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Reflections of feminine sensitivity in “The God of Small Things”-A brief Study

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“Feminism” has erupted as a revolt against “conservative perception of women’s issues”. Because this conservative perception gave rise to feminist movement. In the context of historical sociology, gender, social policy, family and class are taken into consideration. Whether it is east or west, the fate of women is the same. The liberation or solidarity must start at the grassroot level. We all have multiple identities based on gender, class, sex, race, nationality etc. These overlapping identities are the major problem. What do really women want? Equity, Social and Legal justice. Most important support with childcare and other care giving functions invariably fall upon women. In the beginning women imitated the dominant male models. Later women started protesting (The feminist phase) and started looking at life from the women’s point of view. In “**The God of small things**”, there is a great deal of revelation of female experience.

The setting is a well established patriarchal society, where women are naturally oppressed and exploited. There are unfulfilled desires, broken marriages, shattered faiths and prejudices, planned revenge in the novel. These complex problems bring nothing but frustration to the female characters of the Novel.

Pappachi’s treatment of his daughter high lights how his bestial violence affected “**Ammu’s**” psyche. Pappachi is an orthodox, jealous husband. There are many references in the novel enumerating his maniac capabilities and his method of terrorizing his own family. He is a compulsive wife beater, thrashes his wife mercilessly either with a brass vase (P50) or his “Ivory handled iding cop (P181). Even though Mammachi (First generation woman) suffers a lot of her husband’s cruelty, she does not look repulsive against her husband and adapts herself “properly into the conventional scheme of things” (P122). However Roy says Mammachi cries at her husband’s funeral because “She was used to him, (not because) she loved him” (P50) “With her eyes she looked in the direction that her husband looked. With her heart she looked away (P30).

"**Ammu**", the female protagonist recognized herself and walked out of unbearable circumstances that threaten to fossilize her very existence. Here we see women's consciousness. She moved from the feminist phase to the phase of displacement and self-discovery. Self assertion seems to have become the keynote of the expressions of the evolving women. To escape the dictates of the patriarchal form of society, the new woman comes out in more prominent contours. The new woman of India has recourse to divorce as the only means of salvaging her lost life. That is what "**Ammu**" did in "**The God of Small Things**".

At Ayemenem, Ammu felt like a captive lady, but to assist her mother in relation to household chores. She gradually begins to grow desperate. Roy says --

"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. Eventually, one worked. Pappachi agreed to let her spend the summer with a distant aunt who lived in Calcutta (P38-39).

Ammu is forced to stop her education, because Pappachi felt that college education for a girl is an unnecessary expenditure.

Ammu's mother "**Mammachi's**" life seems to be sandwiched between inhuman cruelties of her husband "**Pappachi**" and her responsibilities. Probably that is the reason why she started a business of pickles on a smaller scale. It is a great story of frustration and suffering which doesn't have an end and continues to the next generation of **Rachel, Estha and Sophie Mol**.

"**Ammu**" is not a fallen woman. She feels sorry for the inability of her husband for protecting her self-respect and decides to leave him. She returns to the same dark cellar from which she wanted to run away. Destiny brings her to the place of perpetual suffering. She returns to "**Ayemenem**" with twins with her. Here we see the sensitivity of woman. She tolerated everything for the sake of her children.

"**Ammu**" Swallowed all the humiliation for the sake of her children while children kept themselves together, Ammu found herself engulfed by the bitterness of her marriage and divorce. Ammu has a problem, the problem of choosing the surname of her husband or surname of her father. Gender-domination is evidenced between Ammu's parents. Mammachi secretly pawns her jewellery to send money to Chacko whee as Ammu is denied of education. Pappachi is jealous of his wife's pickle factory and its profits. He does not like her playing violin with much expertise. Gender priority is also seen the matter of property. Ammu being a woman has no claims on the pickle factory. Chacko believes that women are not fit to own property though the factory earns more profits under the guidance of Mammachi. Chacko says "What's yours is mine and what is mine is also mine"(P57).

Margaret fell for **Chacko's** irresponsible, optimistic ways but soon is tired of the same. She rushed into marriage with him without proper thinking. Very soon she divorces and

marries Joe. She loves her daughter Sophie Mol very much. After the accidental death of Sophie, she becomes a hysteric patient. Thus we notice women characters having many pressures, obligations etc.

Velutha the son of **Vellyapappen**, returned to **Ayemenem**. He is a talented young man, who has a spirit of protest. **Ammu** sees a great personality in him, because he articulates, everything which she could not herself say out. She feels he is the God of small things. On the basis of this realization, being the representatives of the oppressed and marginalized both **Velutha** and **Ammu** tried to seek solace in each other. For this **Velutha** was put to death in **Kottayam** police station and **Ammu** was separated from her children. At the age of 31, she breathed her last all alone in a dark room in the **Bharat lodge** in **Alleppey**. **Thomas Mathews** behaves very ruthlessly when **Ammu** goes to kottayam police station. **Ammu** was punished for denying the love laws. It is the dreams of **Ammu** which bring her closer to **Velutha**. **If these dreams were not there, the relation would have been simply incestuous one. But now it has got great psychological and literary value.**

Many Indian women are still in the clutches of religion and social norms. **Baby Kochamma** is an exceptional woman without mercy and sweet feelings towards children. **Baby Kochamma** lives her past in the present. Her passionate love affair with a Roman Catholic father **Mulligan** still haunts her. She tortured Rachel and Estha with her words. She suggests that "Estha" be sent to his father. After **Sophie Mol's** death **Ammu** and the twins subjected to further humiliation. Little girl Sophie doesn't accept Chacko as her real father. She loves him less than Joe. The little girl insists that "**Joe's is my dad**".

Chacko is a representative of exploitative male who oppresses women. He troubles his mother, sister and even wife. **Ammu's** inter-religious marriage is abused but Chacko's relation with low caste women is accepted in the name of "Man's needs". In this Novel marriage is a trap for all. No marriage is successful. Roy's Portrayal of **Mammachi** and **Baby Kochamma** exposes the high caste feudal values which they represent.

Ammu is not willing to accept motherhood or divorcehood. "She wanted her body back. It was hers. She even shrugged her children off the way a bitch shrugs off her pups when she has had enough of them (P222). **Ammu** wants her body back. This vividly projects the feminist view of "**Arundhati Roy**". **Ammu** was very much in frustration. She diverts her distress on to her children and says "**you're the milestones round my neck**".

Notes :-

- 1) Roy Arundhati. *The God of small things*. New Delhi, India ink 1997
- 2) The critical studies of Arundhati Roy's "The God of small things" editors Jaydipsinh Dodiya, Joya Chakravarthy. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors. New Delhi
- 3) Indian women writers, edited R.K.Dhawan. prestige books.
- 4) Arundhati Roy, the "Greater common Good, Frontline. May 22 - June 4. 1999 P4