ARUNDHATI ROY - WRITING THE WOMAN :
THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

Chapter IV

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THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

Arundhati Roy’s winning the Booker Prize, in 1997, the world’s second most coveted award, for her debut novel boosted the spirit of Indian women, and timed a sure welcome to women writers to the vast expanse of world literature. The world is all praise for Arundhati’s maiden attempt, yet at home the accolades were not unanimous nor very spontaneous. The veteran critic and writer Sukumar Azikode did not hesitate to remark: “Being realistic the book is full of sights especially for the Westerners. But it offers no insights. It is very satisfying. And that is the main flaw. It offers no challenge to the reader. It is Kerala for the foreign tourist, just the priphery” (Azhikode 2). Shobha De called it a “freak thing that happened” (qtd. in Eichert 40). But Kamala Das compensates when she bursts out in full-throated praise “She is our own girl...I feel so proud of her” (40). “In the tumult of feudalism’s dying pangs, in the wide swathe that the narrative cuts through Kerala’s modern history, in its pungent ironies, in the nerve-tingling passions, in the overarching pathos, the novel has few modern parallels in
Indo-Anglian writing” (John 177). Arundhati is the youngest writer to win the pretigious Booker, and the first resident Indian to whisk away the enormous sum of twenty thousand pounds sterling in a clean sweep. Roy’s success is spectacular, for when only five months into print *The God Of Small Things* sold 3,50,000 copies worldwide and was translated into twenty-seven languages outright. Though a novice in the field of novel writing Arundhati has tried her hand at script writing for *The Banyan Tree*, a television serial and for the *Electric Moon*. Her career also includes a part in the film *Massey Sahib*, directed her husband and the part of Radha in *In Which Annie Gives It To Those Ones*, which she also scripted. Arundhati was not a case of a total unknown bursting into limelight. She came into news with her single - handed tirade ,”The great Indian Rape Trick”against the Bandit Queen, the film by Shekhar Kapur in the wake of the Mandal Issue. At present, after this first novel, she has voiced an impassioned plea against nuclear weapons, striking against everything Big. In her essay, *The Greater Common Good* she takes up the cause of the tribals in the Narmada valley, along with Medha Patkar. Her very recent article, *The Reincarnation of the Rumpelstiltskin* stresses the need to be independent as she always was and wishes to be.
How much it takes to become a writer. Bent (far more common than we assume), circumstances, time, development of craft — but beyond that: how much conviction as to the importance of what one has to say, one’s right to say it. And the will, the measureless store of belief in oneself to be able to come to, cleave to, find the form for one’s own life’s comprehension. Difficult for any male not born into a class that breeds such confidence. Almost impossible for a girl, a woman (Oslen 256).

Woman-authored as *The God Of Small Things* is, the text belies the statement categorically. Arundhati writes surmounting forcefully all the barriers that may come in her way. She flings to the wind all the opprobrium that women writing may have gained and says what she has to say and with conviction. *The God of Small Things* is not a story or just a telling of a tale but as the novelist has herself claimed tells us how things that happened affected the lives of the people concerned. In the course of writing, she draws into the vortex of her story the teeming and burning issues of life. *The God Of Small Things* is not a mere nostalgic dallying with the past, but is deeply implanted in the present. Arundhati’s people reek of sweat and blood, and tears. Their sobs resound with the rumblings of the storm.
The novel assumes the dimension of a protest novel which is keenly alert to the social injustice that goes sanctioned by the prevalent traditional norms. The inequality meted out to women seem to be the subject primarily occupying her. But no less important is the social discrimination meted out to the low-castes and the exploitations carried out in the name of class struggle. The politics of the day also forms her agenda: the Naxalite upheaval in Palghat, the World Bank Loan, ‘the river sold for more rice’, the flow of Gulf money, the sorrows of the employed separated from their families, all form the texture of her story.

The snobbery of the upper castes, the alien longings of the Anglophiles, and the religiosity of the clergy covertly come up for her criticism. But above all this, what lingers in the mind is the tragedy of man’s instinct: “the subliminal urge to destroy what he could neither subdue nor deify” (TGOST 308). Like all great literature the novelist strikes an optimistic note when the novel ends with, ‘Naaley’; for the word is a harbinger of hope and life, however ignorant man may be of what it unfolds. And to be sure, the didactic tone too cannot be missed: “If you want to end up there, you must aim there” (292).
The Women Characters in the Novel

Arundhati Roy celebrates the female in the diversity of female experience offered in *The God of Small Things*. She has no intentions of being moralistic and is pragmatic and down to earth in her creation of her women characters, some of whom sharply demarcating a novel culture different from the traditional. We are forced to recognize the cravings of the human mind illuminated against the background of their socio-political considerations. The tragedy that befalls her women is the tragedy of freedom that they grapple with.

"Things can change in a day. That a few hours can affect the outcome of whole life times (32)", is the keynote of the novel; and it is what happened unfortunately to Arundhati’s women, which shakes them from their enforced complacency. The major women characters of the novel, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Margaret, Ammu and Rahel are repeatedly defeated and derailed either by circumstances or by themselves. They call for the reader’s sympathy and understanding which are reserved from the men in the novel. Pappachi and Chacko cast their shadows over the women’s lives. Velutha, the God of small things, is the unhappy victim who is oppressed along with the women and their social restrictions. As Rahel had noticed in the case of Paradise Pickles and Preserves, an ambiguous unclassified disorder seems to
be arbitrary in the case of human beings also. This disorder in classification prescribed different norms for different people, exercised authority on the most vulnerable and the weakest of the weak whereas the powerful ones transgressed social and moral laws as per their convenience. When Ammu says that nobody – mother, father, brother, husband, best friend, even her own son who “could grow up to be an MCP” (83) – can be trusted she is only voicing the feminine consciousness of victimisation.

Sway of Patriarchy

In the politics of power, patriarchy becomes a potent tool to affect control and conformity in the family. The grand old Ayemenem house is the fulcrum of the little cosmos of the novel and spins out its tenacious tentacles to hedge in the lives of those born into it and from it. And the absentee patriarch Rev. Ipe seems to impose its first laws laid down by him of ‘how much’ and ‘whom’. Perched high up on one side of the mounted stuffed bison head he presides over and controls the present and lays his finger on the future. While he smiled his confident ancestor smile over the threshold, Aleyooty Ammachi, his wife looked hesitant.

