

## Examining the Women Issues and Child Abuse as Mirrored by Arundhati Roy's *the God of Small Things*

Danish Suleman<sup>1\*</sup> and Abdul Halim Mohamed<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Education and Modern Languages (SEML), University Utara Malaysia, Malaysia.*

### ABSTRACT

*The women's right issues and child abuse are among the most prominent challenges still faced by India even in the 21st century. This paper explains how the abuse of women and child is the biggest human rights violation in India. The current paper examines the causes that lead to women issues and child abuse in India from the perspective of Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*. In present India, even after Independence, gender discrimination and child abuse in Indian society are at worst. In order to understand the causes that create challenges for women and danger for children in Indian society, the current paper studies the views and experiences of Arundhati Roy as she presented in her selected novel *The God of Small Things* (1997). It uses a qualitative research methodology to analyse and collect the relevant data using the textual analysis method. The significance of this study is to create an awareness among the readers on the importance of rights and freedom of women and children in India. This paper depicts how Indian women, as well as children, are facing problems and violence in their daily lives and how literature (novel) education is used to raise and build their personalities in order to contribute fruitfully in Indian society.*

**Keywords:** Child Abuse, Gender Discrimination, Women's Rights, Violence, Education, Indian Society, Patriarchy.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Human experience has mainly been a masculine, or what may be called a 'malist' experience. Hence, the cumulative image humanity offers is a tilted, distorted one with the female voice denied an equal force, with the woman remaining behind the walls. Ibsen commenting on the hypocrisy of the man in patriarchal society says:

[t]here are two kinds of spiritual laws, two kinds of consciences: one in man and another altogether different in woman. They do not understand each other but in practical life the woman is judged by man's law as though she were not a woman, but a man (Innes, 2000, p. 70).

This statement shows the plight of women in a male-oriented society. Jane Austen (1817) in *Persuasion* protests, "[m]en have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands" (p. 222).

The women of the early Indian English novels have been portrayed to be women with no identity. They are expected to obey the elders and to follow the traditions. Shirwadkar (1979) once remarked:

---

\* Corresponding Author: dan1990danish@gmail.com

[t]his sense of obedience to the elders which the girls have to follow pervades the Indo-Anglian novel. The picture of highly westernised girls aping the west and obsessed with the idea of physical love only was ridiculed. In contrast, the traditional ideas of obedience and faithfulness were shown as the very essence of Indian girl or girlhood (p. 31).

Talking about women issues in India, a report by *Thomas Reuters Foundation News* includes Goldsmith and Beresford (2018) reporting that “*India has become the most dangerous country for women*”. More specifically, they conducted a survey and based on polling among global experts they released this report that says:

The poll was a repeat of a survey in 2011 that found experts see Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan, India, and Somalia as the most dangerous countries for women. Experts said India moving to the top of poll showed not enough was being done to tackle the danger women faced, more than five years after the rape and murder of a student on a bus in Delhi made violence against women a national priority (Goldsmith & Beresford, 2018, para. 4-5).

In another report by *The Washington Post* in which Gowen (2018) reports that “*Reported cases of crimes against women rose 83 percent between 2007 and 2016, where there were four cases of rape every hour.*” (Gowen, 2018, para. 8).

On the other hand, in child of abuse in India a report from Ministry of Women and Child Development (2007) says that the age group of 5-12 includes the most active victim of child abuse (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007). Over 69% of children were reported as physically abused. 52.91% and 47.09% were boys and girls respectively who faced abuse at their homes. In terms of child labour, data shows 50.2% of children working whole week in which 81.16% of girls work in houses and 84% of boys work in tea stalls. Similarly, 65.99% and 67.92% of boys and girls respectively are reported as being physically abused by their families who are living on the streets (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007).

Hence, Indian literature, showcases a number of novels and workpiece that focus on women and child issues in India. Through the portrayal of the characters in the novels, writers try to reflect and understand the lives of the victims which further enhances readers’ interest in these issues and motivate them to dive deeply into these issues and challenges faced by women and children in Indian society. Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997) is one among these novels that focus on women issues and child abuse in detail.

