

Empowerment of Women: *The God of Small Things*



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Abstract

The paper discusses the major themes of amorous love, human relationships, domestic violence and representation of empowerment by the female characters in the novel *The God of Small Things*. In the novel there are five female characters name: Mammachi an entrepreneur, Baby Kochamma who decides to remain single and enjoys her life. Ammu, daughter of Mammachi is a very rebellious character and the protagonist of the novel. She left her husband, father of her two children who had been ill-treating her. Eventually she finds fulfillment in her relationship with the untouchable or the person of lower caste Velutha although she belongs to a highest Christian family. Margaret is an empowered woman who is courageous enough to leave her first husband due to incompatibility and remarries and finds fulfillment. Rahel, who is the narrator of the story, is a modern, sophisticated and highly educated personality in the novel. All the characters are of different generation but they share some similarities which make them empowered.

Keywords: Audacious, Independent, Empowerment, Self-Reliant, Self-Dependency.

Introduction

The present paper is an attempt to explore the elements of women empowerment in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*. It throws light on female characters of the novel who get empowered in spite of being subjected to injustice, exploitation, and several other social challenges in their life. The novel highlights the condition of women and poor people in the Indian society and discusses the different social disposition like religion, caste and honor killings which still exist in the social set up of the country hindering the development of the nation. The novel discusses the conditions of women who are tortured and exploited by the patriarchal society. The theme of the novel is defined in terms of elements exist around female characters. On the one hand the female characters of the novel are trapped between orthodox and patriarchal and on the other hand they try to express themselves asserting their individuality, independence, dignity and self-respect.

Aim of the Study

The present paper is an attempt to explore the elements of women empowerment in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*.

Main Text of Study

The chapter explores the theme of women empowerment through critical understanding and analysis of major female characters of *The Gods of Small Things* viz Ammu, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Margaret Kochamma and Rahel. They all are smart and resourceful, and belongs to the privileged class but somehow they are deprived of their rights as a woman. So they commit transgression to challenge the custom, laws and social norms which eventually proves fatal to them. However their empowerment, it is judged in terms of their determination and self-reliance through which they challenge the norms of the society and live independently without any patriarchal support. A woman becomes empowered when she displays determination regarding her vision and awareness about her rights and takes decisions for her own life.

The novel is set in Ayemenem in Kerala and the narrative revolves around a Christian Indian family. Rahel and Estha, the twins and their mother Ammu are the main characters and the narrative revolves around them. The narrative covers the events from 1969 when the twins were seven years old to 1993 when they reunited after thirty years of separation and the story is in flashback. When the twins Rahel and Estha return to Ayemenem after thirty years they become nostalgic about

their childhood which they spent in Ayemenemat the age of seven and also remember their mother Ammu, the protagonist of the novel. Ammu is the daughter of Pappachi and Mammachi and she belongs to an orthodox Christian family where she spends the life with constraints of Patriarchal family setup. This is the reason that she is not happy with her parents and feels like a prisoner because her father dominates Ammu and beats her mother without any reason. Ammu is forced to give up her studies because her family believes that higher education for a girl is unnecessary expenses. This makes her desperate and she wants to be free from her dominating ill-tempered father and long suffering mother. After the completion of her studies, on her summer vacation she goes to her aunt's home for spending holidays. There she meets a Bengali Brahmin who proposes her for marriage and Ammu accepts the proposal only to get rid of her orthodox parents. However later it is discovered that her husband is an alcoholic and abuses her physically and insists to make physical relationship with his boss for the security of his job. But Ammu refuses the proposal and divorces him and returns to her unwelcome home to live with her parents and her brother Chako. Chako, who has completed his education from Oxford and gets married to an English woman Margaret Kochamma. But Chako divorces her when she disclosed about her relationship with her lover Joe. Chako and Margaret Kochamma have a child named Sophie Mall. After his failed marriage Chako returns to Ayemenem. His father has died and he joined his mother Mammachi's business 'Paradise Pickles and Preservers'. In the family there is another character Baby Kochamma- Ammu's aunt who has never married because at her young age she has infatuation with a Catholic priest and she tries to attract him but fails to do so. Later she decides to remain unmarried for rest of her life and later her loneliness becomes the reason for her frustration and irritation. The whole family belongs to elite class with conservative in lifestyle. Drastic changes are destined in everyone's life when two incidents take place; first the death of Sophie Mall and second love relation between of Ammu and Velutha- a lower caste man who worked in Mammachi's factory. When their relationship is discovered, the family ceased Ammu at home and Velutha pays high price by facing humiliation and eventually losing his life. At the same time Sophie Mol's daughter of Chako and Margaret who has come to Ayemenem for Christmas celebration are accidently drowned in the river. For the sake of the family reputation, Baby Kochamma, accuses Velutha of rape of Ammu and murder of Sophie Mol. As a result the police beats Velutha to death and Ammu gets separated from her children and Velutha and confines in the room. Estha and Rahel are the witness of all these unfortunate incidents. They have been separated by the family. Estha was sent to his father and Rahel stays at Ayemenem and after some time Ammu dies at the age of 31 due to some disease. Rahel after having a brief married life and a divorce, starts to work for meager amount in the U.S.A. Estha turns into an introvert as a result of whatever he has experienced in

