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Arundhati Roy's Fiction: Feminism and Postcolonial Identity

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Abstract

Roy reflects society's struggle with its colonial past via the microcosm of individuals' lives. In addition to evoking the spirit of postcolonial India, the book adds to the larger conversation on postcolonialism's continued significance. Uncertainty over one's identity and relationships, as well as an unknown self-directed suspicion, are challenges that postcolonial personalities must overcome. Arundhati Roy portrays a matrilineal community in her book *The God of Small Things*. She centers her story around a Syrian Christian family. Roy, Arundhati Items chosen for examination in "The God of Small Things" have been examined through the lens of postcolonial theory.

Keywords: Arundhati Roy's, Fiction, Feminism, Postcolonial, and literary

Introduction

A person's struggle with and subsequent search for their own identity is central to the phenomenon of alienation. As is common in postcolonial, Indian authors engage in subversion. Both imperialism's dominance and Eurocentric ideology are called into question by these writers. Subversion is not only a powerful literary device in the postcolonial age, but it also serves as a kind of self-proclamation.

At the very end of the book, in a scene that breaks all the other rules, Velutha jumps from the History House a masterful postmodern and postcolonial trope to the riverbank, breaking the mould of ideal love for the first time in the book, and the lovers can only look forward to "Naaleey"-tomorrow. Despite the fact that Chappu Thamburan, the Lord of Rubbish and a secretive spider, outlives Velutha, the lovers' estranged language evokes a profound, heartbreaking melancholy through its verbal and physical dance, which implies the tragedy's connection to its time while also leaving an impression of its trade with the future.

The works of "Frantz Fanon" in the 20th century are considered to be the foundation of the postcolonial literary

movement. It rises to prominence and becomes an "Institutional Enterprise" according to Albert Memmi and, more specifically, Edward Said's Orientalism. Reflections on postcolonial theory by Bill Ashcroft - Many forms of migration, resistance to slavery, representation, difference, race, gender, location, and reactions to the powerful imperial European master discourse's philosophy, history, linguistics, etc. that give rise to these topics are all part of postcolonial theory. The intricate tapestry of the field is formed by all of them, none of which is fundamentally post-colonial.

Consequently, the phrase "post-colonial literature" may mean both a specific historical period in which a country participated and a corpus of writing that emerged from a number of decolonized nations yet had commonalities in key respects. Works by Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie, Michael Ondaatje, Frantz Fanon, Isabella Allende, and others have made significant contributions to postcolonial literature. "Waiting for the Barbarians" and "Disgrace" by J.M. Coetzee, "Omeros" by Derek Walcott Thus, in order to go forward with the reality of cultural integration occurring throughout the post-colonial age, postcolonial literature restores the nation's dignity. The postcolonial writers Bill

Ashcroft *et al.* describe share the following trait: The imperial center's postcolonial voice is marginalized and silenced; the text itself abrogates the imperial center; and the center's language and culture are actively appropriated. He demonstrated how in order to deny the worth of the un-canonized and "Peripheral the Marginal" in relation to the dominance of English literature, "A privilege norm" was placed at the very bottom of the literary canon. Uncertainty over one's identity and relationships, as well as an unknown self-directed suspicion, are challenges that postcolonial personalities must overcome.

Literature Review

Bibi, A., *et al* (2019) ^[1]. Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" is deeply divided along class lines, and the sad results of inflexible social structures are shown via the story's recurring and important topic of class warfare. In the book, we see how the interplay of class, gender, and religion, among other social categories, shapes the tragic fates of the protagonists and antagonists. This conflict is shown by the bond between Velutha and Ammu. As a member of the untouchable Dalit caste, Velutha is shown as an exceptionally bright and talented laborers whose social standing is limited and predetermined by his low caste. Despite his ability, he faces immense societal prejudice and is limited to low-paying occupations.

Elsa Jose Sheba (2021) ^[2] Every single day, women are victims of violence in some part of the globe. Every day, women face a myriad of forms of tyranny and degrading treatment in India as well. In India, patriarchy is deeply ingrained in society, which leads to the oppression of women. In patriarchal societies, men have all the power and decision-making positions inside the family. They are the ones who possess property, have moral authority, and lead the political party. An essential patriarchal value is the concept that a woman's place is solely in the home, serving her husband, father, and brothers. The patriarchal culture is the backdrop of Arundhati Roy's book, *The God of Small Things*.

