

Feminist Issues In Arundhati Roy's Works- *The God Of Small Things* And *The Algebra Of Infinite Justice*.

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Abstract: *This paper deals with feminist view in Arundhati Roy's two works- The God of Small Things and The Algebra of Infinite Justice. Roy focuses how women are always subjugated at the hand of male dominated society. Since from the dawn of civilization women have been considering as a puppet at the hand of patriarchal society.*

In The God of Small Things, Ammu, the protagonist of the novel had been tortured by her father, Pappachi from the very beginning of her childhood. After marriage, her husband who is an alcoholic even goes to the extent of attempting to use her wife to satisfy the sexual desire of his boss Mr. Hollick, his boss to save his job. When Ammu leaves her husband she cannot rear up her children because she is not independent as she has been deprived of education. In the essay The Algebra of Infinite Justice, the Taliban regime of terror, first chooses woman as a subject of victim and oppression. Thus Roy in her two works present the condition of women under terrific torture by male dominated society.

I. Full Paper-

Feminism means equal rights and opportunities of women in political, social and economic field and at the same time gaining sexual autonomy and self determination. Feminist movement stemmed from the recognition of subordination of women and form the existence of discrimination based on sex. Feminist movement involves some rebellious issues as women's liberation, freedom, radical feminism, social emancipation and many more. Feminist beliefs have existed throughout history but feminism as a movement did not appear in Europe and other countries until the mid- 1800's. At that time women used to confine at home and they had no right to voting and all the institutions of higher studies and professional careers were beyond the reach of women. Feminist movement brought a radical change to the history of discrimination and exploitation. If we go through Shobha De's *Socialite Evenings* we will see that this work epitomizes the rage of the exploited female against the male dominion.

In Western society, the women's issue is mainly for job equality and sexual roles. But in Eastern society, a woman being a mother, wife, daughter and amidst all tries to show her womanly power. In the Epic *Ramayana*, Sita resisted the demoniac aggressiveness of Ravana. Shakuntala depicted her strength bravely by accepting the challenge of Dushyanta. In *Mahabharata* Draupadi showed her ferocity by washing her hair in the blood of Dushasana who had attempted to disrobe her in the court of the Kauravas.

In 1893, New Zealand first got the right of women's suffragette and it was followed by Australia, USA and some other European countries. In India women had always the right of voting. The first book of feminist movement is Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* which depicted the position of women in the society. It pleaded for better educational opportunities for women.

Arundhati Roy (born in 24th November, 1961) is an Indian English writer and political activist who came into focus of the whole world for her debut novel *The God of Small Things* which won the Booker prize in 1997. This novel delineates conflict between 'The Big Man the Laltain (lamp) and Small Man the Mambati (candle). Roy sarcastically shows a harsh irony on male domination over women. This novel is a real portrayal of the oppression of the women in society and their marathon struggle to create a sense of identity in a male dominated conservative social space. A woman in our society faces ups and downs, ifs and buts. A woman is totally entrapped by the hands of other. Let us discuss the story briefly: Ammu, a woman, is the protagonist of the novel who has a strong yearning for happiness and demands a life free of shackles or constrains. The narrator gives a vivid description of a girl's growing up from childhood to adolescence her experience of married life and her challenging activity against hypocritical patriarchal society. The novel primarily takes place in a town named Ayemenem in Kerala. As a child, Ammu had been tortured by her father, Pappachi. She and her mother had been even beaten by him. Ammu Ipe becomes successful to escape her cruel father and she spends a summer with her distant aunt in Calcutta. There in a wedding reception she meets a person who assists in managing a tea estate in Assam. Ammu is in a hurry to marry him because it is her belief that Ayemenem people were quite dead against her wishes and the writer observes. "Ammu didn't pretend to be in love with him. She just weighted the odds and accepted. She thought that anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem. She wrote to her parents informing them of her decision. They didn't reply." (p-39)

But Fate further betrays her and Ammu realized that she committed a blunder. She has jumped out of the frying fan into the fire. Her husband is not a generous person but an alcoholic who even goes to the extent of attempting to use her wife to satisfy the sexual desire of his boss Mr. Hollick, his boss to save his job. She gains nothing but only hatred from her husband and she hits her husband with a heavy book and leaves her husband's house with her twins Estha and Rahel. Being neglected and rejected by her husband, Ammu finds no way but to return to Ayemenem with her pulled-out cheeks and there too she finds her parents cool and indifferent to her and her children. Being an affectionate mother she cannot tolerate the miserable

condition of her children. She imagines the twins "like a pair of small bewildered frogs engrossed in each other's company lolloping in arm down a highway full of hurting traffic".

