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God of Small Things: Embolden Feminism and Vigorous Argument Against Social Discrepancy

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In the post independent Indian English literary propagation Arundhati Roy is undoubtedly one the strongest proponents of progressive writing whose dazzling appearance in her very first novel 'The God of Small Things' caught international attention that has played a positive impetus to push forward Indian view of feminism and women's emancipation against social oppression in creative writings. India being a traditional country people here like to follow worn out social framework and relation that causes tremendous hardship to her women who are really deprived of all sorts of freedom which is the basic condition for them to change their life to a decent way. *The God of Small Things* has got a mixed reaction in Indian review. The polemic Shobha De expressed it is a story of "freak thing that happened" but Kamala Das highly appreciated it for exposing deep-rooted caste-ism and cruel patriarchy.

Having a sound family background and privilege of receiving higher education Arundhati attained a cosmopolitan world view with nuance and straight forward rebuff against parochial patriarchy and male chauvinism. So in her personal life she closely watched women's role and life in Indian society. She is very much vehement to be vocal that comes in an undertone artistic way makes novel a piece of fine art that ends with inconsolable tragedy of all the main characters good enough to rend our heart and full credits goes to her credit.

Now a very question strikes in our mind. What are the real position of the women in our society? What could we see in our surroundings? Indian constitution has given broad space for its women; in reality we are far away from the dream of our nation builders who thought and hope that overcoming a long bleak period of British shackle these countrymen will stride forward to their goal and a new humanity will go ahead in a smooth and unbending proceedings- alas! Indian society still carrying the legacy of the past following a raveled mixture of worn-old feudalism and ruthless capitalism. No wonder discrimination and disparity is common every nook and corner of this country.

But still there is silver shining as the women are coming forward shattering the taboos and inhibition. They are trying to move neck to neck and throwing challenges to men flock of the society. The main protagonist

of 'God of Small Things' AmmuRahel's mother with her self-confidence and defiance terribly shakes the heart of the readers with her tragic end for her forbidden love with Veluthathe untouchable.

At the backstage of Ayamanam, a small lush green village of Kerala the novel starts to tell us an intrigue story of love defying social injunction. Here we get numbers of anecdotes deeply interwoven with each other. The depiction of the novel commence in a moth eaten old house of an imperial entomologist Pappachiwho following the same patriarch hegemony of his father Reverend Ipe. The man boastful of being a serviceman of British Raj in India. His mind is fully colonized who almost laments the leave of British from the subcontinent. He proclaimed the greatness of Anglo culture does not hesitate to make physical assault to his resilient wife Mamachi . He has not even a modicum of guilt feelings to commit such unjustified cruelty with his seventeen years junior wife. What was the reason of doing so is not clear, probably he would feel a sense of insecurity for being a much older husband of his beautiful wife and suspected wife's loyalty though there not a speck of indication from her gesture and behavior. In a regular basis he would beat his wife with a brass flower vase whenever he felt to apply it to control his wife as his maid-servant.

Mamachi who was a victim of dominant patriarchy of her in law family was used to be that way by her husband. She would play violin and when the violin teacher expressed his unreserved applause for his young pupil the jealous husband could not bear it at all. Losing civility he broke the bow of her violin and threw it into the river.

He might have continued beating wife unless his growing son reproached him one day for doing so. The helpless father getting fear of son's changing habit (as he was leaning towards Marxism and a close sympathizer of Keralian communists)and stout physique and apprehended some bizarre consequence left this habit and when he found in jealous surprise people's praise for the pickles of his wife factory he decided to stop talking with wife for the rest of the life.

Chacko the son instead of being an Oxford learned and a supporter of Keralian progressive political institution could not come out of the patriarch blood under the veil of his apparent generous outlook. This is really a very serious failure of Indian educated folks. They can't take their learning in life though pretend it before public. This double-standard attitude is prevalent in our social life like a cancer in the throat.

He did not show much sympathy to his divorced sister AmmuRahel's mother who was leading the days of agony and serious psychological criticality of returning back to father's home with her two children Estha and Rahel leaving her Bengali husband a tea planter in Assam.

In fact page after page of this noteworthy novel we see the misappropriate behavior of the male to the female counterpart and dreadful callousness or indifference that hurt and bleed the mind of the women they are associated with. All men are just like a replica of each other in their interaction with their fellow women either they are mother, sister, wife or any other relation. These males may be educated,liberal, conventional, progressive political worker, whatever they may be.

FEMALE CHARACTERISATION:

The God of Small Things essentially a womanly novel by a female writer who sees her world through her microscopic analysis. One may differ but ignores her. The writer Arundhati depicts the fate of main characters and the tragedy that they suffer. There are five women whose life story are crafted with a close watch. They are

- 1) Mammachi (Ammu's mother)
- 2) Baby Kochamma(aunt of Chacko and Ammu)
- 3) Ammu(Rahel&Estha's mother)
- 4) Rahel
- 5) Margaret Kochamma(estranged wife of Chacko)

We also see other female character such as Kalyani the wife of a local political leader K.N.M Pillai but this is a minor character- very soon she disappears from the novel after a little presence.