Ayesha Farooq, Dr. Sahibzada Aurangzeb, Javid Khan (2018) ^[3] This article delves into the feminist ideas of subversion and resistance as they pertain to Roy's work and how it questions conventional gender norms. Examining the work through the lens of feminist and postcolonial scholars like Judith Butler and bell hooks, as well as historical characters like Begum Rokeya and Amrita Sher-Gil, we look at how the book contributes to broader philosophical discussions. We use a qualitative research approach to analyze the novel's use of literary techniques, symbolism, narrative structure, and intertextuality to communicate its themes. In this examination, we will look at how patriarchy and colonialism work together to perpetuate power inequalities, and how literature may be used to challenge and change social standards.

Brajesh Kumar (2024) ^[4] The representation of women in "The God of Small Things" and "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" by Arundhati Roy are examined in this research, which focusses on themes of empowerment and resistance. Roy's stories include strong female characters that fight against injustice in complex ways and defy conventional expectations. Ammu and Rahel are only two of the many characters in "The God of Small Things" that defy

traditional gender norms and patriarchal Keralan culture. Roy shows how difficult it is for women to be independent in a traditional society by their own mistakes and hardships. Through the experiences of characters like transgender woman Anjum and Tilottama—who struggle to find their place in India's turbulent political climate—"The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" broadens this investigation into a more comprehensive sociopolitical framework.

Gnanamony, S., Hariharasudan, A. (2017) ^[5]. The aim of the research is to identify the feminist strains in the postmodern Indian Fiction *The God of Small Things* (TGST). The researcher intends to methodically examine the text in order to discover feministic principles. Prior research is surveyed in the study. Some of the important topics that postmodernists have investigated include sexism and feminism. Through her female characters spanning three generations, Arundhati Roy depicts the plight of women in this book. The book depicts a generational divide among the female characters, which is fueled by animosity and resentment. It also draws a divide between generations that are at odds with one another. One major factor that works against women is the influence of political and family norms.

Themes of feminism in Arundhati Roy's fiction

Arundhati Roy portrays a matrilineal community in her book *The God of Small Things*. She centers her story around a Syrian Christian family. Her portrayal of people's subordination at various social levels is really skilled. She reveals the social hierarchy and how the mighty take advantage of the weak. Gender roles are clearly indicated in the book, with males ruling over women, the touchable ruling over the untouchable, the overthrown ruling over the overthrown, and the educated leading the proletariat. Roy investigates the victimization and persecution of Mammachi, Ammu, Estha, Rahel, and Velutha, who are at the core of this intricate power system.

The work of Arundhati Roy is replete with the stereotypical features of a patriarchal society that values males over women. As she explains, patriarchal culture views women and the untouchables as faceless, enslaved objects. In her review of "The God of Small Things," Rashmi Rajpal states: This is the tale of the hardships endured by Kochamma, Mammachi, Ammu, and Rahel, the infant. Different approaches affect each of them. Women experience psychological, physiological, and sexual oppression in nations like India, where the patriarchal system is well entrenched.

In patriarchal civilizations, women are always considered second-class citizens. Estha and Rahel's great-grandfather are Reverend E. John Ipe in *The God of Small Things*. It is clear that Reverend Ipe is a chauvinist based on his treatment of his wife, Aley Ooty Ammachi. Their pictures stood on the wall of the Ayemenem residence, and the description gives the impression that there was some strife between them. Focusing on the road, Reverend Ipe looks about.

It comes out that Pappachi is a horrible, manipulative, and aggressive bully. To appease his masculine ego, he acts respectably and sophisticatedly, yet his traditional mindset is on display when he abuses his wife and kids. After supper, he uses a metal flower vase to strike her every night.

The slaps were old news. The only novel aspect was the regularity with which they occurred.

His prestigious job and extensive education do not absolve him of the responsibility of physically abusing his wife and kids. The wounds and lumps on Mammachi's head are visible signs of the abuse she endured. Even Ammu's new sneakers are torn to shreds by Pappachi. His view of marriage is that it establishes male dominance over female. In his view, the wife is nothing more than a domestic servant; he has the right to forcibly remove her from the home and destroy any of her valuable items, including the piano, just as he would his nine-year-old daughter's prized gumboots. He has autocratic control over his family.

