

Psychological Behaviour and Women's Liberation in Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things"

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ABSTRACT

Arundhati Roy's works prominently feature women navigating complex social structures and challenging patriarchal norms in India. Her female characters, like Ammu and Rahel in *The God of Small Things*, often face oppression within a rigid, caste-based society, yet they also embody resistance and resilience. Roy's narratives highlight the injustices inflicted upon women through patriarchy, love laws, and social taboos, while also exploring themes of female agency and empowerment. Indian women are mainly oppressed because the country is built around a patriarchal mind set. Patriarchy is a social system in which each and everything in the family is controlled and decided by the males. They have the roles of political leadership, moral authority and property ownership.

The patriarchal idea is that a woman's only duty is to serve her father, brothers and her husband. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is a novel which is set in a patriarchal society. Breaking laws, forbidden relationships, the changing social order, oppression of women etc. are its main themes. This novel shows how differently men and women are treated according to the unwritten social norms. Women who stand against men and society are considered as the other and they will be punished accordingly. The present article analyses how Roy portrays an unpleasantly difficult situation of Indian women against the setting of Ayemenam, a southern Indian state of Kerala where the chain of relationships are very complex which traps the female characters subjecting them to repeated suppression.

Keywords: empowerment, fiction, liberation, relationships, social, suppression, women

INTRODUCTION

Arundhati Roy is one of the transcending stars in the atmosphere of Indian fiction in English. She was brought into the world on 24 November 1961 in Meghalaya, India. Her dad Rajib Roy, was a Bengali Hindu and her mom Mary Roy, was a Syrian Christian. The divine force of little things is her presentation novel and is likewise a semi- personal novel. She was granted the Booker Prize for the novel *The God of Small Things* in 1997. She was the main Indian Women to win this prize. In January 2006 she was granted the Sahitya Akademi Award. She as an Indian English author enters contemporary social- policy centered issues which is sufficiently recognizable in number of studies.

Liberal learned people read Roy's evaluates of the state and her pictures of protesters as past the pale. Samanth Subramanian starts his New Yorker survey of *My Seditious Heart* by reminding his pursuers over and over exactly howirate Royis. While he adulates her apple scene in Kashmir, her study of the neoliberal venture he diminishes to "uninhibited outrage," and asks that enemy of Fourth Estate axiom, employed regularly against radicals: What arrangements does she have, inanycase? A normal sentence in Subramanian's audit depicting Roy's scrutinizes starts, "She lambasts, "or "She excoriates." He blames her for irregularity in her mentalities toward peacefulness, and of receiving "a gentler point of view" while considering the brutality submitted by India's Maoist "Naxalite" development. Yet, in spite of his portrayal of her supposed tricky delicacy toward radical savagery, what she really composed was that their organizer.

The Feminism advocacy of women's right on the ground of the equality of the sexes. Many feminist women writers who have contributed literature to the society wrote chivalric novels. Most of their novels had women protagonist and were based on the glory of women in the world. Feminist women writers still strive to uphold the rights of women through their works like poems and novels. Arundhati Roy is an Indian bestselling author of fiction and poetry. She always had an affinity towards writing and the courage to pursue it under all the situations. Roy relates to the many roles women play in their lives and it is reflected in her work too. She writes with great energy and creates amazing works at ease. Modern female novelist's works are the novels of protest and an outburst of reservations and contaminations. They look for some Indianness' for conveying the messages of feminism in an Indian way. Woman writers of Indian writing in English are good in analyzing complex issues like complexities of human relationships, manwoman relationship, woman's psyche and her potential.

