



CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

DR. D. PARAMESHWARI

Assistant Professor
Dept. Of English
Osmania University, Hyderabad.
(TS) INDIA

ABSTRACT

Arundhati Roy's debut novel 'The God of Small Things' which won the Booker Prize, has received world wide acclaim as well as denunciation though eulogy far outweighs censure. In a very short period, the novel attracted diverse critics who have analyzed it from various angles. Till date, five critical anthologies and number of articles highlighting the thematic, structural, linguistic, and stylistic achievements of the novel by Arundhati Roy have been published. Many more articles are being churned out for publication.

INTRODUCTION

The novel makes it very clear that "it was a time when the unthinkable became thinkable and the impossible really happened" and expects to be interpreted keeping this in mind. The God of Small things have a very good combination of happenings and characteristics that reveal the good and bad; the real and imagined portrayals convincingly. The heightened pathos of the lives

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of the suppressed and the glib and smooth talk of the oppressors is brought out in a manner that makes one ponder over such gruesome and tyrannical forces and devastating incidents for a long duration. It is in short an usually innovative, lyrical, intensely tragic, semi-autobiographical, thought provoking novel; full of allusions and timeless yet timebound.

The novel begins at the end with Rehel, one of the twins return to Ayemenem after twenty-three years to meet her twin brother Estha, who had been returned to India by their father. The main events, leading to the tragic incidents and their aftermath in the novel, begin with the arrival of Sophie Mol, the English cousin of the twins. The arrival of Sophie Mol and her mother to the Ayemenem House and the subsequent developments indeed change the lives of the twins as well as every one else in the family. The ill-fated Love affair between Ammu, the mother of the twins and Velutha—the untouchable Paravan, two very important characters of the novel and the accidental drowning of Sophie Mol and finally the brutal killing of Velutha and the miserable life and the depth of Ammu and the destruction of “two childhoods” is narrated in an architectural style. The refrain in the novel “Things can change in a day” seems to prepare readers to expect unusual, unlikely events that finally mark for the twins “Not death just the end of living”

Basically, The God of Small Things is a sad tale surrounding a Syrian Christian family based in Ayemenem of Kerala and brings out clearly the prevailing conditions of society. The innocent is victimized, the downtrodden are suppressed and above all women who do not adhere to the antique laws laid down by traditional Patriarchs have to pay a heavy price.

The cruelty inflicted on Ammu the protagonist, and her children Rahel and Estha after her clandestine affair with Velutha, makes it appear that she is more sinned against than sinning. Velutha is an outcaste, a ‘Paravan’ for others, but for her and her children a God, a benign soul and the only person who gave them love. Velutha’s annihilation is also enormously gruesome.

This novel is of great magnitude and contains incidents and characters which can be studied and analyzed at various levels. As such, a careful selection of critical comments on this extra ordinary novel is given to reveal the multiplicity of themes approaches and interpretations.

The God of Small Things represents all those people who are victimized by the forces of history, dead convention, false pride and respectability the tyranny of the state and the politics of opportunism and androcentric order. The God of Small Things is also the simple natural life of children and innocent creatures.



In terms of the real and imagined position of women in modern Indian society will be taken up in this chapter. In addition to this, attempt will be made to project various instances of the real and imagined situations, instances and beliefs found with in the text. The treatment that majority of Indian women receive at the hands of their husband's is shown in the following lines: "The Kathakali men took off their make up and went home to beat their wives. This seems to expose the hypocrisy and duplicity the one encounters at every level.

Velutha "The God of Small Things" the maker of small, wonderful items in carved wood like boats, jewel boxes and windmills is a major character in the novel. He used to accompany his father to the Ayemenam House to help him count coconuts, when young. He could carry the small wooden things for little Ammu and hold them flat on the palm of his hand so that she could take them without being touched, as he was an untouchable. Mammachi is the first one to notice the remarkable endowments in Velutha and persuade Vellya Paapen Velutha's father to send him to the untouchable school that her father-in-law Punyam Kunju has founded.

The sacrifice of "Two Childhoods" in addition to the punishment meted out to the lovers makes the novel highly tragic.

"In a sense all the major characters in the novel are doomed. There is no ray of hope for them... if Ammu and Velutha met their fate, what is there for Rahel and Estha? It is a portrayal of helpless human beings who know not what they are doing and where they are going. In fact, they have nowhere to go".

Arundathi Roy has successfully depicted through the twins' experiences, innocent children's world shattered by the scheming adults and archaic laws. The trauma that they undergo in a short span of their existence leaves deep scares on their psyche.

In addition to the rich characterization her unique style of narration and use of linguistic and literary and poetic devices make the novel The God of Small Things distinct and remarkable. Innovative and lyrical sentence constructions and word formations also bound in the novel. For example: he had a green wavy, thick watery, lumpy, sea weedy, floaty, bottomless- beautiful feeling. In this connection, John Updike's comment "Well, a novel of real ambition must invest its own language, and this one does", is worth taking in to account.

Therefore, the sensibility that tempers the novel is post-modernist and it is futile look for a spiritual or moral center in such a novel. The novel succeeds with the modern reader because it has the tone and temper, attitude and Chutzpa, profanity and cynicism, frivolity, and humor and commonsense that confirm to the contemporary taste.

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