

Human Predicaments in “The God of Small Things” by Arundhati Roy

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Abstract:

Arundhati Roy’s depiction of Ammu’s identity of her is as if she has no identity at all as a woman. She was ill treated, scolded and rejoiced by the male colonizer’s gaze especially to the sexual organ of the women. It is the endless episode of Indian women in general and atrocities and ill – treatment of woman by police personnels particularly in India. The rude behaviour of the inspector towards Ammu and the use of the word “Veshya” (a fallen woman or prostitute as had relation with Velutha) show the low degree of treatment of women in public life especially in the police department. This forces the study of Indian women in its contemporary cultural context as low they are exploited by the God of Big things. Ammu, a socially and economically insecure woman suffers in the hands of rigid upper class (Big Things) for her passionate love and social transgression.

I. Introduction

Ammu’s relationship with Velutha is a realization that events the small things matter in one’s life. They know they have no other way to go, that they have no future but present and therefore, they wish to enjoy the present moments. Velutha dies of natural death (in fact, unnatural due the police atrocities) as the spider dies in its web, so does Ammu. In fact their relationship is no exception but a part of unjust social rigid mortal standard of Indian Culture and others which Arundhati Roy herself witnessed in her own locality.

Ammu’s material life like many Indian women’s signifies a heterogeneous relationship between a wife and a husband. Her’s is a story of loveless marriage. She has been depicted as if she has no ‘self’ or “no identify’ or no autonomy” (p.no.90), but just a show piece. She leaves her husband and comes back to her parental village, crossing the rigid boundary of ethical society in India, asserting her identity. In

fact, her marriage itself was also escape from her family and village. She did not ponder much when she took her decision of her marriage.

Roy describes:

“The proposal of Ammu, Five days after they first met – Ammu did not pretend to be in love with him. She just weighted the odds and accepted. She thought that anything, anyone at all would be better than returning to Ayemenem” (p.no.39).

The husband (Babu) is a drunkard who even does not care for his duty in the tea garden. She suffers from the beating and atrocities of her husband. She rebels and defines the order of her husband. When she was asked to go to his English Boss’ care, the define is the true identity of the Indian woman who can lead her life amidst sorrow and sufferings but cannot just offer her body against her wish Adultery and immortality are sins for her. However, for the security she needs a companion, a caring, sharing and loving soul, after leaving her husband, Ammu is complacent and comfortable in

her relation with Velutha. They exchange each other, the feelings of love and sex which are evident from the following lines: “Clouded eyes held clouded eyes in a study gone and luminous woman opened herself to a luminous make she danced for him on that boat – shaped piece of earth- she lived”. (p.no. 155).

Arundhati Roy suggests that in India social fabrics a low caste convert Christian is still low (Velutha). They fail to join the mainstream Christianity and what happened with Ammu and Velutha that they could not unite forever in the world; rather they reached their end soon. One died in her “die-able age” (p.no.39). other died because of bet and web woven by herself. Thus the novel tells an endless struggle between big man and small man. Both Velutha and Ammu were punished because they defied the turn into the mirror of stereotyped and fixed images. They tried to retain their own identity, guided by their inner light, breathing the laws of the society.

Roy probes into female psyche and shows that women could not enjoy much freedom and autonomy in Ayemenem society. Male dominance is quite obvious in Pappachi – Mammachi family. The familial relationship is devoid of love. Ammu, Pappachi’s daughter is reminded of her childhood days in Delhi, where her Entomologist father used to act like a bully.

The second most important female character is Mammachi who puts up a kind of resistance against patriarchal oppression and marginalizing apparatuses. Mother of Ammu and Chacko, Mammachi is also a physically and psycho logically abused wife alike to many woman in different society who undergo torture and trauma and never speak out. Roy situates Mammachi in a strategically significant position between the caste, class and gender sub alters and the feudal- capitalist patriarchal social structures that are inflicted with age old complexities.

She is not only a passive victim but is also the target of the Jealousy of her entomologist husband. Mammachi also denied of help from her husband, the super patriarch in the family, although she is practically blind. The work at the pickle factory is not “a suitable job for a high – ranking government official”.

She does not acquiesce in these acts of insolent marginalization and remains till the end of the novel a steady character even assimilating many of the features of an Indian Patriarch. Mammachi’s strategy of utilizing patriarchal authority herself does not help her in the end in dealing with her son Chacko. He takes away the pickle – factory from her; as if a kind of a consequential sequel to his saving Mammachi from her husband’s beatings. Chacko replaces her and reclaims the role of the Patriarch as it belongs only to the men in the family. Mammachi is made sleeping partner. Chacko becomes a businessman, the “Marxist” owner of the pickle factory – a capitalist enterprise.

Mammachi becomes an instrument of Patriarchal domination despite being a victim herself. As a post colonial Indian woman she succumbs to the lures of pre – colonial caste rules and “love laws” and at the same time tries to be in an interrogative mode regarding both the colonial past as well as the neo-colonial present in her interactions with her daughter Ammu.

In India, even today, evils of caste and class and patriarchal oppressions feed and depend on each other. Mammachi’s daughter Ammu resists Patriarchy and caste and class bigotry in public and pays with her life. Obviously, the web of neo- imperialism masquerading as globalization supports such social structures in place. Chacko’s British wife is the colonial apparition who although allowed little space in the novel, contributes, coincidental as it may seem, to the demise of Velutha. Her half – Indian- hay-British

daughter drowns, releasing Chacko of all fatherly responsibilities. Although both her children are divorces, Mammachi does not resist her tyrannical and manipulative son. Mammachi does not condone the mutually consensual relation between Ammu and Velutha. Her caste and class bias, though not openly expresses, plays a part. Mammachi's complaint against Velutha assists his murder in the hands of the Police. A colonial institution that plays the role of the state rouge, Velutha being the son of nature, being the subaltern meets death and becomes **The God of Small Things**. But Mammachi's family fever disaster. The marriages don't work. Wedlock's, relationships with the western never work out and probably understand show the novelist's scepticism about and around marriage with the people from the west. But what about the values that are imported, uncritically speaking, Chacko's being the small world Casanova and Rahel's desire for her brother apparently seems western borrowings. However, springing in the fertile nature of Ayemenem, these are local cravings that haunt a disciplinary society which only costs human happiness and penalizes in return.

"He (Pappachi) never touched Mammachi again. But he never spoke to her either as long as he lived" (p.no.48).

II. Conclusion

In short, the novel as well as our contemporary Indian society is a synthesis between Eastern and Western culture. The identity of very Indian educated women lies, in fact, in the western dress and behaviour while still they possess the essential Indian nationalist spirit within their heart. In short, **Roy creates a microcosm that encompasses, gender bias, wife battering, infidelity, molestation, emotional insecurity, pride or death within one family in the South of Kerala**. Through the microcosm, Roy explores the often chaotic social and political history of India. She has portrayed the endless tale of Indian women who are struggling to liberate themselves from the clutches of patriarchal society of India. In fact, through multiplicity of feminine gender identity she projects the true picture of Indian Christian women of Kerala. They are trying to assert their identity as per their education, environment and hierarchies.

Reference:-

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