



Contours of Sexuality in Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Abstract

This study aims at analyzing the contours of sexuality, obscenity and incest in Arundhati Roy's debut novel, *The God of Small Things* to mark how the novelist deconstructs the naturalized and normalized social, ethical, and cultural values in the Indian society. The illicit relationship between the central character of the novel and a divorced woman, Ammu and the servant of her family, Velutha, the incest between Estha and Rahel, an incident where an old man forces Estha to masturbate, and the sensual affair of Baby Kochamma with Father Mulligan are some of the highly charged obscene details in the novel that invite a keen rationale for the research. The research utilizes the theoretical framework of psychoanalysis and radical feminism that deal with sexuality, feminine sexuality, and sibling incest to observe Roy's motive for emphasizing on pornographic drives. Both Freudian psychoanalysts and radical feminists deal with the sex overtly taking it as the basic human instinct. The research finding is that Roy emphasizes the graphic description of sexual acts among members of family and different castes to cherish beauty found in 'small things', to mystify the mundane, to examine the issues of unethical sex in revolutionary South-Asian societies. It is expected that people interested in researching libidinal issues in Roy in particular, and South-Asian literature in general, can take the paper as a reference.

Keywords: Incest, instinct, pornography, sexuality, taboos

Introduction

Although sex and incest have been associated with the taboo topics of discourse in the literary creations, the works of some Indian authors, namely, Sreemoyee Piu Kundu, Rosalyn D'Mello, and Arundhati Roy are adorned by sexuality for dismantling the social shackles that hinder openness and exploration.

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Arundhati Roy is compared with the great authors like Salman Rushdie, William Faulkner, and James Joyce for handling the often-restrained sensuous issues in her fictions (Lutz, 2019; Smith & Israel, 1987). Observing the contours of obscenity and incest in Roy's *The God of Small Things* has been relatively a newer trend of looking at the socio-cultural reality in India through psychoanalytic and feminist spectacles. Arundhati Roy's magnum opus, *The God of Small Things*, catapulted her to fame because it won her the honorable Booker Prize for literature in 1997 heralding a new revolutionary trend in Indian English fiction (Adhikari, 2022). Roy has very artistically sought to make a satirical commentary on India's prevailing socio-cultural-political ethos in the issues of love and sex (Smith & Israel, 1987). Roy endeavors to insinuatingly champion the notion of discriminating Dalits or the downtrodden in making physical relationships, and lastly, to make her story a great work of art with lush and sensuous prose style and commonplace diction (Nayak, 2015; Sibi, 2019). This research paper seeks to answer why Roy emphasizes obscenity, sexuality, and incest. Roy puts off the patriarchal masks, like other feminist writers, while delineating the special connotations in anatomical discourse.

The rationale of the paper lies in observing why Roy has attached pornographic details in *The God of Small Things*. The novel is set in a town, Ayemenem or Aymanam, now a part of Kerala, India. Ammu Ipe, disappointed by the marriage proposal of her parents, goes to spend a summer with a distant aunt in Calcutta (Dhami, 2021). To avoid returning to Ayemenem, she marries a man who assists in managing a tea estate in Assam whom she later discovers to be a heavy alcoholic who beats her and attempts to prostitute her to his boss so that he can keep his job (Kunhi & Kunhi, 2017). She gives birth to twins, Estha and Rahel, yet ultimately leaves her husband and returns to live with her mother in Ayemenem (Adhikari, 2022). There, the Brahmin woman, Ammu finds Velutha, a servant, and the so-called untouchable Paravan boy gifted with carpentry and mechanical work (Jennings, 2010; Sibi, 2019). Ammu comes to "love by night the man her children love by day" (*The God of Small Things*, p. 44). After the discovery of their relationship, Ammu is imprisoned into her room. A group of policemen hunt Velutha down and savagely beat him for crossing caste lines (Surendran, 2000). Haunted by their guilt and grief-ridden pasts, the twins' renewed intimacy ultimately culminates in their incest (Smith & Israel, 1987). Roy seeks to demonstrate how women have ventured to cherish with basic instincts escaping themselves from the inhumane treatment by the dogmatic authorities of their society.

