



# Re-Envisioning Feminism: The Fiction of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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## Abstract

The feminism in Arundhati Roy's literature is analyzed in this study, with a focus on the novel *The God of Small Things*. She has skilfully demonstrated the position of women in Indian society. Roy is fighting for women's independence so that they can have their own identities and equal access to resources in the workplace and in society. In her work *The God of Small Things*, the women are shown as fully evolved characters, not just as objects. Roy sheds light on some of the most significant issues and themes, such as the inextricable connection between affection and grief and the lasting impact of early experiences in one's formative years.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Independence, Society, Grief, Physical assaults

## Introduction

Women's emancipation in India has led to a closer look at the country's glaring reliance on patriarchal authority. Today's women are not going to be men's mannequins. This has led to a dramatic shift in how women are portrayed in the media. The female Indian essayists have advanced from the stereotypical portrayals of helpless, selfless victims to more nuanced accounts of their inner lives and inconspicuous interpersonal connections. The most significant characteristic of modern portrayals of female characters is the conflicting excitement of men and women in public due to self-affirming women engaged in an ardent search for their personalities. By writing *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy established a name for herself in the academic community and earned her own unique perspective on the world. Her feminist activist stance is revealed, and her heroine fights for women's sanity.

The novel's female protagonists are determined to break free from the constraints of the surprisingly enlightened society's rules and regulations. Ammu, the protagonist, marries a Bengali Brahmin over her family's

disapproval even though she was raised in the household of a Christian family in Kerala. Later on, her better half loses his job, her husband's office manager promises to help him out if he's allowed to sleep with Ammu. When Ammu came to know this, she is not accepted the proposal and defend with her husband, so he is repulsive against her and brutally tortured. So, she ends the relationship with her husband and moves back to her parent's home. In Indian culture, there is a myth that if a married woman moves back to their parents family without her husband, she and her family loses their prestige or status they may have gained. Even at the house where she was brought up and nurtured, she is not welcomed as a member of the family. Ammu's independence of thought ultimately limits her to disobedience. She is acutely aware of the conservatism of the society of which she is a part and the members of her own family.

## God of Small Things: A Feminist Interpretation

The story explores the plight of female characters living in patriarchal households in Southern India. This social space provides evidence of men's emergence as authoritative actors in society. Roy's nonfiction writings, *The Great Indian Rape Trick I* and *The Great Indian Rape Trick II*, are also essential reading for anybody interested in Roy's feminist visual metaphors. Through the lives of her female protagonists, Baby Kochamma, Mammachi, Rahel, and Ammu, author Arundhati Roy expresses her feminist viewpoints in *God of Small Things*. Roy shows the steady shift in women's status in society through these characters, who serve as stars of their own postmodern cultures.

Mammachi is a first-generation woman figure. She is the wife of Pappachi, who is an Imperial Entomologist. She skilfully turns her culinary skills into a profitable side business. Her jarred pickles are so popular that they quickly become their own small industry. Pappachi, green-eyed by his wife's success, beats her mercilessly. Pappachi also dislikes his wife's age difference. Pappachi struggled with retirement's shame. He was seventeen years older than Mammachi and dismayed to find he was older while his wife was young. Pappachi abruptly stops his wife's violin lessons after knowing she's good in the music. Pappachi savagely beats his wife out of irritation. Pappachi's physical assaults against Mammachi were even more detrimental.

Mammachi has suffered in silence for many years, despite the fact that women primarily govern the Syrian Christian Community in Kerala, India. In a patriarchal society, where men have the most sensual, political, economic, and physical power, Mammachi is seen as physically weak, whereas Pappachi is seen as preeminent. Mammachi meekly accepts and abides by his demands. The same thing keeps happening with her son Chacko as well. After he gets back from England, he takes over the pickle business. But Mammachi is the one who puts all of her efforts together to keep the business operational. Chacko's ideas are a mix of socialism and capitalism, which makes the business lose money. However, when problems arise, only Mammachi bears that, while Chacko is kept in the dark. To rerun the factory, Mammachi hired Velutha is, a member of the oppressed (Paravan) caste. His family has been with Chacko's for many generations. Velutha is a very gifted worker, one who is both skilled and energetic. Velutha has a style of his own, unlike any other oppressed person. His skills in updating machinery have made him indispensable at the pickle plant, but on the other side, Mammachi faces widespread hostility from the other higher caste employees because of Velutha's social status.

