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## Multicultural elements in Arundhati Roy's the god of small things

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### Abstract

This paper intends to shed light on the multicultural themes highlighted by Arundhati Roy in her magnum opus *The God of Small Things*, such as caste, creed, untouchability, women's condition, and Diaspora. In addition to this the paper further explores the issues like racial discrimination, cultural alienation, East-West discord, Identity Crises, Intercommunity/interracial marriage, racial prejudices, cultural dominance etc. All the female characters are described by Roy in an outstanding manner. This paper also highlighted women's condition with regards to the culture. When there is time to come to accept the cultures of society, they show their acceptance. On the contrary, when cultures are against them, they show their rejection. This shows their ability to openness to change.

**Keywords:** Caste, untouchability, diaspora, multiculturalism

### Introduction

In the United States, the term multiculturalism was predominantly associated with the demand of black and other minority populations for equal participation in American society. Multiculturalism prioritises the objective of respecting minority culture in response to cultural intolerance. Velutha was mistreated by Baby Kochamma in this tale since he was from a minority culture and worked in their pickle industry. Arundhati Roy's Velutha, on the other hand, is portrayed as a kind and compassionate member of society. Peaceful coexistence of diverse cultures and subcultures, care for minority cultures, equality of rights, and opportunity are all values associated with multiculturalism.

Arundhati Roy describes the religious, socio-cultural, and political setting in Kerala society in the latter half of the twentieth century in *The God of Small Things*. The Ayemenem home is essential to the story. Senior people of the Ayemenem house are more traditional, having developed viciousness, delusions of grandeur, egotism, and macho chauvinism. Despite the fact that multiculturalism embraces the concepts of freedom, human dignity, fairness, and equality, the so-called upper caste, dominant patriarchal culture openly breaches all of these principles and maintains control over society's power structure. Minority cultures are victimized by marginalization, injustice, dispossession, and discrimination in the novel. The writer portrayed, minorities are victims of marginalisation, injustice, displacement, and intolerance. Ammu's intercommunity love marriage is an outstanding example of how to bring people from different communities together. However, the dominant traditional culture is unable to acknowledge and accept such a fusion. Her odd behavior is one of the manifestations of her increasing rebellious spirit against the patriarchal civilization that rejects and ignores her. Both Ammu and Velutha have attempted to form their own 'subculture' as violators of 'Love Laws,' but the so-called promoters of the prevailing culture do not allow them to do so. Multiculturalism emphasises the values of equality and fairness for all groups and civilizations, yet in the novel, the dominant patriarchal society cruelly violates the principle of multiculturalism. Throughout the story, members of minority cultures are victimised by a variety of factors including poverty, social stratification, tradition, cultural taboos, politics, and bureaucracy. Upper class individuals treat poor minorities as their slaves, making them, culturally socially, intellectually and economically

defenceless under the pretext of caste and cultural superiority. Arundhati Roy has attempted to emphasise the importance of creating a peaceful society in which everyone's rights, and individuality are protected in order to enhance the democratic multiculturalism principle. However, the narrative finishes on a melancholy note, influenced by injustice and inequality.

**Women's Situation:** Through the characters of Baby Kochamma, Ammu, Rahel, Sophie Mol, Mammachi, Margaret Kochamma, Kochu Maria, Beena Mol, and Aleyooty Ammachi, we learn about the predicament of women.

Ammu is compelled to give birth to her twin children, Esta and Rahel, on the bus. Ammu fell in love with Velutha, despite the cultural differences, and she was humiliated by society. The conductor, Thomas Mathew, was sly and greedy by nature. He stared at Ammu's breasts and bullied her for having illegitimate children. Inspector said to Ammu- 'If I were you, he said, 'I'd go home quietly. Then he tapped her breasts with his baton.(Roy 8) He addressed her as Veshya, and we deduced from this that males in society never treat women with respect, regardless of whether we believe in the principle of equality. Ammu was keen to receive an education once her father retired and settled in Ayemenem, but her grandfather, Pappachi, insisted that college education for the daughters was an unnecessary expense and that it was better if they contributed to household labour. Her alcoholic spouse even disregarded her. In such a situation, she took great care of her children (Rahel and Esta). Her children's statement substantiates this. 'Because you're both our Ammu and Baba, and you love us twice as much.'(Roy 149) Even though Hollick, the company's manager, tried to persuade Baba (Ammu's husband) to concentrate on his work, he was sacked for his irresponsible behavior. This demonstrates that there are many individuals willing to assist Ammu in reclaiming her good life, but Ammu's fate is never on her side. Her demise was also so agonizing that she died alone. Chacko's relationship with labour women is easily accepted in society, but Ammu's love for Velutha is criticized. According to them, divorce women have no right to love any man. This act fosters gender discrimination once more. Sophie Mol was the daughter of Chacko and Margaret, who were an English mother and an Indian father. In the very first of the novels, we found there was the funeral of Sophie Mol. Rahel and Esta love Sophi Mol too much. Rahel repented on the Sophi Mol death by saying: Where do old birds go to die? Why don't dead ones fall like stone from the sky? (Roy 16). It was the optimistic view of Rahel, who could feel the presence of Sophi Mol in nature. It was the misfortune of Sophie Mol, who died at an early age without enjoying the sheds of life