Many Indian women writers in English with their newly acquired feminist consciousness have given their writings a new dimension in the portrayal of the new woman writers like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy etc., have probed deep into the female psyche and have created an awareness of different kinds and forms of female experience. Their protagonists are mostly upper-class and middleclass women, educated and intelligent yet dislocated individuals who go through a crisis in life as a result of repression within the family, their constrained relationship with their husbands, their disillusionment in marriage, and their own lack of assertion & realization of self. Poverty also has reduced women powerless. Akhila is a forty five years old spinster who takes various roles of a daughter, sister aunt and the provider of the family, an income tax clerk, one day she sets out to seek certain answers for herself, she buys a ticket to a kanyakumari and placed in —Ladies Coupel along with five other woman giving her company for the overnight journey. These women share their life experiences with her, thus helping her to gain her full potential as a woman and grapple with the answers to the questions. She has been asking so long, Roy portrays the protagonist as by fulfilling the expectations of her family Akhila has forgotten to live for herself. The ties of tradition have always pulled her back, checked her in mid-stride whenever she has tried to make her way towards freedom.

KEY ASPECTS OF WOMEN'S ROLES IN ROY'S WORKS:

- **Marginalization and Oppression:**
Roy portrays the struggles of women in a male-dominated society, showcasing their pain, suffering, and vulnerability to violence.
- **Challenging Societal Norms:**
Her characters, particularly Ammu and Rahel, defy social expectations and transgress against cultural norms, demonstrating a desire for freedom and self-determination.
- **Resilience and Resistance:**
Despite facing adversity, Roy's female characters demonstrate strength and resilience in the face of oppression, often finding ways to resist the limitations imposed on them.
- **Intersectionality:**
Roy's narratives recognize the interconnectedness of gender with other social categories like caste, class, and religion, offering a nuanced perspective on the experiences of women in India.
- **Feminist Perspective:**
Roy's work is rooted in a feminist perspective, criticizing patriarchal structures and advocating for women's liberation and empowerment.

Characters in “The God of Small Things”

- **Ammu:**
A divorced woman who experiences social ostracism and domestic violence for daring to love a man from a lower caste.
- **Rahel:**
A young woman who, along with her brother Estha, witnesses the tragic consequences of societal prejudice and injustice.
- **Mammachi:**
The matriarch of the family, who, despite her own suffering, embodies a certain strength and resilience in navigating the patriarchal world.
- **Baby Kochamma:**
A complex character who, despite her traditional upbringing, also displays a degree of agency and manipulation in her pursuit of social status.

Expanding on the themes:

Roy's portrayal of women extends beyond the immediate family, encompassing broader social and political contexts. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, she explores the experiences of women from diverse backgrounds, including Anjum, a transgender woman, and Tilottama, who navigates India's tumultuous political landscape,

demonstrating a broader scope of womanhood. Her work encourages readers to confront uncomfortable truths about social injustice and to consider the possibilities for social transformation.

In "Women in The God of Small Things," critic N. P. Singh says that the first generation has a tendency to "defy the age-old norms of patriarchy" (65). Women of Ayemenam house do not have much freedom since men rule and decide for their lives. Mammachi's relationship to Pappachi is male dominated because he is of the belief that a man should have authority over the woman. For him marriage is the male's authority over female. Therefore, he considers his wife like a slave. Their relationship is filled with jealousy, hatred and it is devoid of love. Since Mammachi is a successful businesswoman and she gets more popular as time goes, Pappachi becomes jealous of her. In the meantime he starts to beat her. He does not want to see the good qualities in his wife. No night had passed without beating his wife. Mammachi is partially blind, but he does not like to lend her a helping hand because he considers that pickle making is not a suitable job for a high ranking ex Government official.

Mammachi is a physically and psychologically abused wife like so many women in different societies who undergo torture and never speak out. She does not speak against the actions of her husband and remains in silence. Pappachi is not ready to encourage his wife in her jobs. There is the time when they spend a couple of times in Vienna and Mammachi takes lessons in violin, but when her teacher praises her exceptional talent before her husband, he abruptly stopped her music lessons because of the fear that his wife may surpass him.

