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## Book Review: God of Small Things

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### INTRODUCTION

India's most prominent trait is its unity in variety, yet it is also a country with a diverse socio-cultural matrix. The caste system has been a part of India's history from time immemorial. Caste segregation is a key source of division among our country's citizens. One segment of society has always been oppressed, exploited, excluded, and ignored, defying all idealistic notions of universal brotherhood. We have been talking about such lofty ideas since the Vedic era, but sadly, the same Vedic age also instituted class inequality, from which our society has yet to emerge. Though various treatments have been sought, they have so far only been found on paper. Well-to-do people are reaping the benefits once more.

Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* successfully exposes Indian society's hypocrisy. *The God of Small Things* has brought to light all of the sufferings and humiliations that Dalits endure in today's globalized society. Yes, it is a stunning and heartbreaking reality that in today's India, when a man has little time for himself, he yet has time to encourage society's termites. Untouchability is not merely a Hindu fixation, but it is also an Indian obsession, according to this novel.

Dr. Amar Nath Prasad rightly says, "*Arundhati Roy, a great champion of the cause of the Dalit and the deserted points out those unnoticed shades of a social problem which generally escapes the eyes of social scientists.*"

## **THEME**

Christian missionaries offered a glimmer of hope for the upliftment of Dalit Hindus, claiming that conversion to Christianity would better their social position. Tragically, instead of alleviating their predicament, it exacerbated it. Converting to Christianity was supposed to alleviate their caste-based discrimination issues and provide them access to all of their basic rights. However, this conversion shattered the Dalit identity, with one side rejecting them and the other refusing to accept them. Because they converted to Christianity, they were denied all of the government's privileges granted to scheduled castes and tribes, such as employment reservations and low-interest bank loans.

The God of Small Things focuses on the most socially explosive of all relationships in India, a love affair between a Dalit man and a high caste woman. It is a story of women and untouchables versus imposed traditions of Indian society, it is a story that magnificently depicts the oppression of women in a male chauvinistic society. High caste persons are always liable to deteriorate, destroy and devour the lower strata of society.

## **ABOUT THE STORY**

This novel brings before us the story of a Dalit Christian, Velutha, who commits the crime of loving a touchable Christian woman, Ammu, who is a divorcee and is always marginalized by her own family. He is handsome and has a multi-talented personality; his capability is known to all but his caste surpasses all his talents and abilities. He is tormented and tortured supporting a high caste woman. The two lovers are supported by social order as the two are from completely different social backgrounds. Ammu is a typical upper-class woman who, as per society's rules, should not even dream of socializing with the untouchable Velutha. Such behavior of Ammu brings dishonor to her family and she herself suffers lasting damage to her own reputation. Velutha, on the other hand, is a man who is at the lowest rung of the social ladder, specifically called paravan. The two defy the age-old institution of their particular

classes and cross into forbidden territory. Such violation on their part necessarily results in a very heavy penalty, where Ammu loses her social status completely and worse still is tortured and brutally killed by the aides of her family.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF TITLE**

The God of Small Things is represented by Velutha, an outcast and the lowest on the social scale. He represents the untouchables, those who have no way out in a culture that is unyielding. He is endowed with several virtues. In the God of Small Things, he is a guy of innocence and simplicity. In the narrative, he represents the untouchables, those who have no way of escaping an unrelenting society. He is endowed with several virtues. He is The God of Small Things, The God of Loss, a guy of purity and simplicity. He is a hidden diamond in the depths of the ocean, yet despite all of these qualities, he does not value respect or decent treatment in society. Caste firmly places the impoverished guy at the bottom of society. He becomes a Christian in order to avoid being victimized by a caste society, but his conversion and technological expertise never bear fruit in this harsh and merciless culture. He is likewise well-versed in social conventions and his standing in society, but he is still unable to manage his human emotions, which are unaffected by caste, and he pays the price.

### **MARXISM AND SOCIALISM**

Today, honor killing is a hot subject. This is obvious proof that romantic relationships in Indian society are constrained to a specific area, and that violating these boundaries leads to disastrous consequences. In the name of social status, the lovers are slaughtered. The novel's disaster is no exception. When Velutha comes into contact with Ammu, tragedy begins to take its toll on his life. This love affair was diametrically opposed to both Marxism and socialism's viewpoints. Velutha falls in love with Ammu, putting all his caste and community prejudices aside. Even though they knew the outcome ahead of time, they were enamored with each other. If Ammu takes the initiative, Velutha will not detain her or herself.

Ammu provides Velutha with what society and his family refuse to provide. In such a terrible environment, Velutha finds true satisfaction in a few minutes spent with Ammu. As a result, he seals his fate. He pays for the raptures of realized passion with his bleeding damaged body.

The worst disaster occurs when one becomes oblivious to society's prevalent standards. Velutha's father chills in his bones when he learns of his son's and Ammu's blindness, for a converted Christian, a Hindu Dalit, let alone a paravan, cannot be forgiven for falling in love with a girl from an orthodox Syrian Christian family. Knowing the outcome, he joins hands with the perpetrators since he believes it is a crime.

### **RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

When Ammu's aunt, Baby Kochamma, learns about the relationship, she is mostly opposed to it since it involves untouchables. This is enough for the elderly lady to remove an untouchable forever. Meanwhile, Sophie Mol, Ammu's niece, drowns, and knowing this, Baby Kochamma devises a scheme to assassinate Velutha for the sake of the family's image and files an F.I.R. against the innocent Dalit. Velutha is apprehended and interrogated like a hardened criminal; he is subjected to third-degree torture for helping an abandoned creature. He is tortured until he dies; his penalty is imposed not by constitutional law, but by love laws enacted by society's judges. He is sentenced to death, but not in the legal language of 'to be hung till death,' but in the language of society's authorities, 'to be beaten to death.' He is accused of assault and rape of Ammu and is wrongly implicated in Sophie Mol's death.

