
Empowerment and Resistance of Women in the Select Works of Arundhati Roy

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Abstract

The present research paper attempts to identify the aspects of women's emancipation in Arundhati Roy's fiction "The God of Small Things." Through the representation of female characters like Ammu, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Rahel, and Margaret Kochamma, the current work demonstrates several examples of women's empowerment throughout the narrative. The female characters in this novel had a difficult time gaining their independence and freedom in society. The hardships and misfortunes of the female characters, such as Ammu, Rahel, and Mammachi, are important to the entire narrative. The major material for this research project is Arundhati Roy's 2007 novel "The God of Small Things." The novel has been analyzed using the textual analysis technique. Numerous instances of the marginalization of female characters, including Ammu, Rahel, Mammachi, and Margaret Kochamma, are depicted throughout the novel. Ammu refused to be taken advantage of by her husband, who wanted her to have an affair with his employer. She departed from him and returned to her house. Rahel, who had to work many jobs to make ends meet in the USA, also battled with loneliness. Mammachi managed the pickle and jam industry more smoothly and achieved financial independence without openly opposing her husband. According to the present research article, the female characters in the novel are stronger than the male characters because they oppose them and make their presence known. Critics may point out that the female characters in the novel have had hardships in their families and occasionally harassment from their spouses. However, given that they were set in the 1960s and 1970s, it is clear that the women in this novel had a realistic level of empowerment and resistance.

Keywords: Women empowerment, resistance, freedom, intelligent, social acceptance, economic freedom

Introduction

Arundhati Roy's Novel "The God of Small Things," in 1997 as won the Booker Prize and gained international acclaim. A strong literary interest in her work had been sparked by this novel. People who had previously attacked her for the book's purported vulgarity were now reading it to learn about its unseen qualities. Although the book covered a wide range of topics, women's empowerment was one of the main themes. Ammu, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Rahel, and Margaret Kochamma are just a few of the numerous female characters in the book. One important aspect of these female characters in the novel is the power, freedom, and independence they fostered. Although critics may point out that the aforementioned female characters experienced hardships in their families and occasionally harassment from their husbands, it is clear that the women in this book were realistically empowered given the 1960s and 1970s in which they lived.

Since women have been reliant on males in the dawn of civilization, empowering women entails giving them the ability to make their own decisions. In her book "Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research," Professor Yin-Zu Chen of National Taipei University authored a piece titled "Women's Empowerment." She used these terms to characterize women's empowerment in her essay."The system of sexual stratification that has led to women's subordination and marginalization is challenged by women's empowerment as an economic, political, and sociocultural process in order to improve their quality of life." (Chen)

According to the aforementioned notion, women can only advance in the process of empowerment after being freed from societal bonds. These social bonds can take many different forms, such as sociocultural, political, or economic. They will understand their value and significance once they are freed from these constraints. After that, they will work toward reaching their objectives. Here, it is vital to shed light on the societal constraints that impede women's advancement. The following problems and constraints have an impact on how empowered women are in society.

Women's Lower Status in the Family of Indian Society:

Women have a lesser status since they continue to perform routine tasks like cooking, cleaning, and caring for the elderly and children. The majority of families are blended. Daughters are permitted to go out and study by their parents. However, they are hesitant to grant their daughters-in-law the same independence. Other lady in the household puts pressure on females, to quit their jobs and focus only on family matters after marriage. Making a good connection between one's job and one's family requirements is what empowerment entails rather than ignoring family responsibilities.

Marital Problems:

Indian women are required to make several concessions in their weddings. They are unable to discover the ideal companion. However, whether they like their husbands or not, they are compelled to live with the person they are married to. Child weddings, in which young girls are married before they are emotionally or physically mature, are another

problem. At a time when they should be studying and playing with their friends, kids have to take care of the domestic duties. These girls' health deteriorates as a result of becoming moms at a relatively young age. In India, widow weddings are still prohibited in the majority of civilizations. It is a major issue as many young widows must live a lonely and neglected life without any assistance from their life partners. Another major issue in weddings is the dowry system, as many females are abused by their in-laws due to their insatiable need for dowry. Because their parents are always concerned about the costs of their marriages, this system renders the girls a liability in Indian culture. Because many deserving young ladies are married to unworthy, impoverished, or older partners, mismatched marriages are also a source of worry in society. Inter-caste marriage is still rare in Indian society. Because they are afraid of having their blood tainted, many individuals do not like such unions. There are fewer options when there is no intercaste marriage. The bride and groom have more options in intercaste weddings. Divorce is considered terrible in Indian society, and many men and women are married to cruel spouses. Women are compelled to lead quiet lifestyles and endure domestic abuse.

