



**PICTURIZATION OF CHILDREN IN OUR SOCIETY- A
HARSH REALITY REFLECTED IN 'THE GOD OF SMALL
THINGS BY ARUNDHATI ROY**

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ABSTRACT:

Arundhati Roy is one of the foremost novelists of the socially committed tradition. She shows exceptional awareness of the social crisis and sensitivity to the problems. She is one of the few Indian writers in English who is actively interested in contemporary socio-political issues. These activities are amply evidenced in a number of articles, interviews and books which she wrote on various topics in recent years. She is a dynamic political activist, vocal spokesperson of the anti-globalization movement. She is a vehement critic of neo-imperialism and of the global policies of the United States. She mixes her celebrity status with her political advocacy to speak out on social issues and achieve media impact.

The story of the novel *The God of Small Things* is set in Ayemenem, now part of Kottayam district in Kerala, India. The keywords setting shifts back and forth between 1969, when fraternal twins Rahel and Esthappen are seven years old, - and 1993, when the twins are reunited at the age of 31. Malayalam words are liberally used in conjunction with English. Facets of Kerala life captured by the novel are keywords, the caste system, and the Keralite Syrian Christian way of life. Roy ends her postcolonial novel by suggesting how much theoretical, social, cultural, political and historical knowledge is involved in her portrayal of the characters Ammu, Estha and Rahel and their learning to experience in Kerala. Their changing relationship with Velutha is based on an understanding of the brutality of caste, the love laws, and of the necessity and urgency to deinstitutionalize them

Keywords - Communism, Temporal, Neo-Imperialism, Foremost

INTRODUCTION:

The God of Small Things throws light upon hierarchical structures of power. It also throws light upon the oppression at various levels in patriarchal societies. Despite all rhetorical features, the children are fully neglected in our society. Hardly any care is taken to understand them and to provide them the attention and security they need. Even when laws are enacted to protect them, they are seldom enforced. It is because the guardians are insensitive and very hypocritical for many reasons. This hard reality is revealed in *The God of Small Things*. She projects this bitter reality. She wants to draw the attention of the sensitive readers to understand the tragic picture of our children's world.

In *The God of Small Things*, there are only three children in the novel namely- Sophie Mol, Estha and Rahel. The novel presents a contrast between the first one and the last two. All the three have certain similarities. Their parents are divorced. One of them is not Syrian Christian. That is what is common to them all. But they differ in several aspects too. Sophie Mol's mother is a white woman while the father of Estha and Rahel is a non-white man. Sophie Mol's father is willing to receive her and her mother gladly. His family is equally enthusiastic about it. Estha and Rahel are forsaken by their, father. Sophie Mol is elder than her cousins. A major difference lies in the fact that Sophie Mol dies soon after her arrival as she meets an accident. Estha and Rahel face several odds but survive. The novel can be viewed as a tale of 'terror' that destroyed the lives of Velutha and Ammu. It is also a tale of how Estha and Rahel survived.

Estha's parents were not poor. His father was an Assistant Manager in a teaestate in Assam. His mother's parental home had a pickle factory. So, Estha had a bourgeois background on both sides. Estha and his sister are subjected to adversity. Their parents get divorced. His mother comes to her parental home with two children when they are quite unwanted and neglected. Estha had an unhappy childhood. It is because his father's drunken violence followed by post-drunken badgering. It began when he was barely two. When his bouts of violence began to include the children and when the war with Pakistan began, Ammu left her husband. She returned unwelcomed to her parents in Ayemenem. Here the

children, along with their mother, were unwanted a fact, that, the children in their innocence could not realize instantly.

The story of Estha's life raises naturally the question. "Why is it that he lost his speech?" The answer lies in the fact that the boy was brutalized by numerous persons like Baby Kochamma, Kochu Maria, Inspector Mathews and the Soft drink man. He had no option but to suffer passively. The voice he couldn't raise against the injustice done to himself. His dear ones seemed to have lost its utility. That is the main reason of his numbness.

Lacking sufficient dowry to marry, Ammu is desperate to escape her illtempered father, known as Pappachi, and her bitter, long-suffering mother, known as Mammachi. The present is dotted with past occurrences. The funeral, how children think, the futility of death, a child's understanding and naivety, a mother's tears, unrequited love, Baby Kochamma's childhood and her unsuccessful love story, her gardening skills – are eventually jettisoned because of her fascination for foreign television soaps. The reader is presented a window into the life of the twins - Estha and Rahel. Estha was once returned to his father.

Rahel belongs to the third generation. She is less marginal character in comparison to Ammu and Mammachi. Unlike them, she never faces domestic violence. Still she remains at the periphery because of being a daughter of neglected Ammu. She too experienced insult and humiliation in the childhood as her mother witnessed. Her life is totally disturbed. Her life is totally deserted because of tormenting memories of past. Every time, Rahel protests against the adults. They "threaten to send her away". They tell her that it makes "people love her a little less". This scolding contributes to Rahel's self-image as someone who may not be loveable.

Rahel is a special case of a woman that breaks the laws. She does so almost unintentionally. In the same way, she accepts the consequences. Her character is the only female character in the novel that is presented all the way from her early childhood to her womanhood. This depiction helps to conceive her way of thinking and the reasons for her later behaviour. As a small girl, she had to bear the consequences of her mother's intercommunity marriage and

subsequent divorce. She was just like her mother. She was only tolerated in her grandmother's household. Yet, she was clinging to every possible inkling being perceived as a normal child. She was constantly reminded that both she and Estha "were Half-Hindu Hybrids whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry". This was reminded to her not by strangers, but by her own family.

The first childhood rebellion of Rahel and Estha was supposed to make everybody, and especially their mother, to appreciate them. The accidental death of a Sophie Mol ended their careless childhood. Their rebellion resulted in a tragedy. Any punishment for any violation of any rules seemed insignificant in comparison. Her childhood and adolescence became a series of a law and rules violations. The punishments that were given to discipline her failed completely. She did not complete university education. Then she "drifted into marriage like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge. With a Sitting Down sense".

Such an air of drifting shades her every action. The offences she commits during the years of her schooling, her studies, her marriage, even her return to Ayemenem - are described in the novel with a glimmer of indifference and absentmindedness. Any violation of the social codes on her part was a search for relief. The final violation of the codes is a climax that needs to be done, in order to find a way out of the vicious circle: "Once again they broke the Love Laws. That lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much, sharing together not happiness, but a hideous grief."

Usually, marriage is seen as the ultimate goal in a young woman's life. The only reason for not getting married is that she does not meet the expectations of a prospective husband. Baby Kochamma had "developed a 'reputation' and was unlikely to find a husband. This made her father to decide that "since she couldn't have a husband, there was no harm in her having an education". (26) When introducing Rahel, the narrator describes what detached her from a desirable future:

Rahel grew up without a brief. Without anybody to arrange a marriage for her. Without anybody who would pay her a dowry and therefore without an obligatory husband looming on her horizon.

CLOSURE:

The most unnatural act of social transgression committed by Rahel is her incestuous love for her twin brother Estha. This is perhaps her implicit resistance toward the social order: "Rahel watched Estha with the curiosity of a mother watching her wet child. A sister a brother. A woman a man. A twin a twin". The only person with whom Rahel has harmony, an empathetic link, is her own twin brother Estha, 18 minutes senior to her. Their personalities balance each other like the two halves of a circle, complementing each other.

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