



# ***GOD OF SMALL THINGS: A SAGA OF ETERNAL SUFFERINGS OF WOMEN UNDER PATRIARCHY***

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## **Abstract:**

*Postmodern Indian Literature in English is a powerful expression of Indian women novelists who made major contributions to the realm of English fiction. Indian novel has increased significantly in terms of quantity, diversity, and maturity. Eminent novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Das, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, and many more, with their creative output, have contributed to the enrichment of literature during the last few decades who responsively exposing the different problems and sufferings of women and challenging the gender prejudice role of society. In their creative writings, the female characters either revolt against the subjugation of women and the oppressive role of family, society, caste, creed, and culture, including the long-standing patriarchy or reinvent the feminine ethos. Arundhati Roy's debut novel, "The God of Small Things" is a saga of women's eternal suffering in a patriarchal society where women are oppressed and even deprived of their socio-political, economical identity and basic fundamental rights as a human being. Roy makes an excellent point about how women become victims of violence, exploitation, estrangement, suffering and exile. The novel deals with the sufferings, struggle and subjugation of three generations of women: Mammachi, Ammu and Rahel. This idea serves as the basis for the present research paper, which attempts to explore how three generations of women are suffered painfully in the novel.*

**Key Words:** Suffering, humiliation, Patriarchy, Society, Subjugation.

The famous Booker Prize Winner Indian novelist Suzanna Arundhati Roy, better known as Arundhati Roy, was born in 1961, in Shillong, Meghalaya. She is a well-known Indian author, actress, and political activist who is deeply concerned with India's social problems, particularly those affecting the socially marginalized and deprived people. She has won several national and international awards that includes the National Film Award for Best screenplay, the Lannan Foundation's Cultural Freedom Award, the Global Exchange Human Rights Awards, the Sydney Peace Prize, the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Norman Mailer prize. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* has had a profound influence on Indian English writing in recent years. Indeed, the novel has been widely acclaimed as a significant contribution to the post-modernist literary movement.

*The God of Small Things* presents the realistic portrait of the predicament of Indian women, including their tremendous suffering, pain, subjugation, oppression, and unjustifiable humiliation in a male dominated society. Though it is interesting to note that the novel presents more women than men, most of the men are vague, while women are vibrantly portrayed and engage the center-stage, the novel stresses on the miserable and painful as well as rebellious image of women. Baby Kochamma and Mammachi belong to first generation women in the novel. Mammachi, a mother of Ammu and Chacko and a wife of Pappachi, is a significant character. She is the silent sufferer throughout the novel, as she is a victim of her husband's brutality and capricious behaviour - "his black moods and sudden bursts of temper". She frequently receives the humiliation, physical violence and harsh beatings with no reason, "every night he beats her with a brass of flower vase".

Mammachi becomes the victim of Pappachi's anger she begins pickles factory successfully but being jealous he denies to help her as it is not "a suitable job for high-ranking ex-Government official". She is suffered, humiliated and beaten savagely without reason by her husband. Even her love for violin is crushed when her music teacher mistakenly tells Pappachi that his wife is "exceptionally talented" as he can't resist his savage fury in him. The climax arouses when he tries to shatter the spirit of woman's aspiration and her independent thinking by breaking her musical instrument and throws it into the river. She endures painful suffering and has her soul crushed because she was a woman who was creating a space for her. Roy realistically presents that how Mammachi gives the status of God to Pappachi and how she accept all of his cruelties as the will of God.

Although Baby Kochamma represents the first generation she is less sufferer to any other characters due to her ability to challenge societal norms for women. She even had the courage to fall in love with Father Mulligan, an Irish monk, and had left her family to pursue him by converting herself to Roman Catholicism. She suffers due to failure in love and of subordinate status under patriarchy.

