

**THE FEMALE MAN: MANIFESTATION OF AMBIGUITIES AND AMBIVALENCE
IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S PROTAGONIST AMMU**

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This article is a modest appeal and an endeavor to foreground the role of mother towards the development of a child in a family in general and society in particular in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. In this novel, Roy has documented many issues that prevail over the society. She even acted as an expounder for the characters in her novel those who became mute due to their familial societal oppressions. Roy explores the importance of a mother in the development of child in this double-standard society. Children are the seed-bed of the future. It is in the hands of mother to make the seeds to grow embryonic in the future and illuminate the family and society by harmonizing relationships.

Ammu is a divorced mother, her responsibilities towards the growth of her children are double. She is in a crucial place to act both as a father and mother. Researches affirm that, "children living with two biological parents are more likely to be involved specifically in literacy activities than children from single-parent homes" (Shao 14). The children in *The God of Small Things*, Estha and Rahel could not get proper education, due to their fragmented family. Ammu as a responsible mother taught her children English, its pronunciation and manners. But she felt hurt when Estha and Rahel played with pronunciation and used callous words on them which affected her children sternly. Patrick F. Fagan in his article 'The effects of Divorce on Children' pointed out that the divorced mothers in order to discipline their children tend to be less affectionate and treat them harsher. Ammu walks this talk. Even though she loved her children; she punished and rebuked her twins' souls overtly. Her anguish was the result of oppression, frailty that she encountered as a divorced mother in the patriarchal and double-standard society. "Roy's tightly controlled depiction of Ammu reveals that she contests the gender and social boundaries characteristics of the position into which she is born and in doing so, exercises her own personal agency" (Firebough 139).

Ammu, a Syrian Christian belongs to Ayemenem; she marries a Hindu Bengali Man in order to gratis herself from the smack of patriarchal norms of her father. She gives birth to zygote twins Estha and Rahel "Two little ones, instead of one big one. Twin seals, slick with their mother's juices" (40). Ammu returns to Ayemenem with her twin souls after her marital discontent. Her homecoming is unwelcomed by all her relatives. Diviani Chaudhur states that "Ammu's desperation to leave the insulated backwaters of Ayemenem only lands her back in Ayemenem House, humiliated and with no hope" (70). Whenever Baby Kochamma gets chance she humiliates Ammu and her twins. With the entry of Velutha into the life of Ammu and her children, things get distorted and in turn ruin her life along with her children's. Ammu yearned for love and affection, at the same time her children also craved for fatherly affection. "The most

tragic and poignant moments in the novel are those that deal with Ammu and her children...” (Prasad 161).

When Ammu delivers her twin children, ‘she was glad to have to them’ (41). Like any other mother she too counts their eyes, ears, mouths, noses, fingers but she failed to notice the single Siamese souls. She loved her children and acted as their Baba and Mother. At the same time she hurts them for their liability and for the children’s ‘...willingness to love people who didn’t really love them’ (43). Ammu is Estha and Rahel’s mentor and defender. She used her vent of anger on her children in order to guard the Siamese soul from the repulsive face of their relatives and society. She was the one who first reprimand her children for their fault and even took their erroneous on their behalf quickly.

Each individual has their own liberty to do things as their wish. When it comes for a mother or a divorcee or a wife, their liberty is restricted to great extent. Ammu as a mother, divorcee preferred her individuality, “she spends hours on the river bank with her little plastic transistor shaped like a tanager line” (44). She enjoyed her privacy. She loved listening to songs, smoking cigarette and swimming during midnight. Whenever she was in such state, her heart aches with ‘unmixable mix’ (44). Her age and tenderness lead her to love the man who was loved by her children, who showers her children with fatherly care and warmth also loved by her. Roy brilliantly crafted that both the mother and children take shelter of love under the shade of Velutha, an untouchable. Here Roy states, “To use by night the boat that her children used by day. The boat that Estha sat on and Rahel Found” (44). “However, it is through the sharing of intermittent intimate moments in Ammu’s life that Roy highlights the antagonism between Ammu’s primary role as a mother and the other ways in which she sees herself” (firebaugh139-40).

AMMU AS A BABA AND MOTHER

For Estha and Rahel their mother Ammu was the most important beautiful woman that they have ever seen and ‘sometimes she isn’t’. As a tender mother Ammu teaches her children manners, how to say ‘excuse me’ and she reads them story books. She also warns her children whenever they affront people with words innocently. Rahel once asked her grandmother Mammachi, whether she could inherit the pipette after Mammachi’s death. Ammu scolds her daughter and warns Rahel that “I never want to hear you discussing people’s death with them again” (50). Whenever Estha and Rahel wound people Ammu insisted that “When you hurt people, they begin to love you less. That’s what careless words do. They make people love you a little less” (112). This statement made Rahel to worry that their Ammu loves her less for her hurting words. Sometimes Ammu’s harsh treatment frightens the twins.

Like any other endearing mother Ammu always comes first to rescue her children and to mend her twin souls from their faults. Sometimes with harsh words and action, during such circumstances Ammu’s expression makes Rahel bewildered. Even after twenty three years Rahel could not comprehend the expression on Ammu’s face. Ammu’s expression is like “... a rogue piece in a puzzle, like a question mark that drifted through the pages of a books and never settled at the end of a sentence”.

As a subjugated and affected woman in the society Ammu always inculcates her children that they cannot trust anyone in their life, she said, “that you can’t trust anybody. Mother, father, brother, husband, best friend. Nobody” (83). It shows Ammu’s failed and oppressed state of mind. She never wants her children to suffer by trusting someone in their life. Sometimes her anger towards the Siamese souls shows her helplessness and dispossession.

