

**The Alienated Self In
Arundhati Roy's
*The God of Small Things***

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Abstract

*A critical analysis of **The God of Small Things*** reveals that Arundhati Roy, through her female protagonists vividly portrays the problem of alienated self. She examines with her keen sensitivity and perception the sufferings and problems of women in marriage, who feel completely entrapped, depressed, oppressed, suppressed and doomed to the care of husband and home. The quintessence of Roy's argument is that only when men influenced by the values of feminism replace power with pleasure, competitiveness with co-operation, individualism with community and transcendence with the joys of living and re-order their priorities accordingly, can the world really change.*

ملخص:

تكشف هذه الدراسة في تحليل نقدي لرواية *The God of Small Things* كيفية معالجة الكاتبة (Arundhati Roy) لإشكالية الذات المعزولة من خلال الشخصيات الأنثوية، بكثير من الإحساس و دقة الملاحظة، و تتناول الكاتبة المشاكل التي تعانيها المرأة في الزواج؛ ذلك أنها تشعر بأنها في فخ تعاني من حالة إحباط و اضطهاد الزوج. و في نظر الكاتبة، لن يتحول العالم لما هو أحسن إلا في حالة تشبع الرجال بقيم نظرية " الأنثوية" (feminism). حينها، القوة تستبدل بالمتعة والتنافس بالتعاون و الفردية بالإحساس بالانتماء إلى المجموعة.

Indian English fiction constitutes an important part of the world literature today, and women novelists have made significant contributions to it. Arundhati Roy has emerged as the most significant novelist on the contemporary literary scene. She won Britain's premier book prize, the Booker Prize¹ in London on October 14, 1997 for her first novel *The God of Small Things* and became the first non-

expatriate Indian author and the first Indian woman to win the Booker Prize.

The novel is a story of one much fractured family seen from the perspective of seven-year-old Rahel. The family is unhappy in its own way, and through flashbacks and flash-forwards, it unfolds the secrets of the characters' unhappiness. As it is pre-eminently a novel by a woman about a woman seen through the eyes of a woman, so one of the theme presented in this novel certainly, by and large, be feminine one. The present paper aims at exploring the voice of female alienation in *The God of Small Things* and examines the structure of despair that emerges out of a feminine discourse on the sad tale of a hapless woman seen through the eyes of her daughter.

Arundhati Roy has created three generations of men and women in the world of *The God of Small Things*. Baby Kochamma and Father Mulligan represent the generation born in pre-independence Kerala. Mammachi and Pappachi also belong to the same generation. They have sometimes impulses and urges that defy the age-old norms of patriarchy but they are not able to make a decisive choice and have their way in a largely traditional society. Margaret Kochamma and Ammu represent the intermediate generation that defies the dominant sexual norms of the time and the latter in particular, pays a heavy price for doing so. Rahel and Estha represent the contemporary generation born in post-independence India that doesn't seem to have any feudal, patriarchal hangover and lives a life free from inhibitions and repressions of Syrian Christians in Kerala.

The structure of the society presented in *The God of Small Things** is apparently patriarchal and man is the controller of the sexual, economic, political, and physical power. There is a very sensitive depiction of the way woman suffers due to the sexist bias in the patriarchal society, which gives a subordinate position to women and always treats them as second-rate citizens. The chief argument of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is also that in patriarchy women have been forced to occupy a secondary position in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects to that of racial minorities in spite of the fact that they constitute at least one half of the human race. She believes that this secondary position is not imposed by natural 'feminine' characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of social traditions and education which have been under the control of men. She says:

One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.”²

The story of *The God of Small Things* mainly concerns Ammu, who becomes a victim of male-dominated patriarchal society when she is not allowed to pursue her studies. She finishes her school education the same year that her father had retired from his job at Delhi and settles at Ayemenem. Ammu's father Pappachi, considers the education of women an “unnecessary expense” and so Ammu's education had suddenly come to a stop. She had no other alternative than to come with her father to Ayemenem and wait for marriage and meanwhile help her mother with housework:

Pappachi insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl, so Ammu had no choice but to leave Delhi and move with them. There was very little for a young girl to do in Ayemenem other than to wait for marriage proposals while she helped her mother with housework. Since her father didn't have enough money to raise a suitable dowry, no proposals came Ammu's way (38).

