

A Brief Study of “The God of Small Things”

R. Krishnaveni,

Asst. Prof. of English

Vaagdevi Degree & P.G. College

Kishanpura

Hanamkonda

Abstract

This paper deals with Postcolonial issue and the intersection of different discourses of marginality such as feminism, caste segregation and untouchability. The main theme is how the untouchable along with the woman as a subaltern are facing various problems by the higher class and to bring the awareness of caste system in the society. It reveals a widowed woman is render destitute by everyone in the society. It finds colonial heritage, local realism, cultural complex and identity. It also implies that people get severe punishment for their transgression. It might reflect the possibility of radical political and social change.

Introduction

The recent post colonial literature the terms like displacement and marginality are valued and favoured by postcolonial theorists. The semi-autobiographical novel 'The God of Small Things' was written by Arundhati Roy. The novel awarded to the best full-length novel was written in English by a citizen of the United Kingdom, the commonwealth, the republic of Ireland, Pakistan or South Africa. Roy was the first Indian Woman to win the Man Booker Prize. Roy's win is particularly significant because it took place in India's 50th years of Independence. Roy was born in Assam to a Keralite Syrian Christian mother, the woman's rights activist Mary Roy, and a Bengali Hindu father, a tea-planter by Profession. Roy grew up and she has studied in Corpus Christi School in Ayemenem, Kerala. Roy wrote the screen plays for in which 'Annie Gives It Those One's', 'Electric-moon' and also wrote the screenplay for the 'Banyan Tree' a television serial. The present novel 'The God of Small Things' is semi-autobiographical and major part captures her childhood experience in Ayemenem. Roy began writing of 'The God of Small Things' in 1992 and finished it in 1996.

Summary

The novel began with Ammu accompanying her parents to Ayemenem after her father's retirement. Pappachi was an Imperial Entomologist under the British and after Independence a joint Director of Entomology. Pappachi was a ill-tempered and her mother Mammachi was a violinist and Mammachi's popularity in pickle making business of 'Paradise Pickles and Preserves.' Ammu dislikes to stay along with her parents, Ammu finally convinces her parents to let her spend a summer with a distant aunt in Calcutta. To avoid returning to Ayemenem, Ammu marries a Bengali man (non-Syrian Christian) who assists managing a tea estate, whom she later discovers to be a heavy alcoholic, who physically abuse her and even went to the extent of asking her to satisfy the lust of his boss (Mr.Hollick), so that his job could be saved. Ammu gave birth to Estha and Rahel. At this extremity of humiliation Ammu's struggle began. Reluctantly Ammu returned to her parent's home.

At the Ayemenem house Ammu was more of an intruder and less of a member of a house and her children considered as doomed, fatherless waifs, worse still, they were Half-Hindu, Hybrids whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry. It was because Ammu had been married inter-caste and divorced. Ammu was denied college education by her father, but Chacko has studied his higher education at Oxford. While studying at Oxford Chacko fell in love and married an English woman named Margaret Kochamma. She has given birth to Sophie Mol. Shortly after the birth of Sophie Mol, Chacko had been discarded by Margaret for his lethargic, unproductive ways and also she had been having affair with another man Joe. Consequently Chacko returns to India. He got the job as a lecturer at the Madras Christian College. After the death of Pappachi Chacko returns to Ayemenem and takes over his mother's business of Paradise Pickles and Preserves. This event implies that when a woman becomes a widow, she loses her husband's protection. It is as if a widowed woman could not run a business independently by herself. Mammachi tolerates Chacko's 'libertine relationships' with the beautiful women in the factory and she also helps to her son. But Mammachi turns a blind eye to Ammu's needs and comforts of children development. Yet being a male, Chacko claims as his Factory only where Ammu works.

Baby Kochamma also living in their Ayemenem house who is the sister of Pappachi. Her actual name is Novami, but is called Baby Kochamma due to her young age at become a grandaunt. As a young girl, she had fallen in love with Father Mulligan, a young Irish priest. Mulligan came to Ayemenem to study Hindu scriptures. Baby Kochamma loved a man not belonging to their culture. She also went to the convent for Mulligan and Pappachi very angry on her and Pappachi brought her to home and sent her to America for education, where she obtained a diploma in ornamental gardening. After that Baby Kochamma realized she submitted to the social norms and kept her amorous feelings to herself. Kochamma suppressed her feelings by choosing a life celibacy and spinsterhood. Baby Kochamma delights in the misfortune of others and manipulates events to bring down calamity upon Ammu and twins. When Margaret's second husband was dead in a car accident, Chacko invites her and their daughter Sophie Mol to spend Christmas in Ayemenem.

