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## **Psychological Traumas Faced by Women Due to Societal Norms and Domestic Violence in "The God of Small Things"**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

This academic article explores potent psychological outcomes of trauma. It delves into emotional suppression and societal constraints in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Ammu, Rahel and Baby Kochamma are the focal points. The study investigates ways in which patriarchal dominance and historical struggles result in emotional turmoil. It deeply engages with the insights of feminist thinkers. Figures such as Elaine Showalter Gayatri Spivak and bell hooks are discussed. This exploration unveils how gender dynamics and caste structures create a disruption.

It shows how remnants of colonialism interrupt and harm female identities. This occurs within realm of postcolonial literature.

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### **Introduction**

*The God of Small Things* a creation of Arundhati Roy from 1997 delves into profound psychological wounds etched in women. The wounds were from the aftermath of colonialism in India. The storyline is set in the rich backdrop of Kerala. It unfolds themes of personal distress. Emotional restraint and gender-based complexities of a patriarchal and caste-bound oppression are also explored.

Characters like Ammu, Rahel and Baby Kochamma have psychological trauma. But their trauma didn't start just from individual misfortunes. It also stemmed from cultural forces. These forces were influential in shaping their lives.

In *The God of Small Things* female experiences resonate. They align with the feminist literary theory. This theory puts focus on gender, trauma and power interplay. Susan Bordo notes fluently, "The female body becomes direct reflection of societal control. Psychological scars find hiding beneath cultural expectations" (Bordo 153).

This is similar to Gayatri Spivak's examination. She explores how postcolonial narratives often position women. These women exist as doubly oppressed—trapped in crosshairs of patriarchal norms and colonial legacies (Spivak 201). This paper looks at the psychological trauma experienced by female characters in Roy's novel. It focuses on themes of emotional repression societal constraints and coping mechanisms.

### ***Ammu's Struggles with Psychological Trauma and Societal Oppression***

In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* Ammu stands as evoking symbol of deep psychological scars. These are inflicted by systemic oppression. Her rushed marriage to Babu a man haunted by alcoholism, propels her into a cycle of domestic violence. It causes emotional turmoil. Irremovable marks are left on her psyche.

Ammu's predicament isn't just personal. It mirrors wider patriarchal forces. These forces suffocate women's freedom in Indian society.

### ***Roy captures Ammu's predicament with haunting precision.***

"She had married him for no reason other than escape. And in return he had given her fear. Fear for herself and for her children. And in the end fear for him too" (Roy 42).

When Ammu returns to her family home, she is a divorced woman. Social stigma and alienation greet her. Her psychological wounds deepen further. Literary critic Elaine Showalter sheds light on something important. She talks about patriarchal societies. These societies often see a woman's wish for independence as moral failure.

>"A woman who deviates from norms of marriage and motherhood is often pathologized. Her psychological distress is often seen a personal failing. It's not seen as systemic oppression" (Showalter 103).

Ultimately Ammu's emotional breakdown is tragic. It is a result of her strife to come to terms with her trauma. Her struggle is with societal expectations that are imposed upon her.

### ***Rahel's Heartache and Emotional Isolation***

From young age Rahel bears a heavy weight. She is the daughter of Ammu. The family history carries trauma. Her emotional struggle is deeply rooted. It comes from the anxiety of separation. Also from the unresolved sorrow due to twin brother Estha's absence. The loss of their cousin Sophie Mol is also responsible. The profound connection between twins is often interrupted. This represents self disruption and emotional disconnection.

***Roy vividly illustrates Rahel's solitude. It is shown through strong imagery.***

> "She carried her fear inside her. It was a small clenched fist in her stomach" (Roy 145).

Rahel's detachment from reality is in alignment with Judith Herman's insights. They concern trauma. It proposes that those who endure childhood trauma develop emotional disconnection. This often happens as a protective response to overwhelming experiences (Herman 92).