Pappachi's envy and need for revenge are stoked by Mammachi's booming company and increasing fame. He is so envious of his wife's abilities that he immediately stops her violin lesson the moment her teacher informs him she has potential. The only thing that stopped the violence was when Chacko wrapped Pappachi's vase hand over his back. Pappachi never again had any contact with Mammachi after that.

Painstakingly, he portrays himself as the unloved spouse. He treats Mammachi with the worst contempt and rejects her entirely. To make it seem like his wife is ignoring him, he would sit on the veranda and mend buttons that weren't really missing. Because she is unable to verbalize her anger, Mammachi is unable to affect change.

"Mammachi was crying more because she was used to him than because she loved him," the ironically-voiced author says of the wife's efforts to keep her composure in the wake of dad's death.

Even after years of submission to her husband, she would continue to submit to her son. According to the strong patriarchal system, Chacko would now be the patriarch of the family.

Complicity and resistance: women in Roy's novel

The Deity of Mundane Matters launched the work of Arundhati Roy, an Indian writer who won the Booker Prize, who has spent her life fighting injustices both at home and abroad. This book takes a close look at the oppression of Indian women as well as other marginalized groups in relation to global capitalism, neo-imperialism, and globalization. Roy, echoing the views of Ranajit Guha of the renowned Subaltern Studies group, believes that the fight against gender oppression is paving the way for, or perhaps igniting, a similar movement against caste and class oppression, as well as anti-colonial ideology and practice.

Among the female characters in *The God of Small Things*, Ammu is the most significant. She is a bourgeois middle-class lady who has two children, Rahel and Eshta, and is a divorcee. Returning to her father's home does not make Ammu feel welcome, despite her education and clear speech. She is marginalized by her brother Chacko, who is a kind of elitist leftist. Additionally, she finds herself ensnared by the traditional inheritance rules and family structures observed by the Syrian Christian minority in Kerala. The "Love Laws" that Ammu's society has acquired from their Hindu heritage are broken when she falls for the untouchable worker Velutha.

Her defiance of religious, social, and caste norms is an act of defiance against the oppression she has experienced as a

woman. According to Aijaz Ahmad, she is described as "a woman of great grit" and Murari Prasad makes a comment about Ammu's struggle for self-actualization, which is linked to the experiences of other marginalized people:

"Ammu's rebellion against maternal and marital conventionality, and finally, her liaison with dark-skinned and untouchable Velutha (ironically meaning white) constitutes a violation against a determinate social order, sponsoring the immutable 'love laws.'"

According to Tirthankar Chanda, her rebellion or "quest for self-identity" is "an attempt at repossessing, renaming, reknowing the world." However, it seems destined to fail due to the society in which she has sought refuge with her twins following her divorce and the inability of her family members, such as her mother and great-aunt Kochamma, to offer a suitable example of how to redefine oneself.

Women as the oppressed

Arundhati Roy is a celebrated postcolonial Indian writer. Her 1997 masterpiece, *"The God of Small Things,"* won the Booker award. With the backdrop of Ayemenem, a southern Indian state of Kerala, she deftly examines the plight of Indian women in this book. The female characters are entangled in a complicated web of connections, which repeatedly suppresses and limits their individual independence. As one of the most important Indian women authors working today, Roy immerses readers in the minds of her educated middle-class female characters, revealing their struggles, anxieties, paradoxes, aspirations, and more.

By analyzing Ammu, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, and Rahel's marital and inter-gender connections, the author examines gender oppression. Despite being members of the well-off class, all of these strong female characters are unable to reach their full potential because of their lack of opportunities. Both old values and contemporary views weigh heavily on their minds, and many lack the courage to publicly challenge the status quo. Their moral violations, committed in an effort to question the norms, regulations, and principles of social and cultural limits, bring about their downfall and annihilation.

Ammu was absolutely correct when he said, "Thanks to our wonderful male chauvinistic society". By following their own paths through many challenges, they subtly but surely challenge gender, caste, and clan hierarchies. The heroine of the story is a middle-class bourgeois lady named Ammu. She is a divorcee and a mother of two.