'The God of Small Things' deals with the issue of the despondent predicament of untouchables in India. Velutha is an untouchable, a dalit. Velutha is an extremely gifted Carpenter and mechanic. Velutha has a pleasing personality. His participation in political activity and his outside stay had given him a sense of equality and self-respect. He is found very useful by Mammachi and Chacko, both. As Velutha is a subaltern, Mammachi discriminates him from other touchable workers in the Factory and pays less amount to him. Chacko's windowed ex-wife and their daughter receives the preferential treatment where Ammu and her twins are thrown into complete Isolation. In this condition Ammu is Scaring for an anchor. Velutha noticed Ammu as a woman because of a her beautyness. However Velutha becomes a transgressor when he indulges in illicit love affair with Ammu. so throwing aside all worries and cares, Ammu allows herself to be drenched in the love of Velutha every night for two weeks. Estha and Rahel had developed a great fondness for Velutha. Velutha gives to them father's love and affection truly. They begin a short-lived affair that culminates in tragedy for the family. When Ammu's relationship with Velutha is discovered Ammu is locked in her room and Velutha is banished. Distraught, Rahel and Estha decided to run away. Their cousin Sophie Mol convinces them to take her with them. During the night, while trying to reach the abandoned house across the river their boat captsize and Sophie drowns in the river and she died.

When Chacko and widowed ex-wife Margaret return from Cochin, Margaret sees Sophies body laid out on the sofa. She vomits and historically berates the twins, and hits Estha. Baby Kochamma goes to the police station and accuses Velutha of being responsible for Sophies death. Baby Kochamma claims that Velutha attempted rape on Ammu and threatened the family and also kidnapped the children. The false story was fabricated by Baby Kochamma to take revenge upon Velutha for his relationship with Ammu. A group of policemen hunt Velutha down and savagely beat him for crossing caste lines and the twins witness the horrific scene. Velutha neglected by both the police as well as political party to which he owed his allegiance. When Velutha was in police custody Ammu reached to the police station and appeared to the police about their relationship and he was innocent. But the police inspector, Thomas Mathew threatens her to make her to leave the matter alone. When the twins reveal the truth of Sophies death to the Chief of Police, he is alarmed. He knows

that Velutha is a Communist and is afraid that the wrongful arrest and beating of Velutha will cause to his death. The twins were forced to give the false statement about Velutha by Baby Kochamma. Finally, Velutha dies of his injuries. To save herself (Baby Kochamma) tricks Rahel and Estha into accusing Velutha, Sophie's death. Afraid of being exposed Baby Kochamma convinces Chacko that Ammu and her twins are responsible for his daughter's death. Chacko kicks Ammu and her twins out of the house. When "women seek to transgress the rules that govern love and desire the penalty is death". Due to this, Ammu is forced to send Estha to live with his father and stepmother. Estha never sees Ammu again. Rahel was left in the care of Chacko who was disinterested in her affairs from the beginning. As a result of Chacko's daughter's death Chacko becomes benumbed. Ammu impoverished a few years, later at the age of thirty one years she dies alone. At the same time Rahel reached to India. The church was refused to bury Ammu. Thus, Ammu was denied dignity of a funeral. So Chacko and Rahel completed her funeral as Chacko wrapped her in a dirty bedsheet, laid out on a stretcher and cremated in an electric crematorium where beggars, derelicts and the Police custody were cremated.

After a turbulent childhood and adolescence in India, Rahel goes to America to study. Her marriage ended with her divorce with her American husband (Larry Mccashin). She worked for several years as a night clerk in a bullet proof cabin at a gas station outside Washington. It was only Rahel who could manage to cope with such a job. She was shorn off the feminine virtues of sweetness, modesty, subservience and humility. These qualities are cultivated by women of cultured societies. Estha which is short for Esthappen yako, and is Rahel's twin brother. He is a serious and intelligent. Estha exhibited traits of an introvert person where as Rahel was just opposite to him detached and aggressive. Rahel and Estha both thirty one years old are reunited for the first time since they were children. In the intervening years, Rahel and Estha have been haunted by their guilt of (Which they have given false statement about Velutha) and grief-ridden pasts. Estha is perpetually silent and Rahel has a haunted look in his eyes. They understood each other. The twins renewed intimacy is consummated in them sleeping together. The novel ends by their meeting with each other.

The Basic Theme of The Novel

The basic theme of the novel is the fragile world of marginal characters fitted against the oppressed weight of tradition in the Ayemenem society. The intersection of different discourses of marginality such as Feminism, Caste Segregation and Untouchability can be seen in. 'The God of Small Things'. This novel dealing with subaltern groups and individuals, the conflict between power and powerless, Roy's ideological position on the social and religious constitutions of gender and castes. A complete appreciation of 'The God of small things' is contingent upon on awareness of the role of the Syrian Christian Community and Communism in Kerala. It also call for an understanding of the caste system in south India. The novel is all about atrocities against the small things childhood and youth, women, young and old and the untouchables.