With her eyes she looked in the direction that her husband looked. With her heart she looked away (30).
She wore heavy, dull gold kunukku earnings which were the tokens of her husband’s kindness, the Little Blessed One’s Goodness (30). She lived the matriarch with all the allowances a patriarch was pleased to bestow on his beneficiary. The patriarch’s hegemony unfailingly falls upon his son, Pappachi, whose double-dealing crushes the lives of the members of his family. There is no escape from his clutches and utter dependence on him makes Mammachi and her daughter bear the brunt of his calculating cruelty which settles like a moth on the family. Seventeen years older than his wife he realized with a shock that he was an old man when his wife was still in her prime. Every night he beat her with a brass flower vase, only the frequency changed. One night Pappachi broke the bow of Mammachi’s violin and threw it in the river when her violin master complimented her on her exceptional talent. Back at Ayemenem the Imperial Entomologist, retired, slouched around the compound, jealous of the attention his wife was getting on account of her pickles. He stopped speaking to her until his death, for being reprimanded by his son on beating his mother. When Mammachi cried at Pappachi’s funeral, Ammu told her twins that it was ‘more because she was used to him than because she loved him’ (50). She ‘was used to’ being beaten from time to time.
It is Chacko, the only son of Pappachi who inherits his father’s kingdom, the property and proprietorship of Ayemenem house and the factory. ‘Thanks to our Male Chauvinist Society’, Ammu said (57). Though Ammu did as much work in the factory as Chacko, he always referred to it as ‘my factory, my pineapple, my pickles’. Legally, Ammu as a daughter had no claim to the property. Chacko said, “What’s yours is mine and what’s mine is also mine” (57). Chacko told Rahel and Estha that ‘Ammu had no Locusts Stand I” (57). Chacko was privileged to transgress all social and moral laws. He missed no opportunity to insult her in her own home and and was heedless of the scars that were created on her self-esteem.

When viewed from a perspective encompassing the fate of women in the various institutional domains of society, the many small insults women suffer in face-to-face interaction do perhaps seem trivial. Yet, … the gesture of power are an integral part of women’s placement in the social scheme of things. These daily gestures are constant “reminders” which help constitute women’s subordinate status (West and Zimmerman 110).

K.N.M. Pillai too, the aspiring politician with local supplicants and Party workers ‘had the easy authority of the Man of the House’ (272). His
wife, Kalyani acknowledged his overbearing presence. His S.S.L.C., B.A. and M.A. certificates were framed and hung on the wall along with the photograph of his garlanding Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad. He took pride in his only son, Lenin, whom he expected to get a double-promotion for his brilliance in studies.

**Marriage - An Instrument of Oppression**

Patriarchy implants itself securely within the institution of marriage, the destiny traditionally offered to women by society. It is till true that most women are married, or have been, or plan to be, or suffer from not being (Beauvoir 444).

“She is married, given in marriage by her parents. Boys get married, they take a wife. They took to marriage” (448–9).

... marriage normally subordinates wife to husband, the problem of the mutual relation is posed most sharply to the female (480).

Women have been conditioned in patriarchy, they have internalized its values transmitted from one generation to the other. It is this that strengthens Mammachi to endure the inhuman treatment meted out by her husband. So much so, that she later becomes its vehement exponent rather than its victim. The important women in *The God of Small Things* establish
themselves in terms of their marital status. Alyooty Ammachi is the great
grand mother who acquiesces to the bounty of her domineering husband,
Rev. John Ipe, and reigns as the submissive companion of a generous
husband. Mammachi too is married and lives with Pappachi. Ammu and
Rahel have been married. Baby Kochamma suffers from not being married
while Margaret had been married. Women revolve round their men and
weave their destinies. Marriage and considerations of family alone made
Mammachi go through the hell of life.

Marriage too was the only choice left for Ammu and she holds on to it
like the last straw of her life and livelihood. A girl without gainful
occupation can only wait for her chance of salvation. It is exactly what
Ammu did when her father the Imperial Entomologist came home with no
dowry for his daughter. Ammu escapes from her oppressive father and long-
suffering mother into her marriage with the Bengali tea-planter who leaves
her more miserable than before and sends her back to all those she had fled
from and even worse.

Margaret Kochamma, early a waitress at a café in Oxford started her
friendship with Chacko in laughter and ended up in marriage; Margaret
without her family’s consent and Chacko without his family’s knowledge.
But soon Chacko’s irresponsible ways aggravated by penury made Margaret
break loose from him and secure for her a gainful occupation. She also found herself drawn to an old friend of her brother’s, Joe, with whom she lived and who happily fathered Chacko’s daughter, Sophie Mol, till his accidental death.

Rahel too, a proven problem child from her schooldays, has her tryst with marriage. She meets Larry McCaslin who finds in her ‘a jazz tune’ and Rahel drifted into marriage ‘like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge. With a Sitting Down Sense. She returned with him to Boston (18). But Larry McCaslin soon took offence ‘with her far way look’ and Rahel was divorced to fend for herself.

Marriage holds a different tale for Baby Kochamma, Navomi Ipe who followed Father Mulligan from seminary to seminary. The priest succeeds in keeping Baby Kochamma’s aching heart “on a leash, bumping behind him, lurching over leaves and small stones” (24). Frustrated she returns home from her convent only to earn a ‘reputation’ that stands in the way of her finding a husband. Bruised and almost broken she started living her life backwards (22), with suppressed, unfulfilled feminine longings.

Arundhati Roy’s women have been doomed for one mistake they have earlier committed: a wrong choice, of men. But these women, victims in themselves have internalized the discriminatory values of the prevailing
patriarchal systems. Mammachi and Baby Kochamma later turn out to be the two guardians of their family, intolerant of any trespassers. Mammachi is utterly unsympathetic to her daughter and locks her up like a mad bitch. But she winks at her son's libertine relationships with the factory women. Not only has she ceased to be hurt by them but acknowledges it as 'Men's Needs' and provides him with a backdoor to the house so that he may conveniently indulge in them. Baby Kochamma a great moralist with her sense of right and wrong is the very embodiment of patriarchal authority and with her midget lieutenant Kochu Maria is set to instil order in the patriarchal world. Discarded by her husband and disowned by her family is the fate of a divorced woman. The inquisitiveness of K.N.M. Pillai regarding the marital status of Rahel is a pointer to the position of women in society. Pillai finds the Puniyan Kunju family beyond redemption because of the fate of its women, one dying pre-mature, one divorced and leading a loveless life at home.

A female body, in the patriarchal world is never a personal body but one which poses a severe threat to cultural identity. It may bring a bad name for generations if not properly harnessed by man. Ammu is a challenge that Arundhati has flung into the teeth of social laws. Instead of engaging her heroine in a romance plot that ends in marriage and a life of happiness
everafter, Arundhati highlights her as a symbol of women for whom marriage is a synonym of one form of oppression or another. Ammu rebels against her marriage with the Bengali drunkard husband who was ready to entrust her to the care of the English manager, Mr. Hollick. She returns to her unwelcome home at Ayemenem with her twins. But she is acutely aware of the injustice and refuses to resign passively to her fate. At Ayemenem, her long suppressed feminine longings break loose when she meets Velutha, the low caste. She feels that her body is her own and responds to the churning in her rather than suppress it. She follows the urge of her body and seeks fulfilment heedless of the fate that its discovery may bring. She dauntlessly flouts the social laws as to "who should be loved and how. And how much(33)."

