

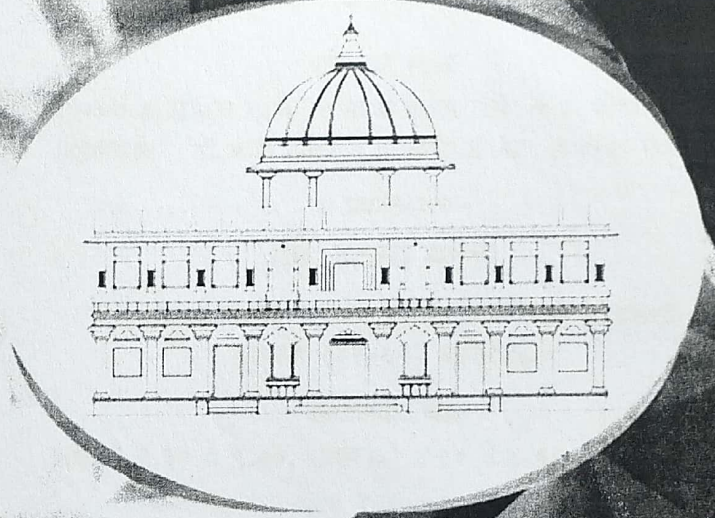
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## Social Order and Law in Arundhati Roy's The God Of Small Things

- Dr. Premal Deore, Malegaon

### Abstract :

The current research paper is an attempt to explore how Arundhati Roy in *The God Of Small Things* portrays injustice and torture of other minority and marginalized groups. The disgust and misery of personal life develops dissatisfaction informally in communication in action and in behavior. It creates the conditions of 'cultural drifts' between touchables and untouchables between the social movement and the individual mind, between freedom and security. Arundhati Roy criticizes the social and political scenario of the contemporary times.

**Key Words :** Marginalized, untouchability, oppression.....

Arundhati Roy criticizes the social and political scenario of the contemporary times. People according to their respective castes. This further determines the kind of life the people are going to lead. The ones occupying the topmost position in the hierarchical order will enjoy every possible privilege of life. The caste system also decides who will indulge in what kind of work, the dress they will wear, The first issue that comes forth is that of 'untouchability'. A traditional Hindu form of society divides education they will receive and so on. Velutha , the untouchable, in '*The God Of Small Things*' faces discrimination all the time. Although this caste prejudice was banned in the 1950 constitution, it still prevails in many parts of the country. In *God Of Small Things* , Roy has presented women with a range of possibilities regarding their outlook on life and society. Women is always viewed as a space to be occupied. Right from the ancient civilization, the husband served as authority over his wife and children. Some are seen as complacent, resistant and even transgressing the dominant order of times. Roy does not idealize or criticize any of them, rather portrays them as having



complex traits. She has shown how each of them has been dominated in some way or the other by the system of oppression. But Roy gives them voice who struggle for their right to possess a sense of identity.

The present paper aims to highlight the social and cultural aspects in the novel 'The God Of Small Things' which is about a family living in Ayemenem, a town in the state of Kerala during post- independence times. The past and present are intertwined in the novel and the story is thus non-chronological in its structure. Rabel and Estha are twins of Ammu living in Ayemenem with their grandmother Mamamachi, great-aunt Baby Kochamma and uncle Chacko. Their father lives in Kolkata whom Ammu divorced while they were two years old. The family is awaiting the arrival of Chacko's ex-wife and daughter Margaret and Sophie Mol respectively who are staying in London. Joe, Margaret's second husband, died in an accident therefore Chacko invited them to Ayemenem for the Christmas so that the loss might be a little recovered. With Sophie's arrival, the twins receive little attention so most of the times they are seen by the side of a river walking and one day they find an old boat. They manage to repair the boat with the help of Velutha and they often visit a house which is abandoned on the other side of the river. Velutha is an untouchable, an old acquaintance of Ammu and Chacko. He has been helped by the family who sends him to a school and later employs him in their pickle factory as a mechanic and carpenter. During her stay with the family, Ammu gets attracted towards Velutha. One day they decided to meet by the side of the river and eventually they slept together. Realizing that what they had done was socially unacceptable, an untouchable having relation with a superior caste, both of them decided to keep their relation as a secret. Unfortunately the secret is revealed one day when Velutha's father observes them. He immediately reports it to Mammachi and baby Kochamma. Following this Ammu is locked up in a room and the twins ask her why she has



been locked. Utterly frustrated, she comments that they should leave her and go away and that without them she would be totally free to act on her own will. So they decided to leave their house and stay at the house on the other side of the river. Sophie hears their plans and demands to be taken along. While crossing the river, their boat capsizes. Rahel and Estha swim to the other end but Sophie is carried away by the current. The twins search her for a long time but fail to find her. They reach the abandoned house and falls asleep on the veranda. Not knowing that their affairs has been discovered, Velutha visits Ammu's house earlier that night. Mammachi insults him when he arrives and soon he leaves the place. In the morning the family discovers that the children are missing. Meanwhile Sophie's death is reported. Baby Konchamma goes to the police station and wrongly blames Velutha for all that had happened. She accuses him of attempting to rape Ammu and also the kidnapping of the children. The police arrived and arrested Velutha and beat him so inhumanly that he almost died. Baby Kochamma forces the children to confirm the false statement she made at the police station. Velutha died the next day in the prison.