The central gravity of the novel is obviously Ammu whose life tricked by her own father. She did not find any option to live her own as the old conventional father had no high wish with her and one fine morning he came back home with a smiling face making an arrangement of her marriage with a Bengali tea planter where the family got a relief of not paying dowry for their daughter. She left home for Assam as family wished and came back there years later when her husband wished her to leave him with their twin children Estha and Rahel. Before coming back Ammu had a mixed feelings of her nuptial life. She enjoyed being the attraction of tea planters' association club where the sahib boss did not hesitate to praise her before husband while he was almost unable to hide his desire for her bodily fragrance. The callous husband failed to read it in its proper meaning and did not mind to leave the wife in his refuge when he had to make a trip to out station. "Ammu , beautiful young and cheeky became the toast of the planters' club"(Roy, 40)

Mammachi:

The writer shows a marvelous arrangement to bring and present this character in her novel. Twin tone she uses for her who in her prime was a victim of his patriarch in-law family and cruelty of her aged husband. She was regularly tortured, humiliated and later deserted. Probably she never received love from her husband whom she adored with fear very common to Indian woman. But the irony is that later she herself became an instrument of oppression for others particularly for the female workers of their Paradise Pickle factory and Velutha and his blind father for being Paravan (keralian low caste). Thanks to age old patriarchy that not only torture and deprive the women but also seize them in their periphery and make a proponent of their atrocities. Mammachi loved Ammu innately and was sad to see her loneliness in the house but she failed to do her motherly duty to secure her daughter financial security and handed herself over her son Chacko. She clearly started to discriminate between son and the daughter. While she would watch the moral fall of her son with a sham eyes she was highly restricted to allow her daughter live a free life. Chacko could easily transgress the moral inhibition and social restriction to meet her carnal desire the old lady took it for granted with a shy that Young man are free to fulfill their desire. She indulged her son and arranged a secret passage at the back of the house for a safe return at dark night for Chacko who could throw dust to the morally high Syrian Christian society of his secret sexual adventure with the hapless female workers the pickle factory.

Along with Baby Kochamma She did not hesitate to show her contempt for the low paid women workers and the untouchables. The pathetic side of her character is that though she had honest sigh for the odd happening of her daughter life she could not became bold to make an effort to bring normal status of her in the family, instead she handed herself (like millions of Indian mothers) at the mercy of her son who inherits all that belongings to her deceased husband. She remained inactive at the very critical juncture of her daughter's life otherwise she could save the life of Ammu and give it a meaning.

Baby Kochamma:

One of the influencing characters of the ultimate destiny of this novel Baby Kochamma plays a crucial role with her all negativity. She was a lovable daughter of Rev. John Ipe who dreamt of her having an adorable and respectful husband. As a young girl she would follow her father in his religious service and ceremonies. She was sent to a convent transferring into Roman Catholic so that she could get a standard education and earn respect in the eyes of the society. She found herself highly admired of Father Mulligan and desired to share her life with him. But circumstance made her a parting with her desire one. When her father found that her adorable child failed to find a husband she was sent to Boston of USA for gaining a diploma in fashion gardening. But could not accept such incompleteness of life so easily. Naturally the green stare of envy ate up her mind and body and a fume of contempt began to grow in her gesture and interaction as a member of the Ipe family. She maintained a fanatic moral standard and whenever found anyone is distracted or slipped from such a pre-condition she did not hesitate to take cruel revenge. When Ammu came back with her twin children she did not take it calmly. She discovered in the eyes of her niece a sense of disloyalty and could not suppress her vengeance on her. She forced Esthato go back to his father in Assam and enjoyed to her heart's fulfillment to separate the mother from her most beloved son. When she came to know the forbidden love between Ammu and Velutha her rage found no boundings and she went to police station to make an arrangement so that Ammu was forced to leave the house and compelled to commit suicide.

Margaret Kochamma:

Margaret who before her marriage was a waitress in a café of oxford where she met Chacko when he went to that world famous university to study. Their relation started with prank and laughter and very soon turned into a hasty marriage. Her family was unaware of it and Chacko hid it from his family to avoid their terrified shock. When the honeymoon began to dry she found the freak of irresponsibility in him and left her getting a better job and finding Joe an old friend of her brother. Joe did not mind to accept Sophie Mal who was the harvest of Margaret's married love with Chacko.

Rahel who was an enigma a Young girls probably a shadow of the writer's real life. This character is marvelously interwoven throughout the novel who like Ammu plays the role of a protagonist of the novel. As a twin child she struck at Estha her brother like a leech that brought huge exasperation to the latter. Later in school she became a source of suspicion to her teachers and classmates for her isolated disposition.

