

Theme of Gender Discrimination in Arundhati Roy's the God of Small Things

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Abstract

Feminism is a movement giving voice to women's subordinated position in society and discrimination encountered by them because of their sex. This paper aims is about the gender discrimination through Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things. Roy's The God of Small Things is her first novel and the winner of prestigious Booker prize in 1997. The novel portrays a truthful picture, of the plight of the Indian women, their great suffering, cares and anxieties, their humble submission, persecution and underserved humiliation in male dominated society. The focus here is on gender discrimination in conservative patriarchal dominated family. Arundhati Roy brings out three generation of women; Mammachi, Ammu and Rahel. The common point to these three generation women is they lead an unhappy conjugal life due to the male dominated society. Roy depicts the issue of gender discrimination through the central character of Ammu. Ammu cannot live her life happy from her childhood to death. Education in society must be given to both men and women without any partiality or gender base discrimination. But in this novel, here Ammu did not get her higher education. Because her parents thinks that higher education to a women would corrupts a lady. On the other hand Chacko, her brother is sent to Oxford to study further. There is a lot of problem that Ammu faced in this novel by men.

KEYWORDS: Discrimination, Gender, Persecution, Patriarchal, Partiality.

Feminism is a movement giving voice to women's subordinated position in society and discrimination encountered by them because of their sex. In the male dominated society many of them considered that a woman should be loyal, obedient and they have to do house hold chores only. Women are discriminated because of their sex. They should not be discriminated by their sex. In this society Women is oppressed by many issues. Here this paper main is to focus on gender discrimination in conservative patriarchal dominated family. The word "patriarchy" comes from the Latin word, pater means father and arch means rule which signifying the rule of the father.

The theme of gender discrimination is the most favourite one for the contemporary Indian women novelists in English. The main objective of women writers of the day is to present various roles played by women in the society and bring the darkness of centuries of her life to light. Though the archetypal roles of women as mothers, wives, daughters and the "other" woman continue to haunt the imagination of these writers yet they try to view the strength and weakness of the female sex as problems which are arising out of culture, social, sexual, economic, ideological, political and gender equation has been radically altered, women are emerging with increases awareness of gender roles and gender identity.

In this paper I have chosen to prove the theme of gender discrimination through the novel of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Arundhati Roy is an Indian novelist, Social campaigner, cultural critic and a popular political figure in contemporary Indian literature in English. *The God of Small Things* is her debut novel which received the prestigious Booker prize in 1997. The novel deals with the horrors of the gender discrimination in India and how women in general are marginalized and oppressed at the hands of patriarchy. The novel also portrays a truthful picture of the plight of the Indian women, their great suffering, cares and anxieties, their humble submission, persecution and underserved humiliation in male dominated society.

In *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy brings out three generations of women; Mammachi, Ammu, Rahel. The common point to these three generations of women is they lead an unhappy conjugal life due to the male dominated society. The first generation of women is Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, are content with their subordinate existence and silently approve of patriarchy. The second generation, Ammu and Margaret Kochamma shows assertion and aversion to the socio-cultural codes of the orthodox society.

The story of the novel moves around Ammu, who is an example of her loneliness, helplessness, agony and affliction through the eyes of her young children Estha and Rahel, who are twins. In this novel men always dominated women. Like Ammu she also undergoes such domination from her childhood to death. Each and every right is equal for men and women. Education is not only for men but for women also. It will give both men and women without any partiality or gender based discrimination. Education makes the man to feel complete in their life. Educating women will make the world more prosperous. It develops all the faculties of man like physical, mentally and spiritual. By seeing the benefits of education, women should not be devoid of taking higher education.

In this novel, Ammu did not get her higher education. Because her father, Pappachi thought that higher education corrupts a lady. The college studies as described by Pappachi as corrupting lady. Her father insists her to learn household chores, rather than college education, which would make her marriage easier. Ammu has to discard education; but on the other hand her brother Chacko, is allowed to be sent to Oxford to study further education. Her parents believe that educating their son will help their family. But Chacko did not do good in education there. He is allowed to study further education because the main reason is that he is a male, whereas Ammu is a female who is deprived of receiving education. She hates to live with her family in Ayemenem house

Finally Ammu convinces them to let her spend a summer with a distant aunt in Calcutta. In Calcutta Ammu attended one wedding reception function and she met her future husband Baba. Baba was working as an assistant manager in a tea estate. "He proposed to Ammu five days after they first met. Ammu didn't pretend to be in love with him. She just weighed the odds and accepted" (TGST 39). Ammu got married to Baba later she discovered that he was addicted to heavy alcohol. In one of the incidents he asks her to satisfy his boss, Mr. Hollick's in order to save his job. Mr. Hollick says Baba that "You're a very lucky man, you know, wonderful family, beautiful children, such an attractive wife.... 'An extremely attractive wife'..." (TGST 41-42). He also suggests

him to send Ammu to look after him. After that Ammu divorced Baba and came to Ayemenem house with her twins.