The decision of her father makes clear the society's priorities that a girl can be given education only if she cannot be given in marriage. Marriage, in the eyes of the society, is the *summum bonum* of a woman's life as Simone de Beauvoir observes, “marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society”³. According to the popular Indian myth, woman is *paraya dhan* i.e. other's property whose custodians are her parents till the time she is handed over to her rightful owner, her husband. The husband in turn feels privileged to treat her as his personal property or his possession. Before marriage women are brought up strictly according to the traditional codes. The moment a girl reaches adolescence, she is reminded of her femininity. The double standards and dichotomous attitude which continue to operate throughout a woman's life start right in her parent's home. She is prevented from developing her individuality. She is constantly reminded by her mother that a girl is destined for man and the one who gets the most masculine attention is the luckiest one. A woman in a male-dominated society is thus conditioned into the emotional and cognitive traits of subordination and dependence⁴.

When no suitable marriage proposal came in a reasonable time for Ammu, she began to grow desperate. At Ayemenem, she felt like a

captive lady, fettered to household chores and dull, mechanical routine. Her frustration for sudden disruption of education, uncongenial atmosphere at home and lack of a viable alternative through marriage made her desperate:

All day she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother. She hatched several wretched little plans (38-39).

Simone de Beauvoir also thinks in similar line that “there is a unanimous agreement that getting a husband – or in some cases a ‘protector’ – is for her the most important of undertakings.... She will free herself, from the parental home, from her mother’s hold; she will open up her future not by active conquest but by delivering herself up, passive and docile into the hands of a new master⁵. Eventually, one of Ammu’s plans worked. Pappachi agreed to let her spend the summer with a distant aunt who lived in Calcutta. In Calcutta, she met a young man who proposed to her five days after they first met. Ammu accepted the proposal of a man whom she had known so little and for such a short time, not because she had really fallen in love with him but simply because, in a fit of desperation:

She thought that *anything*, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem (39).

But it soon transpired that she had actually fallen from the frying pan into fire. Ammu discovered to her dismay that her husband was a “fullblown alcoholic with all of an alcoholic’s deviousness and tragic charm”(40). Disappointment became unbearable when her husband, suspended from his job for alcoholism, agreed to his English Boss, Mr Hollick’s demand of sending his “beautiful, young and cheeky” (40), and “an extremely attractive wife...” (42) to his bungalow for being “looked after” (43). Ammu’s refusal only aggravated her physical and mental torture. Her husband “grew uncomfortable and then infuriated by her silence, suddenly lunged at her, grabbed her hair, punched her and then passed out from that effort” (42). We may recall the observation made by a leading sociologist who said that “Even the poorest Indian male is fortunate in having opportunities for releasing his impulse to domination and the fury of his frustrated ego, because he always has a wife whom he can treat as an inferior”.⁶ The author’s implicit suggestion here is that Indian women can withstand suffering,

even torture, but refuse to succumb to immorality against their wishes. But when her husband's "bouts of violence began to include the children" (42), Ammu had no alternative but to break off and come back with her twins to the very same place from where she once had tried to run away:

Ammu left her husband and returned, unwelcomed, to her parents in Ayemenem. To everything that she had fled from only a few years ago. Except that now she had two young children. And no more dreams. (42)

When the needs, wishes or individuality of one of the partners is ignored then this results in separation. Divorce, as Marilyn French says, "like marriage, is morally neutral, it is good; insofar as it ends a long-term intimacy, it is to be lamented"⁷. But certainly divorce gives freedom to women to get rid of an existence of suffering due to male aggression or gender oppression while the traditional-minded women accept their 'false conditioning' into subordination and dependence without demur, the sensitive and aware women realize the need for individuality and revolt against the established norms by 'leaving a marriage that had become an emotional waste land' for them⁸.

