

## CHAPTER-2

### Three Generations of Oppression

Arundhati Roy shot into international limelight by winning the Booker Prize for her maiden novel, *The God of small Things*, in October 1997. The book is a novel experiment in Indian fiction in English. *The God of small Things* has been described as remarkable for its quality of innocence and originality. It is a playful book, full of poetry and wisdom. Arundhati Roy says herself that ‘it is n't a book about India (---). It is a book about human nature.’

Roy attempts to fashion her artistic strategy with the help of the intense awareness of her role as a feminist operating in a post colonial situation. In this connection we may recall the remarks of Luce Irigaray, an eminent exponent of French Feminism:

The relationship of women to their mothers and to other women- thus towards themselves – are rare subject to total narcissistic ‘black out, these relationships are completely devalued. Indeed, I have never come across a woman who does not suffer from the problem of not being able to revolve in harmony, in the present system, her relationship with her mother and with other women. Psychoanalysis has totally mythologized and ‘censored’ the positive value of these relationships. (75)

Arundhati Roy is excited by the technique of characterization the sympathetic and imaginative probing into the psychological mysteries of the human mind, the adequacy of the language to portray a fusion of the present, past and the future embedded in our imagination through the voice of different selves and especially, the undercurrent of power politics submerged in the apparent story of lapses. Roy has followed the tradition of female writers of creating ‘submerged meanings’ (73) as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Guber have

posited. These meanings are the socially unacceptable ones concealed or obscured behind acceptable designs. Arundhati Roy has very intelligently camouflaged the game of power politics behind the pattern of visibly unchanging society.

In her factionalized autobiography, she has treated the community as a force. The females are given ability but the power to control by authority, politics or money, is generally projected as the prerogative of the males. Naturally, Roy has to maintain a precarious balance between the sexes in their struggle for power. *The God of Small Things* enacts the eternal drama of confrontation between the powerful and the powerless. The author has desisted from making a woman's powerlessness the central crisis. Both men and women, are projected as a victim or a tyrant. It must be admitted that a woman's loss of power is treated very sympathetically, and yet, there is no obsession with women's ineffectual condition in society. The psychological, economic and social problems that play a major role in the novel, devastate men and women alike. Kate Millett has pointed out:

When a system of power is thoroughly in command, it has scarcely a need to speak itself aloud when its working is exposed and questioned it becomes not only subjected to discussion, but even to change. (58)

It is very interesting to note that in the text Roy has carried out covertly the emasculation of men by women and also emasculation of women but not in the conventional derogatory sense. Her women learn to think and act independently and take on the role of the protector but in the process do not sacrifice their feminine qualities.

All the characters in the novel have something to say about their loss. *The God of Small Things* is basically a saga novel that depicts the life, destiny and fluctuating fortunes of three generations of a Syrian Christian family in Ayemenem a sleepy village in central

Travancore. The problems of patriarchal domination and female subalternity and the clash between the two are rooted in the specific geocultural reality of Ayemenem.

The story begins with return of Rahel to her home town Ayemenem to be reunited to her twin brother Estha after the period of about twenty three years. The narrative is told in third person- often moving backward and forward in time. On surface the novel looks simple but it has a sort of architectonic quality. Arundhati is an architect by occupation and occupation has remarkable influence on the structure of her plots.

*The God of Small Things* is preeminently a novel by a woman about a woman seen through the eyes of a woman. The most remarkable thing about *The God of Small Things* is that it has been narrated with candidness and detached objectivity. We are reminded of Jane Austen's view of fidelity to experience. The novel tells of her own experience of life and much has been drawn from her own life but the novel never becomes sentimental or autobiographical in the ordinary sense of the word. In a country like India where patriarchal system is very strong, woman suffers mentally, physically and sensually.

Arundhati Roy's novel is deeply insightful and sensitive as a study in character and motivation, development and growth. It is also a novel exposing the hypocrisy and entrenched prejudices of traditional Indian society as seen in the micro-cosm of Ayemenem. As a voice of protest against exploitation of the lower classes and of women, it is a novel of rebellion. One of the voices heard in the book is certainly a feminist one.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is one of the most powerful novels on a definite social problem of the Indian society. Not once, while reading Roy's book, does it impinge on our consciousness that the society she writes about is traditionally a matrilineal one. Kerala's Syrian Christians have never forgotten their heritage, as Roy does not fail to remind us. Yet, neither in this family nor in the Hindu outer world do we discern any

vestige of woman power. The overall tone is one that underscores the weakness of women, their subservience and their silence.