So, she walks a tightrope between being a successful businesswoman and a respectful housewife without crossing the line into either role's territory. The male-dominated culture suppresses Mammachi despite her numerous strengths.

The novel's main protagonist, Ammu, isn't as meek as her mother. With the introduction of Ammu, Roy adds another layer to her critical examination of Indian patriarchy by addressing the status of isolated women. Ammu is discouraged from continuing her education despite her early age. Contrarily, Chacko, a male member of the Ayemenem House, is sent to the United Kingdom to further his education. Pappachi says women are corrupted by higher education. Because she was unable to go to college, finding a suitable husband was problematic because her family could not pay a dowry. That meant she had to stay in house and learn household chores. She marries the guy she likes to get away from her abusive father. She meets a kind Hindu Bengali from India's tea plantations while on her way to spend time with an Aunt in Calcutta and immediately agrees to marry him.

The luster of wedded happiness quickly fades, and Ammu finds herself the victim of her husband's inebriated rages, prompting her to make the difficult decision to leave him. Ammu decides to leave her husband as soon as their problems begin to have an impact on their two-year-old twins. She realizes that men may take advantage of her, so she returns to her parents' house. Since she is now married, she is theoretically a houseguest rather than a resident. In the same circumstances, her brother Chacko enjoys the affection and respect of their family and the social order, but Ammu and her children endure agony and isolation. A daughter has no legal right to her parents' wealth in traditional Indian culture. This was the situation that happened to Ammu, as a daughter had no claim to her parent's property. Ammu says, "Thanks to our wonderful male chauvinist society" (TGST 57). The peculiar treatment of sons and daughters seems to be transmitted to the next generation. Most of the novel's episodes revolve around the contrast in how Ammu (the daughter) and Chacko (the boy) are dealt with. This difference is made clear right away in the first chapter.

Roy celebrates the reclaiming of one's Supreme Self by a lady who challenges the centuries-old dominance imposed by society on her family under the persona of Ammu. Ammu has a freewheeling nature; therefore, she has no qualms about giving in to her sensual and emotional urges. By loving a guy outside of her caste, she has sealed her own tragic fate. She is a woman whose unusual behaviour shocks everyone and for which she is punished with loss and misery, but she never gives up and refuses to apologize. Roy shows Ammu is a woman full of passion and strong will who poses a challenge to the tyrannical order of society; by often characterizing her nature with metaphors of lunacy and animality.

Rahel represents the female protagonist of the third generation. Both Mammachi and Ammu are seen negatively in relation to the Masculine counterpart. However, Rahel does not experience any tension between her feminine identity and its masculine doppelganger. Like her mother Ammu, Rahel is prone to rushing into and out of marriage. However, the absence of physical abuse trauma sets this apart. She further violates the Love Laws by engaging in incest with her sibling. However, neither guilt nor terrors are causing her concern. Rahel has zero respect for or concern for anything established by humans. She reflects the author's innermost

feelings on the subject of women and their place in today's patriarchal culture. Rahel is the archetype of a woman in the postmodern age. Roy uses Rahel to challenge conventional wisdom and usher in a new era.

## Conclusion

The novel “*The God in Small Things*” clearly depicts the immense anguish and unfair sufferings of women who must silently and submissively bear the weight of male tyranny. She transcends the typical notion of women's empowerment. The story examines the plight of women in a patriarchal society and the competitive nature of female activists. Roy exemplifies the yearning of a woman living in a male-dominated society for freedom, happiness, and a life without artificial boundaries. She looks like a winged creature that longs for the freedom of the wide sky. Nevertheless, near the harsh civilization, her wings are clipped out of nowhere, and she is sent crashing down to Earth, where she must cower in the small leftovers.

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