At the personal level, Ammu was now burdened with the liability of two children, who were not really loved by anybody, and all her dreams had shattered. Although she loved them, and it was as much for them as for her sense of self-respect that she had deserted her husband, they were, nevertheless, like millstones round her neck. Furthermore, at the familial level, she did not receive any sympathy at all. Her father would not believe that "an Englishman, *any* Englishman, would covet another man's wife" (42), and to her mother, her children were a nuisance. And so far as the society is concerned, her situation was a juicy topic. The relatives- near and distant- came to see her and actually chuckled at her discomfiture while they religiously expressed their lip sympathy, so that "Ammu quickly learned to recognize and despise the ugly face of sympathy" (43).

Generally, to have a husband is the greatest blessing for women even if he is evil because society recognizes woman only through her husband. In India, the blessing for a married woman is always '*sada suhagan raho*' i.e. may you never lose your husband. A married woman is respected more than a single woman and a separated or

divorcee is more or less ostracized or shunned as if she was pollution. Instead of showing concern for the agonized lonely woman, the society adds fuel to the fire by insisting on the 'husband' and his status, etc. Similarly, at the age of twenty-four, Ammu's life came to a standstill, nothing to hope for, nothing to happen, only to spend the long uneventful days languidly one after another, and her rebellious spirit only made her more and more miserable as the days went by. At this stage when she knew that she was "already damned" she became an "unmixable mix" combining the "infinite tenderness of motherhood and the reckless rage of a suicide bomber" (44). She realized that though she lived in her parental house with mother and brother, she had no "Locusts Stand I" (159). Thus at twenty-four, Ammu had the painful realization that "Life had been lived" since she had spoilt her "only one chance" by making the irrevocable mistake of choosing the wrong man. She became virtually "untouchable" in her home, in her family and in the society. The mood of the patriarchal society is reflected in the views of Baby Kochamma:

She subscribed wholeheartedly to the commonly held view that a married daughter had no position in her parents' home. As for a *divorced* daughter- according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a *divorced* daughter from a *love* marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage. As for a *divorced* daughter from an *intercommunity love* marriage- Baby Kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject. (45-46)

The concept of marriage as a sacrament and an indissoluble union is prevailing for centuries, and divorce is considered only a male's privilege. Woman is seen only in relation to man. She has no life of her own as Gilbert and Gubar comment in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead. But the woman who refuses to be selfless and acts on her own initiative irritates the society and is unwelcome. The basis for a happy and harmonious marriage is the feeling of sharing, equality and true partnership. But in the patriarchal division of values, equality is not possible because all the superior and positive qualities are attributed to man and the qualities associated with woman are considered to be inferior. A woman's whole existence is seen in relation to the service

she can render to her husband. A more pitiable and resentful phase of woman's marginalization thus begins after her marriage. She is never recognized as an individual, an equal and a human being with her own needs and desires. She is usually seen as an object providing sexual pleasure to man, an asset, a decoration piece and a nursemaid to bring up the children and to shoulder all the responsibilities of the household. In eighteenth century, William Blackstone, a distinguished professor of law at Oxford, described marriage as a "civil death" of woman. In his *Commentaries on the English Constitution* (1758) and *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, he states:

By marriage, the husband and wife is one person in law; that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection and cover, she performs everything.⁹

One of the strong male supporters of women's cause was John Stuart Mill. He is right in saying that marriage is the worst form of slavery for women. He says that:

No slave is a slave to the same lengths, and in so full a sense of words, as a wife is.¹⁰

