



RESEARCH PAPER

Marxist Study of *The God of Small Things*

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ABSTRACT

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Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* is a political manuscript which conveys Marxist approach and throws the light on the fact that the Indian society is so much primitive that there is still the caste system in it. There is class struggle in the society and on the base of the resources the society has been divided in two main groups; bourgeoisie and proletariat. Bourgeoisie is the upper class of society that creates an ideology for the benefits of its own and tries to exploit the lower class for its own benefits. At the same time there have been given so many suggestions to improve the present state of affairs. However, the study argues about the communism, its impacts, false ideology of the bourgeoisie, exploitation of the lower class by the upper class, feminist perspective and the colonial impacts and mainly the Marxist thoughts. In the same way to novel also illustrates the view point of writer that how the Indian society should be. This study is qualitative in approach with Marxist theoretical perspective in the background of Indian society. The study is delimited to the text of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* by using Karl Marx approach towards society.

Introduction

In the god of small things Arundhati Roy seems to show that Marx perception of life is not without faults, having the area the ideal that proletariat, not having to lose but their unity, But it is fact despite of privilege workers having jobs, a large section of India's population having not this privilege.

Arundhati Roy through her novel illustrates the social and political issues in the light of Marxist literary discourse. The study of the characters describe as communists in this novel range from a former Chief Minister of Kerala. It deal in detail how government of Kerala planned to compel land reforms neutralizing law and order and restrained the reactionary anti people Congress government in the center. Absolutely, the ruler in an ideal state tries to his level best to resolve the economic issues too, if it done by capturing the property of the people definitely will be enlisted in which we find Falstags, Bardolph, whereas the aim of the present study is concern it deals with Roy's realistic depiction of communism in the novel is far away from the theoretical idealism of Marxist ideology. In Roy's God of the Small

Things characters are not far away from weakness, Chacko, the man with Marxist mind lethal with a feudal libido. If a person who claim being an ideal Marxist, regards women as objects to gratify his hedonistic desires, not having low position as feudal lord whereas the ideal Marxist ideology is concern there is o caste system equal distribution of wealth, no class conflict, no capitalist mode of production but in the case of God of Small thing is vice versa.

Importance of present study is in many ways as it will contribute more knowledge about the problem for the communist movement was not supported by the Bourgeois, the landlords and the revolutionary group. It will further contribute the knowledge about working of political ideology fabricated into the shape of social life which is being questioned in the novel. For all of above it will reveal the surface reality of deplorable situation manifesting in communism.

Literature Review

Arundhati Roy is regarded as one of the best literary figures of Indian society. She has depicted the contemporary issues of her society masterfully. Present study is aimed to show that that there are many approaches to *The God of Small Things* and these issues are concerning to the approaches like that of Marxism as well as communism. As it is regarded that the literary works are the rue representations of the society same is true for the novel of Arundhaty Roy.

Nobs(2004) asserts that in modern society the individual is shaped by the better living standards. This struggle to live a better and the standardized living create a competition among the individuals of society. This competition creates an environment that is near to the colonization of the western over the eastern and to exploit them. He argues that although the colonization is over now but it has left its impact on the individuals where the period of the colonization has been observed. In India, the caste system is still in vogue where the castes like Brahman, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Sudras are still present. By peeping into the past he argues that near about 3500 years ago the invaders from the north who were known as the Aryans developed and imposed the cast system in this territory of India. But as a matter of fact the Hindu society has been divided into five categories and this division has been based at the religious bases. The highest and the greatest of all is known as Varnas (colours) and after that comes the caste that is the Untouchables. The four Varnas consist of: Brahmans (a priest caste), Kshatriyas (a military caste), Vaishyas (a merchant or agricultural caste), Sudras (a labouring caste). Nobes (2014) illustrates that these castes systems are regarded as the destiny of the Hindu individuals and they have to live the whole life on the bases of this caste system.