*The Responsibility of Motherhood*

The mother-child relationship is the crux of social relationship in Indian society. The words of Smith may be applied in this context to reveal the intensity of the bond:

The time of relationship is not a segment of life’s timeline but a loading of the whole drift of one’s life into each of the moments devoted to being with the other. What is at stake in a relationship is the rightness of one’s life-defining orientation –
so that love, ... is always for ever. It is not an alienable “product” ... even if it is bound to psychological and social effects and is affected in turn by other social dispositions.

(Smith 265).

Any amount of bitterness, isolation and self-abnegation that is a woman’s due is nullified by her symbolic status as mother, the prime source and basis of society and its culture. Ammu puts in all her efforts to put up with her role as a responsible mother. Perhaps this and only this had driven Ammu into her misery. Her children were at times “millstones”, yet she would not give them up and took upon her shoulders the entire responsibility of their bringing up. She became their ‘Baba’ and their mother and loved them double. It is the very same weakness that is exploited by Baby Kochamma in order to wreak vengeance against Ammu who had gone to the police station and spoken against her. She manoeuvres to force Ammu out of the house and intrigues to return Estha to his almost forgotten father. Returning Estha to his father was like tearing off a limb from Ammu. Her longing to win him back plunges her into the world outside in search for a job that would help hold all of them together under the same roof.

When Ammu ‘returns’ Estha to his father, she reminds him to write and gives him envelopes with their addresses written on it so that he could
easily write and post letters. She consoles him that she would soon come and take him back.

Soon, sweetheart. As soon as I can .... As soon as I get a job.

As soon as I can go away from here and get a job (324).

Yet, at times she got angry with her children. They remembered being pushed like billiard balls between their Baba and Ammu who said: "Here you keep one of them. I can’t look after them both" (84). She willingly suspended the years between their sad parting and the expected ‘none too soon get-together’. She battles alone with life, with dreams of a happy tomorrow when she can hold her children under her own wings.

Fatherhood is free from such emotional shackles. While returning Estha to his father crushes Ammu, their Baba lives on with no qualms about separation from his children. The twins are entrusted solely to the mother’s care when the parents part from each other. Anyway, it seemed very magnanimous of him to accept Estha into his new family and conveniently too did he wash his hands off the boy when later he migrated to Australia.

A home and for that matter a happy home, is the natural habitat of a woman. A miserable home drives Ammu to Bengal, her own home shattered by a broken marriage drives her children farther from each other. Ammu and the children are driven apart for lack of a home of their own. Lack of a
gainful occupation makes Ammu helpless. She is at the mercy of her brother who is the sole master of the house where she was born. She can live there only as long as he wishes. These are just a few of the problems that Arundhati raises for our consideration and to note they are most specially a woman’s predicament in her society. Lack of independence makes the woman cow down to her masters. Arundhati displays the world through the microcosm at her disposal; Ayemenem and its milieu. Speaking about hapless conditions of women Arundhati remarked: “The only real conflict seemed to me between men and women” (Interview 102). The double standards of society deny justice and dignity to the women and untouchable alike. Caught in the patriarchal moorings they are not their own but victims and underdogs of a time-acknowledged power that holds its sway over them. So says Ammu, it made no difference, choosing between her husband’s name and her father’s name for it did not give a woman much of a choice.

Women Marginalized

As Simone de Beauvoir observes:

Women lack concrete means for organizing themselves into a unit which can stand face to face with the correlative unit. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own, and they have no such solidarity of work and interest as that of the
proletariat ... They live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, house work, economic condition, and social standing to certain men — fathers or husbands — more firmly than they are to other women (19).

Women are marginalized in The God of Small Things and Arundhati proves that the texture of her novel is the culture of Ayemenem. Ammu was not given a college education after schooling because Pappachi believed that college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl, so Ammu had no choice but to leave Delhi and move with her parents to Ayemenem. She had practically nothing to do there but wait for marriage proposals; helping her mother with housework all the while. She grew desperate, and finally escaped to a distant aunt’s to find a husband later. As a divorcee at Ayemenem, Chacko, her brother and Baby Kochamma, her aunt made use of every opportunity to sideline her creating an impression that she was an outsider in the house, with no “Locusts Stand I” (57).

Mammachi was always the silent sufferer under the clutches of her ill-tempered husband. Her talent for playing the piano was nipped in the bud. Her entrepreneurship in the Paradise Pickles and Preserves was envied and never appreciated.
Kalyani, K.N.M. Pillai’s wife is also given no recognition as a powerful member of the family. When Chacko came to Pillai’s house to discuss the business matters he smiled and nodded a greeting to Pillai. His wife and even the aged mother were of consequence. Pillai threw his soiled clothes at Kalyani, which she took as a boon bestowed on her.

Baby Kochamma joined the convent converting to Roman Catholicism. But she became unhappy for she could find no trace of Father Mulligan there. She came back home; Rev.Ipe realized that his daughter was unlikely to find a husband. So he decided that there was no harm in her having an education and sent her to the University of Rochester in America and that too for a diploma in Ornamental Gardening. She confined herself to the front garden of Ayemenem house and that occupation her father thought would “keep her from brooding” (26).

Rahel was unwelcome at Ayemenem when she came years later to pay her brother a visit. Baby Kochamma and Kochu Maria eyed her with disgust and wanted that Estha being useless, be taken care of by her.

**Colonization of Female Minds**

The ability to bestow meanings - to "name" things, acts and ideas - is a source of power. Control of communication allows the managers of ideology to lay down categories through which
reality is to be perceived. Conversely, this entails the ability to
deny existence of alternative categories, to assign them to the
realm of disorder and chaos, to render them socially and
symbolically invisible (Wolf 388).

The female gender is most often used to make derogatory remarks or
refer to unpleasant situations. Policemen didn't take statements from Veshyas
or their illegitimate children (8). The man with whom a woman sinned
cannot be termed with an equivalent name.

Rahel's behaviour at school was criticized disapprovingly:

It was, they whispered to each other, as though she didn't know
how to be a girl (17).

And, when Rahel married, Larry McCasin possessed his wife as a gift
given to him in love (19). But he was offended by her eyes, the faraway look
that dispossessed him of her.

When Baby Kochamma defied her father's wishes and became
a Roman Catholic it was too much. "Displaying a stubborn
single-mindedness (which in a young girl in those days was
considered as bad as a physical deformity - a harelip perhaps,
or a club foot) (24).
It was to ornamental gardening that Baby Kochamma was turned by her father, when she returned home with a ‘reputation’ that would not procure her a husband. It trustfully proves the claims of Ellis Havelock:

In general the feminine traits revealed are an attention to the immediate surroundings, to the finished product, to the ornamental, the individual, and the concrete; while the masculine preference is for the more remote, the constructive, the useful, the general and the abstract (Havelock 189).

