



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

## THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS AS A FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

Arundhati Roy Presents a slice of life in a small Indian town where male hegemony as well as Androcentric power relation are prevailing on the other hand, she depicts different types of male and female identity challenging myths. This novel depicts the feministic elements, caste and class gender, political and childhood exploitation. It does not deal with one particular theme. It encompasses all the social issues. The dominance of patriarchal voice and treatment of Dalits and women are mainly focused in this novel. The God of Small Things portrays the struggle of women in the male dominant conservative society. In this novel women of three generations are discussed. The first generations is about Mammachi and second is about Ammu and finally Rahel. The three women are struggled throughout their life and they were not able to survive in a peaceful manner. Mammachi was often beaten up her husband Pappachi. Ammu and Rahel were divorced in their life before they begin their family life and both of them returned to Ayemenem. Both of them became the victims of the so called male chauvinistic society.

**Keywords:** Class Gender, Caste, Male Domination, Chauvinistic Society.

The aim of this paper is to focus on the feministic ideas in the novel *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy. The women existed in a male chauvinistic society and the women underwent through many bitter experiences. When we discuss feminism throughout the literary history we can see that women writers have explored the atrocities committed by men against them. Victimized women brought it through their writings to the world, it may be related to the culture, tradition, religion, social acceptance, etc...Women are born as free and her rights are the same as the man and the laws must be same for men and women. *The God of Small Things* depicts some important elements of the life of Mammachi, Ammu and Rahel. Love is always associated with forlornness; it can affect a person's childhood and may be continued in the whole life of a person.

*The God of Small Things* is a well celebrated novel of Arundhati Roy, has received the prestigious Booker prize award in the year 1997. Though it was her debut experience in the genre of fictional writing; it was a giant success and has received big applauses from the literary world. The very basic of this novel is closely related to her personal experience and has many autobiographical elements, but she succeeded all the restrictions of her own domestic experience by generalizing its theme to universal.

The other significant issues and themes that are counter staged are those of mother-daughter relationship, partition and woman, same sex love relationships and the lives of young, fashionable, independent, working city women. Women novelists have incorporated the recurring female experienced and it affected the cultural and

language patterns of Indian literature. They have brought a stylized pattern in the whole context of Indian writing. Indian women writers have given a new dimension to the Indian literature. Indian English literature has developed over a period of time before the rise of novels, several women writers composed songs, short stories and small plays.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is the clear picture of the pathetic plight of women in the society and their unexplainable struggle. The novel demonstrates the ugly face of society which is portrayed in a vivid manner; the novel highlights the position of folk women in India and their constant struggle against the incessant exploitation. *The God of Small Things* never offers any sort of happiness unless the suffering of Ammu, the protagonist of the novel along with Mammachi and Rahel.

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**First Generation:**

*The God of Small Things* never offers any sort of happiness unless the suffering of Ammu, the protagonist of the novel along with Mammachi and Rahel. Mammachi suffered a lot right from her marriage. She married to a man, who is seventeen years elder to him. She couldn't raise her voice against Pappachi, because he was the supreme voice in their family. Mammachi had a doleful life as a

wife, she often beaten up by her husband. He behaves like a decent man but he shows his ego and bourgeois nature on Mammachi. Pappachi had a sort of frustration that he was retired and taking rest at home. But Mammachi was earning fame as a musician as well as a successful entrepreneur in the pickle making business. Mammachi was never allowed to sit in Pappachi's Plymouth until his death. This sort of inequality was there and it continued and Chacko also dominated in the life of Mammachi. He was educated and he has a very dominant tone. He often told the sanitary inspectors, who come to visit the factory as *my factory, my pineapples, my pickles* (57). She even pawned her jewels to send money to Chacko, when he was studying in Oxford. She was denied her own properties ownership.

**Second Generation**

When we see the life of Ammu her bitter experience starts from her childhood itself. She was denied her higher studies. According to Pappachi, college education is an unnecessary expense on a girl. However he showed among his own children. He sent to Chacko to Oxford for an advanced diploma course. This scenario is still continuing and the women are facing the lack of opportunities to get educated. We shall take it as a patriarchal dominance even in the sector of education.