Sorokin(1947) gave the name „Stratification“ to a situation that is used to reveal the inequality in the society where the individual tries to achieve the different positions and the great standards in the society. It s a matter of fact that the standards are achieved by the historically made ways and means. The mechanism of integration allows the individual to cope with the existence of the persistent inequalities between the stratus of the society. Meanwhile Narwoko and Bagong(2004) assert the same assumption that there is often inequality in the society that causes the growth of differences in society.

Worsley(2004) argues by taking the Karl Marx's theory that the class is the motor of social development. Karl Marx argues that the society has developed through four main epochs and they include Primitive Communism, Ancient Society, feudal Society, and Capitalist Society. For Marx only the first epoch called the primitive communism is free from all the social stratification on the basis of class.

Marx believes that in this category the people grow food resources more than they need and also become the part of the society that is more dynamic in nature.

Grossberg (2013) is of the view that it is highly political issue that the untouchables in India are even not allowed to touch the touchable. He further argues in the form of question that what is the real cause of this gap between the classes existing in the country. To him these are only the economic issues that have given this hegemony to the upper class people to exploit the lower classes. That is the reason that the caste system becomes the product of collective power or political dominance. Roy asserts that "touch anything that Touchable touched. But the main thing is to find out the reason of this breach that has been created in the classes and it has been analysed that many of the classes in India have changed their religions just to save themselves from the surge of untouchability and they have converted to Christianity and join the Anglican Church to escape the scourge of Untouchability.

Although, all these critics have discussed and analysed the role of Marxism in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*, but the study argues that their analysis has some serious gaps and assertions. Present study is intended to find out those gaps and fill them by exhaustive analysis of the novel under the light of Marxist approach. Apart from Marxist study the study indicates that *The God of Small Things* is a socio- political manuscript that is based on realistic approach existing in contemporary Indian society.

Material and Methods

The mode of research is qualitative where close reading method of the text is used to sport proposed questions to answer in the light of Marxist approaches. Moreover, this qualitative research is based on the explanation and interpretation of the text from Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*. This study is basically a textual analysis and the researcher aims to adhere the way of discourse analysis.

Undertaken study relies upon the events and incidents of family regarding to Roy's mentioning of historical character in the novel which are the spoke person of Marxism and communism so with help of historical journals, text, book reviews, scholarly journals and interviews analysis will be affective keeping in mind Marxist theory and its other aspects as communism, socialism and capitalism.

Theoretical Framework

Marx's fundamental moral concern was to identify the inequality of wealth. He argues that some groups of the society come to dominate on others to achieve the privilege power and wealth. However, the ultimate goal of Marx is to find out a way where all the members of society should enjoy the equal opportunities, power and

wealth. Marx is of the view that history is basically a continuous struggle between the classes for dominance. He asserts, "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle" (Heaney, 2002)

Similarly the working class has no right to experience anything that is not meant for it. The means of production are in the hands of few people who have a power to invest, have good relations to exist in the world and have resources to utilize. Most members of society have to sell their labour to the capitalists. They have to accept the orders only and have no right to say no on anything ordered by them. But Marx is of the view that the labour should earn money not the money should earn money. The poor class has to work but the land owner class and people who have lot of money they do not have to work and they get a lot of money by utilizing their accumulated money (Trainer, 1998). Marxists argue that the value of the things should be calculated in terms of labour while conventional economics does not practice these ideas.

In terms of relations Marx is of the view that society does not consists of individuals rather it is stands on the foundations of relations between the individuals. On the base of this notion there is no discrimination between the individuals of society rather they are equal to one another on humanistic grounds. In other words, it is asserted that at first they are human beings then they are masters and slaves. However, the relations such as master and slave are outside society. To be a slave or to be a citizen are the social characteristics. And it is matter of fact that the member of one class may not be antagonistic towards the other one that is a view that gives rise to the social mobility between the classes. But one of the great claims of Marxism is that the classes may never come out of the social phenomenon, or in other words the conflicts between the classes can never be eliminated. Disregard of this fact that conflicts occur or not but the division between the classes is likely to sustain forever. The process of conflict is inherent in class system (Miliband, 1991)