Unpleasant situations also are pictured in a derogatory feminine way:

Memory was that woman on the train. Insane in the way she sifted through dark things in a closet and emerged with the most unlikely ones - a fleeting look, a feeling (72).

The city’s deplorable mire drew Rahel into the New York’s ‘deranged womb’ (72). The silence gathered its skirts and slid, like Spiderwoman, up the slippery bathroom wall (93).

*Women as Objects*

Mr. Hollick’s desire for Ammu is expressed very subtly and unabashedly:
You’re a very lucky man, you know, wonderful family, beautiful children, such an attractive wife ... An extremely attractive wife (41 - 42).

Mr. Hollick suggested that she be sent to his bungalow to be looked after when her husband is sent on a holiday. Ammu impresses him with her good-looks. Arundhati describes:

When Ammu and her husband moved to Assam, Ammu, beautiful, young and cheeky, became the toast of the Planters’ Club. She wore backless blouses with her saris and carried a silver lamè purse on a chain (40).

Chacko has always eyed Kalyani with desire.

Mammachi also, destined to live a doomed life was thrown out of her own house. Rahel found herself targeted by the young men who came to the gas station, where she worked as a night clerk. She worked there for several years and found it difficult to ward off pimps who used to approach her with lucrative job offers. Inspector Thomas Mathew tapped Ammu’s breasts as if he was choosing mangoes from a basket. He called her a ‘Veshya’ and referred to Estha and Rahel as ‘illegitimate’ (8).

Even Baby Kochamma was trifled with by Father Mulligan who exploited her maidenly attentions. The Irish monk was more than merely
flattered by the emotion he aroused in the attractive young girl who stood before him "with a trembling, kissable mouth and blazing coal-black eyes" (23). "The young girl and the intrepid Jesuit, stood looking at each other, quaking with un-christian passion" (24).

For Chacko, the working women of the factory were nothing more than objects of his pleasure. They were just to satisfy his 'Men's Needs'. His mother had a separate entrance built for Chacko's room so that he could carry on his affairs uninterrupted.

There is no doubt, women writers can best express what women are and what women want. Women-centred novels which are constantly billed as the voice of the liberated woman, telling it as 'like it is', revealing all, present their heroines as active, speaking subjects. Almost always the heroine tells her own story, in an autobiographical mode which can encourage an identification between author, characters and reader that befits the fictive nature of writing. Both the act of writing and the prevalent theme of sexual fulfilment are offered as the problem of the individual woman trying to express her 'time self'.

Furthermore, the author's interest in women's sexual pleasure in these novels functions not as a radical critique of a society that has no place for women's desire but, more often, as a confirmation of women's position as
personal, ahistorical, sexual and non-political. The questions, she was asking, were legitimate and she was alone in asking them.

**Autobiographical elements**

"Writing was a fictional way of making sense of the world I lived in and the novel was the technical key with which I did it", said the author. *The God of Small Things* is replete with its autobiographical element. A pale reflection of Arundhati’s childhood haunts an inextricable mix of memory and imagination. Arundhati Roy was born in Shillong to a tea-planter. Daughter of a Kerala Syrian Christian mother and a Bengali Hindu father, Arundhati Roy inherits the divergent cultural strains of her parentage. She was brought up in Aymanam (‘Ayemenem’, in the novel) when her mother Mary Roy broke up her marriage with the Bengali. A product of a broken home Arundhati had to fend for herself. Mary Roy made fame by fighting the Christian Succession Act in the Supreme Court to win Christian women an equal share with their brothers. Ayemenem house is not entirely fictional, for Arundhati Roy, the architect, recreated it. It had the folding doors and side entrances that ‘Mammachi’ built for her son’s use. Uncle Chacko is modelled on George Issac, her uncle; and Magaret in the novel is Issac’s divorced first wife, Cecilia Philipson. The Palat Pickles started by Issac after his higher education in England is near the ancestral house, and bears the
slogan “Emperor in the realm of taste”. Kari Saippu’s History House where the ‘history’s henchmen’ made ‘lessons’ was on the other side of the Meenachal river. Every tragic incident in the novel is fictional, like the drowning of Sophie Mol.

That much of the story is autobiographical is conceded. The girl twin Rahel whose narrative voice dominates the tale is Roy herself when young. Estha, the boy twin, eighteen minutes elder in the novel, smacks of her brother, Lalit Kumar Christopher Roy, who is eighteen months her elder in real life. “May be the character has 25 per cent of me but 75 per cent is somebody else …” says Lalit Kumar (Kumar 43).

Mary Roy, Arundhati’s mother, a sufferer like Ammu in the novel says that Arundhati has written neither about people nor about the 1960s. Rather “she is talking about a situation”. Born and brought up in India, Indian and Keralite motifs constantly weave through Arundhati’s writings. The novel echoes Arundhati’s own childhood, the environment in which she grew with its caste divisions, gender discrimination and family feuds. Situated in a very South Indian locale, she lashed out against old custodians of morality and law. Meenachal forms the background and witness to life’s drama unfolded on its banks. The novel has along with its artistic representability ideological meanings. But the realism represented in the
novel conveyed artistically is the merit of the book. It is autobiographical, yet regional, historical, picturesque and satirical all at once.

**Narrative Devices**

Arundhati’s narrative nechmique is to be studied primarily as an expression of the self unhindered, and unmindful of the consequences it might harbinger. Her stream of consciousness is not new to literature; but she has almost perfected it, handed down to her by James Joyce, the master craftsman. The story is told mostly in the children’s point of view, and this provides the convincing creation of child’s world. As Ranga Rao says:

> The children’s “high-voltage imagination results in linguistic, stylistic exuberance in the profusion of capitals, inspired mis-spellings – repetitions, single sentence paras etc., in a comic strip-cartoon style (Rao 2).

