



FORBIDDEN LOVE IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

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Abstract: ‘Forbidden love’ is a major theme that runs through The God of Small things, but in order to understand it, one must deal with themes such as ‘love’ and ‘forbid’. The second kind of forbidden love is that Pappachi’s sister Baby Kochamma. For example, Ancient Greek has different words to denote different aspects of the English word love i.e., *Philia*, *Eros*, *Agape*, *Storge*, and *Xenia*. *Eros* ((ἔρως *érōs*) (from the Greek deity *Eros*) is passionate love, with sensual desire and longing. But the unduly steps taken by men or women to attain through shortcut methods makes it a Forbidden Fruit. The relationship between Velutha and Ammu is solely the pleasing of the body which is not accompanied by the full gusto of *Eros*. Even her own inner moral law doesn’t allow her for an open relationship with Velutha that is why, “Love by night the man her children love by day”

Key words: Forbidden Love, *Philia*, *Eros*, *Agape*, *Storge*, and *Xenia*, Four Law’s

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love,
I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.
And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,
and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains,
but have not love, I am nothing.
And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,
and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”
I Corinthians 13:1-3

Arundhati Roy (born November 24, 1961) won the Booker Prize in 1997 for her first novel The God of Small Things. Roy was born in Shillong, Meghalaya to a Keralite Syrian Christian mother and a Bengali Hindu father, a tea planter by profession. She spent her childhood in Aymanam, in Kerala, schooling in Corpus Christi. She left Kerala for Delhi at age 16, and embarked on a homeless lifestyle, staying in a small hut with a tin roof within the walls of Delhi’s Feroz Shah Kotla and making a living selling empty bottles. She then proceeded to study architecture at the Delhi School of Architecture, where she met her first husband, the architect Gerard Da Cunha. The God of Small Things is the only novel written by Roy. Since winning the Booker Prize, she has concentrated her writing on political issues.

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In English, love refers to a variety of different feelings, states, and attitudes, ranging from pleasure (“I loved that meal”) to interpersonal attraction (“I love my partner”). “Love” may refer specifically to the passionate desire and intimacy of romantic love, to the sexual love of *Eros*, to the emotional closeness of familial love, to the platonic love that defines friendship, or to the profound oneness or devotion of religious love, or to a concept of love that encompasses all of those feelings. This diversity of uses and meanings, combined with the complexity of the feelings involved, makes love unusually difficult to consistently define, compared to other emotional states. Love in its various forms acts as a major facilitator of interpersonal relationships and, owing to its central psychological importance, is one of the most common themes in the creative arts. Love may be understood as part of the survival instinct, a function to keep human beings together against menaces and to facilitate the continuation of the species. However, Greek distinguishes several different senses in which the word “love” is used. For example, Ancient Greek has different words to denote different aspects of the English word love i.e., *philia*, *eros*, *agape*, *storge*, and *xenia*.

1) *Philia* (φιλία *philia*), a dispassionate virtuous love. It includes loyalty to friends, family, and community, and requires virtue, equality, and familiarity. *Philia* is motivated by practical reasons; one or both of the parties benefit from the relationship.

2) *Eros* (ἔρως *érōs*) (from the Greek deity *Eros*) is passionate love, with sensual desire and longing. Some translations list it as “love of the body.”

3) *Agape* (ἀγάπη *agápē*) means “love of the soul.”

4) *Storge* (στοργή *storgē*) is natural affection, like that felt by parents for offspring.

5) *Xenia* (ξενία *xenía*) is hospitality, the ritualized friendship formed between a host

and his guest, who could previously have been strangers. The host fed and provided quarters for the guest, who was expected to repay only with gratitude.

The second theme that has to be correctly understood is that of 'forbid' or the act of 'forbidding'. If something is forbidden, the act of forbidding is done by someone else or by that same person as an act of self-imposition. When God forbade Eve from eating The Apple from The Tree of Knowledge, the act of forbidding is accompanied with punishment if not obeyed; but, unfortunately for Eve, the punishment was beyond her understanding. This is a classic example where two persons are involved, where one brings the Act (Law) into being, and the other obeys it. If this is taken into consideration, there are four steering mediums that enact the do's and don'ts i.e.,

1) Moral Law (created by the inner self that is conscience)

2) Ethical Law (created by Religion, Rituals, Tradition etc.,)

3) Social Law (created by that particular society in which one lives, that is norms created by a society)

4) Legal Law (created by the State).

