

## Oppression and Suppression in Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things"

<sup>1</sup>E.Merlin Glory, <sup>2</sup>P.Prabhakaran

<sup>1</sup>M.Phil Research Scholar, <sup>2</sup>Asst.Professor in English  
Department of English, Prist University, Thanjavur, India

### Abstract:

This study is prompted to understand the culture and social implications which exists in The God of Small Things written by Indian postcolonial writer Arundhati Roy. The study analyzes Roy's work according to the postcolonial theory and gives importance to the premises of main theorist in the fields. Postcolonial literary texts like Roy's are rewriting of colonial and postcolonial images. The introductory chapter gives an insight into the literature on Roy's works and a summary of Bakhtin's important concepts. The second chapter illustrates polyphony of hybrid voices in The God of Small Things. These voices are analyzed mainly in terms of postcolonial theory. The concept of hybridity in relation to the characters and their place in history and how the theme of the colonized colonizer can be extended to other power structures operating in the novel are discussed in this chapter. In postcolonial theory, the concept of hybridity speaks to "the new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization". These "forms" manifest widely and can include class, language, race, politics—any aspects of identity that are informed by the melding of cultures. Homi Bhabha, a postcolonial theorist and pioneering proponent of the theory focuses on the subversive potential of hybridity. He speaks to the power of that third space—the contact zone, the interstitial point—to entertain difference and, thus, challenge the binaries and fixed structures of society. In her postcolonial novel, The God of Small Things, Arundhati Roy writes from that third space, crafting a structurally hybrid work that explores the social functioning of hybridity.

**Keywords— postcolonial literature, cultural and social implications, colonial and postcolonial images, hybrid identities..**

### INTRODUCTION:

The growth of feminism in India has led to the questioning of the prominent old patriarchal domination. The women of today refuse to be puppets in the hands of men. There may be many Indian works deals about the oppression and suppression in women's society. But Arundhati Roy, the famous current writer who is actually brought out the oppressed women's situation to society. For that, she has used this novel THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS as a weapon. It is an incomparable novel of the oppressed women's society in one of

the novels in India. In that way, this novel won the Booker prize of the year 1997. Because of this fame, many writers who gave comments and praises for The God of small Things. It is truly one of the commendable work in Indian novels. This is what it has received the fame and praises not only by the Indian writers but also from American writers. So here, we could understand the oppressed society which described by the author. Indian English literature is an honest enterprise to demonstrate the ever rare gems of Indian Writing in English. From being a singular and exceptional, rather

gradual native are up of geniuses, Indian Writing has turned out to be a new form of Indian culture and voice in which India converse regularly. Indian Writers - poets, novelists, essayists, and dramatists have been making momentous and considerable contributions to world literature since pre-Independence era, the past few years have witnessed a gigantic prospering and thriving of Indian English writing in the Global market. Indian English Literature (IEL) refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English language and whose native or conative language could be one of the numerous languages of India. Its early history began with the works of R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao who contributed to Indian fiction in the 1930s. "The God of small Things" is one of the famous Indian novel by Arundhati Roy. This is her first book in Indian writing. It turns the clash of Tongues and Histories in Kerala into the motor of its comedy, its lyricism and its fine intelligence. It was written in the year (1997) is the debut novel of Indian writer Arundhati Roy. It is a story about the childhood experiences of fraternal twins whose lives are destroyed by the "Love Laws" that lay down "who should be loved, and how much." The book explores how the small things affect people's behavior and their lives. It won the Booker Prize in 1997. The germ of the book *The God of small Things* was planted in the mind of Roy six years before she got the prize. She had always wanted to write something very personal and autobiographical. As she says: "The real reason was also that I had just got a computer and I liked the idea of writing on. So I just started putting down what was going on in my head. It was a very private thing. I would not show what I had written to anybody. It would just stay in the computer. It was all just

coming out of me like smoke I suppose and I kept putting it down".

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'. Roy in her novel confronts boldly the male chauvinism. She retorts against the notion that women 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 an 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 behaviours meted out to a woman and a man is shown in the behavior 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 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 too bear the brunt of the indifferent attitude of the 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. Then the writer attacks the prevailing hypocrisy of the society whereby they build a great barrier between man and a woman. Man by virtue of being a male fails to understand the gravity of a woman, her deep sensitivity and her dedication for her house whom she loves dearly. Roy also attacked the problem of untouchability. She shows how Kelan, Velutha’s grandfather along with a number of untouchables embraced Christianity to get out of the clutches of the problems of untouchability. Despite the fact that these people had access to a separate church, and a separate priest but after 1947 they found out that they were devoid of government benefits like job neither reservation nor bank loans at low interest. The theme of untouchability is a very poignant one. The author has echoed the cause of untouchables via the torturous circumstances underwent by Velutha. The