Arundhati Roy is unconventional in her telling of the tale, in the structure and chronology of the narrative, ‘playing with time’, ‘seeing the world’ as if for the first time. Through ‘the stream of consciousness of a small girl’, the omnipresent author smashes the boundaries of time, oscillating from past to present and freely marching into the future to be back into the past again. Janus-like she visualizes the past and the future, rooted in the present and weaves the saga of a family of three generations doomed in
its destiny, yet hopefully waiting for a ‘Naaley’ (The God Of Small Things 240). The main action of the book revolves round then seven year old twins, Estha and Rahel, Sophie Mol’s arrival and subsequent drowning and the intense but fatal love between Ammu and Velutha, the Paravan. The novel starts with returning to Ayemenem, the scene of the action, twenty-three years later, during the monsoon in June. The thirty-three pages of the first chapter give us a bird’s eyeview of the canvas which is later filled in with elaborated details: Sophie Mol’s funeral, the twins’ birth, Baby Kochamma and her past, Velutha’s death, Rahel’s marriage and later divorce, Ammu’s death, Margaret Kochamma’s grief – all find mentioned in the opening chapter. But the novel ends in the middle of the story with Ammu and Velutha making love and promising to meet “Tomorrow”. The chronological narrative has been discarded for it is difficult to pin down to order the complex and variegated experiences of life. The theme is so universal that the story began very long ago:

... it could be argued that it actually began thousands of years ago. Long before the Marxists came. Before the British took Malabar, before the Dutch ascendancy. Before Vasco de Gama arrived, before the Zamorin’s conquest of Calicut. Before three purple – robed Syrian Bishops murdered by the Portugese were
found floating in the sea, with coiled sea-serpents ... it began
long before Christianity arrived in a boat and seeped into
Kerala like tea from a teabag.
That it really began in the days when the Love Laws were
made. The laws that lay down who should be loved, and how.
And how much (33).

Certainly Roy does not give the whole story in as many words for
much is left to the imagination of the reader. Every device there is in
language is exploited by the writer. Like Estha and Rahel reading The
Adventures of Susie Squirrel reading the words by changing the order of the
letters” “ehT serutnevdA fo eisuS. Eno gnrps gninrom eisus leriuqs ekow
pu” (60). The clustering of items, edible items and human beings together,
the strange classifications of things and the grouping of incidents help to
delineate the topsy-turvy world of morality. Arundhati Roy renders the
external world as a character in itself rather than a setting or background.
One cannot fail to recognize the strong emphasis on the link between an
author’s makeup and his language. It has been observed by Enkvist:

A writer’s style may be regarded as an individual and creative
utilization of the resources of language, which his period, his
chosen dialect, his genre, and his purpose within it offer him.
To understand and to make explicit his linguistic creativity, to appreciate in full the alchemy by which he transmutes the base metal of everyday language into the gold of art, it is first necessary to recognize and where possible to specify the ranges of language within which he is working, and upon which he is able to draw. The attempt to do so in analytical detail is not to destroy the wonder of literature but to enhance it (qtd. in Spencer, Preface 49).

Arundhati Roy wields her pen hearkening to her inner self alone, her thoughts and emotions flicker up and down casting shadows, long and short. She explores the depths of feeling and sensibility and suddenly blazes forth with revelations. Her thoughts are not stemmed by any lack in her language and they find free expression with the language following the trail. The freedom that she exercises in her writing has been met with severe criticism. Arundhati’s linguistic experiment is disgusting to some critics who say, “Indian writers like Arundhati even spit at correct English”, her English is “Chutnefied”, they accuse. Some of her innovations are termed as useless and of no use to writers in future, yet she had the guts and the overwhelming talent to make her way. Metaphors and similes issue forth from her pen with great ease and naturalness. Her mind is a kaleidoscope with beautiful forms
and opens out onto the wide ocean of experience sucking in impressions to form gleaming images that come to stay in every reader's mind. They jostle against each other in their profusion:

Inspector Thomas Mathew's moustaches bustled like the friendly Air India, Maharajah's, but his eyes were sly and greedy (7).

..................................................................

He tapped on Ammu's breasts with his baton as though he was choosing mangoes from a basket. Pointing out the ones that he wanted packed and delivered (8).

..................................................................

The death of Sophie Mol stepped softly around the Ayemenem House like a quiet thing in socks. It hid in books and food . . . (15).

..................................................................

The Small God laughed a hollow laugh, and skipped away cheerfully. Like a rich boy in shorts (19).

..................................................................
So too Father Mulligan had Baby Kochammu’s aching heart on a leash, bumping behind him, lurching over leaves and small stones (24).

Baby Kochamma locked her sad, paint-flaking fridge (29).

And closed her face like a cupboard (29).

And their beds were soft with Ei. Der. Doums. (105).

The mouldy bison said, ‘No. Absolutely Not’ In Mouldy Bisonese (174).

Velutha courtesied with his mundu spread like a skirt, like the English dairymaid in ‘The King’s Breakfast’ (175).

Chacko too is vividly caricatured when Arundhati describes: Chacko’s ears stuck out on either side of his head like teapot handles (241).
Repetitions and parentheses, one word sentences and rhymes reflect the stream of her consciousness running riot encompassing colours, sights, sounds and smells that appeal to her sensibilities. She goes on to describe: “In Rahel’s heart Pappachi’s moth snapped open its somber wings”

“Twins for tea
It would bea” (148)

The popular device of repetition for intensification of effect is no better used when Ousa, the Bar Nowl/Watched Ambassador E. Pelvis Walk:

Past floating yellow limes in brine...
Past green mangoes, cut and stuffed ...
Past glass casks...
Past shelves of pectin...
Past trays of bitter gourd ...
Past mounds of fresh green pepper corn
Past a heap of banana peels...
Past the label cupboard ...
Past the glue...
Past the brush... (193 – 94)
Poetic licence, if one would call it, is exploited to the maximum when Arundhati coins phrases and compounds to meet her purpose:

Satin-lined.

Brass handle shined (4).

Ammu's trembling hymnbook - holding hand (5).

Tea-coloured minds (10).

Fan-whirring, peanut-crunching darkness (98).

"The Orangedrink, Lemondrink Man" (113),

Thimble-drinker

Coffin-cartwheeler (135).

"Viable, die-able age" (161).

blue-lipped and dinner-plate eyed they watched (308).
She also splits words:

And their beds were soft with Ei.Der.Downs. (105).

.................

Is he in heaven? Is he in hell?


.................

Transliteration also waits upon Arundhati as she writes:

Onner.

Runder.

Moonner (64).

Aiyyo Kashtam (177).

ickilee, ickilee, ickilee! (178).

Kandoo, Kochamma (179).

Sundarikutty (179)

Ory kaaryam parayattey? (277)

Out.

In.

And lifted its legs.

Up.
Almost everybody praised the novel for its stylistic innovations and the craftsmanship, the impish humour combined with its pathos. Aijaz Ahmad, an almost unsympathetic critic of Arundhati admits on this aspect:

She is the first Indian writer in English where a marvellous stylistic resource becomes available for provincial, vernacular culture without any effect of exoticism or estrangement (Ahmad 108).

The onrush of ideas brook no dearth of language. Like the Meenachal River in the monsoons they carry us on defencelessly yet willingly, our minds wondering at new revelations of the world around us. The new concepts of comparison arrive like ‘Christianity in a boat’ and seep into our consciousness like ‘tea from a teabag’(33), there to stay.

Roy evokes the tropical splendour with a dazzling command of language and a range of literary gimmicks that leave the sympathetic reader half intoxicated (Eichert 43).