Literature Review

Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things*, became a platform for criticism immediately after its publication. Many critics and reviewers have approached the

form and content, matter and manner of Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things*. Rao (1998) expressed his impression of the novel as the portrayal of the society in these words: "Roy's book is the only one I can think of among Indian novels in English, which can be comprehensively described as a protest novel. It is all about atrocities against minorities, small things, children, women and untouchables" (p. 17). Dhami (2021) evaluated the novel as the representation of traumatic experiences of Rachel, Estha, Ammu, and Velutha, and their vulnerability.

Some critics have observed segregation of family members in terms of gender in *The God of Small Things*. Nayak (2015) marked women possessing the dominant role in the novel: "Traditional joint families are neatly structured where some woman assume dominant role with greater authority over others who are lower down and, therefore, enjoy certain power" (p. 590). However, most critics have noticed the exploitation of feminine gender in the novel. Though Ammu's sheer will-power helps to establish the Paradise Pickles factory, the credit for this is hijacked by Chacko because a female has no right of inheritance of family property (Jennings, 2010). As a daughter, Ammu does not get a good education, but her brother Chacko gets it because he is a male (Lutz, 2019). The sense of relative deprivation among the females in contrast to the males creates a sense of depravity, inferiority and inequality among the Indian womenfolk.

A group of critics is shocked to note the gender-discrimination cutting across caste and class barriers. Ammu is insulted by Inspector Mathew who calls her a harlot (Sibi, 2019; Surendran, 2000). Patriarchy and social customs punish Ammu, the upper caste woman, and Velutha, the lower caste boy- for their not acknowledging the social conventions of freedom in their lives, especially by women. Here in comes the double standards and snobbery of male-chauvinism (Kunhi & Kunhi, 2017). Chacko's sexual promiscuity is rather encouraged by Mammachi, but not Ammu's. It is again a mother, a female, who does this 'injustice' to her daughter Ammu. Ammu, Velutha, Rahel, Estha and Mammachi are the oppressed, while Pappachi, Comrade Pillai, Inspector Mathew are the oppressors.

A host of critics has judged the narrative technique used by Roy in *The God of Small Things*. Written in a style verging on magical realism, the novel features nonlinear chronology, fragmented flashbacks, and linguistic inventiveness to relate the story of the oppressed and the oppressor (Sacksick, 2010). Through a series of broken sentences, bizarre phraseology, ungrammatical constructions and conventional rhythm, she scintillatingly entertains and awakens the readers from their torpor (Sacksick, 2010; Surendran, 2000). Roy's style is immensely metaphorical. Though her narrative is tinged with riddles, it succeeds in narrating its tale splendidly. The novel, despite some criticisms, has been considered a

masterpiece. Rao (1998) also believed that it is an authentic portrayal of the struggle of the characters that make us assimilate with our own stories.

In this way, many critics have approached the text from different perspectives, but they do not make a strong judgment on the issue of incest and sexuality raised in the novel. Here lies the research gap. Therefore, this research paper intends to fill the gap. The focus of the paper is to explore why the novelist, Roy has taken an adventure to deal with the subject matter of sex and incest, so much restricted in the Indian society.

Methods and Procedures

This study applies an interpretative qualitative approach to research by using the primary resource, that is, Arundhati Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things*. Moreover, the secondary resources, such as reviews and critical works on the novel given in journals and website commentaries, are analyzed to test the working hypothesis. Its delimitation primarily lies in analyzing the contours of obscenity and incest in the novel from psychoanalytic and feminist perspectives.

