

# A Thematic Analysis on Power Politics in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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**Abstract:** Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* deals with socio-economic themes. Roy has portrayed the struggle of gender inequality, caste issues, patriarchal ideology, class discrimination and social exploitation. These socio-economic elements highlighted by the thematic analysis of power politics. The power as decision making, as agenda setting, and as controlled through ideology. Through the control power creates binary oppositions in terms of creating hierarchy accordingly with the title of superiority and inferiority groups. Roy has portrayed both the struggle of suffering being an subordinate and suffering as a subordinate to achieve their freedom. Roy has given voice for the voiceless to re-create their socio-cultural norms in her novel, *The God of Small Things*.

**Key Words:** politics, realism, violence, gender conflict, class discrimination, untouchable.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* addresses the socio-economic themes like gender inequality, caste conflict, patriarchal ideology, class struggle, and domestic exploitation. The central characters Rahel, Estha, Ammu, and Velutha are portrayed as the victims of social exploitation in the novel. It reveals the other side of patriarchal culture, which rules and dominates women in their community. The Ipe family is belong to an influential upper-class community in Ayemenem, Kerala. They are economically powerful, politically prominent, and well educated. So, regardless of their gender, age, or social background, the key protagonists are tormented mentally and physically for their identities.

## 2. THEMATIC ANALYSIS

In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, domestic violence is caused due to patriarchal ideology, caste discrimination, economic factor, religious background and age old notions of morality. Mammachi, Ammu and the twins suffer a lot as members of the Ipe family. Ammu marries a man from lower caste community. The Ipe family looks down upon Ammu as she disgraces the family by marrying a Hindu- Bengali and keeping relationship with Velutha, an untouchable. Chacko, who is the brother of Ammu is not ready to accommodate Ammu in his family. He is a selfish man. So he deprives Ammu of claiming the parental property. Ammu falls in love with Velutha who belongs to a different community. So she is treated violently by her family.

Mammachi, Ammu, her children Estha and Rahel, Baby Kochamma, Chacko, and Sophie Mol suffer psychologically and emotionally. When Ammu comes in contact with the police officer, she is sexually abused. Her modesty is violated. When Estha goes to see a movie with his family, he comes in contact with Orangedrink Lemondrink Man who abuses Estha sexually. Estha cannot forget this incident which affects him psychologically. Velutha, Ammu and Mammachi fall victim to physical violence. Lastly Ammu has to bear the brunt of economic violence when Chacko denies her claim on the parental property. Velutha, Ammu, Mammachi and Estha and Rahel, the twins, are the main victims of power politics. Velutha suffers as a member of lower caste community. Ammu suffers as a wife, as a daughter and as a sister. She is a victim of gender difference in patriarchal society. Her children Estha and Rahel have to face violence as children. Mammachi is treated cruelly by her husband. Thus patriarchs of an orthodox Christian family proved to be the perpetrators of the domestic violence. It is observed that women are subjugated by the male members of the Ipe family and men of higher caste and religion treat people of lower caste and religion inhumanly. It is the result of power-politics.

Power is the socially produced impact that controls individuals abilities, behaviours, beliefs, or conduct. Power can be exercised in a variety of ways, such as through institutions, and is not always expressed by the threat or use of physical force by one individual against another. As it arranges individuals in relation to one another, power can also

take structural, discursive, and other forms. For example, it can distinguish between a master and an enslaved person, a householder and their relatives, an employer and their employees, a parent and their child, a political representative and their voters, etc. The term “authority” is frequently used to refer to power that the social structure considers to be morally righteous or socially acceptable. People, who perceive power seen as evil or unjust; Power as decision making, power as agenda setting and power as controlled through ideology. Power creates Binary Opposition (eg: good& evil; masculine & feminine; black & white). The binary opposition creates hierarchy by the title of superiority to one half of the binary while deeming the other to be subordinate.

Roy throws a scathing sarcasm at the dominance of men over women. She wants to make it clear that women are not just objects of pleasure or a way for males to indulge their most primitive desires. In fact, She truly is the most aristocratic and wealthy aspect of a man’s existence. In the novel hypocrite male character is Chacko, Ammu’s brother. Despite being a regular student, he was sent to Britain to study because he is a male member of the Ayemenem house. Ammu cannot continue her studies, nevertheless. She is a woman, and as a result, she has no right to attend college because those pursuits tend to defile a lady. According to some, women are meant to be used for mating, carrying out sexual reproduction, and providing care and nourishment to the family.

