

ANALYSIS OF ARUNDHATI ROY'S NOVEL IN TERMS OF THE GENDER GAP: A STUDY

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Abstract

The social realist Arundhati Roy believes that women can play an equal role in shaping and developing a family and society, despite the gender disparity prevalent in her society. Throughout her work, she displays a keen interest in eliminating social evils resulting from manmade antihuman establishments and societal issues causing discrimination against people who are considered weaker. This novel is nothing more than an artistic enticement to awaken the slumbering conscience of society to get rid of this male-centered attitude. This idea was dramatized by the novelists depicting the Kochamma family of Kerala. The Kochammas have a history of poor relations between their male and female members. Ammu's mother, Mammachi, for instance, suffers severe abuse and beating from her husband. He leaves Ammu little room to grow as an independent and confident individual, since he becomes angry and frustrated whenever he faces a failure outside the home. Her only objective in life is to find a "reasonable husband", depending on him for the rest of her life. The elder brother, Chaco, saves Mamma chi from his abusive father's behaviour. Chaco is also a "worthy daughter" according to Hindu and Muslim principles. This paper is therefore relevant for study as a patricentric novel as a result of all these incidents.

Keywords: Societal Issues, Societal Emotions, Discrimination, Middle class background, Feminine Identity.

One of the South Indian states, Kerala, is the focus of Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize winning novel *The God of Small Things*, which explores gender disparity. *The God of Small Things* portrays both the miserable plight of women in a society dominated by men in order to maintain their dominance. Roy portrays the conflict between males and females in his book to sustain the male's supremacy. This novel illustrates how women can be helpless in the hands of men to resolve frictions between themselves if they don't have their way. *The God of Small Things* illustrates the hard-core exploitation of women by exploiting their weakness & adopting the corrective position in order to establish their manliness. As women novelists have emerged on the front lines of Indian literature, it has become a common factor of feminism both in the Indian and global literature worlds. A novelist like Roy always likes to express the fate of women in India. These feminine writings and feminine identities help women achieve a small degree of liberation from patriarchy. Roles ordained by patriarchy reduce women to a subordinate status. Women's quest is to disembowel patriarchal roles and gain freedom from patriarchy. In order for a novel to be effective, it must have a social purpose and be presented to readers in a way that will evoke societal emotions. There is no point in relying solely on art for its own sake, as whatever is said or written for its own sake usually loses its social relevance and slowly becomes its readers. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to identify some of the societal discrepancies in Roy's *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS* that affect women.

There is a long legacy of Indian literature, mostly due to its mental activity that has lasted for many years. India and Indian thoughts have influenced the minds of the world. India is regarded

as the forerunner of many global ideas. Indian literature began with religious writings. The epics, Vedas, Buddhism and many other religious sects have all made a significant contribution to the literature of Indians and thus to the welfare of mankind. Insightful discussions have been conducted on prominent writers' contributions to enriching Indian English and the lives and works of novelists. In the context of contemporary Indian literature, it has reached extraordinary heights and achieved rich growth. In the early part of the twentieth century, a number of writers sought to write in order to benefit society, politics, and economy. In addition to bringing to light the social evils and malpractices prevalent in society in those days, it was also intended to use fiction to promote social change. Indian English novels manifest themselves in a multifarious way, encompassing almost all aspects of Indian social life.

A new tradition of telling stories has emerged in Indian literature and history, a galaxy of brilliant storytellers who have illuminated them. Rajmohan's wife (1864), which reflects the transitional phase in Indian literature, was the first novel written in English by an Indian. Then there were many more, including Arundhati Roy, the world's foremost living female novelist and social critic. There have also been a number of other writers who have contributed to the flourishing of Indian English literature over the last few decades. Indian literature has gained national and international recognition over the past few decades. The Indian fiction in English genre is one of the most popular literary forms in the world today; it is living, developing, and evolving. It is also an integral part of the third world and novel genres as well. It is not just a literary phenomenon that has led to the growth of the novel in India. As a matter of fact, it has a very strong relation to the social, political, and economic conditions of the country and has little to do with fulfilling merely individual needs or desires. This phenomenon is considered a social phenomenon rather than simply a fulfilment of individual desires. As a matter of fact, men occupy the position of masters in all of these associations, and women are forced to give up whatever degree of individuality is permitted in a patriarchal setting. Most women are forced to dance to the raw sounds of men. There seem to be a number of factors that, in literature in general and in the novel in particular, amalgamate into one single piece. These two major components are the individuality of the novelist (semi autobiography of Roy) and the literary milieu (Booker Award in Roy's case). As a great writer, one of the most important duties he or she has is to represent society as well as its different influences in art. In other words, literature and society are the same thing; they are interwoven both internally and externally. The novel incorporates a distinctive sense of responsibility towards life and acute social awareness to form a significant trend in Indian fiction. Her ideology is deeply rooted in the tradition of blending reality with literature (Art). Her goal is to radicalize Indian society and depicts the multiple tensions at all levels. It encompasses a wide spectrum of social, caste, and gender differences.

