

Feminist Presentation in *The God of Small Things*

Mrs. Gaikwad Rajashri Dattatraya

Asst. Professor, Dept. of English, Yashwantrao Chavan Mahavidhyalaya, Pachwad, (M.S.) India

Abstract

The history of human society is a story of a ceaseless struggle between the have-nots and the haves, the rulers and the ruled, the explorers and the exploited, the oppressors and oppressed. Activists, the creative writers and actors have presented the deprived lives of people through their artistic works. Language, literature and cinema are very important tools to present the suppressed voices of anguish, agony and aspirations of society. Such cinema and literature have played vital role in social transformation and have brought about socio-political revolutions in the world. Many literary movements in the 20th century, during the post-World War period, such as Marxist literature, Phule-Ambekarite literature, rural literature, postcolonial literature, and subaltern literature, explored the voice of marginalization, exploitation and deprivation in the society. Feminism is a rapidly developing critical ideology of great promise. It has evolved into a philosophy encompassing diverse fields of human activity in society. The feminist theory, its varied articulations in a literary context constitute a significant segment for critical endeavour. The present research paper is on 'Feminist Presentation in *The God of small Things*'. The feminist theory is based on emerging self of women in Indian English Fiction and general appraisal of women novelists like Kamala Das, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Rama Mehta, Shashi Deshpande, Uma Vasudevan, Githa Hariharan, Nina Sibal, Arundhati Roy, Mary Shelley, Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, Margaret Atwood, Jean Rhys, Ellen Glasgow and others, as regards their portrayal of women novelists as regards their portrayal of the women's question.

Key-Words: Portrayal, socio-political, deprived, feminist, exploitation

Feminist Literature in English is certainly not a recent innovation. It has been there ever since perspectives on life were recorded in the medium of literature, through it certainly has come to its own of late of recent origin again is the feminist perceptions of literature. Feminism in the Indian context is a by-product of the Women liberalism in general and feminist thought in particular. The indigenous contributing factors have been the legacy of equality of sexes inherited from the freedom struggle, constitutional rights of women, spread of

education and the consequent new awareness among women. The Indian Woman is in the transformation of tradition and modernity presented with the burden of the past but both to cast off her aspirations constitutes the crux of aspirations constitutes the crux of feminism in Indian literature. Actually the woman is in a search for identity and a quest for the definition of the self. It depicts the scrutiny empathetically the plight of women characters at the receiving end of human interaction.

Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* is presented the changing political scene on Kerala, the problems besetting women in a male dominated society. It also depicts caste taboos, the lives of directionless children of a broken home, various descriptions of bees and birds, flowers and trees, sky and river, in a language that is captivating immensely. Arundhati Roy presents the pain and misery of a lonely mother in an indifferent world as perceived through the eyes of her seven-year old children. She describes atypical world where the age old subjugation of women and the severe humiliation of the underclass still persist. She also discusses the women's physical, financial and emotional exploitation together with their mental anguish; traces of oppression seem to have stayed. She shows the women's unequal status in society is a legacy of the past or it is related to culture specific. We find the inequality in Indian society is legitimized by the caste system.

Arundhati Roy states that, "I don't want brownie points because I'm from India. My book doesn't trade on the currency of cultural specificity, even though the details are right...", these details in the form of discrimination against women and the Paravans, despised lot, seem to overpower and overwhelm to all. The distinction between man and woman is a result of the complex operation of economic, political, social, cultural and other factors. We find immense change in women's image and position in the society. These contradictions can be understood by observing the Indian social structure which comprises concepts like caste, joint family

and religious values and practices presenting women's subordinate position in the society.

According to Maitreyi Mukhopadhyay the position of women is emphasized on the poor status of women, their oppression and exploitation, it is not an isolated problem in India. The status of women constitutes a problem in most societies in the rigidly hierarchical and inequitable social structure which exists in India. The subordination and inequality of women is an instrument of function of the social structure.

Arundhati Roy very keenly observes in *The God of small Things*, the social reform in the rigid positioning of women and the intolerable plight of the deprived class. The world of her fiction caught in a state of flux where the values of the patriarchal society are under attack from a new world of self-interest. Observed from feminist aspect, the novel is about the violence inflicted on women and paternal tyranny enveloping the unfortunate children. It shows the double standards of morality in society related to men and women. It also denotes the passive role of a wife in a man woman relationship and the evil-intentioned role of a woman in perpetuating the insult of another woman by a male. Roy has depicted the routine goings-on in an upper-class Syrian Christian family at Ayemenem, situated in Kerala. She carefully presented the cruel realities of life by shifting the attention to dazzling delights of nature in musical language. She uses new words, coinage of new phrases that the children are able to lighten the dense and dark moments in a way providing some relief in life. While describing to Ammu's age when she died it

is presented as, “Not old./Not young./But a viable die-able age” (TGST P.3).

Estha and Rahel are two-egg twins, male and female. They had not established any permanent link with the outside world. They knew that things could change in a day. Their cousin Sophie Mol’s sudden death, this tragedy emotionally wrecked the entire family and signaled a nightmare for Ammu and her twins. It is turning point in their life, “Prepare to prepare to be prepared”(TGST P.200).

Ammu is accompanying to her parents to Ayemenem after her father’s retirement. She denied college education; marriage for her became difficult proposition as dowry could not be afforded. She had to wait at home and become domesticated. Ammu began to feel stifled by the restrictive atmosphere of the house. She had observed Pappachi’s outbursts of physical violence inflicted on Mammachi. He beat his wife with a brass flower vase every night till Chacko intervened and put a permanent stop.

The escape for Ammu, from the oppressive atmosphere was through marriage. Her husband is a sober-looking Hindu Bengali from the tea-estates in Assam. Simone de Beauvoir remarks, “There is a unanimous agreement that getting a husband or in some cases a ‘protector’ is for her (woman) the most important of undertakings....She will free herself from the parental home, from her mother’s hold, she will open up her future not by active conquest but by delivering herself up, passive and docile, into the hands of a new master... “Ammu had not found solution to

his drunken husband, she returned reluctantly to her parent’s home. She became an intruder and less of a member of the house. Baby Kochamma, her Aunt, comments on her as, “She had no position at all” (TGST P.45). Baby Kochamma became a greatest rival of Ammu and she disliked twins also.

Ammu and Chacho are in a similar position about their marital status is concerned. Ammu had been a victim of battering while Chacho had been discarded by his wife for his lethargic and unproductive ways. Being a male, Chacho holds the reins of control and Ammu is at his mercy for her and her children’s subsistence. Ammu works in the Pickles which Chacho claims as “my factory, my pineapples, my pickles” (TGST P. 57). Ammu’s humiliation is the result of her marriage having gone wrong. According to Simone de Beauvoir marriage is not only an honorable career and one less tiring than many others. It alone permits a woman to keep her social dignity intact and at the same time to find sexual fulfillment as loved one and mother. Ammu quarrels with her fate, yet she does not achieve anything concrete. The male tyranny that is unleashed on her takes a cruel form in her parents’ home. Ammu unable to hold control to herself she breaks free of all the constraints and barriers and walks across the life infusing company of the Velutha. Ultimately she is able to become a part of her twins and Velutha.

In this way Feminist English Literature is a spectrum of soft and prominent many colours and shades presented in *The God of small Things*.

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