*Nictitating membrane*, she remembered she and Estha once spent a whole day saying. She and Estha and Sophie Mol.
Like children playing with the sounds of language, the author attempts to integrate form and language. While going through The God of Small Things one feels that the novelist is irked by the linguistic constraints and is eager to transcend the confines of ordinary language and hence invent any literary device that will make communication effective. Arundhati Roy is asserting her independence as an individual, free to think and write what she has known. We are reminded of the famous cry of Kamala Das:

... Why not let me speak in

Any language I like? The language I speak

Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses

All mine, mine alone. (An Introduction 26)
And falling in line with the famous Indian writers, Arundhati too has chosen her own language to voice her thoughts and feelings and emotions. Also she delves deep down into the labrynths of the minds of her characters.

**Use of Taboo Language**

Helen Cixous exhorts in “The Laugh of Medusa”:

> Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes and rhetorics, regulations and codes. They must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve discourse ... (336).

Fully aware of the ideological role of language in doxifying and constructing gender and thereby marginalising the position of women, women writers have endeavoured to develop modes of writing to counter phallocentric strategies of representation of women sexuality.

The episode with the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man was disgusting and yet Arundhati deftly describes it with all its far-reaching implications on Estha and on Rahel too. Estha encountered the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man and fell into the clutches of the unfriendly ‘jewelled bear’ (102). His gold chain was almost hidden by his chest hair. His white Terylene shirt was unbuttoned to where the swell of his belly began (102). Under the pretext of offering Estha a drink he made Estha do what he wanted.
His hand closed tighter over Estha’s Tight and Sweaty. And faster still.

Fast faster fest

Never let it rest

Until the fast is faster,

And the faster’s fest.

.................................................................

... Then the gristly-bristly face contorted, and Estha’s hand was wet and hot and sticky. It had egg white. Quarter-boiled. The lemondrink was cold and sweet. The penis was soft and shrivelled like an empty leather change-purse. With his dirtcoloured rag, the man wiped Estha’s other hand (104).

Estha learned two things for ‘Two Thoughts’ came into his mind:

a) Anything can happen to Anyone

And

b) It’s best to be prepared (194).

Her pornographic detailing entices us with its humourous and interesting images. Thus Baby Kochamma carries ‘melons in her blouse’(95). Muralidharan sits on the milestone:
Muralidharan, 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 (62).

Also we find, 'everyone pissing in front of everyone in the urinal of Abhilash Talkies' (95–96). The standards prevailing in society prevented women from using technical vocabulary to express their feelings. Roy flouts this tradition and writes the body. Roy forges aesthetic vocabulary for the special nuances of female sensation and champions the female consciousness. Like her male counterparts she records every gamut of female sensation.

With all the heat of sexual passion is the union of Ammu and Velutha. There is no baulking in the pursuit of Ammu’s intensity of experience:

Ammu, naked now, crouched over Velutha, her mouth on his.

He drew her hair around them like a tent. *Like her children did when they wanted to exclude the outside world.* She slid further down, introducing herself to the rest of him .... She sipped the last of the river from the hollow of his navel. She pressed the heat of his navel. She pressed the heat of his erection against
her eyelids. She tasted him, salty in her mouth. He sat up and
drew her back to him. She felt his belly tighten under her, hard
as a board. She felt her wetness slipping on his skin. He took
her nipple in his mouth and cradled her other breast in his
called palm...

At the moment that she guided him into her, she caught a
passing glimpse of his youth, his *youniness*, the wonder in his
eyes at the secret he had measured and she smiled down at him
as though he was her child (336).

The detailed explicit sexuality in these lines is unique in Indian
English, especially that written by women and is paralleled only by Kamala
Das.

Notice the perfection

Of his limbs, his eyes reddening under

Shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor,

Dropping towels, and the jerky way he

Urinates. All the fond details that make

Him male and your only man. Gift him all,

Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of

Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers . . .

(‘The Looking Glass’, The Descendants)

**Exponent of Female Sexuality**

Bereft of soul
My body shall be bare.
Bereft of body,
my soul shall be bare.

(‘The Suicide’, The Descendants)

Arundhati Roy toes the line of Kamala Das in her conviction, in her portrayal of Ammu who becomes a true representative of the awakening feminine consciousness. Ammu awakens to the rights as a female, a woman who wishes to express her feminine sexuality. With women’s claims to their rights, they have also affirmed their faith in their bodies. Besides the numerous issues, in the novel, Arundhati takes up female sexuality as the crucial focus of her literary consciousness. “it is by writing about their sexuality that women writers can begin the process of exorcising the male mind that has been implanted in us” (Fetterley, *Preface* xxii). Roy describes vividly the union of Velutha and Ammu in the most intimate way, recording every gamut of female experience. Her descriptions graze in and around
subjects and words considered as taboo for women. The pornographic details form a document against the hitherto male dominated tradition. Thomas Mathew tapping Ammu’s breasts with his baton, “As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket” is her brave recording of a reality. Even the incest between Rahel and Estha is delineated as an urge to realize the perfect unison of the ‘We’ and ‘Us’ of the twins. And what Rahel and Estha “shared that night was not pleasure but utter grief”, an added reassurance of the consolation that can be found in each other’s company alone.

Arundhati asserts female sexuality on the basis of reciprocity and naturality. She contradicts the popular endorsement by Andrea Dworkin who states:

> Intercourse occurs in a context of a power relation that is pervasive and incontrovertible. The context in which the act takes place, whatever the meaning of the act in and of itself, is one in which men have social, economic, political, and physical power over women. Some men do not have all those kinds of power over all women; and most men have controlling power over what they call their women … (101).

Arundhati’s Ammu demonstrates that “she too is a giver of gifts” and not Velutha alone who can give gifts. It is to her ecstatic yearnings that
Velutha responds and therein he negates the principle that the phallus is the symbol of power and so sex is for the man only.

'A story of sexual anarchy in the Latin Catholics of Kerala' is what E. M. S. Namboodiripad called The God of Small Things. The scenes of physical intimacy between Ammu and Velutha are described deftly. Velutha had all along been considered as the God of Small Things, a giver of gifts to her children. But it is with electrifying effect that Ammu realizes that she too can be the giver of gifts. She starts "To love by night 'the man her children loved by day'" (202). It was on a fatal night while listening to a radio that "something stirred inside her" and "a liquid ache spread under her skin, and she walked out of the world like a witch, to a better, happier place" (44). She sheds her motherhood and divorcehood to join Velutha. She gave him her gift, her own body. "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" (335).

Arundhati pictures unhesitatingly the repulsion of Mammachi at the scenes envisioned by Mammachi who writhed in anger at her daughter's relationship. She even imagined in vivid detail:
a Paravan's coarse black hand on her daughter's breast. His mouth on hers. His black hips jerking between her parted legs (257).