Manju Kapur, who occupies an important place in the world of Indian English literature. She is a well-known novelist of great reputation and her teaching experience and ability are clearly visible in her novels. She has written five novels and all her novels have received ample appreciation from the readers, reviewers and the critical experts of the literature. She presents everything in her novel hopes and aspirations, failures and frustrations, conflict between two generations and self-realization. She seems to be a wonderful in the presentation of various types of human relations in the novel. In her novels, Manju Kapur seems to be always dealing with family as the central issue. Family teaches them to understand human relationship which is the essence of the continuity of human existence. Her first novel *Difficult Daughters*, published in 1998, attracted the readers from all sides. This novel received the prestigious Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 1999 for the best first book in South Asia. Her second novel *A Married Woman* was published in 2003 and this novel brought much attention for her. The third novel *Home* was published in 2006. This novel is clear epitome of her deep-rooted understanding of Indian women in the traditional society. Her fourth novel *The Immigrant* was published in 2009. Her fifth and last novel *Custody* was published in 2012.

Manju kapur's *Home* deals with the lives of different generations of women. It looks at women from the traditional way and reading this fiction one is deluded to believe that women are born just to marry, cook for their in-laws home and deliver forth children especially sons. In *Home*, Manju kapur is in search of new alternative in her presentation of the character of Nisha. The struggle of the protagonists between tradition and modernity and their need for an identity in the society forms the theme of the novel. The novel *Home* presents Nisha, the protagonist as bold, educated and balanced.

Manju Kapur's novel, *Home* takes us through a brisk and strangely captivating account of three generations i.e., the first generation of Lala Banwarilal, the second of his two sons, and the third of his grand children. The first generation of Lala Banwari Lal, head of the family, runs a sari business in Karol Bagh, Delhi, where he settles after partition of India. Banwari Lal has two sons – Yeshpal and Pyarelal and a daughter Sunita, who already married and has a son Vicky. Yeshpal marries with Sona and Pyarelal marries with Sushila. Sona's sister Rupa is the wife of an educated but badly paid government servant, Premnath. Banwari Lal is a believer in the old ways. Men work out of the home, women within. Men carry forward the family line, women enable their mission. His two sons Yashpal and Pyare Lal unquestioningly follow their father in business and in life but their wives do not. Neither does his granddaughter Nisha who makes her choices considered unavailable to the women of the family.

Both the sisters are hard workers, good at heart and live with their in-laws in the same area. All are the members of the next generation to Banwari Lal. After an accidental death of Sunita her only son Vicky is taken to Karol Bagh, Delhi from Bareilly. As Sona does not conceive for a long time, her mother-in-law assigns to her the responsibility of Vicky. Meanwhile Sushila gives birth to Ajay. Sona feels her life has been misery and she is always taunted by Maji for not bearing a child. She keeps fasting for a long time for the want of a child but it helps her in no way. So Yashpal plans to visit a shrine at

Chitai near Almora. It is believed that the Goddess of this mountain is very powerful. Rupa and Premnath also accompany them.

After two months Sona comes to know that she has conceived. Soon she gives birth to a girl 'Nisha'. When her horoscope is matched, she is declared as Mangli. After Nisha, Sona gives birth to a son Raju. Meanwhile Sushila gives birth to her second son Vijay. So including Vicky, Ajay, Vijay and Raju are the representatives of the third generation. In the early part of the novel Nisha, in her infancy phase, falls a prey to the carnal desires of Vicky, a fifteen year boy and her kin. Vicky tries to seduce her. It affects her psychologically and mentally. She is sent to Rupa's home for a change.

In Rupa's house Nisha has no problem at all. Rupa and Premnath understand all that there is a hand of Vicky behind Nisha's miserable condition. Here, she felt comfortable and ore concerning. Rupa was also childless. Premnath and Rupa looked after Nisha very carefully: "Nisha now finds herself in an atmosphere very different from the one she had lived in. As the only child she was the centre of intrest, concern and attention"(24)

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