### **1.1 Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*: Brief introduction**

Arundhati Roy was born on 24th November 1961 in Shillong, Meghalaya in India. She is one of the most prominent Indian English writers, who have tried their hands at novels, screenplay writing, essays etc. She also is a social activist. She has spent her childhood at Aymanam in Kerala and incorporated her childhood memories in her debut novel, *The God of Small Things* which she began writing in 1992 and completed in 1996. Dhawan (1999) describes this book as “*a taboo-breaking protest novel*” and “*out of a sense of complacency at having rid the society of discrimination based on caste and gender*” (p. 118).

*The God of Small Things* (1997) is the first novel of Arundhati Roy. It tells the story of childhood experiences of genealogical twins whose lives were ruined by the “*Love Laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much*” (pp. 188-189). The novel discovers the effects of small things on people’s lives and behaviours. This novel is knitted with different themes like Indian politics, class and culture relations, forbidden love, social discrimination, betrayal and misogyny.

While the story is heart-breaking and sometimes brutal, Roy has a way with words and composes some very beautiful sentences. Arundhati Roy's piece of work is enthralling sometimes, the story knitted around "two-egg twins", Estha and Rahel, is convincing and strange. *The God of Small Things* transparently depicted the hidden despairs and unmerited sorrows of those women who always bear the burden of male dominion nature mutely and docilely. She transcends the ordinary concept of feminism. The female characters in the novel like Ammu, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma and Rahel went through several hardships in their daily lives. The family pressure and societal boarder lines affect their inner selves. The torture they all were getting in their homes at the hands of their own made their lives miserable. The novel examines the jealousy between women, the plight of women in the male-dominated framework. Roy shows how a woman in patriarchal setup yearns for pleasure and happiness and a life far from any shackles and constraints.

This novel is not limited only to the extreme violence on women, but it also reflects the violence and abuse on children. The sexual exploitation experienced by Estha at the Abhilash Talkies showed how desperate are some people in rural parts of India to fulfil their unhuman sexual urges. Arundhati Roy knitted all the events of women issues and child abuse in such a manner that it reflects outstandingly the real picture of some illiterate parts of Indian society where all these activities are still in practice.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The main purpose of this study is to examine the possible causes for women issues and child abuse as experienced and penned by Arundhati Roy in her novel *The God of Small Things* (1997). So, for that reason, the researcher will also be looking at several other research papers and other writers' views on women and child abuse in India. Indian women novelists like Kamala Markandaya (1924), Ruth Praver Jhabvala (1927), Anita Desai (1937), Shakuntala Shrinagesh (1953), Nayantara Sahgal (1927), and Shashi Deshpande (1938) turned themselves towards the women's world with its intuitions, perceptions and imaginations. They cultivated a new feminine form and style, especially in the art of novel writings. These writers launched an aesthetic voyage within to explore the private consciousness of the women characters. The women characters created by them showed enough courage to fight with social evils and male superiority.

Indian women were covered with many dense, illiterate, slack layers of prejudice, agreement, and reserve in literature as well as in life. They were like lifeless things, who followed five paces behind their men being gentle, patient, kind, and for generations altogether (Behtash & Sajjadi, 2012). Anita Desai's "*Cry, the Peacock*" (1963) focused mostly on the disharmony that exists in Indian home within the marital relationship. The female character Maya narrates to the reader as she explains the growth, development and peak of her neurosis. Maya as a young girl is possessed by a childhood prophecy of tragedy. The belief that a woman requires not just food, accommodation and clothes is aptly illustrated in this novel. The hypersensitive mind of women is illustrated by Anita Desai in the most tender way where the atmosphere of tension is set ideally against the backdrop (Bhosale, 2017).

The novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980) narrates Saritha's struggles for equality for her brother, husband and for identity. It is a story of Saru who senses as an imprisoned animal, imprisoned by the necessity to prosper at all times. As a woman, she needs a person that can take care of her in marriage. The senselessness of her struggles turns out to be obvious to her after hearing her mother's comments on listening to the end of the war in *Mahabharata* (Bhosale, 2017). Several numbers of thinkers like John Ellis (1946), Harold Bloom (1930) and Roger Kimball (1953) contend on tagging feminist critics as angry, hostile, and resentful who

disgust literature and abuse the canon. They believe that aesthetics and politics are not compatible, the former is staining and infecting the purity of the latter.