The novel revolves round suffering of the protagonist, Ammu, stands in for the second generation, comes out as a sorrowful and betrayed character who wants to live her life on her terms but is ruthlessly oppressed. Her suffering starts in her family and ends with her death in society because she is oppressed by her father, her mother, her husband, her brother, her aunt, the police, and ultimately by the male dominated society. Her childhood was full of suffering and tragic, as a child her father violently beat her "with iron-topped riding

crop". Ammu is intentionally deprived of higher education by her father. She endures boredom, isolation, humiliation and secondary place in her family, so - "All day she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother". In a desperate yearning to escape the brutality of her father, Ammu marries an Assistant Manager of Tea Estate against the permission of her parents. Soon she suffers and regrets on her wrong choice of marrying with a person who is an alcoholic and a wife-beater. Eventually, the marriage breaks down when he offers her to his white boss in exchange for being restored his job. When his filthy attitude became violent, "she left her husband and returned unwelcomed to her parents" with her twins- Rahel and Estha.

Ammu deep down in an eternal suffering as she receives mental harassment and hostility from her mother and the other women of the family. Ammu and her children are ignored, hated and humiliated as they are considered a burden but she swallows everything for the sake of her children. Baby Kochamma says, "As for a divorced daughter - according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage. As for a divorced daughter from an inter community love marriage..." Ammu is denied a claim in the property under the norms of the male chauvinist society. Chacko straightforwardly tells her, "What's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine".

Fate has another terrible twist to offer her deadly sufferings. She leads to love the untouchable Velutha, she takes the tragic decision to "love by night the man her children adored by day." The couple, discarded by the orthodox society, boldly meets at the haunted house on the bank of the river, Meenanchal, to find peace in unity. When this secret affair uncovered, Velutha is arrested on a fake charge of rape on Ammu made by the Mammachi and Baby Kochamma. In the police custody, he is tortured and humiliated in the most inhuman way possible and beaten to death.

Ammu becomes the victim of extreme humiliation when she goes to the police station to free Velutha. The officer gazes at Ammu's breasts as he speaks. He says, "Kottayam police does not take statements from *Veshyas* (prostitutes) and their illegitimate offspring." He even taps at her breasts with his baton. The most helpless and humiliated Ammu with full of agony mutters to herself, "He's dead ... I've killed him." Unfortunately, her own family members banish her from home. As a result, she is separated from her children and dies alone in a grimy room of lodge. In a male dominated society she suffers as a daughter, wife, and sister and even as a citizen. The author's feminist rage exposes how women become victim of violence, exploitation, estrangement, and isolation as well as how well-oiled exploitative machinery of patriarchal society put Ammu to death.

Rahel is a third-generation woman character who experiences less suffering than other women in the novel. Being a daughter of a divorced mother, she has been treated as an alienated and humiliated by her own family and patriarchal society. She endures suffering throughout her life as a result of not having a family or the affection of her father. Since she was a young child, she has witnessed her mother's unending suffering. She

also had to deal with the agony of a failed marriage and was estranged from her twin brother Estha as a result of Sophie Mol's demise. Her life turns into a living nightmare as a result of her horrible previous memories.

The first generation of women, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, being traditional in their outlook, suffer a lot because they accept the subordinate existence and male domination. The second-generation women, Ammu and Margaret Kochamma, suffers because they rebel against the socio-cultural norms of the society but Ammu pays a heavy price for it. The third-generation woman, Rahel, suffers as she inherits the rebellious attitude and denies the repressions of society. Far from being traditional, she is a transgressor. She is guilty of incest which is not accepted even in the contemporary society.

*God of Small Things* explores that every woman suffers in her own unique manner. The novel is the saga of eternal sufferings, misery, and physical and sexual violence of women in a male-dominated society. It portrays that how women suffer mentally, physically and sexually in male chauvinism. It also depicts a futile struggle of women for their fulfilment and their appalling conditions in a conventional patriarchal society. The author's feminist rage exposes how women become victim of violence, exploitation, estrangement, and isolation as well as how well-oiled exploitative machinery of patriarchal society put Ammu to death.

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