his childhood and at the end of the novel they reunited.

In the novel Arundhati Roy highlights the various aspects of Indian society and treatment of the society towards women, children and lower caste people. The novel presents oppression of female characters named Ammu, Mammachi, Margaret Kochamma. These are the female characters that play important roles in the novel and the story revolves around them. They are beautiful, educated, talented, smart and resourceful but they all have been deprived of their rights. The chapter discusses the characteristics of women empowerment through the critical analysis of females of three different generations who challenge the social values and cultural boundaries of the society. Mammachi and Baby Kochamma are from first generation; Ammu and Margaret Kochamma are from second generation and Rahel from the third generation. Though they are oppressed by the patriarchal society and also belong to different generation yet they all have shown their courage and self-reliance to emancipate themselves from all the restrictions of the society to achieve their desire and wish to live independently. By their consistent efforts they represent the characteristics of empowered women.

Baby Kochamma is introduced as an elderly woman and a spinster. At her young age, being failed in one sided love, she decides to remain unmarried and lives alone without any patriarchal support. She falls in love with a Christian priest named Father Mulligan. However her initiation remains unreciprocated resultantly she decides to lead a solitary life. In Indian society marriage plays an important role for women. For this, it is believed that women should live as per the norms set by the patriarchal society whether they are fair or biased against women. Consequently, it is mandatory for them to spend life within the boundaries of patriarchy but Baby Kochamma never bothers about the society and she takes decision of her life on her own. Nonetheless, she is no longer an amicable person due to immense frustration born of her tragic failure in love. But she never begs for any support from the society and finds out her own means of amusement like watching T.V shows and is always pre-occupied with sadistic propensities. Baby Kochamma violates the prevailing norms of the society by refusing to get married to anyone else. She is an empowered woman who finds her own ways to lead a happy and contented life.

Baby Kochamma is delineated with strong emotional passion and a highly rigid and uncompromising attitude towards love relation. Baby Kochamma's failure in culmination love relation to marital conjugation leads to the discovery of self and eventually to the realization that she is competent enough to live by herself, resisting the pressures of the conventional patriarchal society that takes marriage to be a necessary social and emotional obligation for woman. It is another very important aspect of her personality that despite violating the conventions of patriarchal society. She remains an

inseparable part of the same and discovers her own means of living life and entertaining herself.

