

Bestial act against Dalit in the novel *The God of Small Things*

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*Abstract: The paper focuses on the deplorable situation and inhuman act of the touchable against untouchables. The author Arundhati Roy in the novel *The God of Small Things* created a great tumult in the minds of the readers. She delineated the antagonism between same class people, exploitation and forbidden relationship between touchable and untouchables*

Keywords: Dalit, bestial act, exploitation and forbidden relationship between touchable and untouchables

The God of Small things was a wonderful novel written by woman writer Arundhati Roy about Dalits. Even today this novel created great tumult in the minds of the society. The novelist depicted the antagonism between the same class of people, exploitation, and forbidden relationship between touchable and untouchable. During the British rule in India, the untouchable people were classified as Exterior Classes. The term Dalit came from the Indo-Aryan root 'Dal' means held under check or suppressed or crushed. Dr.B.R. Ambedkar

who gave the name Dalit for the word untouchable but Gandhiji named them as Harijans (Children of God). Dalit people used to live under poverty, starvation, insults which were totally against humanity. In this novel, Paravans were hated by the upper class due to the foul smell emanated from them.

The word caste came from Spanish and Portuguese word caste which means race, breed or Lineage but the Indians used the word Jati for the word caste. Traditionally four divisions of caste system prevailed in the Indian society called Varnas. The Varnas was based on birth person and occupation of the people the varnas would be classified. Outside the caste system were untouchables and they were sullied, polluted and not to be touched. Neena A. Almadi observes, “Caste as a cultural brand has structured the Indian society into what it was in the ancient times and what it still is today”(M.F. Patel 271).

In this novel the novelist depicted inhuman acts of upper-class people against the untouchable were as follows untouchable have separate entrance to their homes, drew water to drink from the separate wells, They were expected to crawl backward with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that upper class people would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping in to the Paravan’s foot prints. Not allowed to walk on the public road, not allowed to cover their upper body, not allowed to carry umbrella, and further untouchable had to put their hands over their mouth when they spoke to the upper classes people to prevent polluted foul smell emanated from their mouth. These disabilities were imposed by tradition and it was deep-rooted in the minds of the untouchables. Nobody dared to question or violate the rigid caste oriented rules. Any deviation from this caste rule would be considered as a sinful act.

Velutha was the son of Vellya Paapen who belonged to paravan and he was a skilled carpenter, able to operate machines, and he was a man of sympathy and love. By virtue of

these qualities, he endears himself to members of Pappachi . He was an independent man and he did not behave the way as untouchable should behave. “In the way he walked, the way he held his head. The quiet way he offered suggestions without being asked” (TGOST 76). The paravans were not allowed to work as a carpenter in Mammaachi factory. In order to please the touchable workers in the factory, Mammaachi offered less pay to Velutha than the others “ Less pay than the regular workers and more than what is paid to a Paravans”(TGOST 77). His father Vellya scolded him for touching household articles of Mammaachi. This widens the gulf between father and son. He abhorred the inhuman behaviour of his father. He participated in the Communist party rally by wearing shirts for the purpose of claiming equal rights. Both the touchable workers and the factory owner Chacko resented over his behaviour. It revealed that it was a great blow the mankind.

Ammu was the unloved daughter of Pappachi who ran away from the house in fear of torture and humiliation of her father in search of self-identity and she married Baba a tea estate worker who was drunkard, sleeping in the hospital corridor when Ammu was suffering in labour pain. The situation was still worse when he compels her to accept an indecent proposal of his employer Holick. She was shocked over the inhuman behaviour of her husband. Therefore she felt dejected and frustrated in her marital life. She lost her hope in the institution of marriage. She became the victim of marriage In this pathetic situation she left her husband and return to her native village Ayemenem in Kerala. “Ammu left her husband and returned unwelcomed, to her parents in Ayemenen. To everything that she had fled from only a few years ago. Except that now she had two young children. And no more dreams” (TGOST42). Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex: The case of Feminist Revolution* observes “Women are an oppressed class. Our oppression is total, affecting every facet of our lives. We are exploited as sex objects, breeders, domestic servants and cheap labourers. We are

considered inferior beings, whose only purpose is to enhance men's lives. Our humanity is denied"(127)

Though Baby Kochamma was related to Ammu, she had no sympathy towards her when she returned to parent's house along with two children. Despite she was aware that under what situation she forced to return to her parent's house she spoke outrageously and passed sarcastic remarks against her. It was contrary to feminine nature. It revealed that her heart filled with venom. Her behaviour exposed inhuman nature. "She subscribed wholeheartedly to the commonly held view that a married daughter had no position in her parent's home. As for a divorced daughter – according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a divorced daughter from love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma outrage"(TGOST 45).

The innocent children of Ammu bore the wrath of other family members. During the day time, the children felt comfortable and happy while they were in the company of Velutha. He loved them, consequent to this unmixed relationship Mixed freely moved with Velutha. Ammu admired his extraordinary qualities of craftsmanship and further, she felt that he was The God of Small Things. Both of them were suppressed and found solace in the company of each other. It laid the foundation for both of them to violate traditional rigid norms and to transgress the moral code.