In actuality, he is assassinated for breaking the caste barrier. Our founding fathers invented the notion of a secular society, one in which all religions are treated equally, but it appears that they should have first formed a distinct religion for Dalits, and only then could they have achieved total success. The poor Dalits have been serving the upper class and their religion till now, but the fact is that all of these things are only tossed parts of the upper class that Dalits cannot use without their permission, so hats off to this fake hypocritical society!

### **GENDER DISCRIMINATION**

When the miserable Dalit is castigated as a break-in barrier, on one hand, another oppressed sector is depicted in its genuine colors on the other. Even today, females in Indian society are counted at a low level. A woman's existence is filled with several interrogations. Women try to show their presence in every field of life, but their journey eventually comes to a halt, and their effort appears fruitless. A man in our male-dominated culture is free to do anything he wants.

He may even satisfy his "manly wants" with family sympathies, whilst a woman is nothing more than a toy in the hands of her family, who will react according to the requirements and desires of the woman. She is unable to have her own desires; she is unable to have any ambitions. Ammu, the novel's protagonist, had a traumatic upbringing as a result of her dictatorial father. Pappachi beats her and her mother with brassware. The practice continues until Ammu's brother, Chacko, intervenes.

Ammu finished her schooling the same year her father resigned from his work in Delhi and relocated to Ayemenem. Ammu feels enslaved at home, bound by domestic tasks and a monotonous, mechanical routine. She wants to flee her abusive father and her long-suffering mother's grip. She has a lot of failed schemes, but one of them actually succeeds. Her father agrees to send her to visit her distant relatives in Calcutta. There she meets her future spouse and they marry very quickly before the dictator can raise any objections. However, she is doomed to suffer. Her marriage turns out to be a complete failure, with her goals crushed, aspirations dashed, and passions vanishing. Her drunken spouse adds to her dissatisfaction by making her entertain his boss. Ammu's denial adds to her suffering, both physically and mentally. Her silence made her spouse "uncomfortable, then enraged." He lunged at her, grabbed her hair, hit her, and then collapsed from exhaustion. She finds safety with her two children, unable to bear any more of the tortures, at the same location where she previously sought refuge. She and her children are not welcome. Her family is uncaring towards her. Three of them are little more than a burden to her parents. She is doomed to live a long, unfulfilling life without a gleam of hope at the age of 24.

### **MALE CHAUVINISM**

Ammu is now practically untouchable in the family and in a patriarchal culture. One of the reasons she is untouchable is that she has no spouse and no property. She does have a portion in the paternal property, but only on paper since what is hers is Chacko's, and what is of Chacko's is of Chacko's. Following his father's death, it is Chacko's evident job to properly treat the family's girls, giving them their rightful place in the family as well as in the land.

The writer also criticizes society's hypocritical moral code, which completely discriminates against women. Chacko, Ammu's brother, is going through the same thing: he's divorced, but his family supports him in order to satisfy his ego as well as his demands, which are entirely forbidden for Ammu due to the morals-obsessed culture. She gets thrown out of the house because she had an affair with an untouchable. Her high-ranking character's brother warns her to leave the house lest he shatters every bone in her body. The children are abandoned. In the end, she'll have to die hopelessly in a hotel room while looking for work. Her father humiliates and corners her, while her spouse mistreats and betrays her. The cops humiliate her, and her brother leaves her penniless. Each of them represents a patriarchal ideology, which states that she has no right to exist anywhere as a daughter, wife, sister, or citizen.

## CONCLUSION

Arundhati Roy has depicted the struggles and the horrible situations of individuals who are separated on the basis of their caste, gender, or even their critical circumstances in. The most notable feature of the narrative is that she had sparked the hot subject of the day, which is honor killing. Though this blind notion has been in patriarchal culture since the dawn of humanity, it has only recently come to the notice of society. While recounting the plight of women and untouchables, the writer criticizes Indian society's sanctimony, in which women are constantly ignored as untouchables, and the highest tier of hierarchy is always reserved for men. The novel exposes the fact that society is divided into two categories: large and small: Small things like love, warmth, ambitions, and sensitivity are crushed into shards by big ones like gender and caste discrimination and statuesque preservation.

Ranga Rao, in his famous article, "*The Book(er) of the Year*" rightly observes: "*Roy's book is the only one I can think of among Indian novels in English which can be comprehensively described as a protest novel, It is all about atrocities against minorities.*"

Arundhati urges societal reforms through Velutha, a representative of the unendurable plight of the dispossessed groups, and Ammu as a deputy of unyielding positions of the woman. Both Ammu and Velutha, who are vulnerable at the bottom of India's gender and caste

hierarchies, suffer from pervasive gender and caste discrimination and violence as a result of highly unequal power relationships.

### **ANALYSIS**

Despite the fact that Roy does not offer any feasible solutions to this difficulty, she urges us to ponder the puzzle seriously. She wants us to avoid continual reification, and she pushes for all classes to join together on a single front to figure out how to solve the age-old mystery. Hatred of untouchables will not be eradicated until society accepts them as fellow human beings, and women's situation will improve only when the mirage of a male-dominated society is dispelled and women are given equal status.