“They whispered to each other as though she did not know how to be a girl.” (Roy, 17). Going through different ups and down after the fateful death of her mother she went to Boston with Larry Mccaslin-when he began to think Rahel a valuable gift of their love and she should be in her possession she left her to fetch back her independence that she valued most in her life. This way Arundhati brings the idea of emancipation

for the modern girl to fight against the patriarchy. Rahel does not cry out for her freedom she just learnt how to be indifferent to it find ways for herself. But we could realize her undertone pronunciation for embolden feminism .there lies the success of this story. She shows while Ammu failed and ended her life with shame and self-contempt lacking self-confidence due to her financial and educational deficit she stands on her own feet like a lofty mountain to challenge the odds of life.

MARRIAGE- A FATEFUL BONDAGE FOR THE WOMEN:

In the patriarchic society of our country marriage is often used as a social instrument of oppression for the women. In western struggle for feminism Simone de Beauvoir, the French scholar and intellectual denies the necessity to maintain family life for the feminist. She argues that the old system of human relation only bears the legacy of the past and can't give anything new to the contemporary women.

When we look at any social marriage in our society we can easily comprehend how the financial interest of two families is safeguarded through this aesthetic bondage between man and woman and ultimately the girl begins to suffer. She not only lose her own atmosphere but freedom and self. Still in our society the boys marry and the girls are married to. The girls are barred to express her feelings about her would be husband and she is forced accept the man her family desires.

Even in the case of self arranged marriage the girl soon discovers very soon that her endearing sweet-heart sloughing off the incarnation of an eternal lover becoming a bully husband with so many demands. He began to impose his lordship and demand submission and unconditional loyalty from her while he is free to do things in accordance with his wish or continues his bachelor-like adventure. The women are persuasively inculcated the values of marriage life and its spotless morality. She is internalized to maintain all that a chaste woman should do while the husband has a free roaming everywhere.

Arundhati shows the life of Mammachi and Ammu in a vivid way who become the puppet in the hands of their own family and forced to marriage someone who only adds salt to their insult and do not mind fill their life with unbearable pain. Mammachi could not think of leaving husband to gain freedom and have an access of leading a life in her own way. She submitted her to her cruel husband and later to her indifferent son and thus can't get over their whim and oppression. Ammu too took her marriage as a last hope for her utterly boring life as she was not properly educated by father she had no way to get rid of the suffocating situation of her family. Her dream for a marriage was to make a good bye to the intolerable pressure she underwent as a young girl before her elders alas! It took not so long to realize that marriage can't bring any freedom for the women instead it brings new problem often onerous. Baby Kochamma got pain from in a different way. She failed to choose her husband due her high demand from it and her womanly desire for marriage being unfulfilled brought in her a jealous torment.

On the other hand having a choice of their own Rahel and Margaret can shun their marriage and lead a comparatively better life under their own control though we know either male or female we subject to the pathetic end of our life.

The *God of Small things* hurls a question at us how long a female body and mind will have to serve the purpose of male desire. In our patriarchal outlook a woman has no choice even on her own body, desire and basic instinct, freedom of choice all are trampled in name of tradition.Mammachi being unsympathetic“chained her like a mad dog” when she discovered her secret love with Velutha the Paravan

The writer brings a strong challenge by sending Ammu to her star-crossed love with the electrician whom she observed having ocean of love for her own children. Slowly she turned attracted to see his humility and intense respect for her and her family whom they show utter disrespect. So she comes forward to give her all to this underprivileged who was her *God of Small things*. There was a doleful end both of their life amid atrocities and humiliation instead of a happy ending of these two lovers.

One of the special feature of this novel is that here the women cannot stand by each other in their peril and take a collective measure. Simone de Beauvoir observes this regretful situation of the women in our society and write "... they(women) have no past, no history, no religion of their own and they have no solidarity or work and interest as that of the proletariat..."(Nicholson, 42)

FLICKERING HUMANITY THROUGH MALE HEGEMONY

Except Velutha all the other characters are presented unabashedly with their male chauvinist outlook. To them women are just subhuman who can't have equal status share with them. But not all the women daunt it passively. They rise up slowly and make their own argument against such disparity and discrimination between two sexes. Amid perverted male propaganda the novel sings the song of a new dawn though we are not sure of its imminent arrival.

When Chacko comments on Ammu before her defenseless children she has 'no locust stand I.' Ammu utter not a single word but prepares to reply with her courageous affair with Velutha and when she knew that Velutha died for her decided to bring justice for him though this patriarch society did not give her any chance to do so. She was lying dead after a huge humiliation in police station where the officer pressed her breast just like choosing a mango from a basket to find the right one for himself. "Ammu dead wrapped in a dirty sheet looked like a Roman Senator"(Roy, 162)

Being cruel to her own son her daughter she sacrificed her love. She had no other option. Years later when Rahel makes a revisit to that utterly dilapidated house she could sense the tragic end of her mother with a glowing feelings of self confidence to deny this male hegemony.

Works Cited:

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Nicholson, L. (1997). *The second wave*. New York: Routledge.