The oppression of women is the oppression that is mentioned in the story right from the start. Women are said to be destined for oppression from the moment of their birth; even as children, they endure cruel treatment from a patriarchal society. In short, women are ostracised by their fathers first, then by their husbands, and eventually by society as a whole, which includes other women who believe it is unacceptable to defy societal standards. Because of the social norms that males have established, women are oppressed, and this oppression is passed on from father to son. Furthermore, women are considered to obey the rules of social norms to avoid troubles. critic Pratibha Verma points out that this novel deals with how the lives of women are controlled by men. We learn that the women are oppressed and “denied basic amenities” since they live in a patriarchal society, defined as “a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Verma 180).

Mammachi is a wealthy entrepreneur who becomes increasingly well-liked with time, which makes Pappachi envious of her. In the meantime, he begins to beat her as he directs his frustration on his wife. He does this primarily because she is a woman and he is the man; he is free to treat her whatever he pleases. Pappachi finds it challenging to appreciate his wife's positive traits without getting envious. He oppresses his wife and beats and mistreats her when he behaves out of jealousy. Pappachi lives his life and never offers to help his wife because he thinks that men should be superior to women: "Though Mammachi had conical corneas and was already practically blind, Pappachi would not help her with the pickle-making, because he did not consider pickle-making a suitable job for a high-ranking ex-Government official" (Roy 47). Even if his wife's eyes are terrible, Pappachi does not even consider aiding her because he has a patriarchal way of thinking. The author also highlights gender inequality as a major social ill. At the age of 24, when Ammu should have been enjoying all the delights of life, her life came to a grinding halt: "She spoke to none. Ammu experienced suffering from a very young age. She entertained herself for hours on the riverbank with her miniature plastic transistor in the form of a tangerine. She indulged in cigarette smoking and a late-night swim" (Roy 44). She arrives as a virtual outcast who is cut off from her family and society. The most prejudiced and constant opponent of Ammu, Baby Kochamma, claims: A married daughter had no place in her parent's home. Ammu's only demands of her family are gender equality and acceptance on par with her brother. She hopes her family, which rigorously adheres to patriarchal society's traditions, would give her what she wants. Ammu's oppressed life is summed up by Roy as follows: Ammu had been insulted by the police, left penniless by her brother, mistreated and betrayed by her husband, and cornered and humiliated by her father. Each of them expressed the patriarchal worldview that said woman should have no rights in any situation, regardless of her status as a daughter, wife, sister, or citizen. To her society, she was nothing more than an object, a role that required her to be obedient. (Roy 54)

Ammu is a victim of society because she wants the freedom to choose how she wants to live her life; in actuality, Ammu is a victim because she is a strong woman who supports women's right to make their own decisions about how to live. She strives to break free from the tyranny of the males by fulfilling her needs, even though she is aware that she will never be treated equally to men and that society is against her. Eventually, her life is snatched. Roy also highlights the untouchable was an another social ill. In the novel, the concept of untouchability is examined on two different levels. First, there are the Parvan, or social outcasts, who are never granted even the most fundamental human rights. Second, there are high caste metaphorical untouchables. In this instance, inequality manifests itself through the marginalisation of women in both private and public life. In the novel, Velutha, who belongs to lower class has to find his place in society, he must put up a fight. Roy wants to demonstrate that, with the right guidance, a Dalits or untouchable can also become an engineer, a doctor, or a professor.

### 3. CONCLUSION:

The representation of women's condition in society and their herculean fight to find a sense of identity in a traditionally male-dominated environment strikes *The God of Small Things* as its most important theme. An Indian woman's social structure is complicated and full of ifs and buts. Ammu, the main character, is an abandoned lady with little options in life. In conclusion of the novel, we discover that Arundhati Roy has a profound fear of small things. Small things in this context refers to those who are harmed by cultural, social-political, and economic practises. Roy is focusing on trivial things like young children, women, and Dalits-lower caste people who have historically been viewed as the second sex. Women are treated as private property and always taken for granted in Indian society. Children who lack defence always endure a number of different forms of child abuse. became social outcasts and even experienced sexual abuse. Masters and powerful individuals mistreat and exploit Dalits and underprivileged workers. As a result, Arundhati Roy has given all of these voiceless people a platform in *The God of Small Things* to reimagine their social and cultural status.

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