

# "Reactions And Reflections: The Reception Of The God Of Small Things"

Dr. V. R. Dalavai<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Associate Professor, Department of English Govt. First Grade college, Hunnur, Email: dalavaivrd@gmail.com

**Citation:** Dr. V. R. Dalavai et.al (2022), "Reactions And Reflections: The Reception Of The God Of Small Things", *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 28(1), 245-247  
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v28i01.7269

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This article delves into Arundhati Roy's writing career, with an emphasis on her critically praised novel <i>The God of Small Things</i> . The novel, which won Roy the Booker Prize in 1997, is known for its detailed depiction of the cultural and societal aspects of Kerala, India, particularly caste and gender. The essay explores the novel's semi-autobiographical themes, focusing on Roy's childhood experiences in Aymanam, Kerala. Despite its global success, the novel generated outrage in India due to its sexual content. The article also discusses Roy's subsequent writings, her political involvement, and <i>The God of Small Things'</i> considerable influence on Indian and global literature. The novel, with its complicated narrative and powerful storytelling, has become an important text for questions on postcolonial identity, social justice, and literary innovation.

Arundhati Roy is an Indian author best known for her novel *The God of Small Things* (1997), which earned her the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1997. It became a best-seller. Arundhati Roy is also a political campaigner. She earned the Sydney Peace Prize in 2004, the Orwell Award in 2004, and the Norman Mailer Prize in 2011. According to Amarnath Prasad and B.D. Sarkar, "Arundhati Roy is one of the glittering stars of Indian English fiction." Prasad Preface I.

To begin, Arundhati Roy from Kerala earned a B.Arch from the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi. She began writing screenplays for films such as *Annie Gives It Those Ones* (1989) and *Electric Moon* (1992), which were directed by her first husband, Pradip Krishen. Roy earned his first National Award in 1994. She attacked Shekhar Kapur's film *Bandit Queen* for presenting Phoolan Devi's rape without her permission.

This is how Roy began writing his novel *The God of Small Things* in 1992 and finished it in 1996. According to Wikipedia: "The book is semi-autobiographical and a major part captures her childhood experiences in Aymanam, Kerala." (Wikipedia, Roy III)

Roy rose to international prominence after his book *The God of Small Things* was published. It got the 1997 Booker Prize for Fiction and was named one of *The New York Times'* Notable Books of the Year. It ranked fourth on *The New York Times'* Bestsellers List for Independent Fiction. Roy earned a half-million-pound advance for the book, which was already a financial success. It was released in May 1997 and had been sold in 18 countries by the end of June. Wikipedia adds:

*The God of Small Things* received rave reviews in major American newspapers such as *The New York Times* ("a dazzling first novel," "extraordinary," "at once so morally strenuous and so imaginatively supple") and the *Los Angeles Times* ("a novel of poignancy and considerable sweep"), as well as in Canadian publications such as the *Toronto Star* ("a lush, magical novel"). *Time* named it one of the top five books of 1997. The critical response in the United Kingdom was less positive, and the awarding of the Booker Prize created controversy; Carmen Callil, a 1996 Booker Prize judge, branded the work "execrable". and *The Guardian* dubbed the context "profoundly dismal." In India, E. K. Nayanar, then Chief Minister of Roy's native state Kerala, criticized the book for its unfettered depiction of sexuality, prompting her to face obscenity charges. (Wikipedia 2.)

Arundhati Roy could not write another novel as successful as *The God of Small Things*. Why we don't understand. Even Kiran Desai and Aravind Adiga's other novels did not stand out. Since then, Roy has written television serials such as *The Banyan Tree* and *DAM*. She stated that she would work on her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. She authored writings about politics and culture. Such books as *My Seditious Heart*.

### **Arundhati Roy advocated for the following universal causes:**

1. Support for Kashmir separation.
2. Sardar Sarovar Project
3. American Foreign Policy
4. War in Afghanistan.
5. India's nuclear weapons.
6. Israel
7. The 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament.
8. The Muthanga Incident
9. Thoughts on the 2008 Mumbai attacks
10. Criticism of Sri Lankan government.
11. Views on Naxalites.
12. Criticism of Anna Hazare.
13. Views on Narendra Modi.

Arundhati Roy's other books are listed below:

1. The End of Imagination
2. The Cost of Living
3. The Greater Common Good
4. The Algebra of Infinite Justice
5. Power Politics
6. War Talk
7. An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire
8. Public Power in the Age of Empire
9. The Checkbook
10. The Shape of the Beast
11. Listening to Grasshoppers
12. Broken Republic
13. Walking with Comrades
14. Kashmir: The Case of Freedom
15. The Hanging of Afzal Guru
16. Capitalism
17. Things that can and cannot be said
18. The Doctor and the Saint
19. The Debate between Ambedkar and Gandhi
20. My Seditious Heart
21. Azadi

3

The God of Small Things, by Arundhati Roy, is about the childhood experiences of fraternal twins whose lives are wrecked by the 1960s Love Laws in Kerala, India. It is the practice of untouchability and casteism.