Literature is a collection of thousands of threads that weave together to form beautiful pieces of art and life. A fictional piece like *The God of Small Things* is a complex web of threads that have their own importance in the creative process. Therefore, the scholar's primary responsibility lies in unravelling the whole bundle without breaking it. Similar to Roy's attempt to disentangle a society, this paper also aims to disentangle a section of fiction focused on women and caste. Throughout history, the second sex has always been viewed as secondary. The marginalization of women is an old story. The subject of women has always been subservient to men. Even the most famous thinkers and philosophers regard women as inferior. In Aristotle's opinion, femininity was an incomplete version of masculinity. Their works were considered subservient and below literary standards because they dealt with marginalization

and domestic imprisonment. The author Arundhati Roy makes a point of emphasizing that families that reaffirm male supremacy in the past are destined to stumble sooner or later.

Ammu is the central character of the novel, but only has a marginal existence within the family. Women's education has been overlooked in a patriarchal society where the value of women is largely ignored. In Ammu's father, Pappachi, she is never encouraged to find her place in life because he does not like spending money on her. Ammu's survival is determined by marriage. Her father retired from his job in Delhi the same year that she finished her schooling, so she moved to Ayemenem. The college education was considered unnecessary by Pappachi for a girl, so Ammu was forced to move with him out of Delhi to live with him. Young girls in Ayemenem had little to do other than wait for marriage proposals... (38). Her count is apathetic thanks to our wonderful male chauvinist culture. Ammu responded, "What you own is yours and what you own is also mine." (56). No woman appears to be rebellious in her novel. Regardless of whether they are young or old, they have been cheaply subjugated to someone. They have been portrayed as loyal servants to their leaders. It is repeated in various contexts referring to a number of characters throughout the novel, but the point is that the genuine reader immediately becomes aware of the lack of or the absence of something in all characters, and they seek to identify the missing or distorted thing throughout the novel, especially among the female characters.

During the course of Roy's trilogy, three generations of men and women are featured. Mammachi represents the generation of women who have always been silent victims of atrocities committed by males. Baby Kochamma and Father Mulligan represent the generation of people born before independence. In spite of her love for Father Mulligan, she cannot flout patriarchal norms blatantly, which leaves her destined to lead a life of spinsterhood, fulfilling the patriarchal role of a sexless, pure woman. It is this generation of women, headed by Margaret Kochamma and Ammu, who overtly challenge patriarchy but suffer in terms of failed marriages for it. Rahel represents liberated women, who do not capitulate to social and religious norms and boundaries. Roy presents Rahel as a liberated woman, free from patriarchal shackles. Through Rahel, Roy presents a woman who challenges the patriarchal role and niche for women in a confrontational manner. As a result of Rahel's unsavoury past, she loses her zest for life. She grows up unsupervised, without anyone to arrange for a marriage for her. Without anybody to pay her dowry (18). An identity crisis ensues as she searches for meaning and identity amid the chauvinists. Roy presents men and women from three different generations.

As a result of the local disapproval, Ammu is turned into gallows, an enclosure, and an absurd institution by her husband. This represents societal attitudes toward divorcees. While Ammu's husband remarries, he leads a happy conjugal life free of twin responsibilities.

In her return to Ayemenem, Ammu finds herself in an intimate relationship with Velutha, an untouchable woman. Velutha is murdered by the police for mating with a touchable woman, and Ammu is expelled from her home. The Ayemenem family disintegrates, and Estha is sent to the Baba, while Rahel remains with them. They broke the rules in the most violent way. But it wasn't just them. It was everyone else too.