Engels in his *The Origin of the Family* also points out that the Latin word "Familia" means the total number of slaves belonging to one man. Marriage, he says, is not a "reconciliation of man and woman," but the subjugation of the female in the interest of perpetuation of slavery and the private property. Thus, for man, marriage means complete gratification on all fronts. He enjoys both the worlds of home and of career. It permits him progression and self-advancement. Since woman becomes his "half" and takes his name, his family, his religion and class, she is virtually reduced to the status of a "nurse-maid" of the children. Before marriage, woman is made by her parents and after marriage, as Balzac puts it, "a wife is what her husband makes her"¹¹. She eventually finds, as Germaine Greer observes, that after marriage her life has "changed radically, but not her husband's."¹²

It is interesting from the feminist point of view that although Baby Kochamma was a woman, she was not in sympathy with another woman- her own kin- when she was in real distress. And Ammu's

own mother, her “bitter long-suffering mother” also refused to have any sympathy for her miserable daughter. The hard fact is that woman herself is responsible for the troubles of another woman. In our society, it is not only man who suppresses the liberty of woman but woman too. Not only mother-in-law and sister-in-law, even one’s own mother may be cruel to her daughter to please those who expect complete submission from a woman after marriage. But again, it may be attributed to the environment and social set-up in which she is born and brought up and to the lack of moral and mental courage to break free from the fetters of centuries old rigid conventions. A traditional mother always wants her daughter to be *good girl* and *properly married*. Simone de Beauvoir says that “a generous mother, who sincerely seeks her child’s welfare, will as a rule think that it is wiser to make a ‘true woman’ of her, since society will more readily accept her if this is done”.¹³

In Arundhati Roy’s fictional world, man and woman remain only islands and fail to shape up as continents because their relationship lacks mutual love, understanding and adjustment. Marriages too did not ensure happiness in Ayemenem household. Respectable family history coupled with high social position remains comfortably divorced from male chauvinism. The novel recounts in detail the relationship of Pappachi with Mammachi, his wife. Although it is a marriage between homogeneous groups, the relationship is devoid of love, and harmony remains but an illusion for the family. Lack of love between married partners cuts deep down into the psyche of the children. Ammu, Pappachi’s daughter recollects with dread her childhood days in Delhi, where her Entomologist father used to act like a bully:

In her growing years, Ammu had watched her father weave his hideous web. He was charming and urbane with visitors, and stopped just short of fawning on them if they happened to be white. He donated money to orphanages and leprosy clinics. He worked hard on his public profile as a sophisticated, generous, moral man. But alone with his wife and children, he turned into a monstrous, suspicious bully, with a streak of vicious cunning. They were beaten, humiliated and then made to suffer the envy of friends and relations for having such a wonderful husband and father (180).

Although Pappachi was a high up in the society, a noted entomologist in fact, and was seventeen years older than Mammachi, he had always been a jealous man. Mammachi was a victim of prolonged physical violence. She receives regular beatings at the hands of her husband, which increase directly in proportion to the degree of success she achieves in her entrepreneurial project, Paradise Pickles and Preserves:

Every night he beat her with a brass flower vase. The beatings weren't new. What was new was only the frequency with which they took place (47-48).

Even in old age "the long-suffering mother" (39) bore the "raised, crescent-shaped ridges. Scars of old beatings from an old marriage. Her brass vase scars"(166). We notice a streak of schizophrenia in Pappachi. He puts up the show of decency and sophistication to demonstrate his male ego but his bourgeois mentality comes farther when he tyrannizes his wife and child:

Not content with having beaten his wife and daughter, he tore down curtains, kicked furniture and smashed a table lamp(181).

