

RECLAIMING VOICES ON THE MARGIN IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S

THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

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ABSTRACT

Keeping the contemporary scenario of Indian life as the background the present study goes on to explain the reclaiming voices on the margin in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. In Indian Writing, Feminism has been used as a modest attempt for evaluating the real social scenario as far as woman concerned. In the Indian context, several feminists have realized that the subject of woman's emancipation should not be reduced to the contradictions between man and woman. In order to liberate herself, the woman needs to empower herself to confront different institutional structures and cultural practices that subject herself to patriarchal domination and control. This research paper analyses how the Indian English fiction writer, Arundhati Roy has shown her sympathetic and revolutionary attitude especially to the neglected women in *The God of Small Things*. The prominent theme she raises in this fiction, is the realistic delineation of the plight of the women in society. The Indian woman lives within the constrictions of several taboos simultaneously needing emotional release from time to time. But in the absence of proper diversion she suffers from inner fragmentation. The present study examines some of the major characters of the novel.

KEYWORDS: Marginalization, Patriarchal Society, Empowerment, Victimized, Forbidden Love

INTRODUCTION

Arundhati Roy is an international literary figure in the field of fiction. She is a famous Indian novelist and social activist. Roy's debuted first novel, *The God of Small Things*, which bagged the coveted Booker prize for literature. The world of Roy's novel is captured in a state of flux where the values of the patriarchal society are under attack from a new world in which self interest and self aggrandisement and social equality are forcing their entry. Seen from a feminist point of view the novel speaks of the violence perpetrated upon women and paternal tyranny engulfing the luckless children. It ruthlessly unmask the dual standards of morality in society in respect of men and women, the passive submissive role of a wife in a man- woman relationship and the vindictive attitude of a woman in prolonging the suffering and ignominy of another woman by male. In this novel the novelist implicitly advocates greater social reform in the rigged positioning of women.

THE DISCRIMINATION OF FEELINGS

Ammu is the most important female character in *The God of Small Things*. A middle class bourgeois woman, she is a divorcee with two twin's children, Eshta and Rahel. She is beautiful and sardonic woman who has been victimized first by her father and then her husband Baba. Ammu grew up in Delhi but, because her father said that college was an unnecessary expense for a girl, was forced to live with her parents when they moved to Ayemenem. In the society,

education must be available to both men and women without any discrimination. Education develops all the faculties of man physical, mental and spiritual. It enlightens and broadens a person's outlook. So, keeping in mind of the benefit of education, women should not be devoid of taking higher education but what we find in this novel is somewhat difference. Here Ammu did not get the opportunity of doing higher education. It is only because her parents think that higher education corrupts a lady. On the other hand, her brother Chacko sent to Oxford to study further, though he did not do well there. He is allowed to study further because he is male. She met her future husband Baba at a wedding reception. She divorces him when the children are very young. He was a violent alcoholic who not only beat his wife and children but attempted to prostitute his wife to his English employer. Educated and articulate, Ammu is not welcome on her return to her father's house. A kind of an elite leftist, her brother Chacko marginalizes her. At the age of twenty four a divorced daughter she had "No Locus Standi" in her parental house. Both Ammu and Chacko find themselves in a similar position as far as their marital status is concerned. Ammu had been a victim of physical abuse while Chacko had been dumped by his wife for his slothful, barren ways. But in Ayemenem, Chacko rules the roast, being a male and Ammu lives at his mercy for her and her children's subsistence.

FORBIDDEN LOVE

The many types of love is referred in Roy's novel, whether they are described as erotic, familial, incestuous, biological, or hopeless, are important to the novel's meaning. However, Roy focuses her authorial commentary on forbidden and taboo types of love, including Ammu's love for Velutha and Rahel's love for Estha. Both relationships are rigidly forbidden by what Roy calls the "Love Law" or "The Laws that lay down who should be loved, and how and much". Although on breaking these laws is the worst of taboos, and those who break them are brutally punished, desire and desperation overcome the love laws at the key moments of Roy's novel. One interpretation of Roy's theme of forbidden love is that love is such a powerful and uncontrollable force that it cannot be contained by any conventional social code. Another is that conventional society somehow seeks to destroy real love, which is why love in the novel is consistently connected to loss, death and sadness. Because all romantic love in the novel relates closely to politics and history, it is possible that Roy is stressing the interconnectedness of personal desire to large themes of history and social circumstances. Love would therefore be an emotion that can be explained only in terms of two peoples' cultural backgrounds and political identities.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The subject of empowerment of women has becoming a burning issue all over the world since last few decades. Thus, women's quest for equality with man is a universal phenomenon. The position and status of women all over the world has risen incredibly in the 20th century. Women empowerment is empowering the women to take their own decisions for their personal dependent. Empowering women is to make them independent in all aspects from mind, thought, rights, decisions, etc by leaving all the social and family limitations. It is to bring equality in the society for both male and female in all areas. Women empowerment is very necessary to make the bright future of the family, society and country. Women need fresh and more capable environment so that they can take their own right decisions in every area whether for themselves, family, society or country. In order to make the country fully developed country, women empowerment is an essential tool to get the goal of development. It is a great irony that a daughter estranged from her husband in this novel is tortured and tyrannized in her parent's house. While as estranged son, Chacko not only received warm welcome but also remains the rightful inheritor of the family's wealth and fortune. When he flirts with the labour

class women of the factory, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, encourage him in the name of "Man's Needs". But it is seen that the same behaviour of Ammu, in her illicit relationship with Velutha, is termed as untraditional and sinful. She is being locked in a room and is beaten black and blue. The codes of society make a great difference between men and women. Roy tries to sensitise this society to the cruelty of some of its traditions and dehumanizing taboos. She shows how the women and the untouchable are treated as impersonal and subjugate objects in this social structure; how things are decided for both by the patriarchal ideology of an ancient culture which also cultivates the pervasive snobbery and violence of the 'Touchable' towards the 'Untouchable'. The saga of suffering and torture starts with the central female character, Ammu. From the character of Ammu, we can learn that Ammu is the woman who tries to rebel against the Hindu values and patriarchy system in Indian society. Unlike her mother, she cannot accept the bad attitude and actions of her husband and prefers divorce than keeping her marriage. Ammu is also the example of a member of society who breaks the communal mores of India. Roy, through the character of Ammu has portrayed, that the female sex is completely neglected in society. When Ammu makes the physical relationship with an untouchable man Velutha, their relationship exceeded to an extent that it came to be labeled as illicit. In this novel, it is found that both male and female are treated differently as Chacko, being a man lives happily even after divorce but on the other hand, Ammu, after divorce, suffers in the whole novel. It shows different social conditions of men and women in the society which is very decisive. This novel was a revolutionary attempt on the part of Arundhati who tried to open the eyes of Indian community towards the callousness of treating women as objects. Women thus treated are considered soulless beings, sub-human and playthings for men. This imbalance in society explains much of the unhappiness prevailing in our families and the battered lives of children who are exposed to this very partial and unjust view of life. The end result is a paralyzed society unable and unwilling to grow.

CONCLUSIONS

Arundhati Roy has powerfully employed the universal themes through individual and society. It directs and focuses our attention on those who are silently suffering and try to become successful. Each and every story and character is woven with everlasting confidence and internal strength. The structures of power and oppression are often referred to and discussed by Roy in *The God of Small Things* but the individual perspective is never being neglected. One interpretation of Roy's novel is that it is an exploration of subaltern agency on the margin because it focuses on men and women and children who struggle for their right to possess a voice of their own.

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