When Chacko warns Pappachi against beating, he withdraws all communications with his wife. He finds another way of oppressing her. From that time onwards he never tried to speak with Mammachi until his death. Whenever he gets a chance, he rejects and insults Mammachi. To show his relatives that Mammachi is not caring him and to make people feel sorry for him, he starts to sew buttons in front of them that are not really missing onto his shirts. In "Man-Woman Relationship in The God of Small Things," critic Nirmala C. Prakash points out Pappachi's view of marriage as follows: "Wife is but a slave who can be driven out of the house at his will and whose precious possessions like piano can be as mercilessly broken..." (180). Roy adds that Mammachi accepts her situation and becomes submissive to the societal rules, "she accepted the female role model imposed on her by the society – docile, submissive, ungrudging, unprotesting" (56).

Another maltreated victim in the novel is Baby Kochamma, sister of Pappachi. When she was a young woman, she falls in love with Father Mulligan, an Irish Priest. When her dream of marrying Father Mulligan gets shattered, she receives the shock of her life. In order to win him, she converts herself to Roman Catholic faith but ultimately she is a failure and starts living in the Ayemenam house. She does not dare to challenge the traditional ideas of love and marriage prevalent in post-colonial India. Baby Kochamma does not run away to fulfil her dreams but upholds her very reactionary ideas. She hates the Hindus, does not think that a married or divorced daughter has any position in her parent's home and she is against intercommunity marriage. She conspires with the inspector and puts Velutha, an untouchable in the prison, where he is severely beaten to death. This attitude of negativism is perhaps due to the malicious treatment meted out to her in her life.

Baby Kochamma does not overtly believe in the rights of women as well as subalterns and makes a distinction between her self-interest and those of other women. In stark contradiction to her personal subversion and transgression of patriarchy and oppressive structures, Baby Kochamma concurs in the repressive actions against Ammu. Male dominance in family matters stifled their voice even in personal matters like marriage. Thus like Mammachi, Baby Kochamma also apparently submits to the patriarchal norms without any hesitation but if closely examines we can see that she has an implicit resistance against the socio-political order in post-colonial India.

Pratibha Vermain "Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: A Study in Feminine Sensibility and Aspects of Style," has of the opinion that the women in the novel are always under the genuinity of the men and strictly under the shade of a patriarchal society in which she defines patriarchy as, "a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (180).

Ammu, a middle class educated woman and a divorcee with two children, is the female protagonist in the novel. Even though she is educated, she is also the victim of the male dominated society. Oppression of Ammu begins by her father. He does not allow her to educate herself at college. He says that college education for a girl is an unnecessary expense. Although she would have liked to be educated, she is rejected for the reason that she is a girl. Ammu is not privileged for college education and also for marriage as dowry is a difficult preposition. Pappachi and Mammachi treated their children differently because one is a woman and other is a man. They send Chacko to Oxford for quality education. Ammu realises that they do not care for her as they do about Chacko. Sometimes she feels that she does not exist at all. A good example for this is her eighteenth birthday, "Her eighteenth birthday came and went. Unnoticed or at least unremarked upon by her parents" (Roy 38). Subsequently, she became domesticated depriving of privacy and freedom.

Stink of suffocating atmosphere of the house had long been felt by Ammu with her Pappachi's outbursts of physical violence inflicted upon Mammachi. To escape from this prison, she runs into a marriage that ends in divorce. She marries a Bengali Hindu who is a drunkard and authoritarian figure over her. He asks Ammu whether she can stay with his boss, so that his job remains secure. But Ammu goes against his wishes and he starts to beat her. He thinks that he can beat his wife anyway he wants. He takes the power of a cruel husband. Even though he mistreats Ammu, she is not ready to be a victim and a sexual toy for his boss. Here Ammu stands as a sturdy woman who is not ready to be a doll in her husband's hands.