Kashmira Sheth's *Boys Without Names* (2010) raises the issue of child labour in India due to some unwanted reasons for the family. Alobeytha, Ismail and Shapii (2016) in their article *The Use of Frame Story in Kashmira Seth's Boys Without Names* mentioned that:

[s]heth exhibits her proficiency in depicting the portrayal of the child labours in India by mobilising fables and creative nonfiction inside the frame stories. Her actions and decisions help to revive the traditional element of Indian literature through the use of fables. (p. 110)

Similarly, Khushwant Singh's *The Company of Women* (2000) talks about child sexual abuse in its content. In this story, at one place the character in the novel Molly told us about her sexual exploitation, she mentioned that "it was my own uncle, my mother's younger brother, a good twenty years older than me. Beast! Took advantage of poor, innocent me" (p. 229). Shushantika, another character in the novel, also claims that she too was sexually exploited once and says,

[i] was sixteen. Nothing romantic about the deflowering. My own uncle, my father's younger brother. This usual thing, you know a close relative whom you trust. It seemed harmless enough at first kissing and cuddling, that sort of thing. Then he thought he'd me worked up and started playing with my breasts and stroking my crotch. (p. 267)

In the same way, we are taking Arundhati Roy's views and experiences on women issues and child abuse while exploring her novel *The God of Small Things* (1997). It is observed that Roy is sharing, by the help of her characters namely Ammu, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Rahel and Estha, her experiences on how women are tortured in and outside their homes. The rights of women are simply ignored in a patriarchal society that leads to emotional and psychological issues of women. Even children are forced to hide their emotions and sometimes used as an object by people who fulfil their sexual desires on them. The same event is presented by Roy in this novel where Estha was sexually abused by the Orangedrink Lemondrink man at Abhilash Talkies.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The present study is qualitative-based research as it gives the opportunity to read, reread, explore, examine and criticise the novel thoroughly (Creswell, 2011). The sample of the study is Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997). The reason for selecting this novel for this study is that this novel intensely deals with main motives and objectives of this study, which is to examine the women issues and child abuse in Indian society. The data will be analysed through textual analysis method as it will help the researcher to understand human behaviour, their culture and subcultures as well as their involvement in society (McKee, 2003).

### 4. DISCUSSION

Arundhati Roy, as a novelist, is known for her socio-cultural explorations. As a modernist, she has incorporated many of its devices in her writings. She is involved with many modernist ideologies like regionalism, ecofeminism, socio-cultural identity, and so on. The modern outlook has brought psychological demoralisation, economic depression and intensified reaction to the bourgeois modes of social and economic practices. As the output of her attachment to modernism, many of its issues are percolated in her philosophy and writings. Daily Telegraph

reported, *"It is rare to find a book that so effectively cuts through the clothes of nationality, caste and religion to reveal the bare bones of humanity."* (Roy, 1997, Back Cover).

The novel deals with the inhuman effects of the villainous factors of gender, caste and politics. Conditions of women as a subaltern in society have always been closely analysed in Indian literature. Mahashweta Devi, Mukhtar Mai, Amrita Pritam, and Anita Desai are the women writers who deal with feminist themes. Arundhati Roy deals not only with the oppression of women but also with the sexual and social exploitation of the children prevalent at various levels. She succeeds in giving a voice to the concern of subalterns through her language inventiveness under the fictional backdrop of Aymanam changing from colonial antecedents to the modern times. The story of the novel moves around Ammu, her son Estha and daughter Rahel. Mammachi, Ammu, Rahel and Baby Kochamma represent the three generations of women who are victims of patriarchal society.

#### 4.1 First Generation Women

The first generation of women, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, are content with their subordinate existence and silently approve of patriarchy. They show how the patriarchal system of marriage unleashes a reign of terror, misery and violence upon Mammachi and Ammu.