Rahel was the most considerate and affectionate of all the family members. She was a naturally generous person. Except for her drunken father Baba's maltreatment of her mother Ammu, she was constantly worried about Ammu and her brother Estha. She adored her cousin, Sophi Mol, without regard for other members of her family. Rahel married Larry Mccaslin, but it was her bad luck that she had to divorce him. She never felt bad about working as a waiter in an Indian restaurant in New York to supplement her income. This demonstrates her ability to deal with a difficult situation without giving up hope. She respected Velutha,

except for his low creed and caste, which showed her humanity.

**Mammachi:** Arundhati Roy's female characters, as we have seen, are both wretched and confident. Mammachi and Pappachi had been married for a long time. It was a man's hegemony. Mamamchi was treated badly by Pappachi, who even beat her with a brass flower vase. She tolerates him because she doesn't want to create clashes in the family. Ammu and her mother are both afflicted by the family's male member's mental and physical deterioration. Mammachi was virtually blind, therefore she had to rely on others all of the time. She trickled down her tears without noticing others, which indicated her strength. Throughout her life, she thought good for the wellbeing of her family. After the retirement of Pappachi from the government service in Delhi, she started making pickles and banana jam commercially to assist her family financially. This exhibits her devotion to her husband. When Mammachi succeeds in business and becomes the centre of attention, on the other hand, it hurts the male ego. Pappachi never missed an opportunity to insult her in front of others.

Baby Kochamma was Rahel and Eshta's aunt. Because Baby Kochamma was the daughter of a priest, she saw everything through religious lenses. She despised the twins because she saw them as hopeless orphans without a father, half-Hindu hybrids who had no regard for Syrian Christians. Father Mulligan was a love failure for her. When Ammu returned to her parents' home, Baby Kochamma said, "Married daughter had no position in her parent's home."(Roy 45). This shows her orthodox viewpoint and gender discrimination.

Margaret Kochamma got married with Chacko, she was the English mother of Sophie Mol. She came to Ayemenem to celebrate Christmas. She was married for the second time to Chacko, as her first husband, Joe, had been killed in a car accident. She had no doubt grieved for her husband's death, but she never indulged herself in such grief but started a new journey of life with Chacko for the sake of her daughter's future. She worked as a waiter at a cafe and also completed a teacher training programme. Her self-sufficiency was what Chacko admired the most. In her whole life, she proved herself to be an ideal wife, a loving mother and a responsible daughter. Arundhati Roy portrayed the character of Margaret Kachamma with great ease and gave message to today's women to become self-dependent.

**Caste Creed Untouchability:** predominantly reflected in Roy's portrayal of the Indian society. Velutha worked at the pickle factory of Mammachi, who was the son of Vellya Paapen, parvan by caste. Everyone seemed to dislike them because of their low caste. They even allowed him to enter the house of Pappachi at the back entrance of the Ayemenem house. They couldn't touch anything in the house. In Hindu and Christian civilizations, caste distinctions can be seen. Parvans were prohibited from walking on public roads, from covering their upper parts, and from carrying umbrellas. When they spoke, they had to cover their mouths with their hands to keep their dirty breath away from the people they were speaking to. To get rid of the plague of untouchability, these Paravans converted to Christianity and joined the Anglican church during the British Raj. Aside from that, they were given some food and money. They felt compelled to leap from the frying pan into

the fire as a result of this experience. They were made to have separate churches, services, and priests. They have given you a special favor to sweep away your footprints without a broom.

Diaspora The Diaspora life style of many characters is referenced in Arundhati Roy's Magnum Opus book, *God of the Small Things*. Chacko fell in love with Margaret Kochamma, she belongs to foreign culture, while she has always been respectful to Indian culture and tradition. She also has an interest in learning more about Indian culture. Sophie Mol, her daughter, was also nurtured in a foreign society, but when she returned to India with her parents, she seamlessly assimilated into Indian culture.

### Conclusion

This research paper examines the position of women and explores the caste, creed, and untouchability and gender discrimination in the backdrop of multiculturalism. All of these are still burning issues in Indian society. In the novel *The God of the Small Things*, these multicultural elements are exposed and highlighted. Roy has connected readers with Indian culture and tradition, both in India and abroad. An attempt has been made to explore the various aspects of multiculturalism that Arundhati Roy discusses in her work and try to offer women justice, to prove the necessity of equality and justice and human dignity.

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