In every walk of life a woman is governed and controlled by some men. The moment she is born she becomes the property of the males. Before marriage she is governed by her father; after marriage by her husband; and at the old age she comes under the dictatorial supervision of her son. This reality is depicted vividly by Roy in this novel taking characters from a single Syrian Christian family. *The God of Small Things* is somewhat an expression of the author's own personality. It is a pale reflection of the haunts of Roy's own childhood on the limpid backwaters of Kerala and the society she lived with caste prejudices, discrimination against women.

The four women whose lives Roy follows and who 'belong' to Ayemenem all suffer because of the narrow confines that define the women's world. Roy analyzes the gender oppression through the examination of the marital and inter-gender relations of Ammu, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma and Rahel. All these female character are smart, resourceful and belong to the affluent class of but they are deprived in fully recognizing their capabilities. Ammu's mother, Soshamma, known to Rahel and Estha as Mammachi, is a victim of prolonged physical violence. The wife of a former government official, Mammachi is familiar with the general resentment from and regular beatings by her husband. She has weal and bumps on her head as evidence of beatings with a brass vase. The beatings, she has regularly received at the hands of her husband increase directly in proportion to the degree of success. She achieves in her entrepreneurial project, paradise pickles and preserves. Referring to Mammachi's husband, the narrator claims, "Every night he beats her with a brass flower vase. The beatings weren't new." (47) This illustration of physical abuse provides only a glimpse into the patriarchy of Indian culture. Mammachi's

inferiority to her husband becomes clear when the narrator states that “Pappachi would not help Mammachi with the pickle-making because he did not consider pickle-making a suitable job for a high-ranking ex-Government official”.(47) Roy’s ironic juxtaposition of a slothful character, exerting energy only to beat his wife, serves to further illustrate the patriarchy of Indian society. Pappachi’s treatment of his daughter highlights how his bestial violence affected “Ammu’s” psyche. Pappachi is an orthodox, jealous husband. He is a compulsive wife beater. There are many references in the novel enumerating his maniac capabilities and his method of terrorizing his own family.

Pappachi’s cold blooded cruelty is all the more terrible for the almost deadpan way in which it is narrated, as an incontrovertible fact of their life, which they are helpless to change. His deliberate shuddering of the child, Ammu’s beloved Wellingtons and the systematic murder of his favorite rocking chair in place of his wife speaks of extreme perversion that goes unperceived and unpunished because of the pitiful silence of his victims. He inflicts not only physical cruelty but mental cruelty too. He is at pains to project himself as the neglected husband. When visitors come he sits down in full view sewing buttons on his shirts – buttons that “aren’t missing.” “He did his bit”, we are told, “in further corroding Ayemenem’s view of working wives.”(P.48) His jealousy of his wife’s talents goes to the extent of promptly putting an end to her violin lessons as soon as her instructor tells him she has talent in the concert class. Even though Mammachi 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" (122).

Paradise Pickles just happens. It is not the result of any long standing ambition on Mammachi’s part nor is it the logical come out of any professional training undertaken by her. It is merely an extension of her home wifely interests. She made pickles at home like

any other housewife. People appreciated them. She made more on request. The Thing grew. It became an enterprise. To the end she governed it like one big family kitchen. The men in the family contributed nothing to its success. Neither Pappachi nor Chacko enhanced or increased the running or profit of the enterprise. However, as soon as Chacko appears on the scene, he promptly takes over the administrative reins of Paradise Pickles and informs Mammachi that she is the “Sleeping Partner” (57).

Though Ammu’s contribution to the factory is at least as great as his, Chacko always speaks of it that factory is only mine and never ours. “Though Ammu did as much work in the factory as Chako, whenever he was dealing with food inspectors and sanitary engineers he always refers to it as my factory, my pineapples, my pickles” (57).