Mammachi owns the expert business skills and initiates a pickle factory on her own, but Pappachi *"would not help her with the pickle-making because he did not consider pickle-making a suitable job for a high-ranking ex-government official"* (Roy, 1997, p. 47). She got beaten by him without any reason, *"the beatings weren't new. What was new was only the frequency with which they took place"* (Roy, 1997, pp. 47-48). Just after the death of Pappachi, her son Chacko took charge of the factory. Mammachi felt marginalised after losing the possession of the factory. As per Chacko's views, *"what's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine."* (Roy, 1997, p. 57). However, Mammachi does not fight back with her oppressive son and acknowledges to his *"Men's Needs"* as he seduces the *"pretty women who worked in the factory."* and forces them to *"sit at table with him and drink tea"* (Roy, 1997, p. 65) despite the discomfort of his mother. Mammachi was very skillful as she also knows how to play the violin. Pappachi, with the fear that his wife may leave him behind in popularity, stopped her music lessons immediately after Mammachi got highly appreciated by her music teacher. After all these brutalities on her, Mammachi still adjusts with his situations without any questions and with an ultimate elasticity in her nature. Her enduring capacity is tremendous that can face any torture without showing a single sign of pain.

Winmayil (2014) mentioned that *"Pappachi, the Entomologist became frustrated by the fact that his discovery of a new species of moth was unrecognised and after twelve years the credit was bestowed to another director of Entomology"* (p. 379). This dissatisfaction leads to an enraged Pappachi in dark moods and unexpected attacks of temper that he vomits out all in the form of physical abuse to Mammachi. Because of her immense talent in violin and her expertise of running pickles factory, Pappachi feels jealous and this makes him always beat her. Mammachi knew her worth and talent but still, she never complains of Pappachi's male egoism. She, on the contrary, preferred to live as a slave of his maleness and accept all kinds of rejections and insults. Mammachi behaves like a completely conventional Indian woman who always remains quiet to every type of suppression.

Another abused and illtreated victim in this novel is Baby Kochamma, sister of Pappachi. To her immense shock, her dreams of marrying with an Irish priest Father Mulligan get shattered. Nanda (2012) mentioned that *"To win him, she converts herself to Roman Catholic faith but ultimately, she is a failure and starts living in isolation in the Aymanam house."* (p. 3). Amitabh Roy (2005) analysed the character of Baby Kochamma and mentioned that *"It is a pity that she submits in the name of decency and honour to the very sexist, casteist and communal prejudices"*

*that have stood in her way and denied fulfilment to her*" (p. 62). Baby Kochamma adopted intense negativity in her attitude that she even reported fake case against Velutha and with the favour of inspector she sent him to jail where Velutha got beaten to death. All these manipulations isolate Baby Kochamma to a wretched life where her only companion is the television. Thus, like Mammachi, Baby Kochamma also apparently submits to the patriarchal social norms without any hesitation but if closely examined, she puts up a line of implicit resistance against the biased socio-political and economic order in the patriarchal society. She at times showed herself as someone who can at least raise voice and take actions against social norms. This can be seen from the fact that she even decided to change her religion in order to marry Father Mulligan.

#### 4.2 Second Generation Women

The second-generation woman Ammu shows assertion and aversion to the socio-cultural codes of the orthodox society. She breaks the moral norms of society and indulges in sexual freedom. Ammu pays a heavy price for her defiance. Ammu is born in a Syrian Catholic Christian family in a conservative fictional town Aymanam in Kerala. Male chauvinism and gender biases are the major hurdles in Ammu's life. She has been confronted with patriarchy since her childhood. Pappachi, Ammu's father, is an embodiment of imperial power who inflicts violence upon Mammachi and daughter Ammu. He is not a bit reluctant in flogging Ammu and throwing the two out of the house during the winter nights of Delhi. Ammu's defiant nature challenges him. His jealousy does not let him appreciate his wife's efficient management of the family's Paradise Pickles factory. His frustration leads him to derive pleasure in beating her. Ammu is denied education. To get rid of her patriarchal father, she marries Baba after five days they have met. But her condition gets worse because her husband was an alcoholic and beats her frequently. After the divorce, she comes back to the hell of Aymanam with her twins. She along with her kids gets humiliation because of *die-vorce*, meaning dead according to society. Ammu and Chacko are estranged. But Chacko receives a warm welcome and becomes the inheritor of the property. His profligacy is recognised as "*Man's Needs*" (Roy, 1997, p. 168) whereas Ammu is treated as a "*Veshya*". She does not neglect her bodily needs and asserts herself, "*She wanted her body back*" (Roy, 1997, p. 222).

