



Trauma in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Abstract:

*Arundhati Roy's writings is like an infinite voice in desert place because of her valiant stand in the socio-political scenario. What is the uniqueness of her writing? She targets the root of the problem and exposes before the readers with her unique style of narration. Her voice always stands for the silenced class in the society. Children are the most traumatized characters in her novel, *The God of Small of Things*. They are perpetually tormented in their life in different stages of their life. Their behavior with others are reflected in different ways in different occasions. Arundhati Roy in her novel, portrayed the characters of children with a deep psycho-analytic way. Estha and Rahel, the twins suffer eternally in their life due to the mental torment of the elders in the family as well as in the society. Even though, they grown up, they carry trauma in which they had undergone in their childhood days.*

Keywords: Trauma, torment, guilty consciousness, bullying, psychological scar, molestation, humiliation, introvert.

Introduction

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is the Booker Prize-winning novel in 1997 and the most controversial work in the contemporary Indian literature in India. It is an extraordinary novel in its theme and its narrative techniques. The novelist deals with the subjects in the novel which are harsh socio-political realities of the Indian society. Many Indian writers are not dared to touch certain cruel realities which are invariably seen in Indian society. What is the most unique feature of her writing is that she deals with the harsh social realities directly with such boldness. Nobody can imagine such valiant stand in the present socio-political scenario in India and abroad. She directly

targets the devils who do deception with powerless class in the society. Her voice always stands for the silenced class in the family as well as in society.

Some of the characters in the novel, *The God of Small Things* were undergone with trauma in their life. The readers who go through this novel will feel the most traumatized life of these characters. The children are one of the most vulnerable classes in family and society. They were tormented perpetually in their life in different stages of their life. The theme of trauma is widespread in the novel, *The God of Small Things* through the deplorable living conditions of the children and their trauma in their later life.

The technique used in *The God of Small Things* itself is a trauma narrative. The narration itself shows that the novel outwardly exhibits the symptoms of trauma. One of the important purposes of the trauma narrative is to reproduce the trauma for the readers to experience the same once again. *The God of Small Things* upsets the orderly chronological and consistency in narration for ordinary readers. Speaking, its main purpose is to disorient readers and invite them to involve in the process of integrating the interconnected narrative layers and faint the exact perspectives of the matter. The narration tried to reproduce the twins' trauma to the readers through the mindset of traumatized children. When they lead a perverted life, the readers can understand how their traumatic childhoods contributed to the perverted life.

It is evident in Estha's life. He always worries in life that the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man who molests him at the Abhilash Talkies will come again and harm him. Because of this fear that causes Estha to think two thoughts: Anything can happen to anyone and it's best to be prepared. Estha's second thought causes him to persuade Rahel to transport to the History House across the Meenachil River as a means of escape from Orangedrink Lemondrink Man. As he stirs the fresh banana jam at Paradise Pickles, Estha realizes that Orangedrink Lemondrink Man could walk in at any time. There is again another evidence of Estha's trauma when he and Rahel transported to Velutha's house on a boat for repairs.

As the twins were expecting for Velutha to return home, Kuttapen, Velutha's brother entertained them and ensured them that their boat would be repaired. He also warned them about the inherent danger of the river in a playful way. There was danger of fear at the bottom of the deep water in the river. Estha was always under the threat of returning danger on a conscious level. Subconsciously, his body was still in a state of perpetual danger and his happiness would be interrupted at any moment. Estha here exhibits all symptoms of trauma.

Throughout life, trauma haunts the life of the people and reflects the indelible imprint of the traumatic moment. Traumatized people suffer continuously in their life. They cannot lead a normal life because the trauma repeatedly interrupts in their life. When Rahel observed an eccentric woman on a train Grand Central Station, New York who distracted her terribly. Fragmented memories had tormented her. The occurrences and consequences of Velutha's death were intrusive in her life. The intrusive elements always interfere in her life to participate in an intimate relationship. It was evident from her life. Her inability to interact effectively in social relationships caused her expulsion from several boarding schools.

Constriction is another symptom of trauma which is visible in the character of Estha. Out of conscious pricking, Estha agreed with Rahel that it was not Velutha that they saw in History House where Police Officers had attacked him. Earlier, Rahel informed Estha that she was sure, it was not Velutha but his imaginary twin brother, Urumban from Kochi. The writer explains that Estha was initially reluctant to believe and unwilling to seek refuge in imagination. But Baby Kochamma had changed all these things. She had succeeded in bullying Estha into condemning his friend, Velutha. This betrayal was unbearable for the children whom they loved as the God of small things. The guilty feeling Estha felt in his life for betraying an innocent man haunted the whole life. Out of trauma, sometimes Estha whispered in Rahel's ear that you were right, it was Urumban. For the sake of appeasing his guilty consciousness, Estha finally agreed with Rahel. Finally, this trauma of guiltiness became too much for Estha to tolerate and later he had surrendered to it by dissociating from realities.

Inspector Thomas Mathew had recognized children's incoherence. Baby Kochamma succeeded to convince them that unless they made a statement that Velutha had abducted children, they and their mother would go to three different prisons. Ultimately, she gave them the choice: Velutha or Ammu. They were enforced to put in a traumatic situation. Both had to agree that Velutha had abducted them but lonely Estha accompanied the Inspector Thomas Mathew to the lock-up where Velutha's battered body lying down. Estha had to identify and betray Velutha. Estha had seen blood spilt from Velutha's skull like a secret and a pool of urine spreading from him. It was extreme trauma for a child and Estha carried the psychological scar in the remaining life.