The Style of Depicts (fantasy) of the Characters

Human beings are baffled in their apparent fulfillment of dreams. The classification of persons of this novel is based on arbitrarily assigned identity on the basis of social and gender roles. The character and their real ideology that brings the devastating and life altering consequences for its protagonists. In the center of the novel are the oppressed and marginalized members, Ammu, velutha, Rahel, Estha. Roy depicts women around the factory as either displaced (like Mammachi) and dispossessed (like Ammu) (or) sexually exploited (like women workers) by Chacko. A women identity is traditionally defined with reference to a male entity. A woman is someone's wife, mother, sister, but Ammu is seldom an individual. This effect has shown on her children entire life that they write their names 'unknown' in the place of 'surname'. It's a little wonder of this novel. This novel represents all those people who are victimized by the forces of history, dead conventions, false pride and respectability, the tyrannums of the state, the politics of opportunism and androcentric them is also simple, natural life of children and innocent creatures. Roy depicts Ammu's first (divorced) husband as callous man, Ammu as feisty, beautiful, a confined and constricted woman possessing her own private aches and pains and also Ammu is a strict mother. Ammu's children Estha and Rahel are unprotected children and very intelligent. Velutha is a low-class (untouchable) a dalit, extremely Carpenter and Mechanic and also he has, a pleasing personality. Baby kochamma is suppressed her fellings by choosing a life of celibacy and spinsterhood. Mainly

love, ideals and confidence all are forsaken, consciously and unconsciously, innocently and maliciously and the deception affect all the characters deeply.

Cultural Complex and Relationship

India is a very complex society with various cultural and religious habits and beliefs. Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims share and living the same place. Society is divided not only by the very strict caste system but also by class consciousness. There are number of languages spoken in India. The main difference of class and mass (untouchable) people is higher classes make a point of speaking English sending their children to study in England and adopting certain English habits. Kerala, wher the story is set itself has a complex social setup with Hindus, Muslims and Christians having life style and traditions different from each other. Roy evaluates the Indian postcolonial complex (or) the cultural attitudes of many Indians towards their former British rulers. A related inferiority complex is evident in the interactions between untouchables and touchable in Ayemenem, Vellya Paapen (velutha's father) is an example of an untouchable so grateful to the touchable class that he is willing to the touchable class that he is willing to kill his son when he discovers that his son has broken the most impartent rule of class segregation that at there be no inter class sexual relations. Nearly all of the relationship in the novel is somehow colored by cultural complex and relationships in different way including the twins relationship with Sophie Mol, Ammu's relationship with Velutha, Chacko's relationshipip with Margaret, Pappachi relationship with his family members, finally Baby Kochamma relationship with Father Mulligan. Characters such as Baby Kochamma and Pappachi are the most rigid and vicious in their attempts to uphold that social code, while Ammu and velutha are the most unconventional and daring in untravelling it. Roy implies that how they are punished so severely for their transgression.

Highlights of the Novel

Arundhati Roy is magnificent writer. The charecters are so well outlined. In this novel Roy has highlighted the rigid positioning of women and the intolerable plight of the deprived class. The whole story was written so beautifully, lyrically and poetically in good quality. Roy has made many stylistic innovations which make the novel unique. The stylistic innovations include the use of words, phrases and even sentences from vernacular languages,

use of Italics and Upper caste letters, subject less sentences, topicalization, deviation from normal word order, single word sentences, change of word classes, clustering of word classes and variety of other techniques. Roy is keenly aware of the exploitation and oppression of have-nots (including women) by the upper classes. The novel encompasses the poor exploited and socially rejected people of the Kerala society. They are misfits, out casts, factory workers and low caste people Roy clearly points out the fatal effects of massive industrialization. There are two storylines to be considered in this novel. That are the novel is a 'before and after' story. Before the main drama there is the story line, when Rahel is seven years old. After story, Rahel has thirty one years old, she returns from the united states to her home Ayemenem. Of course, these two story lines ultimately combine into a single story. This type of narrative technique 'metatemporal narrative mode' used by Roy. Roy has the courage to use an innovative narrative and stylistic technique.

Conclusion

Arundhati Roy Selected for study in 'The God of Small Things' have been studied from Post colonial point of view. This novel has dealt with postcolonial issue. Identify is a fact essential to prove one's own existence. The characters are continuously in search of their own ideas. Roy in her debut novel 'The God of Small Things' has highlighted the oppression of the other marginalized group i.e., the 'Untouchable' along with the woman as a subaltern. Here the untouchable still epitomizer the works form of marginalization. Roy has tried to sensitize this Postcolonial society to the cruelty of some of its traditions. She has challenged certain common-age-old, self-satisfied yet dehumanizing social taboos, she has shown how patriarchal ideology of an ancient culture decides codes of conduct for both, women like Ammu and untouchables like Velutha. It is this ideology and the value system that is responsible for the violence of the 'Touchable' towards the 'Untouchables'. Roy has presented all this through the eyes of Estha and Rahel. The God of Small Things is grounded in historical realities. One finds colonial heritage local realism all together in the novel. She has presented a women's struggle in seeking 'identity' in a male dominated conservative society. She has successfully tried to highlight her attention on social reform. She has definitely arisen our sense of potty and sympathy for the mombattis the downtrodden and the less privileged by this 'The God of Small Things'.

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