In this novel, Ammu is the one who got the utmost emotional abuse in her life, "*thanks to our wonderful male chauvinistic society*" (Roy, 1997, p. 57) as observed and stated by Ammu, while targeting the patriarchal minds. Ammu was an educated and well-spoken woman but still becomes a victim of ruined and suffocated marriage.

[h]er husband turned out to be not just a heavy drinker but a full-blown alcoholic with all of an alcoholic's deviousness and tragic charm. There were things about him that Ammu never understood. Long after she left him, she never stopped wondering why he lied so outrageously when he didn't need to particularly when he didn't need to (Roy, 1997, p. 40).

Her act of taking instant and abrupt decisions in the condition of psychological trauma affects negatively on her as well as on those who love her. Pappachi, her father, is always busy trying to make his good image in society with all positive attributes. In front of people he is the kindest person on earth, but as soon as he is alone with his family, he becomes a monster for his wife and daughter. The tolerance of her father's wrath taught her "*to live with this cold, calculating cruelty. She developed a lofty sense of injustice and the mulish, reckless streak that develops in Someone Small who has been bullied all their lives by Someone Big*" (Roy, 1997, p. 181-82).

Ammu in her own village Aymanam had to suffer from verbal, discriminatory, financial and emotional exploitation. Aymanam people tried to marginalise her on the facts that she is "*a married daughter at parent's house, a divorced daughter, a divorced daughter from a love marriage, and a divorced daughter from an intercommunity love marriage*" (Roy, 1997, pp. 45-

46). She also got children who were half-Hindu twins. Her own brother Chacko was so mean to her and always tells her *"What's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine."* (Roy, 1997, p. 57). The marriage system which is completely fruitless looks futile to Ammu. In order to fight back with all her frustration, disillusionment and alienation in life, she started to listen to her favourite songs on the radio. Arundhati Roy distinctly points out in a very poetic language the psychological and emotional trauma that Ammu was going through. Roy depicts that in the search of happiness, Ammu, *"temporarily set aside the morality of motherhood and divorcehood."* (Roy, 1997, p. 44). Roy named the battle of Ammu which was going inside her as an *"unmixable mix. The infinite tenderness of motherhood and the reckless rage of a suicide bomber"* (Roy, 1997, p. 44).

At last, when Ammu got tired from every relation, she by luck came to meet Inspector Thomas Mathew who abuses her both physically and verbally. He addressed her *"veshya"* (prostitute) and her children *"illegitimate"* (p. 8) and in a very inhuman way used his baton to tap her breast. Embarrassed and emotionally broken from this incident, Ammu *"was unable to bear the humiliation and the fact that she could not save the life of Velutha."* (Winmayil, 2014, p. 381). Roy (1997) describes the behaviour of the police inspector as:

[h]e stared at Ammu's breasts as he spoke. He said the police knew all they needed to know and that the Kottayam Police didn't take statements from veshyas or their illegitimate children. Ammu said she'd see about that. Inspector Thomas Mathew came around his desk and approached Ammu with his baton (p. 8).

The hardship Ammu faced in the police station and the fake charges made against her regarding the violation of the laws of love, in which it should be kept in mind to which person we should love and to what extent, made her psychologically ill. After sending Rahel and Estha to Aymanam and Calcutta respectively, Ammu remains lonely and broken emotionally because of which her health deteriorates with asthma. The continuous dreams that Ammu had regarding the police arrest and their urge to cut off her hair with scissors because she was considered a prostitute further tormented her mental condition. In Alleppey (a city in Kerala), Ammu left this tormented world at the age of thirty-one *"a viable, die-able age"* in Bharat Lodge (Roy, 1997, p. 161). Her tormented soul, being a sister, daughter, wife and mother, silently came to an end. However, at the end the church denied burying her body there so it was given to the Electric Crematorium.

Hence, the researcher observed from the point of Arundhati Roy how the patriarchal society suffocated the lives of women and even never hesitated to abuse her (women in general) on each and every stage of her life. This leads to a number of suicidal cases, honour killings, dowry killings, rapes, social and capital rights' violations in northern, central and some part of southern Indian rural society. There is every second woman in India in the Image of Ammu who is suffering and dealing with the same patriarchal issues (Murthy, 2017; Saryal, 2014; Kumari, 2014).