Ammu's marriage became a heavy burden to her retired father. Later Ammu herself found her future husband in a marriage function in Calcutta. She got married and later she had a traumatic experience. When she comes to know that her husband is a drunkard and a liar, she had no other option than to get back to Ayemenem. Though Ammu was never a bit of bluff, she was forced to satisfy for her husband's manger. It reckons that men are even ready to pawn their wives for their materialistic gain.

She feels as she had jumped out of a frying pan into fire

She returned to Ayemenem with her twins. She was denied all the rights at Ayemenem. Baby Kochamma's words added fuel to the fire "*A married daughter has no place at her parent's house*" for a divorced daughter there is no place at all. Everybody at Ayemenem ill-treated her. Ammu treated like a poor relative who lives in their relative's home. The

society believed that the women who live with their husbands as good women. Ammu's brother also divorced and he never felt any sort of guilt, he enjoyed all kinds of happiness in the society. The chauvinistic mentality of Chacko could be seen there, he tells her that "*What is yours is mine and what is mine also mine (57)*". This sentence is a clear cut example of arrogance as well as male chauvinism and how brutally that rejects the space and role of women in the society, even to their own blood relation. Ammu had to keep silence on this remark is nothing but showing the helplessness of women who live under the shadow of men.

Ammu's married life was so pathetic and she was forced to leave her husband and returned to Ayemenem. Her desires were not fulfilled and as a woman she had her own desires of sex. She discovered a suitable person who can certainly fulfill all her desires. They met often and that lead her to keep an illicit relationship Velutha. In order to satisfy her long suppressed sexual desire and goes out in night and meets her lover Velutha. Though Velutha was an untouchable, he considered her feelings and gave comfort to her. He supported her and it made to transgress the walls of society and loved him with best of her love and affection.

### Third Generation

Rahel was also a victim of male chauvinism. She was also denied the love and care by her parents and grandparents. Rahel became fatherless at the very young age. Ammu was the father and mother to her. Rahel didn't receive parental love; she comes to Ayemenem along with Ammu, where she was denied all kind of love and care, even Ammu showed love and care towards Estha. She didn't care much love towards Rahel. This made her believe that Velutha as her father figure. "*she knew his back she had been carried on it*". When Velutha dies, Ammu and Rahel die there. Rahel stays with Mammachi and is sent to school, and Ammu runs off to live on her own. Years later Rahel reunites with her mother when she discovers that Ammu has a lung disease that eventually kills her. Rahel finishes her studies and moves to America and lives a normal life as an architect, married to a white man that she doesn't really love. After the death of Ammu, the twins separated by their grandparents. Rahel had a

hard time in school, she was separated by religion, community, gender and class because her father was a Hindu and her mother was a Syrian Christian.

At age 31, Rahel finally hears that her brother, Estha, had returned to Ayemenem, and so she heads back to meet with him. Upon her return she discovers that her brother had become a mute, since he had left to live with his father. He speaks to no one, and takes long solemn walks alone with no end in sight. However, Rahel is determined to bring her brother back to her, and she spends a lot of time with him as they go through their old stuff, reminiscing together. This leads to them having sex, and for the first time in decades, being with someone they love, even if that person is not someone they should be in love with.

Hence the novel is doleful one and depicts the miserable life of three generations of women. Roy illustrates the patriarchal voice that existed in the society and also how the three women tholed in their life. The love and care from a husband for a wife also lacked there in the case of Ammu and her husband. The lack of love in her conjugal life and hatred in the relationship with her husband makes the protagonist to keep an illicit relationship with an untouchable. Hence we can clearly say that love always transgress all the social and religious boundaries. The love and care from parents in the childhood is very critical to the proper growth and development of every child. When we focus on Rahel and Estha, we can clearly say that they didn't receive love and care from their parents and also they didn't get the fatherly affection.

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