Theoretical Framework

In his interpretation of Freudian theories, Jay (2022) believed that sexuality first seeks gratification orally in infancy when it begins to suck at the mother's breast. This is called the oral phase. The infant can't distinguish between his self and breast, and appreciates its mother as the object of the first external love (Freud, 1961). Freud (1961) contended that the child has narcissistic love for his own body before he loves the breast. The anal phase begins in the second year when the child's erotic interest shifts to the anus during toilet training (Freud, 1961). The third phase, phallic, begins from the fourth year and remains up to the sixth year (Freud, 1961). The libido is focused on the penis or the genital area in the stage. Freudian theory of psychology makes three categories of the human psyche: id, ego, and superego. The primitive instinct, the id, contains unrestrained sexual drives and is oriented to the pleasurable principle. Superego is oriented towards the morality principle and achieving big ambitions (Freud, 1961). Ego, oriented towards the reality principle, mediates between the instincts of the id and the super-ego. The Oedipus complex develops when the id of the oral stage is repressed (Freud, 1961). Accordingly, Freud (1961) contends that human behavior is influenced by the conscious and unconscious states of mind. The unconscious is formed when our unaccomplished instincts are stored in the mind, and get reflected in the dreams, jokes or texts (Freud, 1961). If consciousness refers to what we are aware of at present, sub-consciousness is not being fully aware of at present (Freud, 1961). Freudian critics take literary texts as the narration of dreams, or the conflict of id, ego, and superego. The textual content

is the manifest content that records the sexual instincts of human life in the latent content. Trauma takes place in human life when the libidinal urge is blocked. But perversion occurs when one is unrestrained from sexual drives.

The dynamics of sibling incest, according to Smith and Israel (1987), is caused by “the parental stimulation of the sexual climate in the home” (p. 101) and “family secrets, especially with regard to extramarital affairs” (p. 101). When family members experience trauma and insecurities in the outer world, they get indulged in the incest to consolidate their relations and to mark their security (Owen, 1998). Radical feminists take pornography as a means of enjoying themselves. MacKinnon (1983) rightly argues, “Socially, femaleness means femininity, which means availability on male terms” (p. 530). Radical feminists do not like the way pornographic women are linked with economics. Radical feminists argue that most females are coerced into pornography because of unfortunate circumstances. They view that pornography helps women to establish their identity because it contributes to sexism. It liberates them from sexual abuse by men or their treatment as a commodity.

The theories of Freud, radical feminists and other psychosexual theorists, discussed here, are the tools taken to observe Roy’s motive for utilizing obscenity and incest in the novel. One motive is that if obscenity is emphasized, it is a means of liberating people from domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, and other dehumanizing activities performed by men.

Results and Discussion

The God of Small Things is replete with descriptions of the love-making of Ammu and Velutha and of direct and indirect references to forms of forbidden love such as incest. Roy’s description is almost pornographic and often descends into naked description. The obscenity and incest of Roy’s novel, *The God of Small Things*, arouse researchers’ curiosity in surveying why she has put so much emphasis on these so-called taboo issues in a conservative society like India. For Roy, as Freud (1961) elaborated, sex seems to be a public matter rather than a private one. The incest between Estha and Rahel, the illegitimate relationship between Ammu and Velutha, and the Orangeman Lemon Drinkman impelling the innocent Estha to masturbate are some of the pornographic scenes in the novel. The expression of bodily and sexual drives has been used by Roy in articulating the genuine female consciousness in *The God of Small Things*, also referred to as *TGoST*, in abbreviation for citation in this paper.

The issues of incest, masturbation, and sex were taboo topics slightly discussed by such male writers as Rosalyn D’Mello and Salman Rushdie. But women

are dealing with them to explore their psychic and physical experiences. MacKinnon (1983), a radical feminist, thought that if women are engaged in pornography, it is their choice. Roy's indulgence on the taboo sorts of love, as in the case of Ammu and Velutha, or Rahel and Estha is intended to attack the society's narrow-mindedness towards such love. Both relationships are rigidly forbidden by what Roy calls the "Love Laws" (*TGoST*, p. 311), or "The laws that lay down who should be loved" (*TGoST*, p. 311). The pornographic concerns have special connotations in the feminist discourse and are used by Roy to put off the patriarchal masks.

