

## The Heterosexual Love in Arundhati Roy's the God of Small Things- A Critical Elucidation

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### Abstract:

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* has been described as a remarkable novel of innocence and originality. Arundhati Roy herself has remarked that "It isn't a book about India . . . it is a book about human nature" (1, file://G:EnglishPh.d/Arundhati% 20 Roy% 1.htm). There are strains of jealousy in the novel. We notice that Chacko is jealous and possessive of his foreign wife. Though he wanted his wife totally loyal and submissive to him, he was not willing to give up extra-marital affairs for her sake. We notice the same jealous streak in his father as well. Theirs was a family that was well known throughout for their charity work. They had even built a school for the untouchable children. They even went of their way to talk about equality of rights for everyone. However, when it came to their personal life, that was another matter altogether.

The novel is a poignant tale revolving around the death of young Sophie Mol who, along with her mother, came to Kerala to try and come to terms with the death of her mother's new husband. It is also about two young twins Esthappen and Rahel whose lives rotate around the shocking consequence of accidental death of their visiting English cousin, Sophie. It is also about the destructive power of Caste system and the malicious nature of every human being.

**Keywords:** Exhibit, marital affairs, malicious nature, and Caste system.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The novel introduces us to different kinds of love and undertones of sex. There are shades of incest between Rahel and Estha who absolutely turn for guidance to each other. To illustrate these themes Roy goes for repetition. This repetition makes the reader to shock away from the main plot. The protagonist Rahel exhibits uncanny ability to share her twin brother, Estha and Rahel lived in a world lived in a world that had totally forgotten them and gave them no respect. Rahel's martial life was unsuccessful. She seemed incapable of finding love or affection in the arms of any man. She flitted from job to job unable to make a home or a life for herself abroad. On the other hand, Estha went through life in a total haze with no concept of what he wanted to do with his life. As a result, years later, when the twins meet in Ayemenem, it seemed only natural for them to find solace and love in the arms of another. Though it is inappropriate to have sexual relationship with family members, they end up in sexual relationship with each other. Sex is perceived as consolation and another way of comforting each other.

We are introduced to another form of love-homosexuality. This was noticed when the Englishman, Kari Saipu, who owned a house on the other side of the river, took a young native man as his lover to live with him. However, when the child's parents came to take him away, the English man, unable to face the thought of living without his lover, shot himself in the head. Since that day the house, after extensive litigation, remained empty and deserted for the years to come. It was in this house, known as the History House, that events would happen that would turn their lives around.

Further we are introduced to heterosexual love between high caste woman and low caste man. This is love story between Ammu, the daughter of factory owner, and Velutha, an "untouchable". Ammu was extremely attractive, feisty, independent, bold, misguided and desperate woman trying to be "modern" without any limits. Though she was extremely happy when she became a mother, she did not know how

to rear her children. She loved to party, smoke cigarettes and to escape her lonely existence in her parental home, she made terrible mistake of getting married. Her marriage turned out to be disaster because her husband was a drunkard. Exasperated by her husband's non-stop drinking, she decided to divorce him and returned to her parents home in Ayemenem. She was totally unwelcome and her parents have absolutely refused to believe that there was anything wrong with her husband. As far as they were concerned, he could do no wrong in their eyes because he was an Englishman.

Ammu tried to bring up her children in a proper way. She emphasized that all they needed was her. In the eyes of her parents, Ammu was a divorced daughter from an inter community love marriage and there was no place in a respectable house for a woman like her. Ammu was a young lady with emotions and feelings deep within her. With no other outlet in a narrow-minded society that she lived in, Ammu started to become very unpredictable. She lived her life on an unsafe edge. She was battling mixed emotions with her life. She had tender love towards her children and nurtured wild reckless need to be loved by a man. It was this need within her that brought her in contact with Velutha. In Velutha, she felt that finally she had found true love. Ammu had the ability to rationalize her life and to deal accordingly with what life threw around her. She was not a good judge of character. She judged people from outward appearances. It was her crazy love for her lover that finally led to his death.

Velutha was a poor 'untouchable', who was very creative, hardworking and an intelligent young man who could, unfortunately, go nowhere in life and have no scope because he was born a low caste. He was an accomplished carpenter and an all-round mechanic. If it wasn't for the fact that he was a low caste, he could have gone to be an engineer. He dared and tempted fate by crossing the boundary line once too often by loving Ammu. Ammu, on the other hand was very conscious of the caste feeling surrounding her. But she looked at life more practically and loved a man of lower caste. It wasn't fame or fortune but true love between a man and a woman.

The instability of Ammu is another aspect of the novel. Ammu couldn't make up her mind between her father's name and husband's name. As a result the children were unsure of their name. Furthermore, she insisted that her children call her Ammu at all times and not mother. We notice that she impulsively started things she could never furnish. She fails to hold even a job. Her last days were extremely sad ones. We are asked to understand the pathetic plight of a sick, unsteady woman who had no grip on reality. We notice Velutha's greatest crime in life was loving and being loved by a woman of higher caste. Ultimately this led to his horrendous death.