She is the product of a failed marriage, despite her intelligence and eloquence. Her spouse was shown to be an alcoholic with all the cunning and sad charisma one would expect from someone with a serious drinking problem. Ammu could never grasp certain aspects of him. Even when she broke up with him, she couldn't help but wonder why he lied so much-especially when it was unnecessary for the sake of his boss's sexual desires and the stability of his own employment, her drunken spouse would subject her to brutal abuse. "Drunken violence followed by post-drunken badgering" and "Ammu left her husband and returned, unwelcome to her parents in Ayemenem" describe the escalating misery that finally leads Ammu to leave her husband.

Ammu takes solace at her father's house, but it becomes a hideous place for her and her dizygotic twins, Rahel and

Estha. There, she endures emotional abuse, insults, and humiliation at the hands of her own family. Despite not having had the same opportunities for education and experience as her brother Chacko, Ammu has a remarkable amount of self-confidence and often outwits him. "Ammu learnt to live with this cold, calculating cruelty she did exactly nothing to avoid quarrels and confrontations," says Chacko, who is always trying to put his sister in her place. He also claims that "Ammu had no Locusts stand I" and that "Ammu, Estha, and Rahel were millstones around his neck" Actually, one might say that she actively sought them out and maybe even liked them Velultha, a carpenter from a low caste or "untouchable" community, becomes Ammu's emotional safe haven when her own family rejects her time and time again. As their secret romance grows, they engage in sexual relations that go against the grain of Syrian Christian society's long-established conventions. The church also declined to bury Ammu due to her moral infraction. Rahel imagined a Roman senator in her. Et tu, Madame! As she recalled Estha!! a grin spread over her face.

A postcolonial reading of "The god of small things"

The story unfolds as a chronicle of the twins' formative years spent in the care of their maternal grandmother Mammachi, paternal grandpa Pappachi, uncle Chacko, and aunt Baby Kochamma. In the patriarchal Ipe family, the males have all the power and the women are subservient. Arundhati Roy speaks out against the conventional society's harsh treatment of women and individuals from lower castes. She tries to make her defiant protest heard in an effort to stop the unfair and brutal treatment of women and the oppressed. Because it had persisted for so long, the social reformers saw it as the worst thing that had ever happened to Indian civilization.

On top of that, the patriarchal society depicted in *The God of Small Things* is one in which men hold all the reins of power—economic, social, religious, and political. In societies where men predominate, women are relegated to a secondary role. Fortressed by cultural norms, religious dogma, and historical precedent, patriarchy is an oppressive social order. When a guy wants to establish dominion over a woman, he often does terrible things to her character. A woman who is enslaved does not know who she is or what she stands for. Only in connection to men is her existence recognized. Spivak simplifies

The point is that the male remains dominant due to the ideological construction of gender, which is both the object of imperialist history and the topic of insurgency. When it comes to colonial production, the subaltern, as a woman, is even more marginalized since she lacks a history and the ability to speak out.

The subaltern status and marginalization of Indian women are examined via the experiences of three generations of women in *God of Little Things*, spanning the colonial and postcolonial periods. In the first generation, we have Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, who subtly accept the dominance of men. They accept the conventional patriarchal rules because they are self-aware and know they are subservient.

Soshamma, also known as Mammachi, is Rahel's grandma, the mother of Ammu and Chacko, and the traditional house mistress. She is introduced as a submissive wife right from

the start of the book. She follows all the rules set by the patriarchal culture. She wishes she could join the faceless mass. She disregards her own unique identity in favor of fitting in with the gender norms. She never challenges patriarchal subjugation, but she believes she and her daughter should conform to it to show that they can meet societal standards. Similar to what Simone de Beauvoir thinks on the effects of social conditioning, Being feminine implies displaying these traits: weakness, futility, passivity, and docility. The girl is expected to do more than just get dressed and primp; she is also expected to rein in her natural inclination towards spontaneity and instead display the poise and charisma that her older sisters have taught her. She will lose her allure and elegance if she asserts herself.

As a simple guardian of her husband's and son's property, Mammachi is forced to handle the pickle plant despite her outstanding entrepreneurial talents. Although she is doing a great job at operating the pickle plant, she is still not financially independent. She can't do without her husband's support financially.