The preference of obscenity is also seen as an attempt to enter into the male domain, as pornography since time immemorial has usually been associated with male desire. Freud (1961) hypothesized that human sexuality is influenced by family dynamics, and by the conscious and unconscious states of mind. When Ammu's husband proposes to her to "sleep with his boss for his job security" (*TGoST*, p. 27), she reacts against it. As Smith and Israel (1987) analyze, when Ammu can no longer tolerate the cruelty of her husband, she quits him even though this step involves jumping into the abyss of total economic and cultural insecurity. A woman is committed to fighting against her economic exploitation led by the masculine members of her own family (Susan, 1995). At her own house at Ayemenem, Ammu and her children are frequently treated as the outsiders. Nevertheless, she continues her struggle in her own way. This also accounts for the self-revelation and the confessional strain in Roy's writings.

We can see Ammu's sexual union with Velutha as a positive and useful act of rebellion. Roy constantly echoes with deeper and wider sentiments that involve larger issues and human considerations: "Once he was inside her, fear was derailed and biology took over" (*TGoST*, p. 366). Velutha and Ammu not only rebel against the social taboos on sex but also cherish each moment of their sexual union. Foucault (1984) also regarded that the innumerable pleasures can be achieved through the union of body and soul, that is, through sex. We find Roy using flashes of poetry that disguise the naked facts of the sex act:

Biology designed the dance. Terror timed it. Dictated the rhythm with which their bodies answered each other as though they knew already, that for each tremor of pleasure they would pay with an equal measure of pain. As though they knew that how far they went would be measured against how far they would be taken. (*TGoST*, p. 335)

From the feminist viewpoint, the sexual act of a woman indicates her desire to enjoy the freedom of life dismantling the barriers of sex. From the active role of Ammu in the whole proceedings, how a woman claims her right as an equal partner is made

clear. The sexual act between Ammu and Velutha is important from the feminist point of view, as the woman insists on being fully satisfied.

Roy is engaged in dealing with the forbidden love because she intends to convey the message that love is an uncontrollable force and it cannot be suppressed by the conventional social code. Most females are pressurized into pornography because of unfortunate circumstances (MacKinnon, 1983). Ammu's indulgence into sex is also pressurized by her unfortunate circumstances. The profound implications of her sexual experience, both good and bad, are expressed by the narrator in poetic language: "Seven years of oblivion lifted off her and flew into the shadows on weighty, quaking wings. Like a dull, steel peahen. And on Ammu's Road (to Age and Death) a small, sunny meadow appeared" (*TGoST*, p. 337). Love will, therefore, be an emotion that can be explained only in terms of two peoples' cultural backgrounds and political identities. Lawrence (1928) compared sex to a religion when he argued, "The blood of man and the blood of woman are two externally different streams; they can never be mingled...It is the deepest of all communions as well as the religious in practice we know (p. 12). Conventional society somehow seeks to destroy real love, which is why love in the novel is consistently connected to loss, death, and sadness.

In dealing with the contours of the sex, Roy is presenting different aspects of love to the readers. If women are able to cast off repressive sexual mores, they can cherish the erotic delights (Tong, 1998). Roy presents a very fitting quote in the novel and that sums up a large part of the effect of love laws: "When you hurt people, they begin to love you less. That's what careless words do. They make people love you a little less" (*TGoST*, p. 237). The beauty of Ammu and Velutha's love for each other is that it is forbidden. Velutha's kind and compassionate love for the twins is a reflection directed towards his unselfish and passionate love for Ammu.

Roy aims at criticizing the double standard of the family in the issues of love and sex. The females like Mammachi and Baby Kochamma overlook Chako's sexual indulgences with low caste women regarding "He can't help having a Man's Needs" (*TGoST*, p. 168). Sex was supposed to be a taboo subject in India even until the end of the twentieth century, because they took the discourse on sex as a sin (Janetius, 2017). When the news of Ammu's liaison was broken to Kochamma, her deep disgust and revulsion is narrated in these words:

She thought of her naked, coupling in the mud with a man who was nothing but a filthy coolie. She imagined it in vivid detail: a Paravan's coarse black hand on her daughter's breast. His particular Paravan smell like animals, Mammachi thought and vomited. Like a dog with a bitch in heat. (*TGoST*, p. 258)

This is the typical picture of the double standard of morality practiced in traditional India. When a man enjoys greater laxity and freedom, the family's dignity and honor rest on a woman's moral conduct. If women violate the sex taboo, she has to confront unnecessary charges against it (Janetius, 2017). At a later stage, we find Baby Kochamma in a conspiratorial role, furnishing all the necessary information to the police: "‘Attempted rape,’ Baby Kochanna suggested weakly" (*TGoST*, p. 314). Men are privileged, women the cross-bearers. The whole system is run by women themselves.