In Vienna, when Mammachi took her first lessons in violin and her teacher told Pappachi that his wife was exceptionally talented, the lessons were abruptly discontinued. A sadist, every night he beat¹⁴ her with a brass flower vase. Mammachi regularly suffered this ignominy with increasing frequency till one day Chacko, on vacation, "strode into the room, caught Pappachi's vase-hand twisted it around his back" and said "I never want this to happen again" (48). Mammachi's physical abuse is stopped by Chacko's superior physical power. A woman always needs a protector: father, husband or son. This idea returns us to the tenets of *Manusmriti*. Chacko becomes his mother's saviour in one way but in another, he joins the team of exploiters when he transfers the ownership of the pickle factory to his name. He turns the venture into a 'partnership' and his "mother is informed that she was the sleeping partner" (57). He begins to refer to it as "my factory" (57) and Mammachi despite her initial hard work, is reverted to the status of "economically mute."

The Pappachi-Mammachi relationship is also ridden with jealousy, violence and hatred. Neither the external appearance of Mammachi “beautiful... unusual, regal” (166), nor her talent as a successful business-woman succeed in ensnaring Pappachi. On the contrary, her flourishing business and growing popularity intensify his jealousy and desire for vengeance. The edifice of their marriage survives but its spirit crumbles down totally when Pappachi, warned against beating, withdraws all communication with his wife:

He never touched Mammachi again. But he never spoke to her either as long as he lived. When he needed anything he used Kochu Maria or Baby Kochamma as intermediaries (48).¹⁵

Pappachi had other ways of insulting his wife also. He never allowed Mammachi or anybody of the family for that matter, to sit in his car. And when some visitors were expected, he would sit on the verandah and publicly sew buttons, which were not really missing, only to give an impression to the visitors that his wife neglected him. In brief, he completely rejected Mammachi and insulted her in every possible way. Marriage, for him, is the male's authority over the female. Wife is but a slave who can be driven out of the house at his will and whose precious possession like piano can be as mercilessly broken as the coveted gumboots of his nine-year-old daughter. Even his rejection, Mammachi accepted passively and submissively. In other words, she accepted the female role model imposed on her by the society- docile, submissive, ungrudging, and unresisting. She was a typical entrapped female who regards her husband as the inevitable oppressor. She was powerless to change things, and she cannot express her resentment. The authorial voice, frilled with irony dwells on the wife's maintenance of decorum after Pappachi's death:

Mammachi pasted, in the family photograph album, the clipping from the Indian Express that reported Pappachi's death... At Pappachi's funeral, Mammachi cried and her contact lenses slid around in her eyes... Mammachi was crying more because she was used to him than because she loved him (50).

This exposes obliquely the discrepancies between the realities of women's lives and the images of women promoted by culture. It had been possibly because of the trained sensibility, the way she had been worked into the feminine role model that she could never appreciate the agony of Ammu. Frustrated in love, she was possibly secretly jealous of Ammu's courage and happiness in love, her fulfilment, however brief. Helene Cixous has given some examples of binary oppositions corresponding to the underlying oppositions of man/woman such as:

Activity/ Passivity	Sun/ Moon
Culture/ Nature	Day/Night
Father/Mother	Head/Emotions
Intelligible/Sensitive	Logos/Pathos ¹⁶

These oppositions are thoroughly imbricate in the patriarchal value system, where the feminine side is always seen as negative and a source of darkness. Lynne Segal also says "men wield power over women through terror"¹⁷. Man evokes fear in the mind of woman by his superior muscular power and by extreme emotional indifference and callousness, which make woman so vulnerable. Man thinks that woman is everything negative that he is not, and behaves accordingly.

Velutha, son of Vellya Pappen-was a Paravan who returned to Ayemenem after his years away from the home. Ammu knew him since her childhood. At Ayemenem, Velutha secretly joined the communist party, which promised the salvation for the underdogs and one day, by chance, Ammu saw along with her brother and children "Velutha marching with a red flag. In a white shirt and mundu with angry veins in his neck" (71). The reaction of Ammu, as Rahel noticed, was profoundly significant.

Rahel saw that Ammu had a film of perspiration on her forehead and upper lip, and that her eyes had become hard, like marbles...

