

Confrontation or Protest in *The God of Small Things* : A Review

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Abstract. Arundhati Roy came into limelight in 1997 after her novel bagged the prestigious Booker Prize for literature. Roy was born in Shillong and spent her early years of childhood at Ayamanam in Kerala. The present novel *The God of Small Things* revolves around this village. The natural ambience, the dialect, and the mannerisms of the people everything seems to revolve around this village. She was a child of a broken home of separated parents. She had to face lots of worries, problems, cares and mishappening in her childhood. *The God of Small Things* is a story of forbidden class-caste love and what community will do to protect the old ways. The Kochamma family business, Paradise Pickles and Preserves, is emblematic of the theme Ayemenem is practically pickles in history, Roy, an architect and screen writer who grew up in Kerala capably shoulders the burdens of caste and tradition a double weight that crushes some and her characters and warps others, but leaves none untouched. The novel takes on the big subjects- Love, Madness, Hope, Infinite Joy. Here is a writer who dares to break the rules. To dislocate received rhythms and create language she requires, a language that is at once classical and unprecedented. The story reveals itself not in traditional narrative order, but it jumps through time, wending its way through Rahel's memories and attempts at understanding the hard fate deal

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Arundhati Roy spent major part of her time at her grandmother's pickle factory, packing curry powders over there and sticking the labels of the pickles. Despite all these oddities she was a genius and extraordinary who gave her heart and mind to studies. As Mary Roy says :

Arundhati is a born talker and a born writer. While she was studying in our school it was a problem to find a teacher who could cope with her voracious appetite for reading and writing. Most of the time she educated herself. I can remember our Vice Principal Sneha Zakaria resorting to Shakespeare's

The Tempest as a text for this little fourth grader. (Roy, 68)

Arundhati Roy's Brother Lalit Kumar Christopher Roy, portrayed as Estha in the novel also says that Arundhati was a very good student, and athlete and an orator.

At the age of eighteen she left to New Delhi for higher education. There she joined the Delhi School of Architecture. There too she lived a life of scarcity and destination. In the second year, she was requested by her family not to return to Kerala. This gave a great jolt to her very sensitive, young mind. She took a tin shaded room at Firoz Shah Kotla. She had to make her living by selling empty beer bottles.

Arundhati worked as a Research Assistant at the National Institute of Urban Affairs after getting the degree of architecture. She worked with such a great perseverance over that she was awarded scholarship to go to Florence to study the Restoration of Monuments and Historical Urban Centers. She returned from Italy grimly determined to restore neither Monuments nor Historical Urban Culture.

Arundhati Roy has been described as charming, humorous, strong-willed, independent, energetic and creative with a great sense of fun, 1.55 mm of doe eyed delicateness, a down to earth 'girl next door' a towering intellect with a poetic fluency with words delivered in a soft modulated voice, a dog-lover. She is 40 years old and describes her two favourite past times as writing and running. Arundhati Roy says about her childhood in Kerala :

A lot of the atmosphere in *The God of Small Things* is passed on my experience of what was like to up in Kerala. Most interestingly, it was the only place in the world where religions coincide, there's Christianity, Hinduism, Marxism and Islam and they all live together and rub each other down. When I grew up it was the Marxism that was strong, it was like the revolution was coming next week. I was aware of the different cultures when I was growing up and I'm still...(98)

She further says :

My mother says that some of the incidents in the book are based on things that happened when I was two years old. I have no recollection of them, but obviously, they were trapped in some part of my brain. (99)

Arundhati Roy departs from the old technique of narration. The booker citation truly says, 'Roy funnels the history of south India through the eyes of seven years old twins'. Besides if one reads the novel thoroughly one finds the point of view expressed in the book is plural and not singular. A number of passages and chapters are beyond the purview of seven years old twins. Before discussing the various entangling points of the narrative, we must know at first the meaning, purpose and variety of point of view in a novel.

The point of view of the author is depicted via the characters, actions, setting and events which obviously is the most important part. It only is the internal part of the narrative. After the publication of the two books, *The Art of the Novel* by Henry James and *The Craft of Fiction* by Percy Lubbock, the point of view has become an important part. Thus the author's today resort is to develop many different ways to present a single story.