Generally, Untouchable man should not love any woman of higher caste and this was the social order in Kerla. Ammu could not control her desire anymore and Velutha was no more called as Untouchable. She crossed the river Meenachal along with her children in a country boat during the night to see Velutha. This rendezvous relationship continued for thirteen nights. One night Sophie Mol joined with them on that night, unfortunately, the boat capsized in the river and Sophie Mol drowned and died. Ammu's affair with Velutha was

short-lived. Amitabh Roy in *The God of Small Things: Novel of Social Commitment* observes, “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”(62)

The non-human Vellya Paapan infuriated over the relationship of untouchable son Velutha with a touchable married woman Ammu and therefore he brought to the notice of Mammachi out of loyalty and sincerity. She could not control her rage due to shame and dishonour and therefore she summoned him to be present before him In the presence of Velutha she spittle on his father Vellya. Mammachi exposed her inhuman behaviour of spitting on him and therefore he felt that it was the price for his loyal and honest disclosure. “Suddenly the blind old woman....pushed Vellya paaper with all her strength...He was taken completely by surprise...She {Baby Kochamma} found Mammachi spitting into the rain, Thoo! Thoo! Thoo! Mammachi was shouting, Drunken dog! Drunken Paravan liar!”(TGOST 256). Palakurthy Dinakar observes, “They have a strong feeling to break the traditional norms but they could not, so they take moral transgressions as only panacca for their liberation”(Adi Ramesh 55).

Both lovers were separated ruthlessly. And both of them were punished separately. Velutha was dismissed from his job and with a warning that he should not be seen within the premises of Mammachi’s estate but Ammu was asked to leave the house. Chacko brother of Ammu in a commanding voice to Ammu that “Before I break every bone of your body”(TGOST 94). Chacko had no locus standi to expel Ammu from the house for extra-marital affair with Velutha because he was involved in a sexual relationship with estate worker with the connivance of Mammach and Baby Kochamma. It was nothing but a double standard of morality one for the woman another for the man. The patriarchal attitude of

oppression was exposed from these two women by her own class of people. Therefore there was no justification for their cruel punishment. But the helpless poor woman had no other go except to leave the house. The heartless family members expelled her in the name of protecting the dignity and fame of the family. They failed to understand the purpose behind proverb” Blood is thicker than water” They did not value her even as a human being.

There was no one to come forward to take care of Ammu’s innocent children and therefore they uprooted by their own class people. Ammu died in the hotel room disgracefully and no one lamented for her demise. Now they lost their beloved mother the only person whom they depended upon. Baby Kochamma and her mother Mammachi were also responsible for her miserable life and death. Both of them had patriarchal ideology they perpetuated it on Ammu. She died at the age of thirty-one. “Not old. Not young but a viable, die-able age”(PTGOST 101) .Due to the love failure of Baby Kochamma with father Mulligan, she remained unmarried for the rest of her life and thereby she became a man- less woman. It transformed Baby Kochamma into a sadist and perverted woman due to self-repression. Throughout the marital life of Mammachi, she suffered at the hands of her husband pappachai and therefore she had aversion to patriarchy. Therefore with a malice intention Baby Kochamma gave the false complaint against velutha that he raped Ammu and kidnapped the children. Velutha was an ardent and loyal member of the communist party he sought the help of communist leader Pillai but he turned down his request and he further he utilised this opportunity to get rid of him. Pillai hides the fact that he had to hold the protection card from the party. He ensured the end of Velutha. He lived in the society “Where a man’s death could be more profitable than his life had ever been”(TGOST 281). On the instructions of Baby Kochamma, Estha identified the Velutha as the abductor. Estha gave the false testimony “Yes it was him”(TGOST 32). The Police inspector did not accept the affidavit of Ammu because she was a divorced woman. Baby Kochamma, Mammachi and

Pillai failed to think and realise the useful and loyal service rendered to them instead they joined together they took revenge on him.

Police woke up Velutha with their boots and beat him severely. On hearing the screaming sound of Velutha they saw Velutha became semi-conscious and he was not moving and he was dragged to the police station where he died due to the torture of police at night. Police always victimize the poor and downtrodden people and it is the reality of the society. "His Skull was fractured in three places. His nose and both his cheek-bones were smashed"(TGOST 304). Both Estha and Rahel were the eye witness to the tragedy they were affected psychotically and they became the victim of trauma. Caruth observes, "as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind"(Caruth1996:3)

This novel attacked the patriarchal notions and cultural pattern of touchable prevailing in society. The novelist exposed the reality of the untouchable in contemporary society. The nucleus of the novel was inhuman acts of the touchable. The study exposed the inner inhuman layer present in the human being in the name of patriarchal norms and cultural pattern of the society.

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