Mothers feel content when their child gets appreciation for some reason. Ammu also desired for some kind of appreciation for her children's manners and language because she was acted as their Baba, mother and the mentor for her children. When Estha and Rahel disobeyed her instruction in front of Margaret Kochamma, "She felt somehow humiliated" (145) by her children's revolt. She expected a yielding act from her children but they disobeyed her commands after seeing Sophie Mol who loved by the entire family from the beginning. Baby Kochamma's stressed that it was useless to correct her children, Ammu gets offended and it pricks her. She tells her kids, "everybody says that children need a baba. And I say no. Not my Children. D'you know why?" (149). Siamese souls know that Ammu acts as their Baba and Ammu. They know that their Ammu loved them double. She never wanted her children to disobey her in the public. Because it creates a chance to people like Baby Kochamma to hurt Ammu that she failed in her marital life as well as, as a single parent.

RAMIFICATION OF AMMU'S TRANSGRESSION ON HER TWO SIAMESE SOULS:

Ammu's transgression impinges on the life of Siamese soul to great extent. Murari Prasad states on Ammu's transgression that, "Her affair lead to tragedy, leaving her twins, Rahel and Estha, "doomed waifs", precarious and adrift" (161). Rahel's quest for wholeness continues till she meets Estha after their twenty three years separation. Ammu's sexual transgression with Velutha ruined the life of four 'small things'. The 'Small Things' are Velutha, Estha, Rahel and Ammu herself. Just like Ammu's twin souls she also yearned for a companion, she even enjoyed seeing her daughter playing with Velutha.

When Velutha was treated as an untouchable by Ammu's relatives, he penetrated into the heart of two innocent children and their mother. He enjoyed playing with the Siamese twins and Rahel feels comfortable with him. "Ammu saw on Rahel's face the high delight of the airborne young" (175). Even Ammu is surprised seeing her daughter's ease with Velutha. She perceives in her daughter's eyes that Rahel is in 'sub-world' from the reality. Rahel also never wants Velutha to share this love, affection and ease with any other person, especially with Sophie Mol. Because Sophie Mol is Loved by all from the beginning, whereas Estha and Rahel always encounters humiliation and yearns for affection and they always felt sense of deprivation from their maternal relations.

Ammu was locked in her bed room by her own family for her illicit affair with an untouchable Velutha. Her careless words made her Siamese twins to leave their Ammu alone. Ammu shouted at them as, "Because of you"?... "If it wasn't for you I wouldn't be here! None of this would have happened! I wouldn't be here! I would have been free! I should have dumped you in an orphanage the day you were born? You're the millstones round my neck? (253). Even though Ammu outbursts her angst on her children, later she regrets for her careless and harsh verbose. Though the twins were not aware of Ammu's state of mind, they decide to leave their Ammu desolated without knowing the catastrophe that waits for these 'small things' in the prospect.

As a mother Ammu had some plans for her and for her children's future. Before her death she spent her morning with Rahel in her room. With her meager salary she bought gifts for her twin souls. She wrapped Rahel's gift in brown paper, it contains a tin Phantom pencil and Paul Bunyan – a Junior Classics comic. Actually, 'they were presents for a 7 year old; Rahel was nearly eleven' (159). Ammu said about her future plans to Rahel and after getting a job she would fetch Estha back from Calcutta, then one day they all three live together once she gets a job in the U.N. Through this it is very lucid that a mother's yearning for her children and longs to

live with her Siamese souls and she also felt sorry for separating the two souls from each other. The main reason for sending Estha to his father was she could not afford to raise two children with her a thin salary. Throughout the day Ammu talk incessantly. She questions Rahel but ‘never let her answer them’ (160). Rahel saw a different Ammu which was not familiar for her. “She was swollen with cortisone, moonfaced, not the slender mother Rahel knew....when she smile her dimples looked on though they hurt” (160).

The hopes and wish of Ammu died along with her in a lodge without seeing her lovable Estha. “...no Estha to lie at the back of her and talk to her. She was thirty one. Not old, not young but a viable, die-able age” (161). Both Estha and Rahel became numb after their sudden severance, so Ammu’s death did not bring tears in Rahel’s eyes but her mind filled with some kind of hum which made her uncle Chacko to shout at her if he wanted to say anything on the rest of the day. Ammu as a adored mother of Siamese souls loved and nurtured her children with Kipling story, her good night kiss, combing her twins hair all these were fed by the electric beast in front of her Rahel. “She was their Ammu and their Baba and had loved them double” (163). Now the Siamese souls lost Ammu and Babu and they got separated Estha in Calcutta and Rahel in Ayemenem. Estha becomes mute and Rahel’s eyes are always in the quest for her wholeness.

The role of a mother is indispensable in the progress of a child. The tender care that Ammu gave as a mother and a father guided and corrected her children, whenever they were in need of Ammu’s support. Firebough commented that, “Ammu’s role as primarily that of a mother automatically subordinates Ammu’s other roles, such as those of lover, wife or independent woman. Though the primary aim of Ammu was being mother, but she also pines for an individuality and independent which is spurned by the family and society. So when she felt defeated or ruined she exhibited her helplessness on her twin souls. ‘Anything can happen to anyone’ this is said by Estha, the same thing happened in their life after Sophie Mol’s death, Velutha and Ammu’s lose entirely made Estha taciturn and Rahel without any solidity in the work she involved. She felt fragmentary.

Many authors have discussed and debated on the myriad roles of women. A woman as a mother is a facet in the larger umbrella of womanhood. Ammu’s dejection and dependence on her children can be parallel with Lawrence’s semi-autobiographical novel *The Sons and Lovers*. Both these novels portray a woman’s dependence and independence in her familial upbringing. These mother figures are like Brecht’s monumental play *Mother Courage* who exhibits colossal capability and prove to the world that, Motherhood can neither be destroyed nor defeated.

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