Defiantly, she takes her husband's beatings in stride. Even when her spouse abuses their daughter Ammu, she remains silent. So, she may avoid fighting with her husband, she tells her daughter to hide outside the house. Not only is she helpless in the face of her husband's bigotry and jealousy, but she is also his object of irritation. Her husband is envious of Mammachi's extraordinary musical aptitude, particularly her playing the violin. Mammachi showed great potential as a violinist when they were younger.

"When Mammachi's teacher, Launsy-Tieffenthal, made the mistake of telling Pappachi that his wife was exceptionally talented and, in his opinion, potentially concert class," she writes, "the lessons were abruptly discontinued".

He eventually smashes the violin's bow and tosses it into the river on a dark night. When she begins a company manufacturing pickles, the same envy is voiced again. As the author explains.

Narrative techniques in the novels of Arundhati Roy

Arundhati Roy's fixation on style has undoubtedly its advocates and detractors. Although she has been praised by western critics and reviewers for her exceptional command of the English language, her detractors have pointed out that the Indian mind finds excess repulsive and that no one ever touches the book. Louella Lobo Prabhu has made the following remarks.

I was captivated by the language which called to mind another literary comparison: Thomas Hardy's visual activation of space in *Egdon Heath*. I read the whole book slowly and painfully, but with a dogged resolve to complete. Unfortunately, I found the excessive use of metaphors and similes to be an awkward and boring task after reading only a few pages. Using not one, but many metaphors to describe a single piece of landscape makes one feel that the author is living by the saying, "Nothing succeeds like Excess."

In addition, the following literary techniques are consistently used by Arundhati Roy, which may be used to deduce her style and method in this novel: Framework, Criticism, Sarcasm, and Comedy.

Structure is the most noticeable feature of *God of Small Things*. The author juxtaposes or merges cut pieces and

incidents into unique situations. The narrative is told from several perspectives, but the most prominent one is that of Rahel and Estha, two youngsters whose internal and external views of the world lead us to unimaginable depths—the center of our emotions.

Through the use of many temporal frames, the narrative travels over various sensory levels. A masterful use of the time-honored flashback technique creates a "Super-realistic" illusion by skillfully transporting the audience across several eras. This so-called "shuttling technique" is used often throughout the book. The first scene takes place in the Kottayam police station, when Ammu meets inspector Thomas Mathew; the second scene takes place at Sophie's burial. The story opens with a sequence that mimics the way a movie camera sets up an image.

The fact that the story progresses through several stages of experience and self-reflection is another striking aspect, "Big Man the Lantain, Small Man the Mombatti," begins with this multi-layered structure. you'll find fragments, stories of individuals whose lives have taken unexpected turns, that weave in and out of one another like a surrealist dream. At times, the language used in these sequences is adapted to the children's degree of fear. This is a short series:

Had he observed her? Had he lost it?

Did he realize she was present? (A Deity Concerned with Maturity) 95) They had always been comfortable touching one other's bodies, but they were too young to understand the concept of shyness.

At that moment, they were. Excessively old

A potentially fatal age

When Rahel thought about the term "old" by itself, she couldn't help but chuckle.

Quite elderly.

Similarly, the backward narrative technique is brilliantly used intitled *The Pessimist and the Optimist*. On a little camp cot that had been prepared for her, next the large bed, Sophie Mol "lay asleep." She stays mentally alert by reflecting on her life's events and reliving moments from the past. Margaret Kochamma, her mother, reclined on the bed next to her; the details of her looks dating back to when she was engaged and met Chacko are detailed in the account.

Conclusion

Roy, Arundhati Items chosen for examination in "The God of Small Things" have been examined through the lens of postcolonial theory. Postcolonial issues are addressed in this book. To establish one's own existence, it is necessary to know one's identity. Postcolonial authors were deeply involved in paving the path for a new language and a different perspective on the cosmos. Roy has made an effort to bring attention to the brutality of some practices within this postcolonial culture. The subaltern status and marginalization of Indian women are examined via the experiences of three generations of women in *God of Little Things*, spanning the colonial and postcolonial periods. As is common in postcolonial, Indian authors engage in subversion. Both imperialism's dominance and Eurocentric ideology are called into question by these writers.

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