Like a rogue piece in a puzzle. Like a question mark that drifted through the pages of a book and never settled at the end of a sentence (71-72) .

Rahel wondered. "What had it all meant?" (72). It meant that Ammu loved Velutha- heart and soul- for his indomitable spirit of protest which she also nursed in her heart but could not voice. She hoped that under his careful cloak of cheerfulness, he housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against (176). This, coupled with the fact that Velutha was possibly the only man in Ayemenem who really loved her children and respect her, intensified her fascination for him. A free woman experiences not only an awful feeling of disgust, loneliness and futility but she longs for companionship and togetherness more desperately than before.

However, the attraction between them was vibrantly physical as well. Eric Berne also feels that "companionship is a twosome and may or may not involve in sex. Companions usually have a certain amount of respect and affection for each other"¹⁸. It is perhaps natural that Ammu with her trodden youth, oppressed existence and frustrated dreams should drift towards Velutha, a Paravan who dared to be so un-Paravan like and transgress the "Love Laws", a representative of the oppressed and marginalized and the two tried to seek solace in each other's warmth. Both had realized this in an epiphanic moment of self-recognition. "Centuries telescoped into one evanescent moment" (176) when they realized that both of them had gifts to offer each other.¹⁹

In that brief moment, Velutha looked up and saw things that he hadn't seen before. Things that had been out of bounds so far, obscured by history's blinkers...

For instance, he saw that Rahel's mother was a woman. That she had deep dimples when she smiled and that they stayed on long after her smile left her eyes. He saw that her brown arms were round and firm and perfect. That her shoulders shone, but her eyes were somewhere else... He saw too that he was not necessarily the only giver of gifts. That *she* had gifts to give him too.

This knowing slid into him cleanly, like the sharp edge of a knife. Cold and hot at once. It only took a moment.

Ammu saw that he saw. She looked away. He did too. History's fiends returned to claim them. To rewrap them in its old, scarred pelt and drag them back to where they really lived. Where the Love Laws lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much (176-177).

Ammu loves by night the man whom her children, deprived of fatherly affection, love by day. In fact, her children, “the twin midwives of Ammu’s dream,” (336) will this to happen. For thirteen nights they meet and share their fragile, transient happiness, knowing fully well that “for each tremor of pleasure they would pay with an equal measure of pain” (335). The “outmoded world-view” and “antiquated philosophy” (339) of an age-old tradition crumbles like a rejected garbage shell as she links her fate, her love, madness and infinite joy to his. They know that they have nowhere to go and no future in a society hostile to individuals who violate its “Love Laws” and enter into forbidden territory. So they stick to small things, small but unbearably precious pleasures. Each time they part, they extract only a small promise from each other: “Tomorrow?” In her essay on “Adultery in Life and Literature”, Nayantara Sahgal observes that if desire for love and truth leads people to extra-marital relations, there is nothing wrong or condemnable in it. She says:

What is right and what is wrong? What should we do or not do? Perhaps both in India and in the permissive West the deciding factors before we act, or judge the actions of others, should be the aesthetics of a particular situation. Is it guided by love and aspiration or greed and gluttony? Is there truth and beauty in it or only the desire for gain? ²⁰

History takes its toll for the violation of its sacrosanct and unchallengeable rules. All hell breaks loose as the nightly trysts of the lovers were disclosed by the loyal and superstitious Vellya Paapen, Velutha’s father in a drunken feat and profusely apologized to his masters. The touchable community including Ammu’s family saw it as the beginning of the end of the world since the lovers had made the “unthinkable thinkable” (256). The wayward daughter was “locked away like the family lunatic in a medieval household” (252) and Velutha was arrested and charged with the rape of Ammu. The image of Ammu locked up or “locked away” (239) represents the triumph of patriarchal power and becomes an agonizing motif of the pitiful weakness of feminine endeavour. The catastrophic consequences of Ammu’s sexual relationship with Velutha bear out the dictum that sanctions hypergamy within well-defined limits: “Superior seed can fall on an inferior field but an inferior seed cannot fall on a superior field”²¹. Mammachi’s condonement, rather complicity in facilitating