It is further argued by Marx that social revolution, revolts, eruptions and outbursts are vivid manifestations of perpetual conflict and alienation. This thing gives rise to an idea that the social struggle between the classes is growing sharper into an irrepressible form. These classes and their differences are so deep rooted that they can never escape from this growing gap between them and the situation can be changed when there is total transformation of the means of production. In Marxist sociology the concept of domination is a central one. He further argues that as conflict is not an inherent feature of human nature in the same way domination is not a permanent part of human condition. Both; domination and conflict are inherent only when there are specific modes of production. They actually believe in a notion that what is produced by human labour. In this way class domination is not fact rather it is a continuous process that depends on the classes to defend, maintain, strengthen and extend their domination (Miliband, 18).

The concept of domination is cultural, economic and political in nature. On the other hand the domination of classes has many different facets. In the same way it has many different connotations. In the pure senses the class domination may not be economical or cultural but it is highly political content. In *communist manifesto*(2019) it has been argued by Karl Mar and Angels that epoch of Bourgeoisie has simplified class antagonism. It has been argued by the both that society has

spitted itself in two different as well as hostile camps, into two classes directly standing against each other; bourgeoisie and proletariat.

However, keeping in mind all these thought evaluated by Karl Marx and the opinions of different analysts of Marxist theory and approach this study intends to show that Arundhaty Roy's *The God of Small Things* a manuscript that shows depicts the true picture of modern Indian society in which there is class system existing on the base of money. The people having the high social order they are regarded as big things and people who do not have the resources to prosper are considered as small things and they are being exploited by the bourgeoisie. On the other hand the theory of Marxism can be analysed in different strands. Present study argues that the bourgeoisie is the class that creates the breaches between the classes because it divides the classes of society and exploits them. In the same way this class of society creates an antagonistic environment where every individual thinks to have a high social pedestal and high status of society. He is eager to control the means of production and this struggle gives rise to the class struggle and the society may not come out of the monetary conditions.

Marxist Strain in India as depicted in *The God of Small Things*

Marxism is not only concerned with the issues such as capitalism, communism and Marxism only rather there are so many questions that have been raised and they have also been dealt with such as the impacts of imperialism and with special reference to post-colonial approaches. On the other hand the chapter is also to deal with the issues of political ideology, gradual development of the Indian bourgeoisie during the period of colonialism.

There have been included so many factors in the development of the bourgeoisie in India and the very first factor, the factor that is generally regarded as major one was the Indian colonial economy that was the initiation of a rapid phase where the import of the consumer goods is occurring (Mukarjee, 2010). It happened during the time of First World War that pushed the masses to demand for liberation from 1930 onward. But as a matter of fact India was not self-sufficient to produce its resources as well as the consumer goods. But during this time indigenous capital was even not in that condition it could have produced its consumer goods on large scale.

The second reason was that during this time of crises there was an inward orientation instead of outward and indigenous industries which were importing the goods looked forward to export the things from local areas (Bagchi, 2000). The third factor was that the total volume of international trade showed a considerable decline during this time but the international goods such as cotton, cement, and steel were increased three times (Homfray, 2012). Another major factor which was happening during this time was the co-operation from the part of princes who helped the large industries to grow their yield and in this regard this time was being regarded as a time of multiplicity of reason where rapid shift to pre-capitalists has been depicted by land lords and industrialists. Another factor involved in the evolution of Indian bourgeoisie is that there had been a great significant shift in foreign trade during the post-world war period resulting in the increment of the total production as well as the number of exports.

But, on the contrary to this there had been a great chance for those industrialists who used to run their industries on their own ways and means. So, they got a great chance to enhance their means of production and it was a great moment for the emergence of the industrialist class in India. In this way they could have a great control on the economy of the country during the time of great crises when whole Indian nation was under the spell of the depression (Chandra, 1970).