Besides this major trauma, there were minor traumas in children's life. Baby Kochamma was unkind to Estha and Rahel as she was the in-charge of the formal education to them in Ayemenem House. The children were not comfortable under Baby Kochamma. Baby Kochamma's Australian friend, Miss Mitten once visited Ayemenem House. She gifted a baby book, *The Adventures of Susie*

Squirrel. Estha and Rahel started to read it backwards. It was an insult to Miss Mitten. Estha did not like Miss Mitten. When she said that she did not know the Malayalam Language. Then he told her directly that it was stupid. At that time, he was very expressive without thinking about the consequences. When Miss Mitten reported the behaviour of the children, they were enforced to undergo an imposition. So they thought that Miss Mitten was their enemy. Later when they came to know that Miss Mitten was killed in an accident when a milk van was reversing. Perhaps, it may be a coincidence but they felt that the justice had been done in their life because when they were reading words in backwards. They were punished. The trauma that tempted them to seek solace in their life after hearing the death news of Miss Mitten.

The traumatic experience began in their life before one week of Sophie Mol's arrival. Baby Kochamma forced them to speak only English. When they were caught them in speaking Malayalam, they were always punished with severe punishment of imposition that *I will always speak in English, I will always speak in English* a hundred times each. When they completed the impositions, Baby Kochamma checked out with her rod to make sure that the old lines were not recycled for new impositions.

Baby Kochamma always enforced them to practice an English car song on their way back from Cochin. They were forced to pay special attention to their pronunciation. Estha had a traumatic experience when they went to see the film, *The Sound of Music* in Abhilash Talkies. Estha did not have a comfortable feeling in the presence of Baby Kochamma and he was afraid of the continuous punishment waiting for him if he would not sing his car song with the correct pronunciation. As a result, he had not interested to watch the film. He faced many difficulties when he reached the talkies. The first difficulty for Estha that he was an only male member in the group as Chacko went for booking a Hotel. Another difficulty, he faced in his life that he had not enough height onto piss in the urinal. He required height to piss in the urinal. If he was not pissing in the pot, he thought that it was a great defeat for him. So he searched for height and he found two rusty tin cans for nothing. He thought that the rusty tin cans were the products of his Grandmother's Paradise Pickle products. A pearl of wisdom suddenly came to his mind. He arranged these empty tin cans in front of the urinal and he stood on them and pissed successfully like a man.

Estha put them back like an obedient man and he was proud of his pissing performance. But he was not aware of what type of ordeal was waiting for him inside the theatre. As he was only seven

years old and so he had to sit on the edge of the chair in the theatre. When the film started, there was a voice in the theatre. It was Estha who was in singing. He felt that he would sing a song as he was in a singing mood. As a seven-year child, he could not resist his temptation. The public in the theatre shouted at him, *Shutup or Getout Getout or Shutup*. Estha felt that he was a little man with a ticket. His mother, Ammu also shouted at him to keep quiet and he surrendered his mood to sing a song. With Ammu's permission, he came out of the theatre and sat on the leather car sofa and sang a song in a nun's voice. The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man caught him and his bitter experience of molestation made him silent mentally. He was incapable to express it but biological expression had come out in the form of a sensation of vomiting from within.

Estha was the victim of trauma created by the big people in the family and society. He became an introvert for an escape route to keep himself away from all humiliations. Even though, he faced the worst thing in his life. Out these traumatic experience, he gradually drifted away from people except his mother and sister at the end. At the age of seven, he understood many big things in his life. He came to understand that he and his sister along with his mother were uninvited members in his Grandmother's house. His maternal uncle Chacko once told them that they had no right to be here and *No Locusts Stand I*. He came to know that his grand aunt, Baby Kochamma disliked the twins as doomed and fatherless waifs. Even the family cook, Kochu Mariya too disliked them without any concrete reason.

Once he said in an imitative way, *Et tu? Kochu Mariya-Then fall Estha*. Kochu Mariya thought that Et tu was the most obscene phrase in English and she also retaliated and commanded to him to go to his father's house. Then he understood that two persons only loved him, his mother and his sister. Estha had exhibited very unusual behaviour and temperament in his life. Sense of insecurity, lack of parental love and feelings of being unwanted in Grandmother's family were the reasons for the abnormal behaviour of Estha. Estha was not ready to come back home when his mother begged him to do so. Trauma, the children faced from the people decided the predicament of the children's future.

This trauma made them adopt the philosophy of everlasting loses confidence in children's life:

a) *Anything can happen to Anyone*

And

b) *It's best to be prepared.*

Estha's teachers wrote in his Annual Progress Reports: *An average student or satisfactory work*. His teachers made a complaint: *Does not participate in Group Activities*. Death of Khuchand was the last shock to Estha for derailing his normal life. When Khubchand died, he walked away from the world. He walked away for hours without any stop. Initially, he walked only in his neighbourhood, gradually he extended into distant places.

Rahel, the sister of Estha was eighteen minutes younger than her brother. They shared common traumatic memory and they commonly suffered because of their joint psychological experiences and joint identities. But the traumatic experiences made different results in these children. Estha was quiet, timid and polite, a passive victim. But in Rahel, she became a rebellious, aggressive and expressive.

Conclusion

To conclude, children are the most neglected class in society. They need care, attention and protection. Parents and teachers never try to understand their traumatic problems and many times, their problems are unheeded by others as the silliest matters. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* portrays the trauma and its psychological consequences in children's lives with all aesthetic sense.

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