Legally he has the right, for Ammu, as a daughter had no claims to the property. “Chacko told Rahel and Estha that Ammu had no Locusts Stand I” (57). A married woman does not feel at home in his husband’s home also. Marriage becomes futile to Ammu. Looking at her photograph taken at the time of her marriage she feels disgusted:

Looking at herself like this, Ammu’s soft mouth would twist into a small, bitter smile at the memory—not of the wedding itself so much as the fact that she had permitted herself to be so painstakingly decorated before being led to the gallows. It seemed so absurd. So futile.” (43-44)

Chacko’s interference, however, only plummets Paradise Pickles into the red. Mammachi’s case is different – a different talk of woe. Although her husband was a high set up in the society, a noted entomologist in fact, and was seventeen years older than Mammachi he had always been a jealous man. So Mammachi remains a silent victim for years. Consistent with the expectations of Indian culture, moreover, Mammachi remains committed to her husband until his death and even cries at his funeral – not necessarily

because she loves him but because she had been committed to him for so long. The narrator states

At Pappachi's funeral, Mammachi cried.... Ammu told the twins that Mammachi was crying more because she was used to him than because she loved him. She was used to having him slouching around the pickle factory, and was used to being beaten from time to time. (50)

She feels definite sense of loss. She is a creature of habit, Ammu told Rahel. She is upset because something she has become accustomed to is taken out of her life. She has no sense of her rights at all. It is an unknown concept to her. She has thoroughly internalized the patriarchal definition of woman as subservient to man, of a wife as one who serves her husband. Despite the frequent abuse of her husband, Mammachi understands her role of wife as determined by her contemporaries and fulfills the expectations of the role. . Both Mammachi and Ammu have been silent sufferers for many long years.

When Chacko catches his father beating his mother and orders him to stop, Pappachi cuts Mammachi out of his life, never speaking to her directly ever again. Released from her husband/tormentor, she promptly takes up a new protector – her son. “The day that Chacko prevented Pappachi from beating her (and Pappachi had murdered his chair instead), Mammachi packed her wifely luggage and committed it to Chacko's care.”(168)

Her perception of woman is as a dependent. She must have a protector at any given time and he can be father or husband or son. There is no such thing, in the traditional book, as an independent woman. Her dependence on Chacko becomes so great that when, later, his ex-wife comes visiting Mammachi vies her with a resentment born of a sexual jealousy. Mammachi and Ammu are established as his standard victims. Chacko's wife Margaret Kochamma was Sophie Mol's English mother. She used to be Chacko's wife! That was

because she had got a second husband in Joe Margaret also, we find, had to live a life which was in no way rosy. She seems infected with the same dependence disease. When Joe dies, she comes running to her ex-husband for a spell of emotional protection. Where Comrade Pillai's wife is concerned, she speaks to her husband using the respectful form of 'he' – "addeham." Pillai, however, calls her "edi" which was, approximately, 'Hey, you! He ignores his wife when he comes home, speaking only to his guest, Chacko the Modalali. Mammachi is actually the only successful person in the family but no credit comes her way. Her achievement is minimized by making out that her factory is just an extension of her kitchen.

Baby Kochamma is the sister of Pappachi who is another maltreated victim in the novel. For Baby Kochamma life is a crushing defeat. Fate is so cruel and unkind to her that she is made to live her life backwards. She receives the shock of her life when her dream of marrying Father Mulligan, an Irish priest gets shattered. To win him, she converts herself to Roman Catholic faith but ultimately she is a failure and starts living in isolation in the Ayemenem house. At times the portrait approaches hilariously the dimension of caricature but we are also shown the very human resentment, jealousy and meanness that lurk beneath the surface. It is a resentment arising from the frustration of her life, an inability to carve but some significant niche for herself. She is sent to the USA to study, of all things, ornamental gardening. How incredibly appropriate a metaphor for the situation of women-something that is attractive but redundant, not a mainstream concern. She makes no actual use of her acquired education to beautify any gardens beyond her own and even her own is dumped unceremoniously in favour of the compelling great new god of satellite TV. Baby Kochamma remains in the memory as a peanut munching couch potato glued to a screen flashing pictures of fictitious foreign worlds. The relentlessly closed windows and doors of



her house provide a metaphor for this woman of narrow concerns and an unthinking derived mentality, a too quick willingness to pass judgments on the actions and lives of others. 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 father Mulligan still haunts her. She tortures Rachel and Estha with her words. She suggests that "Estha" be sent to his father. After Sohpie Mol's death Ammu and the twins are subjected to further humiliation.