The exploitation of women's economic status causes them to be victims. Chacko was an activist for Marxism. In his bedroom, he would lecture the pretty factory workers about labour rights and union laws, flirt with them outrageously, and then call the girls back to his room. He called it all hogwash, and Ammu said it was just a spoiled prince acting out Comrade! It was an

Oxford version of the old Zamindar mentality—a landlord who demanded attention from women who depended on him for survival (63). In the absence of any other alternative, Ammu forced herself to make the choice of her own, but unfortunately, that choice also lied to her. In her life, she had only one chance. She made a mistake. She married the wrong man (38) - an utterly pitiable experience for an Indian woman. Their dreams of being their own are constantly being monitored and blocked by another subject.

Ammu's death is more than fate playing a nasty joke on her. The death of Ammu is a direct consequence of her breaching the limits imposed on her by her community. This prompted generations of her family to break the rules of their community. Her dead body is also compared with a dead cockroach. Ammu's death remains unnoticed as if it were a lowly insect. Chacko wraps her body in a dirty bedsheet and transports it to an electric crematorium, but the church refuses to bury her.

There is no doubt that Baby Kochamma adheres to the patriarchal norms and the patriarchal niches and demands the same respect and submission to these sacrosanct rules of patriarchy that she has displayed in her prime years. Because of her vulnerability to traditional traditions, Baby Kochamma desires a fellow sufferer in Ammu. Ammu is resentful of Baby Kochamma because she saw her quarrelling with a fate that she, Baby Kochamma, a fate she had graciously accepted, the fate of Man-fewer women. I am sorry for Baby Kochamma, who is without Father Mulligan. Women characters in the novel are portrayed as being something to be looked down upon throughout. Roy herself does not present women as being authoritative and each female character is depicted as having some deformity, so she is not viewed by others in a favourable light. Throughout the history of mankind, women have been portrayed as objects of pleasure and pleasure to men. As a result of the allegation of male dominance, men were required to follow a code of moral conduct that was imposed upon them. Men were regarded as demonstrating their masculinity through their wantonness. It has become apparent with time that women have been marginalized in various ways, such as commodification for sexual, reproductive, and entertainment reasons. It was the norm in society to treat women as inferiors to men, and not only on a theoretical basis. Women's place in the family, one of the most basic institutions in society, was regarded as secondary and marginalized. According to conventional family institutions, men are privileged to be the head of the family, and women tend to play the secondary roles of housekeeping and childrearing, as a consequence of traditional family institutions.

The plight of Ammu motivated her to protest against prejudices, codes, and rules which are hostile to women because of her inferior status. Her behaviour is rebellious, subversive of the dominant ideology. Furthermore, they had seen Ammu and other women suffer severe punishments that were out of proportion to their actions. As well as depicting current social problems and turmoil, the author also discusses a clash between the fractional modernization of Indian masses, which contrasts with their traditional mentalities in the present. In addition to highlighting the perpetuation of untouchability and marginalization of women in society, this novel exemplifies a strong anticolonial resistance in society. Despite the age-old colonial devices of intellectual colonization, Arundhati Roy dismantles the British cultural hegemony that has dominated culture and society for so many centuries. The patriarchal structure with its class and gender hierarchy is almost universal, spanning all nations, religions, and races. The fact is, sexual differences are not necessarily indicative of sexual inequality or male dominance. A patriarchal social system, however, emphasizes masculinity as a symbol of advantage, whereas femininity is viewed by many as an indication of subservience and inferiority, while

it is associated with strength, virility, self-assertion, dominance, decision-making, and ownership. In contrast, femininity implies passivity, docility, obedience, and self-negation, as well as weakness, passivity, passivity and passivity.

Roy's novel challenges the accepted notion of women as created by a male-centered society, and by means of her protagonist, she attempts to create a new image for women. She shows that women eventually become men-able to make and take their own decisions, despite a variety of trials and tribulations. A woman's inner experiences are woven into her works, which make the invisibilities visible and the trivial meaningful. As a result of these embarrassing circumstances, Roy used her writings to undermine a society that is male dominant. By the end, Roy humiliates this society with her powerful style of writing. In Roy's writing, she strives to break free from these age-old shackles of love and instead, she brings out the power of women, so that women can be freed from the confines imposed by patriarchal society in traditional societal limitations. As they band together in the discriminatory system, the women they seek support from maintain the male hierarchy upon which they are reliant for survival.

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