Inability to Access Health and Educational Facilities:

Due to a lack of access to healthcare and education, women in society confront several challenges. Because their parents are concerned about their safety, girls are not allowed to leave their homes to pursue higher education or prepare for competitive tests. Some parents discourage their daughters from pursuing higher education because they believe it will not help them. At the expense of their daughters, they spend money on their boys' schooling. Indian women prefer to hide their illnesses since they have been encouraged to feel less important since they were young. They don't tell their parents whether the illness is connected to menstrual cycles. Infertility and other incurable illnesses result from such carelessness. Since they consistently portray a dutiful daughter-in-law who sacrifices her fortune, health, and everything else for her family's well-being, many TV serials are also accomplices in the crime. In her work "Feminism and the Portrayal of Women in Indian Soap Operas," Symbiosis Law School student Devika Reshma brought up the subject of women's limitations through television. "The fundamental theme that permeates all of these TV operas is traditional male chauvinism, where women strive for nothing more than a loving spouse, devoted children, and the ideal life." (Devika) In the novel one can find that women characters suffer a lot through the hands of the society and the patriarchal mindset, yet they fight against them to get some concessions from the society. It shows that the women of the novel are empowered up to a great extent. The novel's female characters, such as Mammachi, Ammu, and Rahel, enjoy a lot of freedom since they may pick their life mates, get an education, and file for divorce if their wives treat them badly. Indian women in the 1960s and 1970s had no access to such rights. After reading the more in-depth descriptions of the female characters in the current book, one may discover the aspects of women's empowerment. Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Ammu, Rahel, and Margaret Kochamma are the book's main female characters.

Mammachi:

Pappachi's wife, Mammachi, was seventeen years younger than him. Cacko and Ammu were her two children. She and her daughter were tortured by their nasty and envious husband, Pappachi. However, she continued to develop her skills. She opened a pickle and jam factory upon her husband's retirement. Her spouse disagreed with this plan since he could not watch her mature. Nevertheless, she persisted in her work and managed the plant effectively. She achieved financial independence in this way. She gave the other ladies from the surrounding villages the employment. She was a genuinely powerful woman who not only achieved financial independence for herself but also gave other women the same opportunity by giving them work in her factory. In light of this reasoning, an inquisitive reader could doubt the viability of the concept of women's empowerment from her point of view, but it is important to recognize that the largest barrier to women's advancement is their financial reliance on males.

Baby Kochamma:

Despite portraying her in the novel as antagonist and attempting to repress the lesser characters, she also represents a glimmer of women's liberation. Baby Kochamma's romance with the attractive Irish monk Father Mulligan ended in failure. She followed him to Madras, but she was unable to get near him. Her father returned to Ayemenem after visiting Madras. Following her return, her father sent her to study at the University of Rochester in America. After two years, she returned with a certificate in ornamental gardening. She was also an empowered woman, as evidenced by her father's generous support for her education abroad. She was free to convert to Roman Catholicism. Since she was a little child, she has been able to carry out her desires. Nevertheless, she became a jealous lady who attempted to repress the lesser men, such as Ammu, Velutha, and the twins Estha and Rahel, after abusing the freedom she enjoyed in her home. However, it is still undeniable that she was a powerful lady. Even so, her parents made it possible for her to become empowered.

Ammu:

Ammu was a marginalized lady who had to endure hardships in her life due to her family's lack of support. Despite the challenging circumstances she encountered, she embodies the qualities of female empowerment. To get away from her family's oppressive environment, she married Baba after falling in love with him. Following the marriage, she moved in with Baba at a tea plantation in Assam as a respectable, upper-class woman. She moved away from the family and married a non-Christian man out of an internal longing. Her husband's drinking problem and repeated beatings caused her marriage to fail. In order to keep his work, her husband made her have an affair with his manager. She divorced her spouse because she could not stand it. She returned to Ayemenem, her hometown. Despite her broken romantic relationship, her family provided her with a place to reside even though she was not welcome at the Ayemenem. Although it wouldn't be acceptable to call it empowerment, she ventured to have a romantic relationship with Velutha, a member of a lower caste. In order to prevent her children from feeling alone in the absence of their father, she adored them and remained strong in front of them. She began working after being kicked

out of her house, and after she found a solid position, she intended to raise her kids solo. She dies tragically in a situation of loneliness and abandonment. Her destiny only brought her disappointment, despite the fact that she deserved a better life. Since Ammu was permitted to marry a non-Christian guy out of love, she also received her fair amount of independence from her family. Despite being coerced by her husband, she refused to have sex with the tea plantation manager, demonstrating her own bravery. Because she was by herself in Assam and her own husband opposed her, she is seen as courageous. She continued to speak out against the injustice. Despite having two young children to care for, she had the moral authority to file for divorce from her spouse. She began working to support herself after the catastrophe forced her to leave her family. It demonstrates that she was a strong, independent lady with the guts to raise her kids by herself. Had she lived longer, her children could have received better care and their lives might not have been ruined as they were in the book. Because Ammu worked so hard to overcome the disasters in her life, she might be considered an empowered woman.