Ammu, the protagonist of the novel, is a helpless victim, tormented by the patriarchal society. She was not given the privilege of higher education by Pappachi, her father, while her brother Chacko was sent to Oxford for higher studies. When her family is unable to accumulate sufficient dowry for a marriage proposal, she becomes desperate to escape her abusive father and her bitterly tormented mother. She visits her distant aunt residing in Calcutta. Ammu's desperation to escape a life in her parents' house compels her to marry the first man who proposes to her for she believes that "anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem" (39). She marries a man who assists managing a tea estate. Yet once again Ammu's dreams are ruined as she discovers to her utmost shock that her husband is an alcoholic who beats her and even attempts to prostitute her to his employer so that he can retain his job.

Ammu watches her husband's mouth more as it formed words. She said nothing. He grew uncomfortable and then infuriated by her silence. Suddenly he lunged at her, grabbed her hair, punched her and then passed out from the efforts. Ammu took down the heaviest book she could find in the bookshelf... *The Reader's Digest World Atlas*.... and hits him with it as hard as she could. On his head, on his eyes, his back, and shoulders. When he regained consciousness, he was puzzled by his

bruises. He apologized abjectly for the violence, but immediately began to badger her about helping with his transfer. This fell into a pattern. Drunken violence followed by post drunken badgering (42).

She leaves her husband with her twin children Estha and Rahel and returns to Ayemenem, her parents' home, where unfortunately, she again resumes and subjugated and marginalized role. Ammu feels unwelcome at Aymenem and father does not even believe her when she tells him about how her husband wanted to sell her to his English employer to save his own skin. Pappachi "didn't believe that an Englishman, any Englishman, would covet another man's wife."(42)

Ammu, the woman in the second generation in the novel is the one who mostly restricted by situation. Because her parents hold the traditional rules of India, she lives as the second. As the matter of fact, her parents give more affection to his brother for being a man than her as a woman. Moreover, after being single mother of two children, her position in society is worse. Ammu's divorce makes her position worse in society. It is because the society believe that a good woman should live with her husband and accept whatever done by her husband. So, divorced woman for them is considered as very bad position that symbolizes the rebellion of un-virtuous woman. A divorcee woman has no position; she is out of place, belonging nowhere. A woman can have any value only in relation to a man; she herself is nothing. In her introduction to *The Second Sex*, Simone De Beauvoir writes:

(Thus) humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being...She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her... (16)

Ammu's love to Velutha is also become a forbidden love for being contradict to the cultural law at that time. The touchable people or the people who have certain caste will

never be allowed to have any relationship to the untouchable people. This is why, Ammu's love to Valutha cannot be acceptable for both people in Ammu's caste like Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, and also for people in Valutha caste like his father who revealed their secret love to Ammu's family.

Ammu is the woman who tries to rebel the Hindu values and patriarchy system in Indian society. Unlike her mother, she cannot accept the bad attitudes and actions of her husband and prefer the divorce than keeping her marriage. Ammu is also the example of a member of society who breaks the communal laws of India.

Ammu recognizes herself and walks out of unbearable circumstances that threaten to fossilize her very existence. Here we see women's consciousness. She moves from the feminist phase to the phase of displacement and self-discovery. Self-assertion seems to have become the keynote of the expression 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 has recourse to divorce as the only means of salvaging her lost life. She is the most conspicuous representative of the fourth generation who died at a very young age of thirty-one.

At Ayemenem, Ammu feels like a captive lady, but to assist her mother in relation to household chores. 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. (38-39)

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

When she tries to rescue her beloved Wellingtons, in spite of Mammachi's entreaties not to, she is beaten and forced to fetch Mammachi's pinking shears with which Pappachi cruelly shreds them. She can only watch again, in silence. It is Mammachi and Kochamma, both women whose lack of exposure to the world is stressed, who take into their own hands the question of Ammu's fate. Typically it is the victim of patriarchal domination who becomes its most ardent proselyte and perpetrator. When faced with the revelation of the Ammu- Velutha relationship, they cannot think beyond the caste prejudice they have inherited. Reputation takes precedence over the real issue of desire and happiness.

Velutha 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. Inspector Thomas Mathew 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.

In a country like India where Patriarchal system is very strong, women suffer in many ways. Thoroughly and successfully socialized and conditioned by patriarchal society, Mammachi and Kochamma, now faced with the news of Ammu's adulterous relationship with a low caste employee of the family, promptly sacrifice her desires to the god of

reputation. The caste system in India was so strong that the lower – caste untouchables were not allowed to enter the houses of upper caste people.