Mammachi is another example of an empowered woman and she sets an example for others by showing her own capability and entrepreneurial skills. It is interesting to note that life for her is not a bed of roses. In Indian society if a woman wants to achieve something she has to struggle a lot against the male dominance and also has to face many problems and challenges in her life. The marital conjugation of Mammachi and her husband Pappachi also put forth a number of challenges before her. Mammachi is being beaten and dominated by Pappachi without any reason. The narrator elucidates the condition of Mammachi and the way she has been ill-treated by her husband and says- 'The beatings are not new what was new was only the frequency with which they took place' (4). Here the given line also represents the real condition of women in the Indian society. Though India is improving but still women are facing lots of challenges like discriminations, humiliations and exploitation of patriarchal society. The pre-existent tradition and culture restrict the women of the society to live according to their own wish and desire. Women in Indian society have always been dominated on the name of customs and traditions. It is also happening with Mammachi, she was restricted by her husband and also beaten by him without reason. She has been exploited by him but she never restricts herself from achieving her dreams. Mammachi is a good violinist and she starts to learn violin from her teacher. Pappachi gets jealous when she is being praised by her teacher. As a result Pappachi forces her to discontinue her violin classes and beats her. In the beginning, Mammachi faces all the tortures of Pappachi passively and silently and preys to the pressure of patriarchal society. Sometimes she represents a traditional and submissive woman because she never questions her conditions and accepts them without applying any discretion. But later she emerges as an entrepreneur and starts her own factory. The opening of her huge business and factory give her an opportunity to get herself free from the domination of the patriarchal society and also to establish her identity in the society as an independent woman. In Indian society women are economically dependent on men and this is the reason for their exploitation and humiliation. Most of the women in India are the victims of these cruel realities of the society which restricts them to be independent. As Meenu Agrawal and Harender Kumar highlight the existing condition of women in the Indian society in their paper *Women Empowerment: Globalization and Opportunities*:

Women suffer from different types of powerlessness in the social economic sphere of life. The lack of power or disempowerment reflects in their less education level, less income, less control over their own income, less bargaining power in selling their own produce and labor, less participation in decision-making body, less access to production inputs and resources and

employment opportunity than men... the dependency makes them as a burden of family and lowers their value of life in some of the developing societies. (155 Agrawal, Kumar)

After emerging as an entrepreneur, Mammachi is empowering herself and also plays an important role for the proper development of the status of women in the society. She emerges as an owner and manager of the company and enhances her position in the society. After taking bold steps she has been transformed into a new woman who destroys the old identity of a woman – the icon of a submissive or reserved woman which was created by the patriarchal society to make her disabled in all political, social and economic fields. Now Mammachi is no more silent and a submissive woman and by her participation in business, she has not only upgraded her status in the society but also generated jobs for her locality. She participates in the decision-making process which she plays an important role for the better development of the status of women and also for the development of the family. Entrepreneurship helps women to become independent and liberal and help to take their own decisions. And it also assists women to get themselves free from the dominations and exploitations of the society.

After the transformation in her disposition Mammachi starts to learn the things with intelligence and becomes smart to take benefit from lower class people to enhance her business. Mammachi, very tactfully deals with the situations which can provide benefit to her business. Mammachi has been transformed into a business woman and very shrewdly she overlooks the quaint ideals of feudal society and also she knows how to get efficient employees in her factory at low wages. She appoints Velutha in her factory as a carpenter and also tries to satisfy him that despite being an untouchable he has got a good position among the workers belonging to the high class. Her intelligence for her business can be identified in the given statement:

Mammachi paid Velutha less than she would have paid a touchable carpenter but more than she would have paid a Pravan. Mammachi didn't encourage him to enter the house (except when she needed something mended or installed). She thought that he ought to be grateful that he was allowed on the factory premises at all, and allowed to touch things that Touchables touched. She said that it was a big step for Pravan. (77).

Here it is evident that Mammachi with intelligence handles her business. Though she believes in social status and caste but for the development of her business she overlooks it and provides her business a new employee who is all rounder and can also provide new opportunities to her business. It is evident from her decisions now she has been changed totally for the sake of the benefit of her business. Now she has learned different techniques which are required for entrepreneurs to make their business successful. Mammachi's bold step to provide jobs to the person of lower caste also reflects

her personality that for the sake of her business she rejects the caste discrimination and also highlights her independency and participation in decision making process. While taking this decision she represents her strong identity because earlier she was not able to take decision on her own. After achieving this much success she becomes independent and this status provides her freedom to take decision on her own. If a woman is economically independent and successful nobody dare to rule over her. Financial independency provides women to enjoy their freedom and take part in all kind of decision making process.