#### **4.3 Third Generation Women**

Rahel, daughter of Ammu and a child of divorced parents, did not get the love from her parents that a child needs. She also had to deal with the inter-religion and inter-region differences of her parents as her mother was Christian and father was Hindu. Her mother was from Kerala and her father was from Bengal. Her school life was also very disturbing as she got expelled from convent school three times and denied getting admission again. She used to crash intentionally with the breasts of her seniors and put fire to *"Housemistress's false-hair bun"* (Roy, 1997, p. 17). Even her own relatives Chacko, Baby Kochamma and Kochu Maria did not like her. The only person with whom she felt comfortable was Velutha, in whom she always found a father figure. *"She knew his back. She'd been carried on it. More times than she could count"* (Roy, 1997, p. 73).

As soon as Rahel comes to know of the physical attachment of her mother Ammu with Velutha, she rushed to the bedroom and locked herself there. When Velutha got arrested, Rahel went to the police station with Estha (her twin brother) to prove Velutha guilty. Because of her family's instability and dysfunctionality, she too becomes numb and unsocial and is unable to boost her self-confidence (Nanda, 2012). A very unusual form of social misbehaviour by Rahel happened when she *"watched Estha with the curiosity of a mother watching her wet child. A sister a brother. A woman a man. A twin a twin"* (Roy, 1997, p. 93).

Rahel started observing her mother when she was completely dependent on her and at times feels her awful temper which was the result of frustrations. From the novel, it is observed how Ammu punishes her and even hurts her by her insensitive remarks, *"when you hurt people, they begin to love you less. That's what careless words do. They make people love you a little less."* (Roy, 1997, p. 112). These comments made Rahel's heart squeezed from the thought that her own mother loves her very less. Although Rahel was very imaginative and it can be noticed from the fact that when she is scared, she used to imagine Pappachi's Moth with icy legs crawling inside her heart. At the funeral of Sophie Mol, she imagines the dead turning inside the coffin. She lives her life like a lost soul. Rahel was like a carefree girl who took admission in Delhi in an Architecture course where she meets a researcher named Larry McCaslin, married him and went to the USA. Rahel rushed in the act of marriage like *"a passenger drifts into an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge"* (Roy, 1997, p. 18).

Same as her mother Ammu, Rahel learns very quickly to imagine and dream about her life. But soon just like her mother, she was rejected by the patriarchal society. She too came back to Aymanam after being divorced by her husband, just the same way it happened with her mother. Hence, by studying all these female characters the researcher can conclude that Roy has accurately understood her characters and boldly presents them to the readers. They too are not liberated even after the fact that they were well-established and well-known among their circle. These female characters of three generations had struggled with themselves in order to find a path that can take them away from the pre-defined social boundaries. They were the victims of the patriarchal society and faced the hardships of isolation.

#### **4.4 Child Abuse in the Novel**

Arundhati Roy lays bare a child's vision of the adult world in the novel as she herself was an *"unprotected child in some ways"* (Rani, 2017, p. 314). Her technical inventiveness lends a unique charm to the novel. She explains the psychological torture of Estha in a very vivid way. Then comes the most shameful incident of child abuse which plays havoc for the poor child. Estha gets completely bewildered after the experience with the *Orangedrink Lemondrink Man* at Abhilash Talkies (Rani, 2017). The terrible experience keeps haunting the boy like a nightmare. He feels unprotected that *"the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man could walk in any minute. Catch a Cochin-Kottayam bus and be there"* (Roy, 1997, p. 194).

When Estha went to watch a movie at the Abhilash Talkies movie theatre with Ammu, Baby Kochamma and Rahel, he encountered the worst experience in his life. He became a victim of sexual abuse at the hands of the Orangedrink Lemondrink man. At that place, the Orangedrink Lemondrink man started enquiring him and said, *"Come and have a drink, a free cold drink. Come. Come here and tell me all about your grandmother"* (Roy, 1997, p. 103). Then he took Estha behind his counter, served him free cold drink and sexually abused him. Roy (1997) illustrated this situation as;



[a]nd, so, behind the refreshments counter, in the Abhilash Talkies, in the hall with Kerala's first 70mm CinemaScope screen, Eshta yako finished his free bottle of fizzed, lemon-flavoured fear. His lemon too lemon, too cold. Too sweet. The fizz came up his nose. How would he be given another bottle soon. But he didn't know that yet. He held his sticky other hand away from his body (p. 105).

