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THE CLASS CONFLICTS IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S "THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS"

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Abstract

Arundhati Roy became universally famous by her prestigious novel "The God of small things" (1997). It is her premiere literary outcome as the first Indian woman to win a Booker award credit for her notable novel "The God of small things". Arundhati Roy focused on her target towards the plight of women and social justice. In this novel, she mainly focused on the caste conflicts in our Indian society. This novel reflects our Indian society's class conflicts and it also shows how deep she is aware of the caste conflicts in our society. The story of "The God of small things" resembles Arundhati Roy's personal life in many ways. This play scattered the caste-base through the woman over her love on an oppressed person. The oppressed person is always suffered and ignored in every situation by others. Here, the others means that they think there are upper class and shows out by their behavior through insulting and humiliating the peoples who are actually like other peoples. In the novel "The God of small things" Arundhati Roy shows boldly and spotless experience of casteism. This novel examines how peak the peoples are forced their crucial actions to the oppressed people. Here, The Evil wins Humanity. Arundhati Roy's openness as a narrator which adds a lot of charm to the novel. Arundhati Roy explains in the novel that connections between the very smallest things and the very biggest things. The God of small things is also focused the theme of humanity identity and abusive of women in our Indian society.

Keywords: conflicts, oppressed, humiliating, spotless, abusive.

Introduction

Arundhati Roy's "The God of small things" is a novel which openly talks on the subject of compound levels. This novel deals with the satire policy of politics, interrogating of casteism, patriarchy. Arundhati Roy explores how the differences of caste, gender, class through social institutions and manner. These affect human connections, kindred and be in somebody's space on individual desires. The discriminatory behavior of caste system is shown by Roy when she depicts the miserable conditions of untouchable and how they were treated as sub-human entities. The novel flashes the light on the early life of the novelist. "The God of small things" is an autobiographical novel. The character of Ammu in the novel represents the author Arundhati Roy's mother is a south Indian woman.

Class conflicts

The class conflict is the most major theme in this novel. The caste conflict means the group of peoples are marginalized oppressed and pass over on the cultural, political, social and religious foundation. Caste plays a very important role in Indian society. It deals with the analysis of how they are dehumanized at the hands of the upper caste people at a range of levels. The novelist have depicted dreadfully sensitive issues of untouchables and marginalized sections through this novel. These class conflicts or caste discrimination is a very disgraceful drawback of Indian society. The author Arundhati Roy intensely observes our society, the bump into with reality that makes them aware of this social evil of untouchability. An untouchable caste called the Paravan. She also shows how the women and untouchables are both treated as uncongenial and subjugate objects in this social structure. Such humiliation is common for them as they are women and untouchables. Consequently, Women have been deprived of economic, social and cultural equality. Mammachi has been ill treated by her husband in the past. The God of small things deals with the troubles of women as daughter and a wife in patriarchal culture. The upper caste people regarded untouchability as effluence, or defilement and always thought of ways to search out do away with of it. They are not allowed to enter their house or touch things of the upper caste. Roy brings out the condition of the demoralized. "The God of small things" focuses on the most important issue of class conflict. Caste system is deeply rooted in the society. Arundhati Roy is deeply allied with India's social problems. She has expressed all the problems faced by common. She has tried to spotlight on the blazing problems of the society. The class conflict is an approach used to study literature, giving emphasis to the voice of marginalized people in the society. Marginalized people are socially, politically, economically and legally deprived of their 'rights' as human beings in every sphere of life and society. Untouchables and females are considered as marginal entity in the society. The novel are representation of caste-system deeply rooted in India and so called upper class. The novel "The God of small things" is the representative of life and life is nothing but the real picture of society. There is a great impact of society on writers in which they are living. In every society, there are various sections to which people belong. There are sections of society that are regarded as class conflicts. The class conflicts are those people deprived of socio-economic opportunities for their nourishment and they are victims of social, cultural and political exclusion. The demoralized, the poor people are regarded as class conflicts.

The Indian society is classified into various classes such as upper class, the non-upper class and the depressed classes. Among these classes exist many castes, sub-castes, which follow numerous practices and usages; surprisingly each of them is unique. The influence of upper caste is felt in the socio-religious and cultural lives of the class conflicts sections of society.