Women and the lower caste are two suppressed categories in the novel. Instead of joining forces against the common enemy, they each of them propagate the ideology of the master class. Velutha's father betrays his own son in his horror of the young man's defiance and fearlessness. Velutha is the over-reacher who suffers for his daring. Mammachi and Kochamma save Ammu by salvaging her reputation. They tell a lie that destroys. The rebel lovers try to fight but it is a battle destined to be lost. They never have a chance. The opposition, years of orthodoxy, is too strong for them. It is unthinkable for a woman of a Syrian Christian family should have anything to do with a Paravan. Mammachi, myopic in terms of physical sight as well as moral perception, is horrified at the suggestion that her daughter could have coupled with a Paravan. She identifies him only by his caste, forgetting his technical skills and the fact that her factory runs so smoothly only because of him. If only she could see it, it is she and Velutha who are achievers in their little world. But in her narrow perception she remains just a woman and he just a low-caste employee of the family. The most important character who is not a member of the family but a very strong member of the family in ascertains is Velutha. It is interesting to note that a communist upsurge is shown as a major happening in the world just outside Paradise Pickles. Velutha is part of it. Rahel recognized him at a protest march, which stops their car on the way to Cochin. With Velutha's positive self-image and sense of self-worth (which allows him to approach Ammu at all), it seems natural that he should have joined the movement for equal rights. When accusation of attempted rape is hurled at Velutha, he goes to the local communist chief for help. He is defeated by Comrade Pillai's refusal of the protection that could have changed the whole story. The irony of the denial of

protection to one of its members, the callousness of the communist leader and also of the police force adds to the wealth of details about human motivations that make the novel so wonderfully sensitive.

Arundhati Roy takes stock of the situation by partially dwelling upon the theme of gender bias by referring to Mammachi's discriminatory attitude towards Ammu. Feminist writers and critics have often pointed out that although literature and mythology around the world have many instances of male friendship and loyalty, there are hardly any women's friendships. It is interesting to notice, then, that there is indeed a conspicuous absence of female camaraderie, closeness, and support in Roy's *Ayemenem*. Instead of feeling genuine sorrow when Ammu is forced to leave her husband, hordes of female relatives descend upon her to gloat over her divorce. There is no concern for Ammu's thwarted desires or residual aspirations, nor even any caring to hear her side of the story. Ammu's transgression is punished with all the severity of women who have no sympathy with a fellow woman's situation. When Ammu returns, divorced, to *Ayemenem* Kochamma could have seen her as a fellow 'Man-less woman' and been good friend with her but instead she resents the facts that Ammu is still fighting the fate she perceives herself to have 'graciously accepted.' We see only envy where sympathy could so easily have made an entry.

It is not, apparently, for a woman to have any personal aspirations or desires. She must only do the 'proper' thing i.e. that which patriarchal society has decreed. If woman behave in accordance with "the laws," they are protected and given a place in society. Roy tells it with a lack of anger (implying a degree of resignation) that is almost frightening. This is how it is.

After all her attempts to ensnare Father Mulligan fail, Kochamma does settle down to the accepted mode of a maiden existence. Thus she ensures a place for herself in Ayemenem. But Ammu breaks the laws every way. First she dares to find a way out of the narrow society she finds so suffocating, has a 'love marriage' and that too with a Hindu from another state. Altogether too many laws broken at one stroke. Ammu makes a mistake. She marries the wrong man. After her defiance, her backless blouses and her perfect smoke rings from a cigarette held in the longest cigarette holder even come to naught. Her husband turns out to be a drunkard who is even willing to stoop to allowing his boss to use his wife. Unlike her mother who tolerated her husband's violence, Ammu leaves her husband and returns, unwelcome, to the protection of her parents in Ayemenem. She is a divorcee, a financial dependent. "For herself she knew that there would be no more chances. There was only Ayemenem now. A front verandah and a back verandah. A hot river and a pickle factory. And in the background, the constant, high, whining mewl of local disapproval" (43).

Both Ammu and Baby Kochamma tried their hand at love. Both lost. Kochamma accepts her maiden status and the closed nature of her life, her only outlet, and her ridiculous diary. But some residual part of Ammu continues to dare to hope. She refuses to live the same circumscribed existence of her aunt. "She wore flowers in her hair and carried magic secrets in her eyes. She spoke to no one. She spent hours on the riverbank with her little plastic transistor shaped like a tangerine. She smoked cigarettes and had midnight swims" (44). When the river throws up Velutha, she dares to welcome him. That is her crime. Besides, Velutha is a Paravan. Ammu has repeated her earlier misdemeanor. She has found love outside the community-again. And this time it is worse: it is adulterous.