The ugly face of humanity imprints a long-lasting influence on his mind. He remains afraid that *"the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man could just walk in through the gauze door"* (Roy, 1997, p. 197) of the pickle factory. His confrontation with the harsh realities of life distorts Estha's sensitive and innocent vision towards life. His bitter experiences haunt him to have these two views: *"(a) Anything can happen to anyone, and (b) It's best to be prepared"* (Roy, 1997, p. 194). He makes himself fully prepared to face the worst if that happens and later all his apprehensions become true. He starts losing his sense of belongingness. He loves his mother and sister. But his mother's stern words hurt his tender mind and compel him to take extreme steps. She extorts: *"I should have dumped you in an orphanage the day you were born. You're the mile stones round my neck"* and *"why can't you just go away and leave me alone"* (Roy, 1997, p. 253). This results in Estha's flight from home. Estha and Rahel eventually decide to live in the history house, an old abandoned building. The twins want their mother to apologise. *"What if Ammu finds us and begs us to come back"*, asks Rahel. *"Then we will. But only if she begs"* replies Estha (Roy, 1997, p. 292). In the case of Rahel, there is always a fear for things in the form of a moth. At one place when Ammu was appreciating the Orangedrink Lemondrink man at the movie theatre, Abhilash Talkies, Rahel immediately responds *"So why don't you marry him then?"* (Roy, 1997, p. 106). Ammu then tells her, *"When you hurt people, they begin to love you less"* (Roy, 1997, p. 107). Then suddenly *"cold moth with unusually dense dorsal tufts lands on Rahel's heart"* (Roy, 1997, p. 107). This emotional abuse was faced by both Estha and Rahel at several places in the novel.

Further, Estha's bewilderment finds an expression in his act of rubbing out his surname from his exercise book. *"on the front page of book Estha had rubbed out his surname with spit and taken half the paper with it. Over the whole mass, he had written in pencil, Unknown. Esthappen Unknown"* (Roy, 1997, p. 156). This incident indicates his inner self-erasing fury which leads to his self-effacement and self-fragmentation. He is separated from Rahel, his voice. The inseparable twins are separated for 23 years. Estha loses the power to express. Roy talks about the matter of bringing up children which throws light on the early life of the novelist. Roy is bold enough to show things in a realistic way. She frankly talks about the issues which are socio-cultural taboos in south Indian rural milieu.

Both Estha and Rahel were prejudiced from an inexplicable and bizarre environment in childhood that had adversely affected their personalities and made them different from others, psychologically. Both the twins were blamed, belittled, rebuked and bullied for no reasons. The elders of this family were not able to dive into the children's world that resulted in the destruction of their lives. Rahel and Estha were always abused and punished for writing backwards. Baby Kochamma punished them in the form of writing *"In future, we will not read backwards"* (Roy, 1997, p. 60) hundred times. They always listen from others that this house of their maternal grandmother does not belong to them. Kochu Maria, who was the maid to that house got guts to tell them, *"Tell your mother to take you to your father's house..., There you can break as many beds as you like. These aren't your beds. This isn't your house"* (Roy, 1997, p. 83).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study precisely elaborated and explained the patriarchal grips on women and child abuse as highlighted by Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things*. The researcher observed how on the one hand Ammu's inter-caste marriage and divorce is condemned by the Aymanam family

members and on the other hand Chacko's love marriage and divorce with Margaret is not given much significance. Even Chacko's daughter Sophie Mol receives a heartfelt welcome from the family. After divorce, Chacko returns to India and starts working as a lecturer at the Madras Christian College. The death of Pappachi provides him full access to the parental assets. He returns to Aymanam and takes over his mother's business of pickle, Paradise Pickles and Preserves. Most of the events denote that when a woman becomes a widow or a divorcee, she loses every power in her life once she loses her husband's protection.

