

An Analysis Of The Tragedy Of Love In “The God Of Small Things”

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“That’s what careless words do. They make people love you a little less.”(Roy, 1997)

The following paper analyzes “The God of Small Things” in the context of the tragedy caused by the lack of love. This novel was first published in 1997 and was a debut writing piece of Arundhati Roy. She is an Indian author, and through this novel, she depicts those experiences of childhood encounters by fraternal twins and their mothers due to the laws and customs regarding the distribution of love. Moreover, it highlights the high impact of small things on the lives of people. Roy writes, “And the air was full of Thoughts and Things to Say. But at times like these, only the Small Things are ever stated. Big Things lurk unsaid inside.” (Roy, 1997) The novel elucidates that, similar to great things, little things also have the power to impact lives and may alter the entire course of life. The story takes place in the region of Ayemenem and revolves around the tragic incidents of a Syrian Christian family. It is depicted that the members of this clan suffer because of a substantial lack of love in their lives. Critiques say that this writing piece of Arundhati Roy analyzes India through the epoch of the post-sixties and enhances its social structure on the micro and macro levels. (The week, 1997)

“The God of Small Things,” similar to many other pieces of literature, this novel is also laden with multiple themes and meanings. It can be referred to as a vast canvas that is painted marvelously with various shades taken by the palette of life. The diction of the novel suggests the standpoint of two fraternal twins named Estha and Rahel, and through their lens, Arundhati explains the profoundness of many factors, including religion, love, agony, life and ambition. Furthermore, Marxism and cast differences, as well as colonialism, are discussed throughout the plot. (Dirlik, 1997) The distances and lack of love between the characters are caused by the several complexities implied by modern life patterns. Gradually, these various reasons, along with a remarkable lack of love, become the cause of the family’s decline.

Evidently, love is the foundation stone of every family and all relationships; however, this core element is entirely missing from the five generations of this Ayemenem family. Almost all the primary protagonists of “The God of Small Things” behave in a distant and indifferent manner toward love as an unknown and far-off subject. (Sonia, 2013) Take the instance of Baby Kochamma, who is the patriarch of the third generation of this family and who has totally lost the real recognition for love in her life. She faced extreme frustration in her early years because of seeking love, and that made her a depressed and gloomy old woman. The disasters of her life led her to decant negativity on every expression of love shown by anyone. This behavior of Baby Kochamma victimizes the Ammu and her twins to a great extent and makes their lives poisonous. The story says that “Baby Kochamma, who is

now eighty-three, is pleased that Esther doesn't speak to Rahel when they interact now, and she gets no special treatment from him. Baby Kochamma doesn't like the twins, and she wishes they would leave soon, as they make her uncomfortable." (Roy, 1997)

As a matter of fact, it is the core responsibility of Baby Kochamma to give a helping hand to the Ammu and her twins as she is the eldest member of the family. However, the situation is worse as she shows an apparent abhorred for them and asserts that "a married daughter had no position in her parents' home; as for a divorced daughter. She had no place anywhere at all, and as for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage." (Roy, 1997) This loveless and unsympathetic attitude of Kochamma plays a key role in the downfall of the family. Similarly, the character of Pappachi is the father of two children but never shows affection or any responsible attitude toward his offspring. His curt and rude attributes remind the "Mr. Compson" (Faulkner, 1927). Love is the most secondary thing for Pappachi, and he is a man who cannot be tamed in the name of emotions. Although this novel is said to be a debut effort of Roy, she very dexterously weaved all the relevant factors and emotions into the fabric of the plot that it represented as a poetical and tragic epic of these twins and their family.

