

Feminism In Arundhati Roy's 'God of Small Things'

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ABSTRACT

Feminism is frequently pronounced as a struggle against all systems of patriarchal and sexist oppression. It is a movement in support of the principle that the women should have the same rights and opportunities-legal, social and economic as men. Feminists categorize the deep-rooted sources leading to subjugation of women and an endeavour to remove them. They try to bring about a change in the social setting in which women are acknowledged as equals, in all regards to men in the equal sharing of rights, occasions and responsibilities in the process of development of human society. Some limit their demands to equality in matters relating to education and work with emphasis on financial independence Arundhati Roy established herself as a novelist par excellence with her masterpiece *The God of Small Things*. This maiden novel attracted considerable readers across the world. Roy discloses the situation of woman in the family and society of Kerala as well as India. The novel is scripted by woman and womenfolk are the focal point of the novel. The novelist does not put on to be feminist but the novel has feminine aspects indeed. All her female characters grieve but fight for their rights in this male conquered society. Roy analyses the deep-rooted social convection.

Arundhati Roy, received of Booker Prize award was born on November 24,1961 in Shillong, Meghalaya, India. Her name is Suzanna Arundhati Roy. Her mother Mary Roy, well-known social activist from Kerala, and her father was a Bengali Hindu tea planter. She spent her vital childhood years in Ayamanam a small town near Kotlayam, went to Lawrence school, Lovedale, in Bilgris, Tamil Nadu. She formerly studied architecture at the school of Planning and Architecture, Delhi, there she met her first husband, architect Gerard Cunha. Roy married second time to a filmmaker Pradip Krishen, in 1984, and did role of a hamlet girl in his prize-winning movie *Massey Sahib*. It was a prolific association for she swiftly got involved in preparing T.V. serials for Doordarshan. Roy is a cousin of well-known media personality Prannoy Roy, the person in charge of the Leading Indian TV media group NDTV. She resides in New Delhi.

'The God of Small Things' is a perfect example of 'feminine writing'. It emphasizes on some important things of life like how love is at all times related with sadness, how a person's childhood practices affect his/her perspectives and entire life. It also exhibits the constant struggle of women against their continuous exploitation, agony and struggle which they suffer because of the male dominated conservative society. The novel defines the state of daughters in patriarchal families in Southern India. It is a type of social forum, which hints at the formation of masculinity as power figures. Roy's feminist conception can also be well comprehended from her non-fictional works also. In this novel, Arundhati Roy describes her feminist perceptions amid the generations of women characters -- Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Ammu and Rahel. These characters are bosses of their own postmodern culture and via them Roy gives the gradual change in the situation of woman in the society. Frequently a woman is shown as 'the other' / 'the marginalized'. Roy through her

novel conjures a young woman's painful journey into her childhood and it focuses on numerous themes and realities

Nonetheless the novel is unquestionably about the twins; Esthappen and Rahel, who can be counted as the protagonists of the novel this novel is a dispute for and in contrast to the virtuous and wicked in the social order with distinct focus on women. The novel emphasises on some significant things of lifecycle like how love is always associated with sorrow, how a person's childhood understandings affect his/her perceptions later in life. The novel shows the unpleasant face of people and society as a whole, a vivid description of the black and ironic world especially while mentioning to women that resides around us. *The God of small things* focuses on the position of women folk in India. It presents before us the endless struggle of women against their never-ending exploitation, suffering and struggle which they experience because of the male dominated conservative society.

"The God of Small Things", showcases three age group of women of different generations. Each of them was born and raised up under diverse circumstances. Beginning with the oldest generation, there is Mammachi, subsequently the generation of Ammu, and the youngest generation is Rahel. Women live according to the dominant customs of Hinduism. According to Hindu philosophy, there are two fold understandings on women. First, woman is measured benevolent and bestower, second opinion is that, woman is aggressive, spiteful and a destroyer. Mammachi's family although they are Syrian Christians, since they live in India, they cannot keep away from being inspired by Hinduism. Mammachi lives under the influence of men. She got wedded in puberty with a man seventeen-years older to her who has almost controlled every step of hers. Mammachi was a promising violinist; she had to give up her career since Papachi asked her to do so. It was through those few months they spent in Vienna there Mammachi took her first lessons on

the violin. The lessons were snappishly discontinued. This is not the only situation that demonstrates the control of man as a husband on a woman. Domestic violence was also a prevalent part of life. Papachi, often used to beat Mammachi with a brass flower vase. In addition, Papachi insulted Mammachi as she was never allowed to sit in his Plymouth, till after his death. The other man who subjugated Mammachi's was Chacko, her fortunate and Oxford educated son. When he revisited home after his divorce from Margaret, and takes over Mammachi's pickle factory and mentioning to the factory as "..... my factory, my pineapples, my pickles" without relating Mamachi who had the factory going on before Chacko returned home. Mamachi did nothing but abided by it submissively. Whatever her spouse did, being a righteous woman, she had to agree to it because it was endorsed by the social order.