her son Chacko's sexual relationship with various "low caste" women, which she justifies as being "Men's Needs", contrasts sharply with her revulsion on learning about her daughter's affair with Velutha. Although, Ammu-Velutha relationship is the only perfect kind of man-woman relationship, which germinates from the innermost core of two human hearts, and the only one that is illustrated with scenes resonant with love, sex and feelings of mutual fulfilment:

Clouded eyes held clouded eyes in a steady gaze and a luminous woman opened herself to a luminous man...

She danced for him. On that boat-shaped piece of earth. She lived.

He held her against him, resting his back against the mangosteen tree, while she cried and laughed alone. Then, for what seemed like an eternity... she slept leaning against him, her back against his chest. Seven years of oblivion lifted off her and flew into the shadow on weighty, quaking wings...

And on Ammu's Road (to Age and Death) a small, sunny meadow appeared. (336-337)

However, it is not a normal alliance for two reasons. Firstly, it is an extra-marital bond and, therefore, against the social ethic. Secondly, it is against the laws of history. Arundhati Roy subtly suggests that even though Christianity survives in India on the strength of low caste converts; these converts can never be assimilated into the mainstream of Christianity. And hence, a relationship between a Christian and a "Paravan" (Untouchable) is bound to be doomed. It is for this particular reason that the Ayemenem House acts swiftly. The relationship lasts only for thirteen days. While Velutha succumbs to stage-managed police brutality "left no footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no image in mirror" (216), Ammu succumbs to the trauma she is subjected to. The novelist lashed out at the hypocritical moral code, which disapproves of such relationship on the basis of caste and class as she writes:

Biology designed the dance. Terror timed it. Dictated the rhythm with which their bodies answered each other. As though they knew already that for each tremor of pleasure they would pay with an equal measure of pain. (335)

When Ammu came to know about it, she rushed to the police station to meet Velutha and to provide evidence that the charge of rape was a concocted one but the treatment that she received at the hands of the Station House Officer shows pitiable condition of women in the society, particularly when a woman is a divorcee and has dared loving an untouchable. Arundhati Roy drops a large hint that the police officer knew that he could freely insult this woman without any fear or compunction as he had the sanction of the society.

He stared at Ammu's breasts as he spoke. He said...the Kottayam Police didn't take statements from *veshyas* or their illegitimate children...

Then he tapped her breasts with his baton. Gently. *Tap, tap*. As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket. Pointing out the ones that he wanted packed and delivered. (8)

The officer represented the society's attitude to a woman who had loved outside the rules of "Love Laws". Roy directs her anger against the police, who advertise themselves for politeness, obedience, loyalty, intelligence, courtesy and efficiency. And Ammu's brother, Chacko had already threatened her with all the authority of a patriarch in his own house:

Get out of my house before I break every bone in your body! (225)

So, having no "Locusts Stand I" anywhere, she had to leave and die helpless, sick, alone in a hotel "in the strange bed in the strange room in the strange town" (161) where she had gone for a job interview, her last frantic effort to make a living in her struggle for survival mainly for the sake of her children. She died at the age of thirty-one:

Not old, not young, but a viable, die-able age (161).

Ammu died all alone, surrounded only by her familiar fears. The church refused to bury Ammu on several counts. Chacko and Rahel took her to the electric crematorium where "the whole of her crammed into a little clay pot. Receipt No. Q498673"(163). This was the price to be paid by those who aspired to live for love. The tragedy of Velutha and Ammu, the price they paid for letting the God of small things enter their life was to serve as "a history lesson for future offenders" (336).