However, it has been noticed that the consciousness about the class is an evolutionary system and it happened in India on the basis of political and ideological consciousness. It is necessary to analyse the political and ideological development of Indian national capitalist class. The most important theme regarding Indian bourgeoisie has been that (a) its independence on foreign capital and its interest in foreign trade especially the exports (b) its association with the land owners (c) its fear of being left and the compromise or collaboration with the imperialism.

This was the time when Karl Marx designed a detailed economic critique of colonialism even before Hobsen and Lenin(Chandra, 1980).it has also been noticed that during twentieth century the influence of this anti colonial movement was further strengthened. This was economic, social or political influence and was happening under the strong influence of leadership of Congress. The people were under the great influence of parties such as communist or social and they were being lead by the strong political figures like that of Gandhi or Nehru.

However, after the independence the upper section of the class was awarded with the lands. This was the start of the crisis among the masses where few were being awarded and few were being deprived of. Although it was a slow oriented favour but it left a long lasting effect on the situation of that time. Today in India small Junker type capitalists are dominant than that if the great land lords. On the contrary to this the working class has shown trend towards the strong sense of solidarity among the farming union. Mukarjee is of the view that if there is a crises among the working class that is based on false and outdate dogmas (Mukarjee 1981).

Some of the writers such as Zulfiqar Ghouse have asserted that the nature of the partition was futile because a common man got just nothing out of it. Only the masters have been changed and nothing else. Instead of white masters there are the blacks controlling the lives of the common people. So in this regard the Indian economy is still being controlled by the bourgeoisie class that has the land as well as all the resources and they exploit the poor sect of the class because they have the authority and the resources.

Results and Discussion

The researcher has analysed that the novel is full of themes like caste discrimination, social stratification, gender bias, power structure, atrocities of police, touchable and untouchable, marginalisation, ideology, capitalism, class struggle and exploitation, transgression, inferiority, colonisers and colonised, structure and super structure, oppressor and oppressed, survival of the fittest, inner and outer conflicts. But most of the relevant term is the class consciousness and Marxist approach that divides the society in two major groups of bourgeoisie and proletariat class. On the other hand there is resistance in the labour class. It works for its survival. In the novel the labour class has been represented by Valutha who is a painter and bourgeoisie

class has been represented by big things such as Pillae, Papachi and Mamachi, factories, and the owners of the factories. They have been shown that they are exploiting the working class. On the other hand the novel also represents that the working class is very talented but the fact is that they are from the paravan therefore they are not in a position to grow. The Indian society has been represented as a very conservative society where still the caste and creed system is existing. Here the paravans are compelled to crawl instead of walking with upper classes. Same assumption has been represented in the story of Ammu and Valutha. Valutha is not allowed to love Ammu merely on the base of fact that he is untouchable and other one is touchable. In this regard the novel is a spun on the very fabric of social stratification that Indian society has for several centuries. Despite institutionalised watchword equality, liberty and justice to all the citizens of India. The democratic India is still reigned over by four class systems even the most progressive of democrats, irrespective of their political party or ideology, or unwittingly perpetuating social equality, religious intolerance and racial discrimination. In the same way the novel has an environment that shows that paravans are not illegible even to work as carpenters. Similarly the novel also represents that working class has been destined to work and respect the upper class but as a matter of fact those are not recognised by the upper class and bourgeoisie.

Moreover, a close reading of the text represents that there is really marxist approach in the text of *The God of Small Things*.

On another place in the text Mamachi (with impetrable touchable logic often said that if only he hadn't, been a paravan, he might have become an engineer (*The God of Small Things*, 72). Meanwhile Chako says that Valutha, "practically runs the factory (*The God of Small Things*, 264). Despite being an untouchable owes a great place at the factory and in the opinion of some characters he manages to run the factory partially. to an untouchable family that is untouchable outcast. He lives with his father in belongs a small hut where he works for many years. Valutha is a person who is creative Valutha in handicrafts and he makes the toys with the dry palm reeds and gives them to Ammu where he says, "on his palm... so he would not have to touch him to take them (*The God of Small Things*, 72).