Ammu, the female in the second generation in the novel is also curbed. Because of her parent's old beliefs, she lives as the second. As, her parents give more love to his brother for being a man as compared to her being a woman. Besides, being single parents of two children, her place in society is worse. She had no other option but to live in her parent's house directed by men. After another marriage took place, Ammu leaves Ayemenem and lives in Calcutta with her second husband. But, regrettably, her second husband is not well in employment and one day he offered Ammu to his manager. This compelled Ammu for the second divorce and that makes her situation worse in society. It is because the society believes that a virtuous woman should live with her husband and put up with her husband unconditionally. A divorced woman is well-thought-out equal to an un-virtuous woman. From the character of Ammu, one can learn that Ammu is the woman who attempts to rebel against the Hindu standards and patriarchy system in Indian society. Contrasting to her her mother, she cannot take the bad behaviour and actions of her husband and desires divorce than keeping her marriage. Ammu is also the illustration of a member of society who breakdowns the communal traditions of India.

Rahel, Ammu's daughter is the lady who has no place in her family or in society. Residing in her grandparent's house, she does not live like an ordinary child. She lives as a spectator to injustices done to on her mother. Rahel is growing up as an unwelcome member of the family, she never experiences the real Hindu custom because no one regards her presence, so, Rahel becomes a free woman who is distinct from her mother, as is not restricted by mental restrictions of the Hindu traditions. This is why, on her return to Ayemenem, she answers to an old man who asked about her married status "We are divorced" without bothering what the old man will think about her answer. Chacko is a representative of manipulative male who oppresses women. He harasses his

mother, his sister and even his wife. Ammu's inter-religious marriage is ill-treated but Chacko's relation with low caste woman is allowed in the name of Man's needs. In the novel, marriage is a dupe for all and being single is successful. In the novel, Arundhati Roy has depicted the terrible social and economic situations of women. Ammu is separated and lives with her parents and brother, Chacko, who treat her as well as her children in a awful manner. She is separated and a divorced woman so has no respectable place in society while her brother is also divorced, but no one speaks anything to him and he leads life happily. This establishes the contradictory conditions for man and woman in the society. Chacko takes charge of the whole Ayemenem House and proclaims his right over the whole assets and even deprives his sister of her stake. Ammu is incessantly under mental stress and strain and is agonised by the people most dear to her. Roy wants to demonstrate that a woman is the essential character of a family and she is the heart of the family and if we breakdown the heart of a woman, the whole family can disintegrate into a void. This is what happens to Ammu and therefore to her children who have this unsuccessful descent from fragmented families and in turn lead a crumbled and disturbed life.

Simone de Beauvoir in her famed book "The Second Sex" comments, "woman has always been man's dependent, if not his slave; the two sexes have never shared the world in equality" Citing on the plight of the wedded women, Beauvoir asserts, "Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society". She further expresses in her work "The Second Sex" as "One is not born but rather becomes, a woman". From this viewpoint, Arundhati Roy's Novel "The God of Small Things" centres on the above-mentioned facts. Roy, through the character of Ammu has depicted, that the females are completely deserted in society. When Ammu advances in the physical relationship with an untouchable man Velutha, their relationship surpassed to an extent that it came to be considered as illicit. In this novel, it is observed that both male and female are treated contrarily as Chacko, being a man lives happily even after divorce but on the other hand, Ammu, after divorce, agonizes in the whole novel. It shows different social status of men and women in the society which is very critical.

This novel was a ground-breaking attempt on the part of Arundhati who attempted to open the eyes of Indian community towards the insensitivity of treating women as objects. Women therefore as treated in the novel are considered soulless beings, sub-human and playthings for men. This disparity in society explains much of the unhappiness existing in our families and the abused lives of children who are subjected to this very partial and unfair view of life. The end result is a paralysed society incapable and reluctant to grow.

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