Actually, Roy seems to be venting her reflexive concern about the body. A woman needs to be watchful for she might be turned into an object (Beauvoir, 1988). The notorious scene in Ammu's bathroom is a case in point. She examines at her body-parts as "objects of male consumption" (*TGoST*, p. 313), and abandons the idea of their aesthetic form. Because women are considered as objects in patriarchal societies, most women have internalized this concept (Davis, 1981). Ammu has no hesitation in making a deduction of getting indulged into the sex. She accomplishes her sexual desire with Velutha. Ammu appears bold in taking the initiation of the sexual activity. Feminists perhaps would hesitate to cite her as an example of a true female.

Roy also focuses her authorial commentary on forbidden and taboo types of love, including Ammu's Love for Velutha and Rahel's love for Estha. Both relationships are strictly forbidden by what Roy calls the "Love Laws" (*TGoST*, p. 311) or "The Laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much" (*TGoST*, p. 311). Although breaking these laws is the worst of taboos, the characters dare to break them. Roy gives the reader a deeper and brotherly understanding of the variegated shades of love. The love of Rahel and Estha for each other is irrevocably strong, since pre-natal bonds so much so that they instinctively know what each other is thinking and doing.

Some critics prefer the term carnography to pornography in order to describe the treatment of masturbation by Roy in her novel. Beauvoir (1988) commented, "Masturbation is popularly regarded as a danger and a sin. Children do it only with fear and anguish" (p. 193). The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man's act of masturbation with the help of a boy, Estha, in *Abhilash Talkies* presents the first description of erotic pornography:

‘Now if you'll kindly hold this for me,’ the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man said, handling Estha his penis through his soft white muslin dhoti, ‘I'll get your drink. Orange? Lemon?’

‘Orange? Lemon?’ the Man said. ‘Lemon orange?’

‘Lemon, please,’ Estha said politely. He got a cold bottle and a straw.
(*TGoST*, pp. 103-104)

Not that Roy just graphically delineates pornographic acts for its own sake; rather, she invests such description with the relish of poetry and humor. Women delineate the sexual scenes because they seek to challenge chauvinistic nature of sex (Tong, 1998). At the end of the act of self-abuse, Roy describes the flaccid penis rather poetically: “Then the gristly-bristly face contorted, and Estha’s hand was wet and hot and sticky. It had egg white on it. White egg white. Quarter-boiled. The lemon drink was cold and sweet. The penis was soft and shriveled like an empty leather change-purse” (*TGoST*, p. 104). One may only conjecture that the reason behind Roy’s depiction of such an erotic scene between a man and a young boy is a man’s lust for deriving solitary carnal pleasure or his masculine, chauvinistic nature through Estha.

Roy depicts male sexual domination and female sexual submission in a rebellious spirit. It is tough to determine whose side Roy has taken in delineating the sexual instinct. Through pornography, Roy seems to have rendered women’s sexuality for male pleasure in depicting the romance of Ammu and Velutha:

She unbuttoned her shirt. They stood there. Skin to skin. Her brownness against his blackness. Her softness against his hardness. Her nut-brown breasts (that wouldn’t support a toothbrush) against his smooth ebony chest. She felt him shudder against her. (*TGoST*, pp. 334-335)

While describing the liquidation of Velutha, the narrator says: “What Easthappen and Rahel witnessed that morning, though they didn’t know it then, was a clinical demonstration in controlled condition” (*TGoST*, p. 309). Far from being vulgar and banal pornography, Roy’s descriptions of the sexual act supports the belief of Foucault (1984) that “sex is not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies” (p. 105). The intensification of pleasures is a means of self-discovery and self-actualization. It is in this context that Roy’s apparent freedom to concede sexual liberty should be viewed as Roy’s feminist stand of transforming her sexual desire into discourse.