Ammu is a woman who does not think about the consequences of her actions. Even though she knows that marrying a Hindu will create chaos in her life, she goes for it anyway. And also, she knows that it is against the social norms of Kerala for a woman to divorce her husband, she breaks the rules again and divorces her husband since she can't tolerate his misbehaviour. Finding no other solutions she returns to her parents' home, to Ayemenam, unwelcomed with her dizygotic twins- Rahel and Estha. Her house turns out to be a horrid place for her. She becomes a subject of humiliation and insult by her own family members. There was only a lukewarm response even from Mammachi to the needs of Ammu and her children. In the opinion of Baby Kochamma, a married daughter has no place in her parents' home and has no place for a divorced daughter at anywhere. She takes the advantage on the inter-religious marriage of Ammu by ignoring her and her twins. She dislikes the children for the reason that they are fatherless. Frustrations of Baby Kochamma had its origin in her hopes as a novice of winning the heart of Father Mulligan had failed. Her sadistic temperament got its bloom in creating opportunities to ditch Ammu.

After getting divorce from his wife, Chacko resorted to the parental home like Ammu. But he, being a male takes the entire operations of the house. Ammu and her children have to live under his mercy for their subsistence. While divorced women are badly treated, society allows divorced men to continue the pleasures of their life. When he comes back from Oxford he takes charge of the pickle factory of Mammachi by marginalising her in terms of both clan and gender. Even though Ammu works as much as Chacko in the factory, she would not inherit anything from her parents. She works in the factory as a slave even though it is owned by her family. Being a woman she suffers all sorts of oppression even from her family members. She is cornered by the family structures and inheritance prevalent in the Indian society.

Another difference in the approach to men and women is the unfair treatment of Ammu's and Chacko's desires and how their parents fulfil their wishes. Although both the children of Mammachi are divorcees, she does not resist her tyrannical and manipulative son. Chacko is allowed to have sexual relationships with the beautiful women workers in the factory who are belonging to different class and castes. However, when Ammu fulfil her desires with a man from a lower caste, she gets banished because it is sinful for a woman to express her sexual feelings.

The repeated rejection of Ammu by her own relatives compels her to seek emotional refuge in Veluths- a low caste or untouchable carpenter. When her family knows about her relationship they banished her instead of supporting her. Even though Mammachi and Baby Kochamma are also women they don't try to understand the sexual feelings of a woman. While Mammachi allows Chacko to fulfil his sexual desires she considers that it is not good for a woman to express her feelings. So everyone turns against Ammu.

Smothered by social injustice, Ammu rebels against the very social norms of the society. She knows that it is not allowed in a society for an upper class woman to mingle with a lower caste. But she neglects all the rejections and punishments that she has to face as its consequence and breaks the rules imposed upon her. Ayemenam family punishes Ammu for her sin in order to save their pride and good reputation. Velutha is put into the jail for the false charge of rape conspired by the malicious Baby Kochamma. Roy points out that when Ammu goes to the police station to save Velutha, the officer offends her as he taps her breasts with his baton. Chacko banishes her from the home and she dies alone. The church refuses to bury Ammu as she violated the societal rules. She again undergoes cruel oppression when she is cremated in an electric crematorium where beggars, derelicts and the police custody were taken.

As a woman Ammu resists the oppressive and repressive social and political structures. She does not succeed in bringing any tangible change but she puts up a brave fight for fulfilling her dreams. Her most important act of becoming sexually involved with the untouchable Velutha cannot be taken as only a sexual transgression, it is a way of resistance aimed at bringing about change in and around her. She is the rebel who represents the defiance of the current condition of society from educated and thinking women.

Rahel is the daughter of Ammu who is deprived of conventional parental law. She is also an unwanted person in the Ayemenam family like her mother. The two children Rahel and Estha live with the stigma of mixed parentage, both in the ways of religion and ethnicity. She is disliked by her relatives- Baby Kochamma, their uncle Chacko and even by the maid Kochu Maria. Only her mother and her brother are there to care her. Ammu being a single mother has to play

the role of a father too. Rahel also derives pleasure from the company of her brother. She feels left out by her family when Sophie Mol who is the daughter of Chacko arrives with her mother. Rahel wishes to be treated as equal to Sophie Mol, but her aunt, uncle and her grandmother tries to avoid her because she is considered as the daughter of a sinful mother. After the death of Ammu the situation becomes worse.