Arundhati Roy in her novel "The God of small things" depicts the house of Velutha, the paravan as it

'...Was dark and clean. It smelled of fish curry and wood smoke. Heat cleaved to things like a low fever... Velutha and Vellya Paapen's bedding was rolled up and propped against the wall... a grown man could stand up straight in the centre of the room, but not along its sides'.(p 208)

Arundhati Roy factually describes the helplessness of Vellyan Paapen, the father of Velutha. He has to crawl backwards and he takes the social disabilities that are imposed on the marginalized section by worn-out tradition. Arundhati Roy says,

"By the time he understood his part in History's plans, it was too late. To retrace his steps he had swept his footprints away himself crawling backwards with a broom". (p 200)

Arundhati Roy depicts the pitiful conditions of the downtrodden and how they were treated as secondary. There was a time when;

“Paravans where expected to crawl backwards with a broom sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christmas would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a paravan’s footprints... they had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed” (p 73-74)

The story transparently revolves around the life Ammu belonging to a small place called Ayemenem near Kottayam in Kerala. Ammu the protagonist grew up in a family where her father Pappachi regards that investing on education is an pointless expense for a girl. But the same venture on his son’s education is in advance resources. The monetary constraints peak the family’s economic grade. Ammu’s marriage becomes a burden to her retired father. For holiday Ammu goes to Calcutta where she meets her brochure husband working in a tea estate as agent who proposes to Ammu to marry her. She gives her permission and marries him. Marriage is the only dependable and trustworthy shelter where one can break away from own parental home with societal support and security.

Human Identity

In this novel, the core concept focused on the one of the major theme of this novel is Human Identity. Human identity which is destroyed by oppressive forces often symbolized by a superior God who is not allowing inferior Gods to exist and occupy places of structure Arundhati Roy has earned a distinct and creditable space for her particular attention towards the plight of women on social justice under constitutional provisions.

Ammu got divorced and having two children: Estha and Rahel. Ammu’s parents have ‘Paradise pickle factory’ where Velutha is employed. The relationship between Ammu and Velutha is portrayed as a protest against the existing laws of society. It attacks the institution of family, religion, politics, and public administration. The story reveals critical factors of life emanating from the awareness. These are love and sex developing between Velutha and Ammu. Their love concern brings misfortune in their life because what they do not tolerable to society due to different castes and creeds which are the prevailing paradigms of Indian society. These are not new. They have come into way of life from beginning of recognized history.

Ammu does not get education properly due to lack of proper facilities. Chacko is her brother. Mammachi is the name of her mother. Pappachi is her father whose traits are not good. He beats his wife and they suffer meekly. After, Ammu’s marriage, her husband asks her to live with his English Boss, but she refuses to do so. Being disappointed, she returns to Ayemenem to her parents with her twins. She lives a miserable life. In her own house she lives as a secondary to the wishes of all. Her parents fail to understand her needs and desires. And they behave indifferently with her and to her children mercilessly.

“Within the first few months of her return to her parents’ home, Ammu quickly learned to recognize and despise the ugly face of sympathy” (p 43)

Rahel has a flashback. She was seriously ill. Estha never saw her when she was sick. The last time Ammu came back to Ayemenem. Rahel was eleven and just expelled from school. Ammu had lost her receptionist job because she remained absent for many days for being sick. The narrator remarks that it was as if Ammu thought that no time had passed.

Both her children and she stood orphaned. They were physically present in the village, they were socially boycotted and isolated. Similarly, Velutha always isolated because of his status as an untouchable. But he is a playmate for the children of Ammu. During short span of time, romance bloomed between Ammu and Velutha. She began to loves him and gradually she lost herself in the world of Velutha. But our society has a some crucial love laws. It was shattered. Because of their awkward and crucial social love laws both Velutha and Ammu were died. Baby Kochamma has known about the love affair of Ammu with Velutha. She was strongly against the love affair to Comrade Pillai who is one of the member of the Communist party. The narrator also tells us that we can't really blame Comrade Pillai for his role in these events – it's not his fault that he

“Lived in a society where a man's death could be more profitable than his life had ever been”.