It is clear that Mammachi is blessed with a pragmatic approach towards feminine sexuality. Her act of sending female employee to Chacko's room apparently appears to be immoral. However it ignores the social morality at the cost of economical predicaments. When women are economically strong, then the whole family and society get benefitted by it. Mammachi also does the same thing that she has not only earned money for herself and but also gives employment to others and makes them empowered and supports them financially. Sometimes she also renders financial support to the poor women who work in the factory and also fulfills the need of her son Chako. Mamachi is familiar with Chakos 'libertine relationships'(168). She uses her economical power on the women of weaker section. She pays them for fulfilling the needs of her son, because she is aware of the women's needs that they have parents, kids and family to take care of. They need money to feed them, so Mammachi helps them financially and secretly gives money to keep them happy and in return she sends them to Chacko's room. However, apparently her act is immoral and illegal yet her intent is human as she helps them and makes them self-dependent. As Dr. Neelam Choudhary says:

Women empowerment is an ongoing and dynamic process which enables women to participate in the decision- making in all socio- economic, political and cultural processes in the society and enhances their abilities to change the structure and environment that keep them disadvantaged. In the words of A.P.J.Abdul Kalam, "Empowering woman is a prerequisite for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of woman is essential as their thoughts and their value systems lead to the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation (116Choudhary)

Ammu and Margaret Kochamma are the female characters of next generation who represent the element of empowerment. Both the characters have recognized their inner strength and give challenge to the social norms. They are of different social set up but are enriched with the same quality and take decisions on the basis of their own choice and preference. Margaret Kochamma is Chacko's ex-wife and Sophie Mol's mother. She is a modern, educated and empowered woman who knows how to live with her own preferences. Before an acquaintance with Chacko, Margaret works 'as a

waitress at a café in Oxford' (240). Her father 'owned a bakery' (240) and her mother was a 'milliner's assistant' (240). Although she leaves home for no other reason than a: 'youthful assertions of independence' (240). She does job and saves money for a teacher training course to do a job in a school. She is a woman who takes care of herself and works to be self-dependent and demonstrates will and wisdom to face all type of challenges.

Margaret fails to recognize Chacko's irresponsible attitude towards his duties in their initial meetings. Unlike Chacko, Margaret is a very talented, hardworking and responsible woman. She always works with utmost sincerity and diligence and she expects the same from Chacko. Though, the latter fails. When they get married without the consent of their family, Chacko had no facility of accommodation; hence they seek refuge at Margaret's flat but Chacko fails to find a job and subsequently he turns into a lazy fat man but unlike Chacko, Margaret continues with her job and also handles the house expenses. About a year later, things become difficult for her to manage. And one day Margaret meets Joe, her brother's school mate and she also discovers that she is pregnant. Joe is very caring and responsible person as 'Joe was everything that Chacko wasn't'(248) and this becomes the reason for Margaret getting close to him. After sometime Sophie Mol was born, Margaret realized that for the sake of her daughter and herself, she has to leave Chacko as he is not performing his duties towards his wife. Finally she asks him for divorce. After that Chacko returns to India and Margaret writes him regularly and gives him news about her daughter Sophie Mol. She assured him that Joe is very caring and loving father that 'Sophie Mol loved him dearly- facts that gladdened and saddened Chacko in equal measure' (249). Margaret is an educated woman who just wants loving and responsible person which she does not find in Chacko. Her happiness and joy can be judged by the lines stated by the narrator:

Margaret Kochamma was happy with Joe. Happier perhaps than she would have been had she not had those wild, precarious years with Chacko. She thought of Chacko fondly, but without regret. It simply did not occur to her that she had hurt him as deeply as she had, because she still thought of herself as an ordinary woman, and him as an extraordinary man. (240)

It is important to note that Margaret has many scintillating manifestations of woman empowerment. The simplest manifestation of empowerment is the quest for self- dependence and for emancipation for social restrictions. Her consciousness for identity is realized primarily in terms of her respect for will and self- confidence. The growing indifference between Margaret and Chacko is also an aftermath of Margaret's consciousness for her own identity which is realized in terms of Chacko's careless attitude towards her, as she takes husband's love and care to be woman's right. It is another master stroke of irony that Margaret's love for Sophie paves way for separation between Margaret and

Chacko. Margaret realizes that Chacko is not an ideal father and envisages paternal negligence for her daughter. She divorces Chacko because Margaret demonstrates consciousness for planning and execution.

