

The Retrospective Elements in Theme: Special Reference to ‘The God of Small Things’

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Abstract

Human life always involves unexplainable complexities which differ strangely from person to person through both its diverse and adverse ways. Life may not be portrayed distinctively by words or determined by minds, which makes it attractive or distractive and this resultant queerness irrespective of the time frame forms the basic issue of Literature. There the shades of either self-perception or appreciation are evoked into the words which form a crucial puzzle like life. Such puzzled circumstances may not be illustrated within the curtailed boundaries of morality. ‘*The God of Small Things*’, the novel by Arundhati Roy deals with such strange and delicate demeanours of human character with the vision that the human character is so unpredictable that whatever may happen at any time. The picturesque moments appear in the novel in terms of morality may surprise moral people which also include certain puzzles which cannot be explained in terms of traditional morale. The already globalized cross-cultural elements also have affirmed *The God of small things* to the entire world. The borders of the self-esteemed conscience on so-called morals have to be refined or waved off so as to attain the appreciation level of the novel. As T.S. Eliot referred, ‘appreciation may not involve complete comprehension’ can form a basic rule for the different levels of appreciation of the novel.

Key Words : Moral Conscience, Self- perception, Racial discrimination, Traditional Morale, Panoramic Vision

Introduction:

The God of Small Things is the Catharsis of Arundhati Roy. As she once referred, writing is just like respiration or a mode of survival for her. Whenever she thinks that she cannot conceive the ideas anymore, she would never hesitate to deliver them. Similarly nothing minute is negligible in the world of writing and publication. These are some of the pivotal elements of her vision on creativity and hence an apt title is granted to the novel. The novel marks the expression of a pinch of very rare experiences. The various episodically twined versions involve innumerable perceptions. The depiction that includes the sharing of home-sickness, blind narration irrespective of

moral/immoral differences, the expertise shown in the use of an apt language, pin-point observations etc. also have played a crucial role in the public acceptance of the novel.

The God of Small Things – Thematic perceptions

The novel involves certain incidents happened in connection with a Christian family some three decades ago at Aymanam a place near Kottayam, Kerala. The plot cannot be considered as a mere story of imagination. More than a dozen characters are present in the novel. The story moves around a mother [Ammu] and her two children [Estha and Rahel] who had left Calcutta being quite fed up with the life there and abandoned by the lady’s

husband. The story reveals the stressed and frustrated lives of the two innocent children who were forced to live on as half-Hindu and half-Christian. Most part of the story is being coined through the visions of the children aged some seven to eight years. But a stream of maturity is evident all throughout the novel which hints at the might of the author. The little eyes of Rahel explicit the childhood days of Arundhati Roy as it is referred by the critic, Dr. Mavelikkara Achuthan. The mother Ammu and her children sometimes alone and other times together narrate the story which makes even certain confusions at times amid the fluent reading. The Uncle Chacko is also a major active character in the novel.

Ammu is a victim of an unsuccessful marriage. She left her life with the husband and returned to Aymanam with the twins, Estha and Rahel. Being still young, she set up and kept on a sexual relation with Velutha, the son of Paravan, one of her household workers. Her mother Mamachiyamma tried in many ways to break the relation. But Ammu never kept an ear to her mother's voice. She was so fascinated by the strong and stout body of Velutha, but pure black in colour. Even the slight elements which involve among the beauties of their mating are positively depicted by the author. Ammu could keep on her sexual relation with Velutha without any impediments since she had her uncle 'Oxford Chacko' a returnee from England leaving his wife there, who also had chosen a similar path.

Entry of a late but short-lived character Sophimol makes a slight twist in the novel. Sophimol is so innocent a character that she was greatly mourned by the readers for her untimely death being

drowned while taking bath in the river Meenachil with Estha and Rahel. But later Velutha was arrested being alleged to kidnap and murder Sophimol and was brutally tortured by the police in this regard. Velutha, being a Dalit youth was actually being tormented for his unauthorised sexual relation with his landlord's daughter.