She has a hard time in her school and was expelled three times from the Nazareth convent and refused to be co-opted by the school. There is no one to teach or guide her moral virtues. So she does not know how to behave to others. So that she drifts from school to school. Once she is expelled from school for smoking which is not allowed for women. She is always in an urge to break the rules imposed upon women by men. Since she does not know how to behave in a society as a girl, she cannot possibly think that smoking is only meant for men. All her teachers say that she does not know how to be a girl.

Like a lost soul Rahel wanders in her life. She takes up Architecture program in Delhi without any thought or interest; there she marries a man of her own choice just as her mother had done. She divorces her husband the moment he stops to fulfil her needs. She refuses to accept the fate of Ammu and Mammachi. She does not feel much cruelty from her husband like her mother and grandmother, but she leaves him anyway. She leaves him because she believes that it is better to avoid a man with whom we feel miserable than to stay with him.

The only person with whom Rahel has compatibility, a balancing harmony is her brother Estha. Their personalities balance each other like the two halves of a circle; complementing each other. The most unfair act of Rahel is her incestuous relationship with her brother. She transgresses the traditional boundaries of a defined and social relationship. While Ammu has an illicit relationship with Velutha, Rahel involves in a sexual relationship with Estha. Both in a way transgress the social norms of the traditional Ayemenam society. Their transgression is perhaps a deliberate act to resist and to challenge the society where in, they have to survive as the victims of oppression. Rahel is a rebel in the eyes of others as she breaks the laws and lives her whole life the way she wants and does not care about the consequences like her mother. She represents the contemporary women in India.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Geraldine, (2013) Roy was considered as notable writers. The study discussed that she focused related to issues of female by consideration Indian society. Though Roy has refused to be labeled as feminist writer related to stories portray by considering sensibilities of female, as the female looks herself & her issues. Actually, the intention of writing this study study is to portray the major theme of the social consciousness of women to find their dignity, independence, and role playing in modern society of India. There are multiple themes in Roy's works, like family, relationship, social position, gender inequality, and etc. Thomas Bonnici, (2015) English is a broadly talked language today. It has regularly been alluded to as 'worldwide language', the most widely used language of the advanced period and right now the language frequently educated as a second language around the globe. English in India is utilized for speaking with the outside world, as well as for between state and intrastate correspondence. As a result of the extraordinary ethnic and semantic assorted variety found inside our country, English goes about as a key 'connect' language. With the Information Technology transformation and most programming and working frameworks being produced in the English language, another utility for composed and oral correspondence in the English language has developed.

A lady as a topic in Indian fiction in English isn't something later however the methodology of the authors is unquestionably unique. In the novel of the 1960s ladies in Indian fiction were portrayed as ideal animals having different temperances, with no understanding of revolt while the later books depict. Ladies are taught and aware of their privilege and advantages requesting their legitimate spot in the public eye. Undeniably, late years have seen the effect of western women's activist speculations set forward by essayists like Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1952), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970). Under these impacts the Indian ladies scholars have effectively made an endeavor to break the artistic and accepted practice of the past. They investigate profound into the mind of their characters and furthermore messenger another idea of ethical quality. At the start journalists like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha de, Bharati Mukherjee and some others have denied such a women's activist inclination in their compositions yet a top to bottom examination demonstrates a solid women's activist expectation, for ladies' issue relates to be the main worry of their plot. Arundhati Roy is one of the most well known essayists in India, Indian ladies' composing hit another high when Arundhati Roy won the Booker Prize for her 1997 introduction novel, *The God of Small Things*, investigating taboo love in Kerala and has been converted into in excess of forty dialects. She was brought into the world in 1959 in Shillong, India, and considered design in Delhi, where she currently lives. She has likewise composed a few genuine books, remembering *FieldNotes for Democracy*, *Walking with the Comrades*, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*, *The End of Imagination*, and most as of late *Things That Can and Cannot Be Said*, co-wrote with John Cusack