Margaret Kochamma is a modern woman who is aware about her own rights and duties. She is strong enough to take decision for herself and for her daughter without thinking about the society. At every stage she stands for a modern woman who believes in empowering herself by virtue of education and earning. If a woman is educated, she can handle all the challenges of her life. As M.S Kulhari says “

Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self- confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process (115 Kulhari)

Ammu, is the another female character of the same generation. She is the protagonist and the most rebellious character of the novel. Her wish to live freely and independently always forces her to be rebellious whenever she is restricted. Ammu is the daughter of Pappachi and Mamachi and Chacko's younger sister. Chacko, as the son of the family and sent for further studies to the Oxford. While Ammu does not get such type of treatment by her parents rather her parents believed that college education is an unnecessary expense for girls. Pappachi is drunkard numskull who terrorizes and beats her mother Mammachi. Ammu wants to escape from the cage of her parents because she feels like a prisoner at home. So after completion of her school education when she finds that her father believes that 'college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl (38), she starts planning to escape from 'her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother' (39). Finally one day her father agrees to send her to a distant aunt to spend the summer vacation. And in a wedding reception she meets with her 'future husband' named Baba. He proposes Ammu but she thinks "anything, anyone at all would be better than returning to Ayemenem'(39). Hence, she gets married to him after that Ammu begets twins, named-Rahel and Estha. After some time she finds that her husband is drunkard and also he forces her to make relationship with his boss for the sake of his job. But Ammu denies and is being assaulted by him. Instead of being submissive like her mother, she hits him back

Ammu redefines woman empowerment in new terms and terminology. Unlike Margaret, she is not conscious about individual's freedom along social and economical axes but she strives to define woman empowerment in term of chastity, dignity and self-respect. Though Ammu is an ordinary woman yet she does not want to follow anyone by compromising with her self-respect and dignity. Again she violates the conventions of the society because in Indian society husband whether he is of good character or not, he is always considered as God for wife. But Ammu breaks the notion when she was asked to make relations with his boss only to secure his job. She hits her husband without any considerations for the social norms and conventions. Ammu sets an example of an

empowered woman who raises her voice against the society and fights for her dignity, self-respect and freedom. Ammu is very caring mother and loves her twins very much. Twins are the reason behind her return to her unwelcome home. Now she has no more dreams except her children's bright future. Ammu is very loving and also very strict mother. She never feels ashamed of being a divorcee or a single parent. However she regrets that she wasted the best years of her life.

Her life changes as she bears the sole responsibility of her children Estha and Rahel. Ammu's empowerment can be realized in providing complete parenthood to her children. Besides being an ideal mother, she also plays the role of a father for her children. Sometimes she expresses her maternal love through kisses, gifts and sometimes like a father she scolds them and teaches them etiquettes and manners which are required for a human being to function gracefully in the society. The challenges of her life have transformed her into a matured woman who is aware of the surroundings and able to take the decisions without the support of patriarchal society. Ammu is full of hopes and confidence. She shares quality time with her children and also with herself. She loves to listen to songs at the bank of river. She keeps a radio set with her and enjoys her own company like an independent woman who is free from all the boundaries.

The line illustrates feelings of Ammu which have been suppressed by the laws and conventions of the patriarchal society or the laws of the society. Now the life has given her another chance to live freely, so Ammu instead of regretting about her past enjoys her freedom in solitary. She starts to respond to her inner voice and lives in her own world, where she does not have to follow the rules and regulations of the society. She walks towards a 'happier place' (44) and her walk gets changed from 'a safe mother to another wilder sort of walk' (44) presents her inner most feelings where she wants to be carefree and walks freely without any restrictions or support. Now she takes care of herself so she adorns her hairs with flower and smokes cigarettes and has a mid night swims that reflect her free will personality and independency. It is considered that a woman has no respect without husband but Ammu never bother about the views of the people, she only wants to give priority to her own wishes, desires and happiness.

