



Confrontation of Protest against Male Chauvinism in Arundhati Roy's the God of Small Things



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Abstract

Roy portrays women's marathon struggle for seeking the sense of 'identity' in male dominated conservative framework breaking the age-old shackles and constraints and to assert her right to live her own way. Roy attacks the prevailing hypocrisy of the society which builds a great barrier between man and woman. The setup of the male dominated society is such that it has little or nothing to offer to the unfortunately forsaken women like Ammu's who are literally forsaken everywhere they go and the greatest pain of it all comes when they are inflicted by ones who are so called your 'own people'.

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1. Introduction

The God of Small Things can be considered a , "...post colonial novel for it seeks to restructure the power center by giving the right to women to live their lives in their own way." (Singh: 102)

It is a study of various postcolonial issues of marginality like Gender discrimination domestic violence and male chauvinism. It is radical subversive and taboo-breaking novel, where Roy's focus is on the irrationalities and injustices of the social life of women. She attacks the double standard that one sex is to be sheltered and kept from power-while the other, regardless of its behavior , runs the world. she assaults on the lopsided values of a male-dominated society where women undergo constant struggle and incessant exploitation and torture in a wider perspective.

2. Research Method

This article is applied a qualitative method. It is considered in presenting the analysis of the data descriptively to confrontation of protest against male chauvinism in Arundhati Roy's the God of small things.

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3. Results and Analysis

Suzanna Arundhati Roy (born 24th November 1961) a significant, booker prize winner in 1977 for her technically brilliant debut novel “The God of Small Things”, is one of the great contemporary writers and activists. This novel is considered as a masterpiece in terms of techniques & modern art used in it, which sees the surface reality and present them in a bold unconventional style. Arundhati Roy’s intensity of modern art is revolutionary one as it breaks with the past tradition and ideas, and words are twisted in such a way that different aspects of life are examined through the expressionism mode, impressionism, realism, surrealism and the stream of consciousness.

Roy portrays women’s marathon struggle for seeking the sense of ‘identity’ in male dominated conservative framework breaking the age-old shackles and constraints and to assert her right to live her own way.

“The novelist focuses on a woman’s need for freedom from her shifting existence, freedom not only from the social setup but also from her own cultural consciousness in the self-imposed restrictions.”(Singh: 91)

The feeling of consciousness, a felt condition of human mind, a condition which Roy explores, feels through and even reacts against it. *The God of Small Things* this highly stylized name tells the story of one very fractured family from the southernmost tip of India. The novel is about the sad story of Ammu who loves, “.....not wisely but too well” and has been ruthlessly crushed down by the traditional and conservative society. Roy in her novel confronts boldly the male chauvinism. She retorts against the notion that women are a weaker sex and are there in society to just satisfy the baser instincts of men. She poignantly protest and mocks at them for their such attitude. Though in history, mythology and in other several legends, woman has been termed as a vainglorious creature and has to undergo several tests to prove her purity despite her sincerity, truthfulness and honesty. But obviously all these things point to one thing-Bias. There are the biases for women harboured by male chauvinism which present their rigid and very narrow outlook. And this is what Roy wants to express in her novel. She ironically remarks at man of double standards whereby first they claim to love her, uphold her and on the flip side of it they want to dominate here and indulge into relentless exploitation and manipulation of her merely as a toy.

Roy attacks the prevailing hypocrisy of the society which builds a great barrier between man and woman. The setup of the male dominated society is such that it has little or nothing to offer to the unfortunate forsaken women like Ammu's who are literally forsaken everywhere they go and the greatest pain of it all comes when they are inflicted by ones who are so called your ‘own people’. Ammu’s is seen braving a very tormented childhood where she had been subjected to all the cruelties inflicted on her by her father and mother only because she was a girl. Her father, a frustrated man used to beat her mother and children and violently broke the furniture. To him marriage was not a pious relationship but a point of showing his male domination over women. The schizophrenic behaviour of her father started strangling Ammu.

Ammu's ironical condition can be viewed from the fact that she as a daughter after separating from her tyrannical husband, is tormented in her own house whereas her brother Chacko after being estranged from his wife is given all the legacy. He is made caretaker of the Ipe household and is seen asserting his position. He bluntly tells Ammu. “What is yours is mine and what is mine is also mine.” He also tells Rahul and Estha that: “Ammu had no locusts stand”.(Roy,57.) Chacko is regarded as the legal inheritor of the family wealth when he flirts with low women, he is encourage by Pappachi in the name of ‘man’s needs.’(Roy,268)