For D. H. Lawrence sexuality focuses on male superiority and it is never a sharing or co-operative experience of the partners. It is purely phallic and upholds the patriarchal principle that possession of phallus is the possession of power and hence sexual enjoyment is for the male. Kate Millet comments on the sexual intercourse depicted by D. H. Lawrence:

The scenes of sexual intercourse in the novel are written according to the "female is passive, male is active" directions laid down by Sigmund Freud. The phallus is all; Connie is "cunt", the thing acted upon, gratefully accepting each manifestation of the will of the master. Mellors does not even condescend to indulge his lady in foreplay ... She enjoys an orgasm when she can, while Mellors is managing his own. If she can't, then too bad. Passive as she is, Connie fares better than the heroine of The Plumed Serpent from whose Lawrentian man, Don Cipriano, deliberately withdraws as she nears orgasm, in a calculated and sadistic denial of her pleasure
(318 – 19). Ammu moves to Velutha, ‘to a better, happier place
(332). She is a giver of gifts not a passive receptor.

The God of Small Things asserts:

The body of a woman is one of the essential elements in her
situation in the world. But that body is not enough to define her
as woman; there is no true living reality except as manifested
by the conscious individual through activities (Beauvoir 69).

Man and woman live in the world on terms of reciprocity.

Language : In Arundhati’s Own Words - ‘a skin on my thought’

In an interview with Alex Wibur, weeks before she won the Booker
Prize, Arundhati talks about her writing craft. The following excerpts from
the interview provide us with her valuable ideas on language use and the
structure of her book that was developed in the course of her story-telling:

One of the things that really delighted me about the God of Small
Things was the incredibly imaginative way you use language - especially as
a way to illustrate how children see the world. Nap becomes “gnap”, barn
owl becomes “Bar Nowl”. And just that slight rearranging of letters puts me
right there in the mind of a seven-year-old. Where did these little touches
come from?
Well, as a child I knew that there was such a struggle to come to terms with what the world is about to do to you. I was an unprotected child in some ways and I felt that one was always trying to anticipate the world and, therefore, was trying to be wise in some way. You sort of accurately misunderstand things and you make concepts out of things that aren't concepts and often, I think, if you have a sort of strange childhood, two things happen. As a child you grow up very quickly but obviously the part that is a child remains a child. And when you become an adult there is a part of you that remains child, so the communication between you and your childhood remains open. It isn't an effort for me to see things through that mirror. It's just all the boundaries are blurred and you make your own rules.

_It seems to me that writers come in two flavours: those who are primarily interested in language and those who are primarily interested in story. This isn't to say that you can't have both interests, but that one is generally more motivated by one than the other. Which camp do you fall into?_

I think that really you must do both things. For me the structure of my story, the way it reveals itself was so important. My language is mine, it's the way I think and the way I write. You know, I don't sweat the language. But I really took a lot of care in designing the structure of the story, because
for me the book is not about what happened affected people. So a little thing like a little boy making his Elvis Presley puff or a little girl looking at her plastic watch with the time painted onto it - these small things become very precious.

*I'm glad you brought up structure because that was one of the most amazing things about the book. You're slipping back and forth between several different time frames for one thing; for another, you basically let us know within the first few pages how the story ends and then spend the rest of the novel showing us how and why.*

But also I think that one of the most important things about the structure is that in some way the structure of the book ambushes the story. You know, it tells a different story from the story the book is telling. In the first chapter I more or less tell you the story, but the novel ends in the middle of the story, and it ends with Ammu and Velutha making love and it ends on the word “tomorrow”. And though you know that what tomorrow brings is terrible, the fact that the book ends there is to say that even though it’s terrible it’s wonderful that it happened at all.

*Love is a real minefield in your novel. Through most of the book it is misdirected, misused, misunderstood, and misguided; people die because of it, are scarred forever by it, and yet in the final pages of this essentially*
tragic story, you end with two very poignant scenes in which love is redemptive - for a little while, at least.

Yeah, because for me, I have to say that my book is not about history but biology and transgression. And, therefore, the fact is that you can never understand the nature of brutality until you see what has been loved being smashed. And so the book deals with both things - it deals with our ability to be brutal as well as our ability to be so deeply intimate and so deeply loving.

Were there any big changes from draft to draft?

There were no drafts. For me language is a skin on my thought and I was thinking of a way of telling it. The only way I can explain how I wrote it was the way an architect designs a building. You know, it wasn’t as if I started at the beginning and ended at the end. I would start somewhere and I’d colour in a bit and then I would deeply stretch back and then stretch forward. It was like designing an intricately balanced structure and when it was finished it was finished. There were no drafts. But that doesn’t mean I just sat and spouted it out. It took a long time.

A lot of erasing?

No, not erasing much - language was never rewritten. I don’t rewrite. It was just a lot of arranging.
You were trained as an architect, and I was wondering if that way of thinking about the world affected the way you approach fiction.

Absolutely. People keep asking me why I don't practise architecture and I think, what do you think this is? This is exactly that. It's really like designing a book for me.

What are you reading now? Do you have any time to read anything now?

I don't actually. One of the most beautiful things about writing is that it really enhances your reading. But after this five years of concentrating on one spot with such intensity, it's as if my concentration is just shattered, and it's a bit like being tortured this long. I find it so hard to concentrate on anything. But I think that it will pass. I hope that it will pass.

Genderization in The God of Small of Things

The language of women is primarily the language of omission, a language of exclusion in a world of the language of man. It is the absence of a specific female generic that contributes to sexism in language. Stepping into the world of The God of Small Things we feel that we have entered into a world of males, peopled by the gender that alone is worth recognizing, where no other has much relevance unless otherwise specified.
Language has always been male-centred and linguistic practices involve referential genderisation that leads to the use of one gender pronoun as universal generics appropriate for signifying both the sexes. The use of masculine pronouns as generics is the most blatant example of such incorrect location. By legitimizing the ambiguity of the masculine pronoun which may mean a male or a female, referential genderization ignores the fact that for every ‘he’ in the language there is a reciprocal ‘she’. In encouraging such usage, grammar becomes patriarchal, and instils the idea that women as individuals, and feminine pronouns as words, are inferior and limited. The following excerpts reveal areas where the male nouns encompass the female which has more separate identity.

Referring to Rahel’s admission into the college of Architecture, Roy writes:

The staff were impressed by the size (enormous), rather than the skill, of her charcoal still-life sketches. The careless, reckless lines were mistaken for artistic confidence, though in truth, their creator was no artist (17).

Rahel stayed in the hostel eating in the subsidized student mess . . . Rarely going to class, working instead as a draughtsman in
gloomy architectural firms … Even her professors were a little wary of her (18).

Rahel drifted into marriage like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge.