Arundhati Roy actually wants to show how a woman always has been the subject of great mystery and controversy in our society and in our history, tradition, myth and legends. We find that Chacko, the brother of Ammu, who somehow has passed his exam at Balliol college in Oxford. Here we find a great irony, a great gap in the treatment of men and women. Chacko, being a male member of the family was sent to Britain for higher study but on the contrary Ammu was not allowed to study further. The main reason which becomes the hindrance at the path of Ammu's studies is that she is a woman and college studies is not suitable for her as it can corrupt the nature of a woman. It is true that even today, though in spite of fundamental improvement in women's right in the villages people are always against the higher education for girls. This is prominent also in a conservative Muslim family where 'purdah' is strictly maintained for a women and women are supposed to be meant for only mating and procreating. Roy throws a bitter irony on domination of man over women. It is also observed by Anees Jung, a feminist writer, in her book *Unveiling India* thus: "... good life it would seem was designed only for men. Page after page in the old album unfolds groups and groups of them ceremonially dressed, naturally guarding a rite, which they deemed was bestowed on them. No women are part of this rite on them except those from abroad usually the west... My mother remains absent in the only family portrait that rest on the last page of the album."

Even it is seen that when Chacko was deserted by his wife Margaret, an English girl, he receives warm welcome and gets the property of his family's wealth and fortune. But Ammu estranged from her husband is cruelly tortured and tyrannized in her parents' house. So Chacko very proudly and egoistically comments- "What's yours is mine and what's mine is mine." How brother can be so rude with his sister! When Chacko flirts with woman, Mammachi encouraged him to commit such a sin by saying that it is "Man's needs" but Ammu goes to commit this she is called illicit, untraditional and sinful. She is punished being locked in a room and is beaten black and blue. Is it a human behaviour! "Ammu as a daughter had no claim to the property and he had no locusts stand I."(P-57)

The novelist depicts the picture of hypocritical patriarchal society which always catches a great difference between men and women. Both men and women are part and parcel of our society. To build up a society, the necessity of both men and women are inevitable. They are like two circles of a chariot. As a chariot cannot stand without circle, similarly our society will fall down for want of any- the male or the female. Roy thinks that a woman is neither a dead object nor a statuesque fairy figure at the hand of man. She is not only a thing which fulfills the baser passion of man but the most important and the richest part of man's life. A woman is always considered as weaker and more sensitive rather than a man but she is also endowed with more patience and endurance. Without woman the role of procreation will come to an end. Though a woman is a representation of a daughter a beloved, a wife, but the most significant part which she performs for society is the role of an affectionate mother. She is not so adventurous like a man, she is compelled to stay at home, she is not allowed to go outside the world to show her potentials and stick to the regulated pattern of existence. But the male member of the society should know that without the presence of women, home is not home at all but a dreary wilderness. Man always used to see the sickle side of woman but he never tries to discover the purer side of woman's heart. Even Shakespeare, the greatest dramatist of English Literature in his comedy *As You Like It* says "Men are April when they woo, December when they wed"- It means after marriage a man's attitude towards woman totally changes. Since the very dawn of civilization, woman has been always considered as an object of neglecting and hatred. The French feminist Lucy Irigaray in her essay *The Sex Which is Not One* promotes radical otherness of woman's eroticism. Another feminist Simon de Beauvoir in her *The Second Sex* considers that one is not born as a woman but becomes a woman, the socio-cultural concept feminizes a woman. Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak in her famous essay *Three Women's Texts and Critique of Imperialism*, Spivak shows the aporia or gaps of the canonical novel of liberal feminism. A man cannot understand the value and position of woman in his life. If a man is garden, the flower is woman; if a man is a temple, the goddess is woman; if man builds a house, it is woman who makes it a home. Woman is always considered as weaker sex, she is told as 'other.'

Roy in her work *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2001) has discussed the issue of feminism. In the essay the Taliban regime of terror, first chooses woman as a subject of victim and oppression. This is not male hegemony, it is the autocracy against women.. In the essay the Taliban unleashed a regime of terror. Its first victims were its own people, particularly women. It closed down girls' schools, dismissed women from government jobs and enforced Sharia laws under which women who are considered immoral are stoned to death and widows guilty of being adulterous are even buried alive. Women are deprived of education, freedom of act and right. Such a kind of situation is created for the woman that they cannot get any chance to obtain relief. Roy being a rebellious daughter of a Syrian Christian mother had to fight against a patriarchal inheritance law in Kerala that did not give equal rights for women as an inhabitant of India which was formerly a part of British Empire. Arundhati Roy has applied her mind and talent from all perspectives correctly and proved that the definition and meaning of human virtues change from time to time and has pulled down the idea created by some agents that there are fixed meaning of human actions and virtues and she correctly evaluated the value of humanity, dignity and social characteristics.

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