Ammu's another important role is seen as a single mother which is always considered as weak and incapable in Indian society. But the reality is different because when a woman becomes a mother she becomes stronger as a result of additional responsibilities. Ammu is also single but strong willed mother who handles her responsibilities and also fulfills her children's needs. Though Ammu does not earn because of lack of qualification yet she tries hard to fulfill the needs of her children. She also tells them that she is their parents. Ammu is capable of handling her twins which can be understood by the lines narrated by the narrators: 'Everybody says that children need a Baba. And I say no. not my children.

Do you know why ?because she loves them Double more than double said Ammu.(149)

Though Ammu faces a lot of challenges in her life but she never gives up and gets empowered by her own thoughts. She never wants any support neither for herself nor for her children. Her destiny has snatched everything - freedom, education and love but she never shows it to her children. Ammu never gets love, affection and care neither from parents nor from her husband, but she never lets her children to go through it. This is the reason she played both the roles - father and mother and capable to give them love more than the double. Ammu represents her capability and independence that no patriarchal support is required for her. It is very difficult for a woman to leave her husband at the time when her children require a caring and protective father. But without bothering all these things she carries out all the responsibilities strongly like a true modern woman.

Ammu has learned that no one is for her she has to fight for herself and also understands the importance of education. If a woman is educated she becomes empowered financially and can handle all the expenses of her family. But because of patriarchy Ammu has not achieved any higher education degree and now she is not able to find out a respectful job. She is able to fight and manage her children but her qualification becomes barrier for fulfilling her dreams. As M.S Kulhari dictates the importance of higher education:

Higher education in India is defined as the education attained after the completion of 12 years of schooling. Higher education for women has gained a wider role and responsibility all over the world...Need for higher education among women assumes all the more importance in countries like India where colonialism has remained a great force hindering education for the general masses and for the women in particular. (119 Kulhari).

But Ammu never gives up and still sees the things positively and carries out her dream to become a teacher and open her own school. Ammu being an optimistic sees her future with positivity. As narrator narrates: "I'll be a teacher. I'll start a school. And you and Rahel will be in it" (325). Ammu being a woman plays different roles to her children and also gives challenges to the society. But somewhere there is something hidden in her heart and she wants love, affection and a true lover. Human beings are already endowed with some natural requirements that are love and hunger. Ammu is always fond for love because, she has never got love and affection in her life. Her eyes are always waiting for someone who will bring love and respect for her and for her children. Finally she finds out her love for life and a good friend for her children named Velutha. As Eleni Stefanidou in his seminar paper '*Social and sexual hierarchies: male and female relationships in Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things"*: 'She enters into the love affair with Velutha because he is the only one to perceive

her as a human being outside social hierarchies' (Chapter 3 Eleni)

Velutha, who is Pravan, a lower cast person with whom Ammu has fallen in love and transgresses the custom of the society. Velutha is very talented and kindhearted man and he always plays with Rahel and Estha. Ammu watches all the activities of Rahel and Estha when they play with Velutha.

She transgresses the code of law of the society- she falls in love with him and has physical relationship with him. As Tirthankar Chanda says: "Her love affair with Velutha is 'an attempt at repossessing, renaming, reowning the world'" (40 Chanda). Ammu never bothers about the society's law because she only wants love and care which she does not have in her life. And this becomes the reason to fall in love with Velutha and breaks the laws. Again she has opened the door for love and to be loved by the man for whom she dreams about i.e The God of Small Things. Ammu always dreams of 'a cheerful man with one arm held her close by the light of an oil lamp. He had no other arm with which to fight the shadows that flickered around him on the floor' (215). It represents the inner most feelings of Ammu that she wants love and wanted to be loved by a man of her choice, who loved her enormously. Ammu's inner feelings can be identified by her dreams that she wants to live freely like a bird that 'Ammu flew through her dream on heavy, shuddering wings'(217). And also represents her intense desire to have a true lover as she dreams of a man of one arm that who loved her like "if he touched her, he couldn't talk to her, if he loved he couldn't leave, if he spoke he couldn't listen, if he fought he couldn't win" (217)