Without further ado Mammachi and Kochamma confer and take the only decision that it is possible for them as acolytes of the patriarchal mode to take. Ammu is locked up like an animal and not allowed to speak. Her children, terribly upset, believe that they are to blame for what is happening and take off in their newly discovered boat in an attempt to decrease the burden on their mother. By the time Ammu is let out and tries to set the Record straight and let Velutha off the hook, it is too late. There is no understanding, sympathy or indulgence for her, only a merciless retribution.

The image of Ammu locked up or locked away as Arundhati Roy describes it, represents the triumph of patriarchal power and becomes an agonizing motif of the pitiful weakness of feminine endeavour.

Ammu was still locked into her bedroom. Baby Kochamma had the keys. She called through the door to ask Ammu whether she tried to keep the panic out of her voice, make it sound like a casual enquiry. Something crashed against the door. Ammu was incoherent with rage and disbelief at what was happening to her-at being locked away like the family lunatic in a medieval household. (252)

Reminiscent of the so-called crazed woman who was locked up in earlier literature analyzes by Gilbert and Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 'Ammu is reduced to a sub human being, her human will denied.' When Kochamma asks her about the absence of the Children, the only answer is the heavy sound of a maddened Ammu throwing herself against the door. In the limited patriarchal lexicon women can be described as either angels or monsters. Ammu has been defined as a monster who must be kept behind bars or else to exorcised from the family home.

It is a terrible punishment that is meted out to her directly and to her children indirectly. It is Chacko, patriarch now in Pappachi's place, who utters the final word



ordering her to leave the house, but the path to that final decree is paved by Mammachi and Kochamma. It is Kochamma's idea, Roy points out ominously, to "That Estha be Returned" (322). Nothing short of a tragedy overtakes Ammu and her children. And, typical of a tragedy, Characters not directly involved in it are also swept into its inexorable vortex. Sophie Mol dies in the unpredictable river. The twins are separated; leaving hollows in each that cannot be filled by anyone else. There are lots of changes in Ammu's character. In the starting she was a poor girl and after marriage she became very beautiful and she changed her style of living. But after her divorce she again changed. Nobody cares her. Nobody wants to listen her.

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.

There are a lots of similarities between the life of Chacko, Ammu's brother and Ammu's. Chacko like his sister takes his chances and leaves Ayemenem. He goes abroad. He also returns to Ayemenem, as a broken man. Now he is a divorced man. He too dares look for new live. But in the male context everything is different. Their daughter Sophie is a very special indeed. She is given the first right (over Rahel and Estha) to comb Mammachi's hair. Baby Kochamma makes a petty but demeaning remark about Estha being shorter than Sophie. Ammu is punished not only because she loves a Paravan but also because she dares to love again at all. Both Ammu and Chacko are young enough to hope for another chance at love. Chacko's 'Men's needs are well understood by his indulgent mother. "One door connected it to the main house and another (the separate entrance that

Mammachi has installed for Chacko to pursue his 'Men's Needs' discreetly) led directly out into the side mittam" (238).

When Mammachi is confronted with the facts Velutha's relationship with Ammu, the image of coupling dogs comes to her mind: "Like animals,[she] thought and nearly vomited. Like a dog with a bitch on heat" (244). He does not have any right to have any relationship with a higher caste woman. Ammu and Velutha dared to see each other. Ammu and Velutha has relationship with each other. But society gives no sanction for their relationship. Society perceives Ammu as Veshya

Inspector Thomas Mathew stared at Ammu's breasts as he spoke. He said the police knew all they needed to know and that the Kottayam police did not take statements from Veshyas or their illegitimate children. Ammu said she'd see About that. Inspector Thomas Mathew came around his Desk and approached Ammu with this baton. He tapped her breasts with baton. (8)

She also begins to see herself as such. She is haunted by a recurrent dream:

She had woken up at night to escape from a familiar, recurrent dream in which policemen approached her with snicking scissors, wanting to hack off her hair. The did that in Kottayam to prostitutes whom they'd caught in the Bazaar-branded them so that everybody would know them For what they were-Veshyas. So that new policemen on the beat would have no trouble identifying whom to harass. Ammu always noticed them in the market, the women with Vacant eyes and forcibly shaved heads in the land where Long, oiled heir was only for the morally upright. (161)