This novel is a story about a helpless, lonely lady Ammu who abandoned by her husband and totally neglected by her family meets her sad fate. It shows her constant struggle to make both ends meet. She struggles, repels but in the end succumbs to the innumerable harms done to her. This story shows the battle between the rich, high and mighty and the poor and the weak. So is the image drawn of Big man, the Italian and Small man, the mombatti and consequently between *The God of Small Thing* and *The God of Big Things*.

The central character of the novel Ammu is very poignantly depicted as the daughter of Pappachi and Mammachi. Her brother was Chacko. She was witness to the severe crudity meted out to her mother by her father who beat her mother up with a brass vase.

Ammu saw the extreme temper of her father when he tore a pair of shoes that she had brought for herself. She was also denied proper higher education because Pappachi thought it was unnecessary for girls. Pappachi suffering from schizophrenia behaved decently at times but became a tyrant for his wife and children.

This is a story clearly depicting the confrontation between the haves and have not of the society, between the high and mighty and the low and the weak, 'Big man, the Laltain and Small man, the Mombatti, between the 'God of Big Things' and 'God of Small Things'. 'Laltain' means the big guns of the society who like a Laltain are well fed, well protected and can survive the gush of the wind unlike the mombatti representing the marginalized, defenseless, the dalit, the deserted, down-trodden, have not, who have no glass of protection and can easily be blown-away by the gushes of wind. Mombattis somewhat gentler than Italian can burn others light much easily than the Italian which is somewhat stubborn to burn other's light.

Through these symbolic representations the author has effectively been able to arouse the pity of the readers for these helpless mombattis. Ammu and Velutha are these mombattis put up against the Laltain of the society or the God of Big Things, Ammu and Velutha have to be against and forsake these big things to indulge into small things.

Roy in her novel confronts boldly the male chauvinism. She retorts against the notion that novel are a weaker sex and are inferior to men. They are possibly there to look after the needs and satisfy his baser instincts. She mocks at their attitude and registers her poignant protest that woman is not a mere toy to be manipulated by a man as and when he likes.

Chacko, a hypocritical male, brother of Ammu truly represents this picture. His selfish side and his false pride to be male are revealed many times in the story. He was sent to the Balliol College, Oxford to study by the virtue of the fact that he was the male member of the society. Ammu was not sent however because she was a girl and because of this simple fact she did not have access to higher studies as it was the popular belief that college studies corrupts a woman. This chronic conservative problem is still there in India whereby a large number of people are against the education of woman. This hypocrisy and biased attitude is brought about poignantly by Anees Jung in her work *Unveiling India*.

This sharp contrast between the behaviour meted out to a woman and a man is shown in the behaviour meted out to Chacko and Ammu. Chacko after his estrangement with his wife is greeted warmly by the Ipe Household and is made in charge of it. He is seen asserting himself and throwing his weight around and in his sadistic and cynical tone he tells Ammu 'what's yours is mine what's mine is also mine'. This is because of

the simple reason that Ammu as a daughter and she has no right on the property.

The irony is projected when Ammu estranged from her husband is not greeted well in her own home, she is ignored and her children to bear the brunt of the indifference attitude of Ipe household. The daughter divorced from her husband is tortured in her home whereas the son divorced from her wife is gifted the whole house and becomes the rightful heir of the family's fortune. His flirtatious advances towards a lowly woman, he is encouraged by Mammachi by saying it is only 'Man's needs' whereas when Ammu estranged by everybody goes in search of love and when she finds some it is termed as illicit, sinful and untraditional. She is locked and beaten up.

Conclusion

Roy has attacked severely this biased attitude of the society which has set up double standards for the same set of activities. It has its different interpretations for the same problem. It fails to realize the importance of a man and a woman both in realizing a society. They both have to go hand in hand to build up a fruitful society. The neglect and exploitation will bring sheer decadence and unrest and result in damage beyond compare because both men and women complement each other; one is not complete without the other.

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Work Cited

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