Rahel's emotional detachment is intensified by neglect from her mother. Ammu's own psychological battles hinder her ability to form nurturing maternal relationship.

### ***Baby Kochamma's Longing and Yearning for Control***

Baby Kochamma's turmoil is different from Ammu's and Rahel's. It grows from Baby's own unfulfilled desires and emotional suppression. Her admiration for Father Mulligan becomes key. It shapes her psychological decline. It evolves into harsh bitterness. It transforms into obsessive need for power.

***Roy speaks eloquently of her repression:***

"She had bottled up her feelings for so long. They soured, turned bitter. They were like old pickles. Pickles left too long in jars."

Her controlling tendencies align with bell hooks' observations. bell hooks talk about suppression of emotions. Emotions suppressed in patriarchal society. bell hooks state:

"When women don't get emotional fulfillment power becomes a way of compensating. It's a coping mechanism. This can lead to cycles of emotional harm." (hooks 67)

Baby Kochamma works to control her family. She particularly singles out Ammu and the twins. This control is a sign of her mental upheaval. It points to the impact of unresolved trauma. This is a reminder of how trauma can result in harmful behaviours. Even destructive behaviours.

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## **The Influence of Cultural and Societal Norms on the Female Mind**

In Roy's narrative Ammu's struggles grow beyond personal trauma. They intertwine with societal expectations. These include caste gender and social propriety. A key example of this is Ammu's forbidden relationship with Velutha. He is a lower-caste man. This relationship brings to light how Ammu's personal agony is deeply intertwined with societal censure.

Roy performs a thought critique of societal "Love Laws".

"They were the laws that decided who should be loved and how. Laws also decided how intensely" (Roy 33).

Cast discrimination's weight augments Ammu's emotional pain. She is faced with penalty for breaking social norms. In addition she has to face the harsh reality of emotional abuse. This is a reality not many are willing to face.

Gayatri Spivak explores marginal voices. She points out women can often be "doubly silenced". Their voices are often mediated. They are distorted. Sometimes they are even entirely erased. This happens due to dominant structures of power. The subaltern woman exists in this space where this can happen. It's a place where her voice is not always her own.

This idea flows into the text. It reveals the psychological disintegration of Ammu and Rahel. The pressures of surrounding culture bears down on them. This pressure forms their personal sorrow. It's unrelenting. It's suffocating.

***\*\*Navigating Emotional Turmoil and Weight of Silence\*\****

God of Small Things explores complex spaces. Women navigate their inner hardships in unique ways. Silence and detachment are their tools. They employ subtle acts of resistance for dealing with issues.

For example Estha opts for complete silence after enduring troubling episodes. Distancing himself from everything. Meanwhile Rahel delves into the purity of her childhood. She finds solace in her childhood memories.

Roy's insights echo Bessel van der Kolk's trauma research. It implies something. Survivors of trauma often hide their memories. It's a method of self-preservation. This leads to a feeling of emotional numbness. Or disconnection. The citation is from van der Kolk 183.

Ammu's rebellious acts, small in nature such as her attachment to Velutha. They can be seen as an effort to reclaim her personal identity. Yet harsh judgments society places on her starkly highlight the limits on her freedom.

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## Conclusion

In final analysis Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. It delves deeply into the psychological scars left by trauma and emotional suppression. Also, societal constraints on women. The pain of Ammu and emotional detachment of Rahel. The bitterness of Baby Kochamma. These all together depict an intense picture. How patriarchal systems shape female identities.

Combining feminist theory and trauma psychology Arundhati Roy does this. It sheds light not only on individual pain. But also critiques the societal frameworks. These frameworks sustain this kind of suffering.

Emotional struggles of women in *The God of Small Things*. These are a heart-rending reflection. Reflection on gender-based violence. The necessity for empathy is highlighted. Narrative justice is also portrayed. These are needed to fully understand complexities of women's lived experiences.

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