Emotional Alienation In Arundhati Roy’s God Of Small Things

This paper deals with the emotional alienation in Arundhati Roy’s The god of Small Things. Our society has created an identity for women since ancient days. Women are considered as a weaker sex and inferior to men. Though she plays an important role in her life, she is not found as an individual human being with all emotions and sufferings. She is supposed to live a life of dedication, surrendering and devotion. In Indian fiction, the women are modeled with the above qualities. Those qualities of women created a large impact on the Indian psyche and the expectation of society, and consciously or unconsciously they have molded themselves to conform to this image. The expectations were raised regarding the behaviour of women, women were been criticized a lot. Women were not given equal freedom. Regarding history, the Vedic period was called the 'golden era' for women. Whereas in medieval period, women started experiencing strict rules and regulations that suppressed her.

In period, schools and colleges were opened by the missionaries for women education. In the post-independence period and also in the 21st century, there is an impact of the medieval period this condition of women is reflected in Indian fiction

Arundhati Roy is the first Indian to win the prestigious Booker Prize. She is perhaps the first Indian Women novelist who gained such a big global market for Indian Writing in English. The novel The God of Small Things became so immensely popular among lovers of fiction. Arundhati Roy was not only a leisure girl with all the time to try out an ambitious opus but a brave and promising writer in English.

Some literary critics have contradictory views on Arundhati Roy’s creative genius. Such critics have perceived a rather new, arrogant girl showing up, one who even finds it gallant to be compared to Rushdie and has developed a sense of inverted show for all that. Yet, she remains a Kottayam girl. The sense of moral uprightness of a Christian community seeps through in her book.

The God of Small Things is an autobiographical type of novel. The character of Ammu in the novel represents Mrs. Mary Roy, Arundhati Roy’s mother Ammu is a South Indian lady. She has married a Bengali man with Roy surname. Since Ammu and her husband belong to two different states, there is very much cultural difference between husband and wife. It results into several problems. Their marriage life is full of conflicts. “Ammu is not happy at all. Her husband gives her a divorce. Then she is over burdened with the responsibility of bringing up two children. Ammu’s struggle for her dear children’s education and livelihood touches our hearts”. (Chakravaty,3)

The Story of The God of Small Things resembles Arundhati Roy’s personal life in many ways. Her mother was very poor. But she studied in Delhi. She got scholarship and went to Italy. She got education after facing so many hardships. “Actually speaking The God of Small Things was vividly etched on the vast canvas of memory, most of which cantered around Arundhati Roy’s childhood in a Kerala village.” (Chakravathy 3)

Ammu the female protagonist of the novel is well known as the mother of the twin children Estha and Rahel but it is important to look at her early life when we examine her character, the flashbacks in the novel gives a good sense of how she was shaped by her past being as adult. Ammu does not get the same kind of treatment as her brother Chacko got. She doesn't have any options. Life at her parents' house was tough. It made her to feel that there was nothing left for her in Ayemenem but she waited for marriage proposals.

She somehow gets permissions from her strict father to go to Calcutta for summer. There she meets and marries Baba which turns to be a bad choice. He was a fit man. After their marriage he turned out to be an alcoholic and outrageous liar. Mr. Hollick, Baba's higher official summoned him to send Ammu to his bungalow to look after him or otherwise baba would be sent out of his job. Ammu refused to her husband's plan.

Soon she leaves her husband and returns unwelcomed to her parents with her two children and no dreams. Ammu emerges as a rebel in the novel who challenges the andocentric notions of her society and becomes a symbol of all that the men folk do not want her to be. "She avoids a surname and considers even reverting to her maiden name. Choosing between her husband's name and her father's name doesn't give women much of a choice" (36).

Ammu does not want to comply with the role assigned to her by the patriarchal society. She is not ready to accept her state of motherhood or divorced.

Ammu's attempt to reclaim her body to assert autonomy over her own body vividly projects the female agenda of the novelist. Ammu quarreled with her ill fate which Baby kochamma graciously accepted. She had strong resistance to social norms. "She wanted her body back. It was hers. She even shrugged her children off the way a bitch shrugs off her pups when she's had enough of them" (222).

Since Ammu's married life was a rotten fruit, she disposed it and progressed in search of a new life which acquainted her to Velutha a man who worked as a carpenter in her mother's pickle factory. Velutha the man from the low social class created ripples in her. She lost herself in the warmth which she longed for. She felt that he was not only the giver of gifts but she had gifts to give him too. The gift was her own body. She knows that their love can never be public. Velutha epitomizes the negation of all that she detests in Chacko and perhaps Pappachi. The family somehow came to know their love affair and soon she was house arrested. And this love story ends up in Velutha's death, which was killed by social tyranny.

Ammu's life after the death of her beloved is unimaginably bad. She has lost the only man she ever loved and she is separated from that kind. Meanwhile as a coincidence Sophie Mol got drowned. Ammu was sent out of the house. Soon she is found dead in a grimy room in Bharat Lodge in Alleppey, where she had gone for a job interview as someone's secretary. She died alone.

The church refused to bury Ammu. So she was taken to electric crematorium by Chacko and Rahel. Ammu's death is a lonely and scary experience. It is especially sad the way the narrator points out Estha's absence. Love and warmth are noticeably missing from the scene.

In country like India where patriarchal system is very strong women suffer mentally, physically and sexually. The protagonist Ammu is the worst sufferer in the novel. She becomes a victim of

male dominated society. Ammu challenges the defiled social order and what it represents first by marrying a man of her choice and then breaking that marriage and getting entangled in a forbidden love. Roy’s protest against male chauvinism is carried on symbolically by Ammu. Ammu has been tortured by her alcoholic husband. Ammu’s conflict with patriarchy often assumes anti-imperialist dimensions. Ammu is considered to be a failure both as a mother and as a wife. Though she was earnest in her duty the male dominated society accused her of failure and called her as a ‘veshya’.

Ammu wanted to live a dignified life. But the society exposed her to her ill-fate. She was sexually harassed by the police men. Inspite of belonging to a high class Syrian Christian family, she was not given the rights to hold the hands of her lover Velutha who belonged to a low class society. Ammu the tragic heroine of the novel was finally called by the receipt number in the electric crematorium. At last the tyrannized society grabbed her identity and pushed her to death.

Roy reveals a child's vision of the adult world in this novel. She deftly weaves the saga of sufferings of women in a male dominated society. Roy has portrayed the sufferings of women from the ancient period till today. She fights for alienation of women, patriarchal domination over women, and hunger for love, humiliation and exploitation. Roy opens her novel God of Small Things with the death of Sophie Mol, tied up with tragic flaws and ends in the feeling of alienation

Ahamad also points out that, “The intermeshing of caste and sexuality is indeed the ideological centre of the book”. (Ahamad 103) .

Thus this paper deals with the emotional alienation in Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things.

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