Since it has been discussed that there is marginalisation of the characters then the question arises that what is the real cause of that marginalization? To some critics this marginalization is due to the fact that these characters are firstly economically weak. And the other factor behind this is they belong to the state that is not regarded as high social class so they are regarded as untouchable and even unclean. This is euphemistic picture of Valutha that he comes into the dreams of Ammu. This factor has been represented in the text of the novel as follows, "he left no footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no image in mirrors (*The God of Small Things*, 206).

Actually this picture of the society is an old version and Roy is eager to tell what the subaltern position was and how the untouchables were being treated in the olden days of Hindu society. The text represents this factor in the following manners "untouchables were, expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping

away their footprints so that Barhamans are Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravans's footprint(*The God of Small Things*, 71).

So far as the picture of society from the perspective of Marxism and class distinction is concerned it is very present in the character of Ammu. He is a marginalized woman because is divorced one an at the same time she had tow kids whome she has to take care of. She is being disregarded by her parents and her kids life with her and she is not given a place in the eyes of her relatives, all the members of Ammu are regarded as downtroddesn and disoriented especially baby Kochama always remains in the quest of things that he sould make the kids of Amu they they " really have no right to be (there) in factory(*The God of Small Things*, 44).

The characters of the novel are basically mouthpiece of the Marxist approach presented in *The God of Small Things*. This approach represents that one day the proletariat class will come to ruin the structure and status of rich people. This is the factor that is represented in the text of the novel. In the novel it is represented that exploitation is imposed upon the charactrers. This is what happens in the text of the novel with Ammu. Although Amu is disregarded by her family but at the same time her family is scared of her. they know that she may become a dangerous and harmful to them because she has no more to lose and if something goes wring to her she may cause a danger to them. they donsiderr her as a" women that they had already damned, who now had little left to lose, and could therefore be dangerous(*The God of Small Things*,44).

It has been illustrated that there are class struggles in the novel and it is the true illustration of the Marxist approach. There are antagonistic thoughts as well class existing in indian showing that they are superior or inferior to one another the demonstration of the family cars and other belonging which are expensive and beyond the approach of a common man is the depiction of Marxism, Baby Kochama is forced an humiliated by the mob of people and she has to wave red flag shouting the Marxist slogans. Since she is here humiliated and she is not in a position to protext therefore she prepares her mind to humilite Valutha. in the text of the novel this factor is presented in the following way, " in her mind he grew to represent the march" and all that had been done to her, " all the men who had laughed at her" (*The God of Small Things*, 78)

Moreover, there are expressions of the communists in the novels and Baby Kochama's mostly feels fear and it was not without any cause it is illustreated by the narrator of the novel that a new militant communist movement called Naxalities spread rapidly avors indian and it is the historical incidentity and it created a wave of terror in every brougeois heart(*The God of Small Things*,66).

On the other hand the Marxist thought has been given expression in the novel by the character of Baby Kochama when she is scared of poor classes and thinks that anyone may steal her belongings. Therefore, she always prefers to lock the doors of her houses andeven windows. This is actually political fear which gives rise to the Marxist slogan that the loiwer part of society, when excessively exploited will forfeit even snatch the resources of upper class of society. And they will always remain in continuous fear. In shour baby Kochama embodies the Syrian Christians and she is

the true incarnation of caste system within their religious practices. They have prejudices as well as there are double standards in that society.

So the question that what is the stance of Roy to depict the symbolic things like that of the naked bodies of Valutha and Ammu. Some of the critics are of the view that the novel is erotic in nature and some give other connotations such as the political implications. And they cannot be decoded as easily as possible. For instance the inspector in the novel twice taps the breast of Ammu. This controversy has been solved by the writer herself when the novel is analysed with a special outlook in the perspective of Marxism. It is illustrated that Mathew does not see her in the perspective of sexual harassment rather a premeditated gesture, calculated to humiliate and terrorize her. An attempt to instil order into a world gone wrong. In contrast to untouched ability of Velutha Roy has taunted on the police authority and their brutality. Burton is of the view that in the novel Roy wants to opine that the female bodies are sexed, raced, classed and ethicised and they are the grounds for the proper exercise of the colonial and imperial powers. Therefore the female body is regarded as a colony where most unruly and colonial disciplines are exercised.