To conclude, the researcher finds that Arundhati Roy has a deep apprehension for Small Things. Small things here refer to the sufferers of cultural, social-political and economic practices. Roy is addressing children, women and Dalits (lower caste of the society) as small things who have always been considered as the inferior ones. In some parts of the Indian society, women are considered as private property and always taken for granted. The defenceless children always suffer a lot to several kinds of child abuse who become victims of society and face even sexual abuse. Dalits and downtrodden workers are exploited and abused at the hands of their masters and powerful people like landlords, rural political goons and some factory owners (Jha, 2016). Therefore, in *The God of Small Things* Arundhati Roy has raised the voice of all these voiceless to reconstruct their social-cultural status.

## REFERENCES

- Alobeytha, F. L., Ismail, S. F. & Shapii, A. B. (2016). The use of frame story in Kashimra Seth's boys without names. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 7(5), 105-111. Retrieved from <http://www.journals.aiac.org.au/index.php/all/article/view/2617/2252>
- Austen, J. (1817). *Persuasion*. London, United Kingdom: John Murray.
- Bhosale, S. R. (2017). *Image of women in Indian English fiction: A study of Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Bharati Mukherjee's select novels* (Doctoral Dissertation, Shri Jagdishprasad Jhabarmal Tibarewala University, Rajasthan, India). Retrieved from <http://shodh.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/123456789/738>
- Creswell, J. W. (2011). *Educational research: planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). New York, New York, USA: Pearson.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, California, USA: SAGE Publications.
- Dhawan, R. K. (1999). *Arundhati Roy, the novelist extraordinary*. New Delhi, India: Prestige Book.
- Goldsmith, B., & Beresford, M. (2018). *India most dangerous country for women with sexual violence rife*. Thomson Reuters Foundation. Retrieved from <http://poll2018.trust.org/stories/item/?id=e52a1260-260c-47e0-94fc-a636b1956da7>
- Gowen, A. (2018). *India ranked world's most dangerous place for women, reigniting debate about women's safety*. The Washington Post. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/06/27/india-ranked-worlds-most-dangerous-place-for-women-reigniting-debate-about-womens-safety/?utm\\_term=.29d24b6b1813](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/06/27/india-ranked-worlds-most-dangerous-place-for-women-reigniting-debate-about-womens-safety/?utm_term=.29d24b6b1813)
- Innes, C. (2000). *A sourcebook on naturalist theatre*. London, London, UK: Taylor & Francis Ltd.
- Jha, A. K. (2016). *The datlits: Still untouchable*. Retrieved from India Today News Website: <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/the-big-story/story/20160215-dalits-untouchable-rohith-vemula-caste-discrimination-828418-2016-02-03>
- Kumari, V. (2014). *Problems and challenges faced by urban working women in India* (Doctoral Dissertation, National Institute of Technology Rourkela, Odisha, India). Retrieved from <http://ethesis.nitrkl.ac.in/6094/1/E-208.pdf>
- McKee, A. (2003). *Textual analysis: A beginner's guide*. London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications.
- Nanda, S. (2012). Women as the oppressed in the god of small things. *The Criterion*, 3(3), 2-7. Retrieved from <http://www.the-criterion.com/V3/n3/Nanda.pdf>

- Rani, K. (2017). Gender discrimination and child abuse in Arundhati Roy's the god of small things. *International Journal of Academic Research and Development*, 2(6), 313-314. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/dan19/Downloads/2-6-159-866.pdf
- Roy, A. (1997). *The god of small things*. London, United Kingdom: Harpercollins Publishers.
- Saryal, S. (2014). Women's rights in India: Problems and prospects. *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(7), 49-53.
- Shirwadkar, M. (1979). *Image of woman in the Indo-Anglian novel*. New Delhi, New Delhi, India: Sterling.
- Singh, K. (1999). *The company of women*. New Delhi, India: Viking Books.
- (2007). *Study on child abuse: India 2007*. Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. Retrieved from <https://www.childlineindia.org.in/pdf/MWCD-Child-Abuse-Report.pdf>
- Murthy, S. (2017). Women empowerment: Issues and challenges. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 4(2), 114-129.
- Winmayil, B. (2014). The emotional abusing and being abused in Roy's the god of small things. *The Criterion*, 5(6), 378-384.