Ammu, a personality, has to be locked up too. She afterwards, dies exiled. But before her acceptance of such fate, in desperate attempts of self-realization, she becomes a

symbolic personification of all subalterns, especially women, who challenges power structures of the social order. Murari Prasad states:

At the heart of Roy's astounding book is the conflict between the characters excluded from institutional power and their hegemonic counterparts... Bose points that Ammu's conscious decision to embrace Velutha is a forbidden cross-caste liaison of radical significance within the novel's given social imperatives... Bose links these violations to Roy's robust commitment to the autonomy of the self – the freedom of small things. Thus the feminist reconceptualization of politics in Roy's novel, as Bose notes, is profoundly subversive. (Bose, 21)

Rahel doesn't suffer as much as Ammu did. As a student at Nazareth convent, she behaved with a revolting spirit and the nuns thought that she did not know how to be a nice-decent girl. Rahel spent eight years in a college of architecture at Delhi without completing the five-year degree course. She married a senior student at the college and went with her husband to Boston. She worked for a few months as a waitress in an Indian restaurant and later got divorced from her husband. Rahel's suffering is more psychological than physical. She is the child of a divorce mother and broken home. She failed to receive love and affection from parents and elders. Living in her grandparent's house, she does not enable to live like a normal child. After the miserable death of Ammu who is her only prop, she becomes helpless and hapless. She is the woman who has no place in both her family and society. These adverse circumstances and excessive negligence teach her to be patient and result in an accidental "release of the spirit" (17). She becomes reckless, daring and independent.

"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” (17). So when she meets Larry McCaslin, a Research Scholar in Architecture from Boston, she doesn’t think twice to marry him. She “drifted into marriage like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge” (18).

When Ammu died she was only eleven and naturally her wounded psyche made her a rebellious person throughout her life. Rahel’s conjugal life did not result in happiness when she made love; her husband was offended by her eyes. They behaved as if they were divorced. Now Rahel has no place in the society that rejected her mother. She is, unlike her mother, a strong and unhesitant character who does not feel shame or moral weakness in the face of the divorce. This is why, at her return to Ayemenem, she answers K.N.M. Pillai who asked about her marital status by “We’re divorced” (130), without worrying what will he assume about her answer.

Arundhati Roy has said that she too, a hybrid, grew up with the realization that there could not be any arranged marriage for her at the end of the rainbow, that she was perceived as an outsider and that she was on her own. Rahel, too, is forced into marginalized spaces where she meets and marries a foreigner, leads a meandering and meaningless existence on foreign shores until she ‘returns’ to her brother Estha, who has re-returned in Ayemenem.

Ammu has to pay with her life for defying the love laws imposed by patriarchal society. Rahel knows it very well. She knows about the destructive consequences for doing anything which orthodox society does not approve. In spite of these consequences, what she does is more dangerous in society’s moral eyes than what her mother does. Her incestuous relationship with her brother at the age of thirty one cannot be accepted at any cost. But she does not care about it. As they go beyond the norms, Ammu and Rahel are taken to be transgressors. Ammu’s love for Velutha is the worst transgression that she

commits. The age old social order is trampled. The relationship between a Syrian Christian woman and a Dalit man disrupt the existing order and notions:

They all broke the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much. (31)

Arundhati's portrayal of Rahel shows her hope and optimism for the emancipation and liberation of women in future from the clutches of male-dominance.

Roy relentlessly fights for the cause of women. In the novel she attacks the male chauvinist society which takes women as legal, economic and sexual property. A woman is a puppet in the hands of her father before marriage, of husband after marriage and at her old age in the hands of her son. Mammachi receives this kind of brutality and suppression from three generations of patriarchal dominance. Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Ammu and Rahel are the relentless sufferers at the hands of the males. Pappachi and Chacko appear to be the eternal suppressors and controllers of women. Baby Kochamma, being a woman, takes the side of patriarchy because of jealousy and her unrequited love. Later Mammachi joins hands with patriarchy to accentuate male dominance. Mammachi's submissive, compliant and meek nature towards her father, husband and son makes her become torturer and suppressor of women later. Ammu rebels against male chauvinists, but fails to defy the age old norms. Her challenge to the traditions and love laws made by the males to dominate women brings a heavy price to pay, and ultimately she has to surrender to fate. Rahel is an embodiment of Roy through whom Roy voices her own protest against male chauvinist society. Rahel is portrayed as a rebel who challenges all sorts of social norms formed to suppress women.

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