Roy’s apparently naked and open description of sexual matters inherently suggests how women express their feminine instincts. MacKinnon (1983) rightly argues, “Socially, femaleness means femininity, which means availability on male terms” (p. 635). Ammu’s feminine parts receive the following insinuatingly sensuous treatment thus:

He [Velutha] kissed her eyes. Her ears. Her breasts. Her belly. Her seven silver stretch-marks from her twins....The inside of her legs, where her skin

was softest. The carpenter's hands lifted her hips and an untouchable tongue touched the innermost part of her. (*TGoST*, p. 337)

In this short rendezvous with Velutha, the untouchable, Ammu probably experiences the ultimate consummation of her own feminine maturity, achieving the ecstasy of her essential femininity. Roy seems to be in consonance with the feminist view that “women come to identify themselves as sexual beings, as beings that exist for men” (MacKinnon, 1983, p. 531). Roy exposes feminine sexual urges, even at times resorting to oral sex: “Ammu, naked now, crouched over Velutha, her mouth on his. She slid further down, introducing herself to the rest of him. His neck. His nipples.” (*TGoST*, p. 336). Of Ammu's concupiscence, her sexual tryst and consummation with Velutha, a doomed yet life-enhancing amour, Roy talks unhesitatingly in a disguised manner through insinuations, innuendoes and similes, ripe with sexual flavor.

Roy is not shy about delineating sexually explicit stuff in her novel. The graphic pictorial and poetic descriptions of sexual organs and the mode of coitus become valuable artistically for Roy. Tong (1998) regarded, “Cast off your old, tired, and repressive sexual mores and delights in the erotic celebration of the body” (p. 112). Roy has a vulgar relief when she invests it with a delightful seamy humor thus: “Murlidharan, the level crossing lunatic, perched cross-legged and perfectly balanced on the milestone. His balls and penis dangled down, pointing towards the sign which said, ‘COCHIN 23’” (*TGoST*, p. 62). It may as well be seen as symbolically foretelling the Ammu-Velutha sexual congress later by the end of the novel. Next, the meeting between Inspector Mathew and Ammu at the police station is rather impishly humorous:

Inspector Mathew stared at Ammu's breasts as he spoke. He said the police knew all they needed to know and that the Kottayam Police didn't take statements from veshyas or their illegitimate children. ‘If I were you,’ he said, ‘I'd go home quietly.’ Then he tapped her breasts with his baton. (*TGoST*, pp. 7-8)

The hidden irony and sarcasm of her descriptions do not spare even the great communist leader, K.N.M. Pillai, who seems to have been turned inside out given his ideological posturing on the one hand, and his sexual demeanor on the other. The illicit love affair is a form of social taboo that victimizes innocent lovers badly by social dogmatism (Janetius, 2017). The illicit love affair between Velutha and Ammu was an act against the attitude of both Marxism and socialism. The Ayemenem leader, Comrade Pillai, in his heart of hearts, does not approve of this relationship (Adhikari, 2022). When Velutha was taken to police custody, he was severely beaten by the police and “Blood spilled from his skull like a secret. His face was swollen

and his head looked like a pumpkin, too large and heavy for the slender stem it grew from (*TGoST*, pp. 319-320). To such an extent that he has to die in custody. But the governing body of the family maltreats Ammu who antagonizes her family by marginalizing herself socially (Kunhi, & Kunhi, 2017). She dies in the grimy room of Brarat Lodge in Alleppey where she had gone to search for a job. The author observes: “She died alone. With a noisy ceiling fan for company and no Estha to lie at the back of her. She was thirty-one. Not old, not Young, but a viable, dieable age” (*TGoST*, p. 161). The taboo relationship between Ammu and Velutha sounds shocking to the Indian society characterized by the conventional caste-mentality.