On their way to receive Sophie Mol, Baby Kochamma told Estha and Rahel: “Don’t forget that you are Ambassadors of India (139).

Kochu Maria was Baby Kochamma’s midget lieutenant (258).

Sophie Mol lay in her coffin. Her face was pale and wrinkled as a dhobi’s thumb (4).

The loss of Sophie Mol had, "... Chacko and Mammachi (grown soft with sorrow, slumped in their bereavement like a pair of drunks in a toddy bar)" (15).

So too, Ammu returned to Ayemenem "swollen with cortisone and a rattle in her chest that sounded like a faraway man shouting" (15).
The expression on Ammu's face was like "a rogue" piece in a puzzle (72).

Ammu lying dead, Arundhati describes:

A platoon of ants carried a dead cockroach sedately through the door, demonstrating what should be done with corpses. ...

Ammu dead wrapped in a dirty sheet, looked like a Roman Senator (162).

There were Comrade Sumathi, Comrade Lucykutty with Modalalies Chacko and Mammachi who formed interesting characters(273).

Latha, K.N.M. Pillai's niece triumphantly recited her poem'. She was like the East German swimmer at the local competition' (273).

The Kathakali performers are all men. Later they go home to beat their wives. It is the logo of a Kathakali dancer that
advertises the pickles: *Emperors* of the Realm of Taste - Ruchi
lokathinde *Rajavu* (275).

History has its *henchmen*; policemen who loom large over the horizon.

Besides there is the man that *manned* the level-crossing (61); the *leper* at the car window, and the 'bourgeoise' (61) in Ammu.

To top them all is the Chappu *Thampuran*, the Lord of Rubbish who outlives Velutha, the doomed (339).

The 'Bar Now'/The insects and birds and other animals that fill the novel's fabric evoke male images. There are *bats* and homing *birds*, designer *pectoral*, all gliding towards Ayemenem like skydivers making patterns in the sky (188). Pappachi's *moth* always cast its shadow on all and everything.
Also, we see: a whole column of juicy ants on the way to church. Ants dressed in red. The ants made a faint crunchy sound as life left them. Like an elf eating toast", .... Rahel crushed them "Antly Church, Antly Bishop". Sweet cousins playing hide and seek at the well. The ants we presume are all males.

The Antly Church would be empty and the Antly Bishop would wait in his funny Antly Bishop clothes, swinging Frankincense in a silver pot. And nobody would arrive.

After he had waited for a reasonably Antly amount of time, he would get a funny Antly Bishop frown on his forehead, and shake his head sadly. He would look at the glowing Antly stained-glass windows and when he finished looking at them, he would lock the church with an enormous key and make it dark. Then he'd go home to his wife, and (if she wasn't dead) they'd have an Antly Afternoon Gnap (185-86).

A squadron of fruit bats sped across the gloom. They could be found beautiful Ugly Toads with yearning unkissed princes (185), coiling purple earthworms for fishing, darting eels (203), crickets swelling, boat- spider floating and Malayali swimming spiders (204), disbelieving lizards', jewelled dragon flies, high stepping chickens, sudden rhinoceros, white termites on their way to work, white beetles burrowing away, white grasshoppers with
white wood violins, plumb, translucent lizards among old pictures (53). All these are out to inhabit the world of the novel with the male gender.

There is no questioning or reckoning of the female in any case, no acknowledgement of any such existence. It is to be wondered whether they can be any other word to denote the female of these above mentioned species.

In the opening part of her article, "Women and the Literary Curriculum", (Elaine Showalter 855) imaginatively recreates the literary curriculum the average young woman entering college confronts:

An anthology of essays, perhaps such as The Responsible Man, "for the student who wants literature relevant to the world in which he lives", or Conditions of Men or Man in Crisis: Perspective on the Individual and His World, or again, Representative Men: Cult Heroes of Our Time, in which thirty-three men represent such categories of heroism as the writer, the poet, the dramatist, the artist and the guru, and the only two women included are the Actress Elizabeth Taylor and the Existential Heorine Jacqueline Onsassis. . . by the end of her freshman year, a woman student would have learned something
about intellectual neutrality; she would be learning, in fact, how to think like a man (855).

It is interesting to know that stories and myths which are called for in The God of Small Things pertain to male heroes of popular songs and novels or folklore. The twins loved to identify themselves with Christopher Plummer as Captain von Trapp (105); precocious with their reading, Rahel and Estha were familiar with Old Dog Tom, Ronald Ridont Workbooks and Kipling's Jungle Book. They listened to Shere Khan's and Tabaquis' utterances.

'...By the bull that I killed, am I to stand noising into your dog's den for my fair dues? It is I Shere Khan, who speak!'

'And it is I, Raksha [The Demon], who answer,' the twins would shout in high voices. Not together, but almost.

'The man's cub is mine Lungri – mine to me! He shall not be killed. He shall live to run with the Pack and to hunt with the Pack; and in the end, look you, hunter of little naked cubs – frog eater – fish killer – he shall hunt thee!' (59).

Rahel also played Sydney Carton being Charles Darnay. "It is a far, far, better thing I do, than I have ever done"(61), she sighed in the mirror.
Julius Caesar and Brutus (83) too were enacted by the twins and Scarlet Pimpernall was also evoked.

It was Lochinvar who had come gallantly on the scene of recital by Latha. Neil Armstrong and O. Muthachen the Malayalee acrobat, all came into the purview of the twins' world.

And supervising the drama of human lives enmeshed in its surroundings, stood Ayemenem House, aloof-looking "like an old man with rheumy eyes watching children play" (165). The house took special care to hedge in its women by means of its purposeful construction.

The doors had not two, but four shutters of panelled teak so that in the old days, ladies could keep the bottom half closed, lean their elbows on the ledge and bargain with visiting vendors without betraying themselves below the waist. Technically, they could buy carpets, or bangles, with their breasts covered and their bottoms bare. Technically (165).

Each of the works chosen for study presents a version and an enactment of the drama of men's power over women. The final irony, and indignity, is that the woman reader has to dissociate herself from the very experience the literature engenders.
Power is the issue in the politics of literature, as it is in the politics of anything else. To be excluded from a literature that claims to define one’s identity is to experience a peculiar form of powerlessness – not simply the powerlessness which derives from not seeing one’s experience articulated, clarifies, and legitimized in art, but more significantly the powerlessness which results from the endless division of self against self, the consequence of the invocation to identify as male while being reminded that to be male – to be universal, .... – is to be not female. Not only does powerlessness characterize woman’s experience of reading, it also describes the content of what is read (Fetterley 563).

As she told newswomen at the Booker ceremony in London: “This prize is about my past, not about my future. I don’t know if I will ever write another book…”

..................................................

“I’ll write another book if I have a book to write”.

Let us hope and pray she will do so.