God of small things brings the position of women in India. It presents the struggle of the woman against the their incessant exploitation, torture and struggle which they are undergoing because of male society. The set up of the society is such that it has little or nothing to offer to the fortune to the unfortunate forsaken women like Ammu, who are literally forsaken everywhere they go and the greatest pain of it all comes when they are inflicted by ones who Sare so called your ‘own people’. Ammu’s life is depicted by Roy from her childhood to her youth, till the times she dies. Ammu is seen braving a very troubled childhood rather tormented nursery years where she had been subjected to all the cruelties inflicted by her father on her and her mother Mammachi whom her father hit with a brass vase. Her father in a sheer fit of schizophrenia tore her new pair of shoes. She was deprived of the decent education because she was a girl. Her father was such a frustrated man that he was not satisfied after beating up his wife and children, tore the curtains, kicked the furniture and broke the table lamp. To him marriage was not a pious relationship but a point of domination of a man over woman.” Velutha, "The God of Small Things," slips from place to place undetected, enjoying life's small pleasures without paying attention to the "Big" fact that he is an Untouchable and should not be playing with the twins or sleeping with their mother. Velutha is also called "The God of Loss," a sad title that references the loneliness that accompanies living amongst the "Small Things." At the same time, recognizing the powerful presence of "Small Things" means knowing that we are never alone; there is always someone watching, even if it is a flea or even a microbe. Estha and Rahel are the the disciples of "The God

of Small Things." They explore the world of the river and History House, where no one else dares go. Because they are children, they are not as tied to the world of "Big Things" as the adults. Yet they also bear the brunt of the weight of the sad and dangerous "Small Things" that go on in their family's life: Estha's molestation, Rahel's fear that Ammu loves her a little less, the secret of what really happened to Sophie Mol, and the beating of Velutha, which they see with their own eyes. When Rahel and Estha make love as adults, they are finally letting go of their grief through action--they set themselves free from the burden of their "Small Things." In *The God of Small Things* the conflict exists at individual and societal levels. The novel graphically shows that how people are helpless to resolve these levels of friction. Velutha, the outcast, can never co exist peacefully with the "touchable" communities for so long as the stigma of untouchability attached to him and countless others like him. Velutha is "highly intelligent," an excellent carpenter with an engineer's mind, but he is also "The God of loss", "The God of Small Things" He left no footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no images in mirrors"Vellya Paapen is an example of an Untouchable so grateful to the Touchable class that he is willing to kill his son, Velutha, when he discovers that Velutha has broken the most important rule of class segregation—that there be no intercaste sexual relations. In part, this reflects how many Untouchables have internalized caste segregation. Nearly all of the relationships in the novel are somehow colored by cultural and class tension, including the twins' relationship with Sophie, Chacko's relationship with Margaret, Pappachi's relationship with his family, and Ammu's relationship with Velutha. 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 unraveling it. Roy implies that this is why they are punished so severely for their transgression. One interpretation of Roy's theme of forbidden love is that love is such a powerful and uncontrollable force that it cannot be contained by any conventional social code. Another is that conventional society somehow seeks to destroy real love, which is why love in the novel is consistently connected to loss, death, and sadness. Also, because all romantic love in the novel relates closely to politics and history, it is possible that Roy is stressing the connection of personal desire to larger themes of history and social circumstances. Love would therefore be an emotion that can be explained only in terms of two peoples' cultural backgrounds and political identities. However, Roy shows other types of less evident discrimination. For example, there is religious discrimination. It is unacceptable for a Syrian Christian to marry a Hindu and vice versa, and Hindus can only marry a Hindu from the same caste. In more than one passage of the book, the reader feels Rahel's and Estha's discomfort at being half Hindu. Baby Kochamma constantly makes disparaging comments about Hindus. On the other hand, there is discomfort even between Christian denominations as is shown by Pappachi's negative reaction when Baby Kochamma converts to Catholicism

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Roy presents a pessimistic picture of society. With the death of Velutha, the last ray of hope disappears. He is accused of kidnapping the twins, and Estha falsely confirms it. Estha becomes a silent creature whose incomprehensible "Yes" served to prove an innocent man guilty. Roy expresses her disillusionment with the social

conditions of the postcolonial world in which the untouchables of the past still face a hostile society that does not let them live as free and independent individuals. Velutha, the God of small Things, the outcast can never coexist peacefully with the "touchable" communities for as long as the stigma of untouchability is attached to him and countless others like him. Ammu, another "untouchable" within the "touchable" cannot pursue happiness because doing so threatens the existing order, and the society takes every possible step to stop change.

**WORK CITED:**

1. Arundhati, Roy. *The God of Small Things*. Penguin Books India, 2002
2. Bayly, Susan. *Saints, Goddesses, and Kings*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.
3. *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2003. Print.
4. Adhikari, Madhumalati. —Power Politics in *The God of Small Things*.| *The Novelist*.
5. Alam, Kzhurshid. "Untouchables in *The God of Small Things*." [www.usp.nus.edu.sg](http://www.usp.nus.edu.sg). The
6. *Postcolonial Web*. 13 June, 2008. Web. 30 May 2009.