Thus, Arundhati Roy, in *The God of Small Things*, has artistically carried off the socially tabooed sexual expressions into the realm of fun and romance through her poetic prose. The novel, *The God of Small Things*, can aptly be called Roy’s projection of her sexist vision to be surveyed and appreciated by the male world. The characters have no any hesitation in breaking the mores of the family and society in the matters of the love and sex. Roy’s central purpose is to display how true love and desires to cherish sex in love is beyond the grip of the fake social control. The organism at first wants to protect life from physical injury. Judged on this principle, almost all the characters of the book seem to be suffering from these demands of the organism. At the same time, Roy succeeds in conveying that feminine essence is incomplete, meaningless without sex.

Sibling Incest for Harboring Repressed Sentiments

One of the central issues of *The God of Small Things* is incest, the universal age-old taboo. It will not be an over-statement to call the novel an effective feminist piece of writing that offers a powerful expression of sexual experience in a social framework. When family relationships are disturbed, a transformation in individual expectations and desires can lead to incest (Freud, 1961). The spousal relationship in the Kochama family is a tensed one, often regulated by the patriarchal hegemony, and this leads to sibling incest. One may take incest as a site for exploring complex psychic instincts (MacKinnon, 1983; Owen, 1998). The pre-natal bond of inexplicable passions, oscillating between affection and sensuousness, seems to be operating in the Rahel-Estha affair, as in the following passage: “They had never been shy of each other’s bodies, but they had never been old enough (together) to know what shyness was. Rahel searched her brother’s nakedness for signs of herself” (*TGoST*, pp. 92-93). Sibling incest depicted in the novel is implied to intensify how the children, Estha and Rahel, have been seeking to find their identity. Freud (1961) himself accepts the role of terrifying experiences, which involve danger to life. So, everybody in society wants personal security first. The identity of the children was lost in the novel because the family was dominated by masculine norms.

The union of Rahel and Estha signifies their attempt to make a rebellion against the strictures on identity enforced by family and history. Rahel and Estha, by coincidence, repeat the history of the family because Chacko and Mammachi had also been found to be indulged in the incestuous acts. This justifies that the mark of sexual perversion had been lying buried in the family, in “the History House” (*TGoST*, p. 25). Instead of breaking from lineage, they go back on it as Estha seeks a return to origin and wholeness through the imaging of Rahel as the mother (Adhikari, 2022). Derrida (1978) also clarified how incest unites siblings disturbed by family conflict: “Each family was self-sufficient and perpetuated itself exclusively by inbreeding. Instinct held the place of passion; habit held the place of preference” (p. 159). The incestuous relationship which develops between the twins is a fine example of suppressed sexuality and genetic predisposition. Incestuous people neglect the social norms for their gratification of inner passion (Owen, 1998). Estha and Rahel were ignored by their parents, by the family and the hideous plot of police, even the Marxist leaders who were in the influence of the family (Kunhi & Kunhi, 2017). That is why, they cherish harboring their repressed sentiments. The twins also betray Velutha, by being co-opted by the unscrupulous system in falsely implicating him, and thus, in his annihilation.

Rahel displays her stamina through her actions. After she survives from the oppressive nature of the family nature in India and from the exploitative act of her husband in New York, she finds solace in the company of her brother. She had “screamed and screamed” (*TGoST*, p. 326) at the platform when she had to go the New York leaving her brother, Estha. Butler (1990) criticized the heterosexual norms fabricated by the patriarchy because it disregards the emotions of the female sex. Rahel is a true radical feminist because she finds bliss in the company of Estha. This sort of statement clearly exonerates Roy of being an immoral or pornographic writer. There are many references that demonstrate how the ‘love laws’ are violated in the novel. Rahel follows Estha and watches him undress, and watches his body closely, probably with authorial approval. Rahel wonders: “Had he seen her? Was he really mad? Did he know that she was there” (*TGoST*, p. 91)? And though, Rahel and Estha are the modern day counterparts. Derrida (1978) argued that whenever “Instinct held the place of passion; habit held the place of preference” (*TGoST*, p. 159). Rahel’s life has since been empty without her twin brother, without her mother, Ammu, who died a few years later, and with her own aimless drifting from place to place.