The fundamental concept of this story is to affirm that women are subject to being suppressed by social elements, but by implicating this, she never meant to be a feminist. Contrarily, she highlights that these unfair societal practices exist because people do not know the language of love. This deficiency of love affects the life of Ammu to the most extreme extent as she is tackled by everyone as a non-living thing or just as a doll. Her father; Pappachi has a self-oriented personality and he always shows the visible signs of frustration, similar to Baby Kochamma he exhibits his failures of life through his sadist and malicious behavior. Nevertheless, he knows how to pretend, and therefore, publicly, he instantly acts like a polite and caring gentleman and father. But whenever he becomes alone with his family, he shows vast carelessness and eventually starts to beat and berate her wife, Mammachi. This absence of love within the domestic setting implies profound adverse effects on Ammu's personality as she is the eyewitness to all such humiliating and unacceptable practices. Both of her parents treat her as if she is a hard-to-carry burden, and they restrict her from attending college while, on the other hand, admitting her brother to Rhodes for premium education. This scenario demonstrates the societal boundaries that allocate the ratio of love according to gender.

Eventually, the lack of love and attention makes the Ammu evade the tough environment of her home. The unkindness of family members left her with the only option to get married. Consequently, she knots the wedding ties with a man she does not love at all. However, misfortune does not leave her alone as soon after marriage, she realizes that she made the biggest mistake of her life. Her husband turned out to be an abusive man who likes to torture Ammu mentally and physically in his drunkard state. The imposition of her husband to conduct extramarital relations with his boss makes Ammu turn back to Ayemenem. Though as expected; the lack of love and care in the behaviors of family members make her an outcast as she is divorced now. Meanwhile, Chacko, the brother of Ammu, also gets separated from his wife and shares the same relationship status as Ammu. But the boundaries of love and societal importance created by genders make Chacko the head and Ammu,

the servant. Along with her, the twins face the most harsh ever days as they are unwanted, disrespected and unloved as their mother.

It is demonstrated throughout the story that loves, and societal significance merely depend on gender roles, and through the character of Mammachi, an irony is portrayed that females also play a spinal role in the destruction of other females' lives. In fact, Roy attempts to recall the calamity of her early childhood and wants to convey that a child that brought up in a careless and loveless environment suffers endlessly throughout his or her life. The life and times of Ammu are concrete instances of such realities; she always feels a deprivation of affection from her parents, which makes her make erroneous decisions in her life. Consequently, such decisions made her life more miserable, more loveless. Her life, in turn, affects the patterns of her children's life, and they become loveless and unwanted too. If only she had adequate love from her family, she would never have confronted such a tragic end as she died and the priest denied offering her funeral rituals, so she was disposed of through an electric crematorium process and became a receipt number "498693." (Roy, 1997)

All the characters that hold a major status in the life of Ammu are barren of love. Her father, mother, brother, husband and Baby Kochamma all treated her as a worthless entity and, in turn, made her life a stigma. The disposition of Mammachi implies the rule of a Gujarati term known as "Kundanika Kapadia," which defines a woman's cynical role in the destruction of another woman. Mammachi was a victim of an abusive husband and well aware of the agony of a humiliated and loveless life, yet she never tries to protect her little daughter from the bitterness of this world. Rather, she pushed her into the furnace of societal prejudices. This lack of love becomes the reason for the eternal devastation of Ammu and her twins.

The abusive and drunkard husband further brings misfortune into her life, and she falls into the pitch of darkness. Each and every character plays a crucial role in the miserable life of Ammu. This novel is a significant reference to comprehend the adverse effects of drawing undue boundaries on the delicate emotion of love. Every individual in society and family deserves to be loved by their loved ones. If elders of society understand this fact, they can protect the system from major problems. Through this novel, Roy represents the macro picture of societal blunders as well as the micro illustration of wrong family practices. It elucidates that child a fragile responsibility of parents, and they have to handle them with care; otherwise, they will be broken to be never repaired. "The fact that something so fragile, so unbearably tender had survived, had been allowed to exist, was a miracle." (Roy, 1997) Only love and lots of unconditional love are the keys to the door to ultimate happiness, both individually and mutually.

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