Ammu was aware about the fact that the place which she thinks is secure is actually in the context of the society is the most dangerous place. Because Velutha is a lower caste man and she belongs to high caste, which is intolerable by the society. They both are aware about the fact that they have to pay a lot for their loving relation. ' though they knew already that for each tremor of pleasure they would pay with an equal measure of pain.'(335) and they paid by losing their lives. But by leaving all the discrimination made by the society they recognize each other as human being as Mohini khot says her article *The Feminism voice in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things*:

He recognizes her human ability to give and receive love; she in turn, disregards his untouchable state and sees him as an attractive man. But in Patriarchal society determined by hierarchies, such a simple vision has no right of existence. (220 Khot)

Finally Ammu achieves her true love and feels secure but actually she enters in the restricted boundaries of the society love and being loved by an untouchable Velutha. For this true love both get punishment that Velutha put to death on the basis of false allegation made by Baby Kochamma to save the dignity of the family and Ammu is separated from her children and being locked in the room and at the age of thirty one due to disease meets death.

Though she was marginalized by the society yet she never let her desires and positivity get marginalized. Sandra Regina Almeida defines the situation of Ammu as:

Ammu's situation has a stronger resonance because in Indian society it is considered a more serious offence for an upper caste woman to be polluted an untouchable that it would be for a man (263 Almeida)

Ammu is always raises voice to get herself free but somehow she has been restricted by the patriarchal society but still she fights with the situation and achieves what actually she wants. By means of the transgression of the caste, class and religious boundaries, she moves towards the step of empowering herself in the quest for emotional attachments, self- identity and liberation. Shubha Prakash and Sujata states:

To escape the dictates of the patriarchy, the new woman comes out in more prominent contours. The new woman of India resorts to divorce as the only means of retrieving her lost life. That is what 'Ammu' does in the novel. (76 Prakash. Sujata)

Rahel is the female character of the third generation of the novel. She lives freely without any patriarchal restriction. Being a daughter of divorced parents, she suffers humiliation and marginalization in the orthodox society. Like her mother, she is also deprived of love and affection that are necessary for the proper growth a child. Children always need love, care and attention from their parents and in childhood parents are the first friend for them and if the parents are divorcee their childhood is adversely affected and hinders the development of their personality. Rahel's disturbing and introvert behavior is the result of the separation of her parents because she never gets love and care from her father and relatives.

Rahel was very close to her mother and her twin brother Estha but after the death of her mother and separation with Estha she leads isolated life which adversely affects her psyche. From the childhood Rahel and Estha never get love from their maternal home. They were unwelcomed and treated a burden of the family. They are fatherless, homeless and without surname - because their mother has not been able to decide which surname should take - father or mother. In Indian society, though women suffered and struggled a lot to bring up their children but they are considered unimportant and people are always inquisitive about the name of their parents. Society adheres to patriarchal norms. Rahel and Estha struggle a lot because people always perceive them that they don't have any identity and they are considered as fatherless. As Baby Kochamma's words is a convincing testimony of the humiliation endured by the twins. She rebukes: 'doomed fatherless waifs. Worse still, they were Half- Hindu Hybrids whom no self- respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry' (63)

Rahel and Estha always try to find love for themselves and they also want parental love from Chacko but he refuses and tells them that they are millstones around his neck 'They're sly. They're

uncouth. Deceitful. They are growing wild' (149). As children of divorced parents, they are always humiliated and never get love and care. Though Rahel and her cousin Sophie Mol are the daughters of divorced parents but they both have been compared and Sophie always gets preference and love by all the family members. Rahel, on the contrary considered inferior and is neglected by them. When the affair of Ammu and Velutha is disclosed and Ammu get locked at home, she rebukes her children that:

Because of you! If it wasn't for you I wouldn't be there! None of this would have happened!... I should have dumped you in orphanage the day you were born! You're millstone around my neck (253)