Rahel is a bold sister who converts as a sex partner when she is obsessed by the carnal desires. A radical feminist has no any sense of humiliation in accomplishing her carnal instincts with her siblings (MacKinnon, 1983). After being together again at Ayemenem, sisterly and brotherly love re-asserts itself against the

love-laws which would, of course, forbid their lying together: “Then she sat up and put her arms around him. Drew him down beside her. Only that once again they broke the Love Laws” (*TGoST*, pp. 327-278). Surely, Rahel and Estha transgress the conventional bounds of civil society in the climax of the novel when “Rahel, dark woman in a yellow T-shirt, turns to Estha in the dark” (*TGoST*, p. 327). It was not a habitual union of the sexes, but a doomsday embrace of two eternally close souls, a consummation of emptiness with a hatred grief. Derrida (1978) regarded incest as a natural phenomenon. This is what happens when the twins meet: “They were strangers who had met in a chance encounter. They had known each other before life began” (*TGoST*, p. 327). Although Roy’s text endeavors to drop an oblique hint of challenging the absolute and conventional ideologies and practices in favor of something trail-blazing and humane, yet the contradiction remains in the novel.

Thus, the novel, *The God of Small Things*, obviously demonstrates some psychological elements playing a vital role in the inner workings of some of the major characters of the novel. Most characters of the novel, Ammu, Velutha, Estha and Rahel have been suffering from depressed mentality and psychology. She didn’t follow the age-old rules of social conduct in society and developed her sexual relationship with an untouchable of her village. It is only because her past life was not fully satisfied. Moreover, it is ‘trauma psychology’ that makes Rahel is a boy of taciturnity, who always wants to lead a life far from the din and bustle of the crowded city. It is this psychology that engraves a permanent imprint in the innocent mind of Rahel, who, later on, develops an incestuous relationship. So, they become abnormal, and consequently, the feelings of loneliness, emptiness, and imperfectness collectively create a situation in which the twins have nothing to do but indulge in incestuous relationship. But Roy never favors this relation. Within the strictures on identity placed by an essentially hybrid family and history, the two seek identity and one-ness, a rejection of separation and hybridity in an act of union.

Conclusion

Roy has made skilful use of the obscenity, sexuality, and incest in *The God of Small Things* because she has a special purpose in dealing with them. She is conscious of the bitter truth that the social barriers, norms, values and traditions have victimized women in the Indian society for a long time. Roy succeeds in giving the idea that if women make sexual relations with a person without formal marriage, even disregarding their social, ethnic boundaries. It is because they seek freedom from the bondages of the patriarchal hegemony which has been exercised in the Indian society for centuries. Some people denounce Roy’s book, because it is replete with vulgar scenes and pornographic delineations. For instance, the masturbation

scene in the Abhilash talkies; the scene of Ammu's bathroom in which she puts the toothbrush on her breasts to see whether it stands or falls. Certainly, this type of sexual portrayal looks somewhat absurd and unethical in the eyes of orthodox Indian readers. But Roy is endeavoring to remind us that the human organism has some certain needs which it wants to get fulfilled at any cost. It is this experience which makes Ammu the transgressor of social ethics and also prompts her to indulge in a sexual life which ultimately leads to their death. In short, the denial of physical and psychological needs makes the characters of the book rebellious, leading to the defiance of society's age-old norms and principles. Arundhati Roy, like a true artist, not only delineates those abnormalities and discrepancies in which there is a conspicuous breakdown of moral and spiritual values but also signifies how individual physical needs can be accomplished. Roy also demonstrates how some people in the eastern society torture the innocent to fulfill their carnal desires. For instance, Estha is forced to masturbate an old man, Orangedrink Lemondrink man in the cinema hall. So it is quite wrong to call the book and the author immoral, as some critics call her. In other words, through the psychological interpretations of the various layers of the human mind, Roy seems to present a trenchant critique of present day Indian society, where some people have appeared bold in fighting against the social norms in the cases of love and sex.

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