Ammu had been humiliated and cornered by her father, ill-treated and betrayed by her husband, insulted by the police and rendered destitute by her brother. Each of them voiced the patriarchal ideology, which commanded that she should have no right anywhere-as daughter, wife, sister and citizen. She was no individual to her society but just an object, a role necessarily submissive. However, it is not the male folk alone that help to perpetrate her tragedy. It is worth considering how women act as agents of this society to undo another woman. Even women, who have been deprived in their life, cannot disturb the society in the least, but rather choose to come down with all the unspent force of their frustration on another helpless woman.

Arundhati Roy here mirrors the social predicament of women in India. Life offers little choice for a woman who yearns for happiness. The novelist follows the protagonist from the childhood days to adolescence, to the experience of marriage, to a loving and caring mother to an estranged wife, to a rebel who challenges the hypocritical moral stand of the society. A marriage of convenience can be as an arranged marriage. If two individuals belonging to the same community, identical moral code, fail to sail together happily, the relationship forged between two different communities, runs the risk of being more fragile. The severest blow to such marriages comes from within the girl's own family as such marriages rarely get parental approval in a traditional Indian set-up like the Ayemenem family. Actually, *The God of Small Things* is a description of how the small things in life build up, translate into people's behaviour and affect their lives. Arundhati Roy herself quoted in Kingsnorth:

The God of Small Things is not just about small things; it's about how the smallest things connect to the biggest things-that's the important thing.

Notes and Works Cited

*Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. New York: Random House, 1997.

¹ The Booker Prize for fiction was set up in 1968 to reward merit and raise the stature of the author in the eyes of the public. It carries an award of 20,000-pound sterling.

² Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983, p. 16.

³ Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983, p. 445.

⁴ Lynne Segal. *Is The Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism*. London: Virago, 1987, p. 118.

⁵ Simone De Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983, p. 352.

⁶ John Stuart Mill. *The Subjection of Women: Women's Liberation and Literature*. Elaine Showalter (ed.). 1869, p. 40.

⁷ Marilyn French. *Beyond Power: On Women, Men and Morals*. London: Abacus, 1986, p. 504.

⁸ Nayantara Sahgal. "The Virtuous Women". *The Tribune (Saturday Plus)*, December 24, 1988, p. 01.

⁹ Kate Millett. *Sexual Politics*. London: Virago, 1977, p. 68.

¹⁰ John Stuart Mill. *The Subjection of Woman*. The Feminist Papers, Alice S. Ross (ed.). New York: Bantam, 1974, p. 207.

¹¹ Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983, p. 484.

¹² Germaine Greer. *The Female Eunuch*. St. Albana: Paladin, 1970, p. 321.

¹³ Simone De Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983, p. 309.

¹⁴ Wife-beating seems to be a norm in the patriarchal society as depicted by Arundhati Roy. Rahel's husband had beaten her. "The Kathakali Men took off their make-up and went home to beat their wives. Even, the soft one with breasts". (236)

¹⁵ The 'communication gap' is ruinous for the institution of marriage. 'Dialogue' or 'discussion' is essential for harmonious marital relationship as Rollo May, a psychotherapist observes.

¹⁶ .Helene Cixous and Catherine Clement. *The Newly Born Woman*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986, p. 63.

¹⁷ Lynne Segal. *Is The Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism*. London: Virago, 1987, p. 12.

¹⁸ Eric Borne. *Sex in Human Loving*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977, p. 123.

¹⁹ Sex is 'essentially emotional' for women as Ella puts it in *The Golden Notebook*. In women, 'sex hunger' arises out of 'emotional hunger'. She cannot enjoy sex unless she loves the man.

²⁰ Nayantara Sahgal. "Adultery in Life and Literature". *The Sunday Standard*, September 28, 1975, p. 06.

²¹. Leela Dube, "Caste and Women", In M. N. Srinivas, ed. *Caste: Its Twentieth Century Avatar*. New Delhi: Penguin India, 1996, p. 11.