We are also introduced to another kind of love, the Oedipus complex kind of love. Ammu's mother Mammachi loved her son, Chacko, to the point of distraction. He was the only one in her eyes who was able to control his father from abusing her and beating her. The parental love became an obsessive love towards her son wherein she lived her life through her son's eyes. Mammachi in spite of her practicality preferred her son and neglected her daughter. Her intense love for her son Chacko was what really spoiled him. She never set any boundaries for him. As a result, he grew up having no moral obligations whatsoever and later this lack of moral obligation towards his wife was what destroyed their marriage. When Chacko's only daughter, Sophie Mol, died, his agony at her death, devastated Mammachi.

There is also an undercurrent of sexual jealousy that emanated from Mammachi whenever she felt that her son Chacko showed interest in other women. What we do notice from all these different types of love and obsession is that they are all destructive in some way, shape or form. Ammu, by loving a man from a low caste, lost her right to stay at home and was forced to leave even her kids. Velutha, by falling in love with a woman from a higher caste, paid the price of love with his own life. Rahel and Estha for innocently loving Velutha and trying to substitute him as a father figure in their lives had to, in the end, turn against him and falsely accuse him of a crime he did not commit. This was done for the sole purpose of protecting the mother they loved so much against society. The guilt that they felt due to this, shattered their adult lives and they were never quite the same again.

Mammachi, with her blind love for her son, totally destroyed his respect for her and he treated her very disrespectfully in her later years. All the events in the book rose to the surface as a result of Sophie Mol's death. Sophie was Estha and Rahel's cousin and Chacko's only daughter. She had come all the way from London because her stepfather had recently died and she had come to Ayemenem to recuperate. She was alive for barely two weeks. She tried her best to mingle with her Indian cousins and feel accepted by the people in her neighbourhood. She was extremely fragile, delicate and outspoken child. One day, when there were torrential rains, Rahel, Estha and Sophie decided to take a

boat and cross the river to the other side in the night. It was this lack of commonsense and irrational thinking that resulted in the capsizing of the boat. Estha and Rahel knowing how to swim, were able to surface above the water but Sophie on the other hand, did not know how to swim and was unable to surface. It was much later that they finally found her bloated body washed ashore. She was just nine years old, a terrible age for this tragedy to happen. It is this death that destroyed overnight.

Her father Chacko was unable to come to terms with her death and he wandered from one business to the other, finally immigrating to Canada forever. Her British mother Margaret Kochamma, was so grief stricken by the loss of her only child, that she left Ayemenem forever. Two weeks later, Estha was forced to move out of the Ayemenem home and live with his father in Calcutta. Rahel was allowed to stay in Ayemenem but she was never able to adjust with anyone or anything. Rahel's thirst for parental love and guidance made her seek love in all the wrong places and her teen years were spent merely drifting around. Ammu was sent from the home to fend for herself and she died as a sad, lonely woman in a forgotten place. It was indeed tragic the way Sophie's death totally shattered each and every member of the family. Life was never the same for them in Ayemenem.

There are strains of jealousy in the novel. We notice that Chacko is jealous and possessive of his foreign wife. Though he wanted his wife totally loyal and submissive to him, he was not willing to give up extra-marital affairs for her sake. We notice the same jealous streak in his father as well. There was a family that was well known throughout for their charity work. They had even built a school for the untouchable children. They even went of their way to talk about equality of rights for everyone. However, when it came to their personal life, that was another matter altogether.

## 2. CONCLUSION

The novel gives importance to Chacko who was Pappachi and Mammchi's son. Chacko was a self-proclaimed Marxist. Chacko was so taken up by foreigners, that even though colonialism had left India, he seemed to refuse to let go of the idea of Colonialism, especially when dealing with women. He felt that women had to depend on men for their livelihood. Furthermore, he was a pompous man only interested in listening to himself speak. He was intelligent and no one in Ayemenem had half his intelligence. He was constantly putting his sister Ammu, down, because she was married out of her caste. However, the same rule did not apply to him when he married a foreigner.

Chacko, though a self-proclaimed Communist was very hesitant to allow Communism to enter his factory because then he would not be able to cheat his factory workers and would have to pay them proper wages. He was a very diplomatic man who was never able to give a straight answer to anyone. Whatever his drawbacks were, the one constant factor in his life was that he truly loved his wife, Margaret Kochamma. Even after they were divorced, he never stopped loving her. Furthermore, he was a man who loved the British and as a result, a foreigner was automatically loved and looked up to by him. That is why their daughter, Sophie Mol, was so loved by all in Ayemenem.

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