Ammu and her children are held responsible by Chacko for Sophie's death. Their stay in the house turns to be unpleasant and so they decide to leave. Estha is sent to his father who lives in Kolkata. He attends school and college there. Ammu leaves Ayemenem to look for a job while Rahel stays there. Ammu finds no work and she dies of ill health in a lodge no one by her side. Rahel marries an American and goes to America with him but the two gets divorced eventually. Twenty three years later, Estha is returned to Ayemenem by his father who was emigrating to Australia. Rahel also returns to the family's house as she longs to see Estha. The twins are reunited and they sleep together that night.

Velutha, the untouchable, is portrayed as a marginalized and



subordinated figure. Mammachi's depiction of the Untouchables in the earlier days is a reflection of the subaltern position that they occupied, paravens were expected to crawl backwards with abroom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint.' Velutha was also not allowed to join a school where other touchable went to study. Rather he was sent to a special school meant only for the untouchables. But with time, Velutha is seen to transgress the social and political order of the day. He becomes a trained carpenter whereas during those days an untouchable could indulge only in simple works. Not only that he secretly joined the communist party and took part in a procession. The most forbidden act he commits is that he loves a woman of a superior caste. for an untouchable it was seen to have a relationship with a Syrian Christian. In spite of that Velutha crosses many boundaries that the society had placed before him.

In *The God Of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy explicitly writes for bigger social reform for the plight for the deprived class that shows the rigid positioning of women in patriarchal society. Mammachi is first seen as a submissive and docile woman who is quite traditional in her views of life. She silently bears the torture of her husband who used to beat her regularly and she never opposed him. But she finds her way out all by herself. She transcends the limits imposed upon her by the society and emerges out to be independent when she starts her business of pickle making in her kitchen without Pappachi's consent. This act can be regarded as an agency through which Mammachi tries to carry out her idea without her husband's and society's opinion.

Considering the other female characters in the novel, the lead character Ammu can be regarded as a marginalized figure. She is one of the most tragic character in the novel. Her marriage with Babu was a failure as he was an alcoholic. She is a divorced woman who is left





with two children to suffer. Utterly helpless she comes to her father's house where she is badly treated with her twins. During her youth, Annu did not conform to the rules imposed on her by her family or the society. She quickly accepts the first proposal made to her and marries a person outside their religion. she took her own decision and later when things went wrong after her marriage she divorced him as well. But now she has been disinherited from the family's property by Chacko, her brother, who says that she has no legal right to inherit the factory or the house. Even her children are marginalized to a great extent. Annu represents the sufferings of younger generation and the changes creeping slowly in the society. In spite of her suffering she keeps her head high against all the hurdles she faces in patriarchal society. Her rebellious nature gives her strength to stand against traditional oppression which every women faces in our society. According to Baby Kochamma they are 'half-Hindus whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would never marry.' Although Annu is disregarded by the family, she is a little feared of due to her 'unsafe edge'; the fact that she has lost much in her life could make her defiant and bold enough to take serious steps. It was what she had battling inside her. This depiction of her character shows that as a mother she always tries to be protective towards her children but as an individual she can break free from all the constraints of life and the 'ordered world' that surrounds her.

Velutha an untouchable of the lowest kind, a Paravan. He lives in a small hut with his father and brother near the Ayemenem house. Velutha was sent to an Untouchables' school and later he received training in carpentry from a workshop that was organized by Christian Mission Society. Velutha worked wonders with his hands. He could repair everything from a clock to a water pump and was employed as a carpenter and a mechanic at the pickle factory of the Ayemenem house. Despite being a paravan, Velutha is extraordinarily gifted, who according to Mammachi could have become an engineer had he not



been an untouchable.

In the novel, 'time' has been used as a structuring principle as well as an important theme in the novel. The fragmented narrative time of the novel suggests the effects of the trauma of the past on the present lives of the characters. People who have traumatic experiences often forget them completely or it remains suppressed which surfaces sometimes. The fact that past and present are blended in the novel speaks of how the trauma sufferers in the novel are haunted by the past memories in their present and its influence on their lives.

In *God Of Small Things* Roy shows how the private and public lives are intertwined with one another. The private lives are regulated by the social, political and religious order of the day. These structure have a profound impact upon the lives of the individuals inside and outside of their homes, their behavior towards other people, their way of viewing the world and so on. Communism, distinction among castes, customs and laws determine the lives of almost every character in the novel. Arundhati Roy depicts the painful picture of sufferings, oppression of the Indian women, humiliation, marginalization, shame etc. The novel gives the painful journey of the three generations of women who are the victims of the patriarchal society and hence marginalized. All of them suffer in this gender biased caste-ridden Ayemenem society. Thus the author frames contention for the marginalized natives of India, due to casteism.

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