The cruelty of the bourgeoisie can be seen by the death of Valutha. He is killed by his wife and is a member of upper class. This is symbolical to the cruelty of the upper class on the lower one. As it has already been discussed that there are so many transgressions in the novel and one of those transgressions is the killing of Valutha by the hands of his wife. So the cruelty of the upper class society is exposed. A student of feminism will argue that it is feministic perspective that has been illustrated in the novel but a student finding the thinking the character of bourgeoisie will analyse that it is the class struggle and the class consciousness that makes Ammu to kill her husband after she becomes conscious of her class. Although she wanted to live under the shadow of her husband but she was unaware from the fact that the person has no arms to fight with those norms of society that are making the foundations of the society so much hollow. So the words are true that the "shadows that he could see only. One of the basic questions that should be dealt with is the way the things have been illustrated by the writer. Roy does not allow her characters to repress their expressions or their wishes. At the same time she does not allow that the individual should be the subject to any thing in the society rather she is of the view that the person should accept his responsibility of his actions.

It is apt to say that Roy has depicted the human beings living in India as the victim if the society where they are oppressed and they do not have this right to raise their voice against that oppression. These are the laws made by the society and the society has been divided into few segments and some of them are looting the others. Roy has depicted the plight of third world individuals from postcolonial Marxist perspective. She portrays the condition of those subalterns in very diverse way. By representing the condition of those repressed people she shows so many things present in the Indian society. The oppressions in the story are depicting that the individuals are not having financial conditions so strong. Transgressions and the breakage of love laws are associated with those who have not the strong economic conditions. The voice that has been raised here in the novel that is the voice of repressed and the oppressed human being and that voice resonates all over the world.

Some of the critics are of the view that the manuscript of Arundhaty Roy shows a growing tension between powerful and powerless in the contemporary India. Not only it portrays a non-equality of the caste but also there are several issues that have been raised in the novel and out of those issues are the feminism, Marxism, subaltern, transgression, violation of love laws. In the same way the writer of the novel has tried to give a glimpse of the contemporary Indian society where the demarcations between the touchable and the untouchables have been vividly exposed.

Conclusion

After the exhaustive analysis of the novel it is concluded that the novel *The God of Small Things* by Arundhaty Roy is a manuscript that clearly depicts the struggle between the classes. Not only, in the novel the class struggle has been revealed but also it has been asserted that the upper classes always exploit the lower classes for their own benefits. From the characters it has been tried to portray that the lower class of society is being misused by the hands of the upper classes. Valutha the protagonist of the novel is the mouthpiece of the lower class of society and he has been revealed as a person who is below the level of humanity. He has no rights to touch even the human beings because he belongs to the class that is untouchable. Roy wants to show that the upper class of society has made some norms and they use those norms for the personal benefits. On the other hand it is also concluded that the social evils existing in India are so much great that they seem to be people belonging to a superstitious society and if they will touch an untouchable to something wrong will happen to them. In the same way it is regarded a transgression if any person belonging to the lower class and tries to have love affairs in the upper class society. In the same way it can also be concluded that there is caste system that is making the foundations of Indian society very hollow when compared with the rest of the world. This caste system makes the society hollow from inside. On the other hand it has also been argued that there are so many political things in the novel.

Recommendations

Although there has been conducted a great deal of research study on the novel *The God of Small Things* and different researchers have analyzed the novel from their own perspectives but it is further recommended that there are so many gaps in the research and their analyses is not full and final. Still there is a great scope of research and the novel can be judged in multiple and various angles such as feminism, oppression, gender bias, and much more through the perspective of post colonialism.

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