Writing Style of Arundhati Roy

In India nationality assumes an imperative part in the development of ladies' personality separated from sex and gender. Indian customary values entirely put ladies in the socially inferior position to men or as subordinate to men. Ladies are confined to their gender parts as moms, spouses, little girl and girl inlaws as opposed to as individual subjects like men. Their social parts outweigh their individual subject position. As broadly developed subjects ladies go about as the repository of the social values through their social gender parts like spouse, mother, little girl and little girl in-law. In this development of ladies, individual qualities and freedom come in conflict with group qualities and ladies need to make trade off by sacrificing their individual values in lieu of group welfare. Again in this development of character of ladies, the female body turns into the terrain on which mapping and remapping of the personality is arranged in light of the fact that female body is viewed as instrumental in giving birth to kids, to safeguard the holiness and virtue of race, class and position. In this manner in safeguarding of social personality of both men and ladies, body turns into a critical thought. This is all the more so in diaspora as relocation to an outside area requests a protection of culture for the development of way of life as well as for the continuation of it in the consequent era. This circumstance makes greater duty and overburden ladies in remote land.

Ladies come in conflict with the old estimations of their local land which are prohibitive and new estimations of the gained arrive which are more liberal. Movement opens up new roads to build up their subjectivity not the same as their customary upbringing. Subsequently in questioning the national social character ladies come in conflict with patriarchy since the national development of ladies' personality is basically patriarchal in nature. Indian ladies' encounter with patriarchal values in diaspora frequently prompt to the imperviousness to patriarchy and result in development of selfhood which shape the real subject in Divakaruni's fiction as in diasporic ladies writing. This angle consequently is managed in detail in this area. These qualities are identified with marriage, parenthood, social upbringing, social stun and such comparable things. From the conflict ladies perceive their distinguishing proof in the diasporic group. In her commended first short story gathering *Arranged Marriage* Divakaruni manages upper and white collar class, high station Hindu urban Indian ladies' broadly built identity in conflict with the new personality in diaspora. This conflict with hegemonic patriarchal thoughts of gender leads her female characters towards freedom and in addition development of selfhood. Be that as it may take note of that these depictions have a place with the early period of diaspora from 2010s to 2010s when social changes in India for ladies were initiated. Henceforth the original foreigners that she depicts in *Arranged Marriage* found the space in diaspora more helpful for freedom and social change.

CONCLUSION

We as human beings respond to different situations. The response is through our emotions and actions. Those emotions and actions are the indicators of our being, without which we are considered dead or non-living. We may perform our tasks like the robots without understanding our feeling anything about the happenings around us. However, this is unacceptable, as god has given us the ability to think, act and feel which defeats the purpose of us being alive otherwise. Suzanna Arundhati Roy, an Indian writer, essayist and activist who won the Man Booker Prize for fiction for the best-known novel, *"The God of Small Things"* in the 1997. The book is semi-autobiographical in nature. It reflects on her childhood experiences in Ayemenem. "There is really no such thing as voiceless. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard." *The God of Small Things* has the elements of the people from the margins-untouchables (Paravan) and women in particular. Special attention is drawn on the condition of women. This work is supposed to be a post-colonial feminist writing. There are elements of feminism. Feminism is the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes especially in achieving political, economic, personal and social equality. India has a patriarchal society where the power is in the hands of male members. They are the decision makers and the authority of taking care of the women and children of the family lies in their hands. They over power women in different aspects-religion, finance, politics etc. Many novels that throw light on the exploitation of women in the society. It shows the reality of the status of women in the society so far. This novel was written post colonialism. The writing shows that the exploitation did not end with colonialism. The setting of the novel is supposed to be in the third world, which portrays the struggle, torture, exploitation that a woman has to undergo in the male dominated conservative society.

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