Velutha here becomes a symbol of victim of racial discrimination. The fate of Velutha may be depicted as a part of the remnants of landlord- slave attitude still being unchanged even in the contemporary modern society. He was really inflamed in the wrath of Capitalism. Even the communist party in which Velutha was a member never intervened in the matter. Comrade K.N. Pillai also had kept mum in the matter. The status proved the all time policy of avoidance of the communist party towards the Dalit issues once again, especially the cases of torture of the downtrodden. The detriment of the author towards the communist party is evident in comrade K.N. Pillai who was being introduced as a 'comrade of allegations'.

'The God of small things' is a store of wild and strange observations. Elements of social criticism are widely spread in the novel. The author points out that Babykochamma, 'The Kohinoor of the family', was never living towards future. Instead she was quite frantically embracing the past and seemed treading towards the past. 'When she was young, she renounced her earthly pleasures but when she became old, she embraced it.' The life of Babykochamma was thus so unsatisfied that she went after a Jesuit priest Fr. Mulligan and later dismayed of it. While becoming the nun in the Catholic Church she had an illicit intention to move to the close proximity of Fr. Mulligan. But

she realized it as an inconceivable wish, since only senior nuns can have access to priests and Bishops and left the place to choose the life of a house wife.

Estha and Rahel living in the house at Aymanam were actually leading the life of orphans which rendered them the full freedom in life. The ignorance upon the do's and don'ts in life and the lack of prudence in the adolescence, disposed them easily as the prey of earthly pleasures. Even the lemonade vendor in the 'Abhilash Tackees' (A film theatre) could easily seduce Estha. The author has narrated the experience in detail, which has become only one among a number of such incidents happening in the contemporary society. She describes it as a usual part of both Literature and life.

The author has also included certain scraps of songs which she had heard and learned in her childhood though its relevance in the story has been criticized. But they are scattered here and there in the novel providing a sense of attraction among the flow of reading it. Most of them are enough to arouse many memories of the past in the readers and some of them might have gone quite out of control in using the normal polite language. Anyway, they might be very common among the village life memories of the people of Kottayam.

Velutha who was born as a Dalit youth however appears as a tragic character in the novel whose death was really pathetic, being alleged for the crime he never had committed. He is the hero of the novel and his identity is revealed clearly in the end of the novel when he was put into the tragic part of his life. Hence the novel may also be called as a tragedy in that perspective.

Velutha is appeared both as a communist and Naxalite in the novel. The virtues and qualities seen as a part of his personality are quite different from what we can expect from the so called men of the 'higher order'. But none of them affected his relation with Ammu. Instead, their relation could prove certain new dimensions in the society which withhold still, the taints of discrimination. The author reveals that the creation of the character Velutha was a result of her close affinity to the Dalits during her childhood. She has also mentioned that the character which had influenced her most in the novel was Velutha. 'I have chosen Velutha from the ordinary folk life', she once revealed in an interview to *Bhashaposhini*.

Velutha is created from her vision that life is full of excitement and enjoyment. Velutha submits the power of his whole masculinity before Ammu, not as an inexcusable sin, but as a part of an inevitable eternal beauty. The sophisticated experience expressed in the narration of the sexual intercourse between them need to be read only as a part of a rare life pattern. It is also a part of the dual nature of the two entirely different personalities.

The use of regional language, another peculiarity of the novel has rendered a great extent the possibility of exploring the depths of village life as well as the depiction of the beauty of the innocent village life. The theme of the novel also shows a close affinity to the structure of a film script which leaves chances for the panoramic visions through various angles of the camera. Obviously, certain frames of visions as depicted in the novel are more picturesque than the mere experience of reading it which could also

place the novel to the category of a Visual Novel.

Conclusion:

‘The God of small things’ has also become an encyclopaedia of small things’ as it is referred by Priya A.S. one of the persons who translated it to Malayalam. The craft of writing had made it splendid

though certain structural elements like time concept, irregular narration of the past etc. may make an ordinary reading little tough. The novel expresses only the experiences of ordinary human life. But the art of visualisation is somewhat exceptional though it is confined to the snug circle of a small village.

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