When Ammu Ipe's husband attempts to prostitute her to his boss the sacredness of Eros apart from *Philia* is violated in the beginning of the narrative sequence by itself thrusts the concept of forbidden love. The nuptial relationship, legalised by the institution of marriage by moral, ethical, social, and legal laws and customs is wilfully, knowingly violated by Ammu's husband, which acts as the starter towards love that is not natural or accepted by the four steering mediums. This is the reason for Ammu to leave her husband along with her children Estha and Rahel (who are twins) and return to live with her mother and brother Chacko in Ayemenem. This inherent natural reason makes the readers to take side with Ammu by not finding fault with her return to her mother and brother.

The second kind of forbidden love is that of Pappachi's sister Baby Kochamma. Here *Agape* is put into question, but since *Agape* is the selfless love shown by God to Man, *Agape* is not endangered but it is the misunderstanding of Baby Kochamma and it is she who endangers herself in the end due to her bitterness. As a young girl Baby Kochamma falls in love with Rev. Father Mulligan, a young Irish priest. The novel does not tell about the parts played by Rev. Father Mulligan, because the story is from the eyes of Baby Kochamma, which makes one to assume that it is solely her own misunderstanding, because she falls in love with Rev. Father Mulligan, on her own accord and gets converted to Roman Catholicism, even goes to the extent of joining a convent, thinking that she could please Rev. Father Mulligan. But she realises that her unwise actions do not bring her close to the man she is in love, where eventually her father rescues her from the convent, and sends her to America for education in Ornamental Gardening. It is this unaccepted love that turns into bitterness in the life of Baby Kochamma.

The life of Margaret also shows that she has not seriously understood the importance of *Philia* and Eros, since she just takes it for granted she moves away from Chacko to Joe through divorce. But, the death of Joe leaves her no choice, for she joins back with Chacko. The day before Margaret and Sophie arrive, the family visits a theatre to see the movie The Sound of Music, where Estha is molested by the "Orangedrink Lemondrink man", a beverage vendor. His fear stemming from this encounter factors into the circumstances that lead to the tragic events at the heart of the narrative. Here, the title of the movie plays an important role, since the movie The Sound of Music is all about family relationship, and how a family escapes war and violence due to their trust and good will on each other. Here, Estha had been uncared for by the family members, he was left alone, in a theatre, is the reason of him being molested. Here, *Philia*, *Storge*, *Xenia*, are twisted into a homosexual relationship of deviant Eros. Since, *Philia*, *Storge*, *Xenia* are surpassed their boundaries broken the moral, ethical, social, religious, and legal laws are broken thereby making this so called love, a molestation.

The relationship between Velutha and Ammu is solely the pleasing of the body which is not accompanied by the full gusto of Eros. This may be because of Velutha's status of being an untouchable. But the erotic relationship between a married woman Ammu with another man than her former husband is a forbidden relationship by the society and furthermore, the relationship between an upper caste and the lower caste is forbidden by the ancient Hindu rules and laws. Even her own inner moral law doesn't allow her for an open relationship with Velutha that is why, "love by night the man her children love by day". When this relationship comes to light Ammu is locked in her room and Velutha is banished. This relationship also causes the tragic end of Velutha.

After a turbulent childhood and adolescence in India, Rahel goes to America to study. While there, she gets married, divorced and finally returns to Ayemenem after several years of working dead-end jobs. Rahel and Estha, both 31-years old, are reunited for the first time since they were children. In the intervening years, Estha and Rahel have been haunted by their guilt and grief-ridden pasts. Estha is perpetually silent and Rahel has a haunted look in her eyes. It becomes apparent that neither twin ever found another person who understands them in the way they understand each other. The twins' renewed intimacy ultimately culminates in them sleeping together. This as a culmination point proves how *Philia* and *Storge* are turned into Eros which is prohibited among siblings.

The novel ends with the last chapter, 'The Cost of Living', where the narrative is once again set in the 1969 time frame describing Ammu and Velutha's first sexual encounter can be seen as the celebration of Eros at the end, at least much better than all the love relationships portrayed in the novel. This ending also shows a suggestion that the Eros between Ammu and Velutha is a much acceptable one when compared to the experiences of all other characters in the novel.

The most important question that one has to ask oneself: "Is Eros a forbidden love?" The clear answer like a cathedral gong would be 'no', because Eros is the basic bond between opposite sexes that guarantees the continuation of the human and animal species in various forms of family, class, caste, ethnicity, and society. In addition, the first blessing, i.e., "And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth." Genesis 1:22. By God the Creator is founded on the concept of Eros. The second blessing uttered by God the Creator, and the first blessing uttered towards human beings: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it;..." Genesis 1: 28; reinstates the fact that Eros is a basic mechanism created by God himself. But the unduly steps taken by man or women to attain through shortcut methods makes it a Forbidden Fruit.

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