



AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S "THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS"

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ABSTRACT

Arundhati Roy a great name in the Indian English literature. She stands with great Indian writers like Raja Rao, Mulkraj Anand and R.K Narayan with her autobiographical and realistic style of fiction. Her first and the best novel, 'The God of Small Things has won the prestigious booker prize in 1997. The novel brought her name not only in the field of Indian English literature but also in the world literature as well.

INTRODUCTION

In the history of Indian English literature Arundhati Roy's name is specially considered and ever remembered. She has created a new style of her own which is mixture of English as well as Indian vocabulary and idioms. This new trend of blending hypnotizes the reader, Indian and foreign, so much that any reader would never stops reading till completes it. Her style is mixture of both lucidity and dignity.

Arundathi Roy's novel The God Of Small Things' is born in the soil of Kerala and it could not take roots in any other soil. D.H Lawrence aptly says that

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“All creative art must arise out of a specific soil and flickers with a spirit of place”¹

Meenachal River of the novel flows through the kottayam district which has a large Christian population. Later this river plays a dominant role in the lives of characters of the novel. Arundhati Roy well employs all the memories of her past life. She herself agrees to the fact and replying to a question she says “It is set in the village that I grew up in the world that I know. It is an inextricable mix of memory and imagination”²

The God Of Small Things is an autobiographical type of novel. The characters of Ammu in the novel represents Arundhati Ray’s mother Mrs.Mary Roy. Ammu is a south Indian lady. She has married a Bengali man with Roy sur name; there is much cultural difference between two states. It results in to several problems in the lives of Ammu and her husband.Thier married life is full of conflicts. Ammu is not happy, her husband gives her divorce. So she has the burden of bringing up two children.

The story of the novel resembles Arundhati Roy’s personal life in many ways. Her mother was very poor. But she studied in Delhi; she got education with so many difficulties. The author grew up in Kerala born to a Syrian Christian mother and a Bengali father and lived at her uncle’s pickle factory. She accepts that the texture of the novel is autobiographical and the incidents are not. At the age of eighteen she left home went to Delhi to study architecture where she met her husband.

The novel is based on the vast canvas of memory. Most of which centers around Roy’s childhood in a village of Kerala. The protagonist Rahel is easily identifiable with the novelist herself. So are Estha and other characters as Ammu, chacko, Baby Kochamma and Margaret kochamma. The pickle factory, the ply mouth, the Meenachal river the Ayemenem house form the very back drop of the novel and which Roy has tried to immortalize are real entities on the land of kerala.M.krishnan Nair rightly comments “Roy has universalized Ayemenem like Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s Maconda and R.K. Narayan’s Malgudi’

The book peeps in to the life of Kerala society and their rites and customs, tradition and patriarchal domination a caste ridden mentality of some certain sections of people, the fatal consequences arising out of divorce. The child psychology, the naked exposure of the malpractices of Marxism and police administration, the prosecution of the untouchable without any rhyme and reason and above all a confrontation between the god of small things and the god of big things.



The story of the novel centers in the incident of Sophie Mol's death by drowning. She is a cousin of two major characters of the play Rahel and Estha, the children of Ammu. She is deserted by her drunkard husband. The children want to know of their father. Finally they try to search a father in chacko, their uncle and velutha an untouchable Paravan servant who has been serving in that family since their childhood days. Ammu attracts towards her servant velutha. It leads the story to fatal results. Baby kochamma lodges complaint against velutha of abducting the children and is beaten to death by the police man. The shocked Estha separates himself from the world. Ammu gradually succumbs to the guilty feeling that she failed to save velutha. She says 'He's dead, I h've killed him.' She thinks that she is responsible for the death of her lover.

The caste system in India was so strong and inhuman. The lower caste people are never allowed to enter in to the houses of the upper caste. Love affair with them becomes a real hell to them. Arundhati Roy has inter woven her own family story in to a novel. Her mother as well as she could not maintain the conjugal relationship with their husbands as a result divorced and became free from the clutches of husbands. The caste plays a dominant role in an Indian society .lowest castes were bonded to particular high caste. They were not allowed to get inside the temples, public markets and even to water in temple ponds. These untouchables are found only in the Hindu religious society not in Islam or Christianity. But here she has brought conflict between Syrian Christians and untouchables.this caste system conflict ends the life of Velutha.

Arundhati Roy has keenly observed the worst caste system and its impact on the people in the community. She herself is the victim of the system expresses her disappointment towards the rigidness of the customs and traditions of the orthodox society.

The novelist deals with the sensitive issues of family and private life, she has liberally and tactfully handled the burning issues like Marxism, untouchability, atrocities against minorities, were salient features of, Kerala in those days. Though chacko and K.N.M Pillai posed as Marxists they are false in nature, both of them are capitalists as they owned pickle factory and printing press respectively. The writer blames such comrades in the novel. According to Ranga Rao “

“Roy's book is the only one can think of among Indian novels in English which can be comprehensively described as a protest novel. It is all about atrocities against minorities, small thigs; children and youth, women and untouchables.”⁴



Roy has observed all these problems of her native place keenly since her childhood. The same problems have been taken shape in the form of characters in the novel. All the characters can be found everywhere in her society.

Autobiographical elements can be analyzed and defended only on the basis of available personal informations of the writer but may be there are more undisclosed personal matters, which make the analysis false. On the whole, the novel depicts the deep rooted autobiographical elements of Arundahati Roy's personal life as well as her own Kerala Syrian Christian society. At same time we can enjoy the descriptions of natural scenery of Kerala, various insects, flowers, and rivers are portrayed realistically.

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