The God's narrative is told in Aymanam, which is part of Kottayam district in Kerala.

The novel's narrative is discontinuous, with the temporal setting shifting back and forth between 1969, when fraternal twins Rahel, a girl, and Esthappen, a boy, are seven years old, and 1993, when the twins are reunited.

AmmuIpe flees her abusive parents, Pappachi and Mammachi, by marrying an alcoholic named Babe in Calcutta. The writer states: "All day she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill tempered father and mother."

The spouse abuses Ammu. Still, she gives birth to twins Estha and Rahel. She leaves her husband and moves in with her parents and brothers Chacko (the latter returned to India from England after divorcing his English wife Margaret after the death of Pappachi).

The multi-generational, Syrian Christian family home in Ayemenem also includes Pappachi's sister, NavomiIpe, known as Baby Kochamma. As a young girl, Baby Kochamma fell in love with Father Mulligan, a young Irish priest who had come to Ayemenem. To get closer to him, Baby Kochamma converted to Roman Catholicism and joined a convent against her father's wishes. After a few months in the convent, she realized that her vows brought her no closer to the man she loved.

Pappachi's sister, NavomiIpe, also known as Baby Kochamma, lives in a Syrian Christian family house in Ayemenem with several generations. As a little girl, Baby Kochamma fell in love with Father Mulligan, a young Irish priest who had arrived in Ayemenem. To be closer to him, Baby Kochamma converted to Roman Catholicism and entered a convent, over her father's desires. After a few months in the convent, she realized that her vows didn't bring her any closer to the man she loved. Her father eventually freed her from the monastery and sent her to America to study. Because of her unrequited love for Father Mulligan, Baby Kochamma stayed single for the remainder of her life, growing bitter over time. Throughout the book, she takes pleasure in the suffering of others and repeatedly manipulates events to create disaster.

Margaret remarried, and her husband died. So her ex-spouse Chacko invited her and her daughter Sophie to spend Christmas at Ayemenem. The Christian family meets Margaret at the airport and encounters a communal disagreement along the way. Baby Kochamma feels humiliated.

Rahel thinks she sees amongst the protesters Velutha, a servant who works for the family's pickle factory, Paradise Pickles and Preserve, and does extra chores for Mammachi. Later at the theater, Estha is sexually molested by the "OrangedrinkLemondrink Man", a vendor working at the snack counter. Estha's traumatic experience factors into the tragic events at the heart of the narrative..

Rahel's claim that she spotted Velutha with the communist crowd leads Baby Kochamma to identify Velutha with her humiliation at the hands of the demonstrators, and she begins to hold resentment for him. Ammu also loves Velutha, a dalit, hence her love for him is taboo.

Later, the society rejects this couple: Velutha's father, VellyaPaapem, exiles his son, while Ammu is imprisoned. Ammu blamed her twins, Estha and Rahel. Sophie and the two went out on a boat trip, and it capsized. Sophie was drowned.

Baby Kachamma reported to the police that Velutha was responsible for Sophie's death. The police arrested him unfairly. Velutha died from police injuries. Overall, Baby Kachamma produced a mess. Chacko kicked out Ammu and her children. Estha did not see his mother, and Ammu died in a motel at the age of 31. Rahel moved to America. The twins saw each other in 1993. Therefore, the novel is a tragedy.

### Conclusion:

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* has received a wide range of responses, reflecting its complex plot and rich cultural setting. Critics and readers alike have lauded the novel for its lyrical prose, unique structure, and moving treatment of societal themes, particularly caste and gender in India. While some have praised its daring storytelling and ability to challenge conventional wisdom, others have criticized it for its complex symbolism and non-linear narrative. Despite the mixed reactions, the novel's influence on Indian and global literature is obvious. It has spurred crucial debates on postcolonial identity, social justice, and the power of narrative, establishing Roy's status as a key figure in contemporary literature. Finally, *The God of Small Things* continues to resonate with audiences.

### References:

1. Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. New Delhi: India Ink, 1997.
2. Prasad, Amarnath and B. D. Sarkar. *Arundhati Roy: A Critical Evaluation*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2010.
3. Prasad, Amarnath, and B.D. Sarkar. *Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: A Critical Appraisal*. Sarup & Sons, 2006.
4. Tickell, Alex. *Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: A Reader's Guide*. Routledge, 2007.
5. Chacko, P. M. "Narrative Techniques in *The God of Small Things*." *The Literary Criterion*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1999, pp. 39-51.
6. Hawley, John C., editor. *Contemporary Indian Writers in English: Arundhati Roy*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.
7. Jani, Pranav. "Postcolonialism, Globalization, and the Literary Canon: The Reception of *The God of Small Things*." *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2002, pp. 236-242.