When Chacho’s marriage breaks up, he comes back to Ayemennem-penniless and aimless to work for her mother's pickle factory where he exploits women workers who depend on him for their livelihood. The ladies of the house ignore his sexual escapades and moreover his mother Nammachi even provide him a special room to facilitate his “needs” uninterrupted. Not only this she slips money into the pocket of the girl he has used. Roy is hitting here the patriarchal society and the laws sustaining it because Ammu's mother pay little attention towards the Ammu’s needs.” She is not probing why a daughter like Ammu's with two children to support is being ill-treated, humiliated and ignored is such a family setup? She has no claim in property even though she does as much work in the factory as Chacko does. For this Chacko says “thanks to our wonderful make Chauvinist Society.”(Roy,3)

At this crucial stage of the novel, Roy didn’t try to Peep into the hard crust of male Chauvinistic society and didn’t dive to the bottom to explore the truth beneath bitter realities of life. Ammu the woman in the second generation faces the agony of living as the second. A middle class bourgeois woman, she lives a traumatized life. She is a divorcee with two children, Estha and Rahul. She has no choice but to line in her parents house controlled by men. Ammu’s life came to a screeching halt “she spoke to none she spent hours on the river bank with her little plastic transistor shaped like a tangerine ‘she smoked and had one night swim.”(Roy,44) She became a virtual social outcast alienated from her home and society. Baby Kochamma, who was the most biased

says, "...A married daughter had no position in her parents home. As for a divorced daughter, she had no position anywhere at all." (Roy,45)

Ammu wanted to break free from the shackles of thin uncongenial atmosphere and antipathy of her family members. She felt like a prisoner in the Aymennem House Ammu's moment of freedom came when she paid a visit to a distant Aunt's wedding in Calcutta & met a man whom she married but soon she realized her gross blunder as he was no alcoholic and forced her to smoke. Her husband's boss nursed carnal intentions towards her and threatened her husband to send her to his bungalow. He said to him, "You are very lucky man, you have wonder family, beautiful children such an attractive wife." (Roy,42)

Notwithstanding this extreme humiliation and taking a courageous step Ammu hit her husband in a mad frenzy with a heavy book and left the place with her two kids.

But it makes her position worst in the society because society believes that a good woman should live with her husband and accept his orders unconditionally. A divorced woman is considered equal to an un-virtuous women. While her brother is also divorced, but no one preaches anything to him. He is living happily. This courageous and dynamic girl of 23 years know "for herself that there would be no more chances. There was only Ayemennem now. A Front veranda and a back veranda. A hot river and a pickle factory. Ammu also wants some relief in her barren life. To support her sinking boat she found an untouchable man Velutha, with whom she fell in love. Here she suddenly turned the wheel of her life violating the "love laws" which the community has inherited from Hindu pert. Her transgression of the class, caste, religious boundaries mounts a rebellion of a kind against her marginalized as a woman.

When Ammu like Chacko made relations with Velutha and seen by his parents. Though she felt satisfied but for fulfilling her impulse she is banished from her home and Mammachi's rage is redirected into a cold contempt for her daughter for what she had done. "She thought of her naked, coupling in the mud with a man who was nothing but a filthy coolie." (Roy,257)

Here Roy narrates Mammachi's tolerance of all this for his son but is becomes the fuel for her unmanageable fury at her daughter when she says, "she has defiled generations of breeding" and brought the family to Knees. (Roy,258)

For this act, Ammu is exiled. After being subject to all abuse torment, torture pain-left in a lurch, with no sympathy or support Ammu breathed her last in a grimy room in the Bharat Lodge in Allepy where she had gone for a job interview as someone's secretary, she dies alone. (Roy,161)

But before her acceptance of such fate, in desperate attempts of self-realization Ammu becomes a symbolic personification of all subalterns, especially those women who challenge power structures of social order. Ammu rebelled against the Hindu values and patriarchy system as well as male unchauvinistic society. Unlike her mother she didn't accept the bad attitude of her husband but preferred divorce than keeping the marriage. The novel is a revolutionary attempt on the part of Roy who tries to open the eyes of Indian Community towards the callousness of treating women as objects.

Though Ammu Roy has put forward the cause of womenfolk of India. Who have been subject to all kind of atrocities, biases and partial behaviour. She is not viewed as equals but as a dust to be shrugged off a doormat. Roy tries to defeat this notion by advocating the case of Ammu who is forever under mental stress and strain. Roy flings harsh irony on this male chauvinism and wants to prove that a woman is the pivotal character of a family and he forms the heart of the family and if we break the heart of a woman, the whole family can disintegrate into nothingness. This is what happens to Ammu and then to her children who descend from broken families and in turn lead a disintegrated, disturbed and stray life

4. Conclusion

Roy wants to propagate that what Ammu goes through both in her husband's and father's house is not based on the principle of quality. She seems to say that woman is not merely an object in a man's hand to be manipulated the way he likes but a woman is the most to the noble and beautiful creation of God. With a scathing attack on the male dominated society, male chauvinism in the novel is protested and defiled social order is challenged. Through Ammu's character, the author seems to raise the genuine concern over the male hegemony prevalent in the society.


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