The police beat Velutha with extreme violence and brutality. The narrator describes his skull cracking and his broken ribs puncturing his lungs. The policemen stop beating Velutha. We learn that his skull is fractured in three places. The bones in his face resmashed, leaving it featureless and mushy. Six teeth are broken. He's bleeding from his mouth because four of his ribs are puncturing his lungs. His spine has been damaged. His intestine is ruptured. Both of his kneecaps are shattered. Velutha murdered. After she heard about the murder of Velutha, she lives a miserable life and she also committed suicide. She dies at the age of twenty seven. She dies at Bharat lodge in Alleppey while preparing for an interview. The church refuses to bury her. Wrapped up in a dusty bed sheet, she is disposed in the electric crematorium in the presence of Chacko and Rahel. Dual tendencies are commonly found in the life of man. They find out the course of his life, always remaining in conflicts to each other. In the life of Arundhati Roy, readers may find such conflicts in abundance which are indirectly expressed in the novel at several places. These conflicting forces add up to the contrasting forces in the structure of the sequence of events. Pappachi is found torturing his wife always quit viciously. In order to escape from these tortures, Ammachi starts scribbling cooking tips which later provoked her to establish a pickle factory. The story ends with the ruins of the pickle factory. Ammu fell in love with a Bengali drunkard betraying and antagonizing her parents. Deserted by the drunkard, she experienced the torture of remaining husbandless. Her relationship with Velutha quenches her sexual thrust which then gets converted into a sensitive romantic affair. Ammu is a fight back struggling inside her to cross the limits that block Indian women.

Ammu with Velutha, has to pay a heavy price for transgressing the love laws by having an illegitimate affair with Velutha, Ultimately she is disowned by the society, separated brutally from her children and faces death. Of all the characters in the novel, Ammu stands unconquerable against the hegemonic forces of male oriented society, it's cruel code of belief and background. Many of Rahel's qualities mirror that of her mother, Ammu. Ammu also did not accept the life that was handed to her; rather, she embarked on a journey with a man she loved – an untouchable that begged more trouble than ever predictable. While her lover had already been from an oppressed caste, Ammu chose the road he had been set upon in order to be with him, and it resulted in her termination. The strong willed mother set an example for her independent daughter, and at a young age. Rahel was able to see past the limitations of death, situation and fate. While Estha, who had live much the same life as Rahel, he moved around without a sound and lively in a closed-off-world, his twin sister dared to dream and let herself go. She imagined what she could not send for; she believed what she could not see. Rahel's willingness she imagined what she on, much like her mother, reflect this. Her actions showed her determination not to let the world around her shape her and in this, she defines the world altogether.

There is always oppressor and always an oppressed. This universal paradigm is generalized in terms of the big things and the small things which allies with the symbolism of the lantern and the lamp. On this level of ideas, this would mean more or less, the same thing as Karl Marx's analysis of the moneyed class and the poor people. The former have become rich by virtue of the labours put up the poor. The poor have become poorer because they are not allowed to share the excess they generated. This could also be viewed in terms of patriarchal and matriarchal structure. Further binaries are implicit too.

Women lack existing means for organizing themselves in a unit which can stand face to face with the correlative unit. They have no post, no history, no religion of their own, and they have no such shared aims of work and interest as that of the working class... they live dispersed among the males, attach through residence, housework, economic condition and social standing to certain main-fathers or husbands more firmly than they are to other women.

"Pappachi would not allow Paravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that touchables touched. Caste Hindus and Caste Christians. Mammachi told Estha and Rahel that she could remember a time, in her girlhood, when paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints". (p 73-74)

"The God of small things" is an ancient drama played out against an unmistakably modern backdrop. It turns the clash of tongues and histories in Kerala. The novel has it all: the echoes, calls and the cries of the Earth. It is an uncoiling spring of human foreboding and inevitability.

Conclusion

Arundhati Roy's prestigious novel "The God of small things" thus turns out to be constant chronicle in the low – mimetic mode, of the ever, suffering humanity which has been for long, victimized by forces who have enjoyed position, power and language. Once the binaries are created, which novel beautifully does, the implications as well as the suggestive localities keep on multiplying. The novel thus annihilates vast areas of social experience into the multiple layers. Roy portrays her women characters as being ragged between traditional restrictions and modern free zones. No doubt, Arundhati Roy shifted the issues related to women prevailing practically in the recent times in the margin.

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