Threatened by the sudden change in the behavior of Ammu, twins decide to hide themselves in the old building on the other side of the river along with Sophie Mol but while crossing the river Sophie Mol accidentally get drowned. After that Velutha was punished by the police on the false allegation put by Baby Kochamma. Rahel and Estha want to tell the truth to the police but Baby Kochamma blackmails them that if they disclose the truth their mother Ammu will be sent to jail. After this incident Velutha and Ammu die and Rahel and Estha get separated. Estha was sent to his father's home and Rahel stays at Ayemenem. They get separated at that time when they need each other's support and love. This separation becomes the greatest barrier of their life that fills them with the feeling of detachment, loneliness, remorse.

Rahel is modern educated woman that she never feels ashamed of her divorce. After her divorce, like a courageous woman she starts to live her life on her own by doing various job and live independently. Unlike her mother and grandmother she never tolerates the exploitation of patriarchy and through her bad experiences she has been transformed into a strong girl who is self- reliant and independent. At the age of thirty two she returned to Ayemenem and meets her brother Estha who has been the victim of that horrible incident of the drowning of Sophie Mol which takes place in Ayemenem when they were seven. Estha has also faced negligence and discrimination from the society and it affects him immensely, resulting into introversion and withdrawal.

Empowered women gets greater control over material and intellectual recourses which helps them in developing their self- reliance, to challenge the ideology of patriarchy and gender based discrimination against women. In the novel all the female characters raises their voice for emancipation and builds her image in the society. They empower themselves through their intellect, skills and education. Baby Kochamma is the example of first generation, she fails to consummate her love- relation with Mulligon then she decides to remain single and refuses to live under any patriarchal authority. It is difficult for young girls to remain single for whole life because they are considered insecure in the society but Baby Kochamma never thinks about the society and takes decision to remain single for the whole life. Mammachi represents her entrepreneurial skills by

running her own factory and empowers herself and others who work in the factory. When a woman becomes enterpreneur then she is economically empowered as Arundhati Chattopadhyaya (2005) states that:

Women entrepreneurial development as the solution for empowering women... She pointed out that that participation of women in the income generating activities for the family has been increasing over time through entrepreneurial development which also brings economic independence among women in the household decision making activities and further generate employment opportunities for other women in the locality. (27 Chattopadhyaya)

All the female characters of the novel are very beautiful, smart, rebellious and independent. They all have empowered themselves by recognizing their skills talent and positively. They are victims of patriarchal society but as soon as when they recognized their worth they liberate themselves from the patriarchal confinements.

Women empowerment is a process through which women can get power to control over material and intellectual resources which help them to increase their self- reliance and independence. It makes women able to fight against prevailing exploitation and gender bias which pervades in the society. Their aim is to render power and strength to the women who are unable to fight for their rights and consequently are subjected to exploitation. The empowerment enables these women to challenge the patriarchy and perpetuate gender discrimination and social inequality. In the Indian society women are always considered weak and incapable, confined under the four walls of the house. But today's women are aware of their rights with handsome contributions to the development of country. Now women try hard to empower themselves through as education, entrepreneur skills and cast a distinct image in the socio- political and economical back drop. Education is the best way to empower a woman and make them self- independent. If a woman is educated to then the whole society will be educated. Baby kochamma, Margaret, Rahel and Ammu are all educated and they determine their aim. In the Indian society on one hand, women are worshipped as a 'Goddesses' who is very powerful and strong and on the other hand they are exploited by patriarchal society. All the

female characters of the novel are firm and enthusiastic to achieve their goals. Despite facing exploitation and suppression against the prevailing social discrepancies and they raise voice and achieve their goals. Most of the women in the society suffer from different types of problems in social and economic spheres of life. The lack of power is identified or judged through less education, less income, less participation in decision making body and less employment opportunity. Roy is always known as the voice of subalterns or weaker sections and she always highlights the problems of the poor or of weaker section. In the novel she delineates the suffering of Indian women but also presents their strength, capability and skills which help them to emancipate themselves and create their own identity to live freely without any patriarchy supports.

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