Rahel:

The two primary protagonists in the text are Rahel and Esthappen. It was hard to separate them from one another since they were so close. Due to the fact that two distinct eggs were fertilized by two distinct sperm, both of these infants were dizygotic twins. Rahel is the more outspoken of the twins since she doesn't hold back when voicing her thoughts. She endures loneliness in a challenging and unsupportive environment, which makes her a very strong character. Throughout her mother's last ceremonies, she remained composed. After studying in Delhi, she married American Larry McCaslin and relocated to the United States. However, their union was short-lived, and her spouse filed for divorce. She experienced loneliness in a faraway nation following this tragedy. In her current book, Ms. Roy made reference to her broken marriage and loneliness. "Rahel didn't have a brief growing up. without nobody to set her up for marriage. Without a dowry-paying partner, she wouldn't have to worry about an obliged spouse. (Page 17) However, she persisted in trying to make ends meet by working at a variety of occupations. She had a lot of self-respect, yet she might have gone back to Ayemenem. Because she could have been humiliated at home, she did not return. Only after learning of Estha's return did she return to Ayemenem. She had a stronger resolve and didn't give a damn about what Comrade Pillai and Baby Kochamma said about her. She told Comrade Pillai about her divorce from her spouse because she had the courage to face life's facts. In contrast to her twin brother Estha, who retreated into a shell of intense quiet, she possessed a strong resolve that enabled her to take good care of herself both in the USA and in Ayemenem. In similar situations, he was unable to endure the suffering of his life. The aforementioned considerations demonstrate that Rahel was an empowered young woman from an early age. Following the untimely loss of her mother, Ammu, she had to deal with the cunning lady Baby Kochamma at home. She was a self-sufficient, educated girl who didn't think twice about being married to an American. She also traveled overseas with him without reluctance. She maintained her bravery and tenacity after divorcing her spouse by working at a variety of professions and positions to support herself. Even though she occasionally had to labor in a hostile environment with uncultured individuals, she persisted

in her struggles. To care for her brother Estha, who was an integral part of her life, she went back to Ayemenem. The aforementioned occurrences demonstrate Rahel's true empowerment.

Margaret Kochamma:

Despite having a lower role in the narrative, she was important since she was Sophie Mol's mother and Chacko's ex-wife. Her parents disapproved of the love marriage that ensued from her connection with Chacko. Chacko did not assume any family obligations following their marriage. He did not provide her with emotional or financial assistance. He lost his work and turned into a sluggish guy. Margaret made the decision to look for a better partner who could help her and Sophie Mol after their daughter was born. She married Joe after divorcing Chacko. It was a wise decision on her part. She used to write letters to Chacko on his daughter Sophie mol's well-being, demonstrating her responsibility and good behavior. In order to take care of her daughter, Sophie enrolled at the same school. She maintained her forbearance following her husband Joe's untimely demise. Additionally, she kept sending Sophie to school so that she could focus on her regular tasks. Sophie did not experience the more profound anguish of losing her father Joe, thus it worked well for her. Her actions in Ayemenem also garnered the affection of the family. She treated family members including Mammachi, Ammu, and her kids with kindness and respect. She was devastated by Sophie's passing and hit Est out of sheer wrath. However, she eventually apologized to Ammu in writing for her impolite actions toward Estha. Margaret was a perfect character in the book since she lived a morally upright life. She had a good motive for marrying Joe instead of Chacko. However, she never attempted to keep Sophie apart from Chacko and used the letters to keep him updated on her well-being. When Chacko failed to accomplish a job, she continued to work hard to support her family, demonstrating her responsibility. Even after their divorce, Chacko continued to appreciate her because of her amazing behavior. These qualities demonstrate her compassion and understanding for other people. Even after her husband passed away, she kept going to school in order to ease her own and her daughter's suffering. It demonstrates her love and sense of empowerment for her child. Her letter of apologies to Ammu, in which she expresses regret for her impolite actions against Estha, demonstrates her compassion and understanding. If one contrasts her with other female characters in the narrative, they will discover that she was an exceptionally kind and flawless individual. She is nice and reasonable, unlike other female characters like Mammachi, Baby, Ammu, or Rahel. These points demonstrate that she was self-sufficient financially, a kind and giving woman, and a reasonable one who is considerate of others' concerns. Thus, it may be said that Margaret Kochamma was the most powerful and important lady in the book. It is clear from reading these women's character descriptions that they stood for a group of strong, independent women who were able to endure social injustices without sacrificing their independence or dignity. If Ammu had been a lesser person, she may have agreed to her husband's unethical suggestion. To satisfy her husband, Mammachi could have shut down her pickle farm. After her husband and daughter passed away, Margaret might have drowned in misery, but she had made the decision to face life.

These outstanding acts of bravery demonstrate how powerful today's female fictional characters are performing.

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