

Gay intuition and the Victims' Psyche in *The God of Small Things*

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Abstract: Gender and sex had been often debated in the society based on its relation with one another. In the contemporary context, there is possibility to replace physique according to one's desire and one can determine one's gender. Monogamy and polygamy are practices preached in daylight with rights. This is the age to think beyond genders and sexual differences were perception matters a lot in the society. It is to such a society that Arundathi Roy had hurled the monozygotic twins. Unaware whether to live in their unique yoke stage or to explode outside with their own impressions of the world and to live with a free mind or thought, the twins wander to their own destinies through the traumatic life triggered in them by the society. This study would focus on specific queer theories and also on relevant psychoanalytical resources.

Keywords: Gay, Psyche, Victim, Sex, Sexuality

Sexuality is a conditioning of an individual's body and psyche in order to maintain the performative roles in one's society. It is purely personal and depends on the functioning of the libido within. Sexuality depends largely on an individual's hormonal balances that have more relation with the psyche of an individual. Repressed desires attain wish fulfillment when the libido works. The working of the libido in the social apparatus needs to correspond with the super-ego in order to attain a moral-social balance. The pleasure principle work positively and brings in positive responses in one's attitude towards life, but when it works the opposite way, it brings traumatic situations to the individual as well as to the society. *The God of Small Things* (1997) presents a similar situation where the twin Estha becomes the victim of the gay instincts of the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man. Gay instincts and the psyche of the victim of the gay desires would be the major concern of this paper. The paper would also focus on reviews from medical resources that would help to understand the gay psyche and the differed behaviour and castrated nature of the victims of sexual harassment, much less is explored on this area of inquiry. "We can't ignore the ways in which gender and sexuality are both distinct and yet impossibly fused, whether we identify as lesbian, heterosexual or somewhere in between need not have anything to do with where we place ourselves on the scale of masculinity and femininity." (Sukthankar: 1999, xxix-x) Though this comment lays emphasis on the asexual nature of gender, gender of an individual is conceived in the wombs of the society and it has a significant role in providing a sexed identity to the individual. A clear differentiation could not be hence made on whether an individual is homosexual or heterosexual as sexuality is

more associated with the psyche of the individual and the functions of various sexual hormones in one's body. Individual sexuality is often considered as 'normal' when it is heterosexual and suiting the norms that are set by the society. Sexuality of an individual is often ignored or not given much significance until it is a cause of thought or threat to society. Heterosexuality is promoted in the society as it would sustain generations of a particular clan especially in the Indian context. But promotion homosexuality in the cultural canon is yet to be thought of. As Giti mentions "A similar logic of implicit and explicit tutelage governs the legal and cultural status of homosexuality in India. The unspoken discourse of rendering invisible results in the creation of categories of sexual behaviour and sexual identity, this intersects with the myth of tolerance where homosexual behaviour between women can be ignored if it is not seen or articulated in any form. In other words, it cannot be validated as an autonomous identity or enter into indigenous historical or cultural canons. (Giti: 1999, 150) Homosexuality is often ignored or not thought off as a serious issue. It is the suppressed function of the libido that had often remained as an untold harmless other aspect of sex, but when this becomes a bane it needs to be addressed with the aid of various literary resources.

Arundathi Roy mentions of her experience in writing *The God of Small Things*: "It is the experience of thirty seven years of her life, her own fears with which anyone could agree or disagree with. She adds: "for me the book is not about what happened, but about how what happened affected people." (Wilbur: 1997, 46) The novel, from its conception generated heteroglossic responses to issues that were present in the life of various characters. It focussed on many contemporary problems in South India with minute precision. "Roy funnels the history of South India through the eyes of seven-year-old twins." (Jayadip Singh: 1999, 2) The mastery of the novelist in presenting the life of individuals varying in ages and viewpoints shows her exceptional brilliance in crafting the novel. "Roy triumphed because, unlike the others, she had the guts and the overwhelming talent to invent a new idiom and vocabulary to tell the story of a seemingly remote people. Mamachi, Susie Mol, Estha, Rahel, Ammu and Velutha will stay with us, popping up once in a while to remind us of some eternal truth." (Jayadip Singh: 1999, 3) The characters in the novel could be seen as moving from the margins to the periphery and vice versa so as to bring in a synchronized story telling. Arundathi's artistry is evident with the various, metaphors that she apply in presenting the major issues. In Roy's words:

writing is a very instinctive thing for me. I find as i write i get worse and worse..."she is "trying to make the connections between the very smallest of things and the very biggest of things. (Jayadip Singh: 1999, 4)

While focussing on the sexual urges and traumatic incidents in the novel, it could be evidently seen that Arundathi is fictionalizing various incidents as she had heard or experienced from the traditional South Indian society. Mary Roy observes: "one of my favourite characters in the book is the cigar-smoking, gay planter. He reminds me of our cigar-

smoking grand uncle—a chemistry Professor, a lover of boys by nature. His wife lived with him and so did a series of young boys... i remember hearing that one day a young lover of his was thrown out of the house. The old man was devastated. We heard he left home and headed for a hotel where he committed suicide—cyanide poisoning. The next year on the same hotel his lover was found dead—cyanide again. Tongues wagged in Aymenem, but no one dared to whisper the word “homosexual.” There is a legend about our grand uncle. That he haunted the family estates, his presence forewarned by the scent of cigar smoke. In fact, many claim to have seen him. Eventually, so one hears, a Paravan's (outcaste) wife Parathi, while cutting grass with her sickle, smelled cigar smoke and she shivered. Sure enough the Thampuran (master) appeared. She nailed him to a coconut palm with her sickle. Parathi claims that he never appeared again. But others say the ghost still walks the house. (Jayadip Singh: 1999, 6)

Traditional South Indian societies promoted heterosexual relations, and identifying an individual as 'gay' was rarer. Homosexuality was never given any position in the Indian socio-political scenario. Even then, there were situations as Mary Roy had described. Homosexuality was not evidently proclaimed in the traditional Indian context. Though there were occasions when such urges overpowered the adult world. Homosexuals, in the contemporary society voice their needs and try to provide an identity for themselves in the heterosexual world. Lot of criticism and debates occur on the rights of homosexuals and the space that they acquire in the heterosexual society. But, less has been focussed on the victims of such homosexual behaviours. Arundathi's novel remains unique mainly for this reason that she is presenting the world of homosexuality and heterosexuality at the same go. Velutha and Estha's mother share heterosexual relations that are confined within the caste and religious barrier whereas Estha has a traumatic homosexual experience with The Orangedrink Lemon drink man. In both these relations, the silent participation of the twins and their family members occur. Roy “funnels the history of South India through the eyes of seven-year-old twins.” (Jayadip Singh: 1999, 8)

The result of such traumatic experiences in the twins create mental as well as physical disorders. The “Emptiness in one twin quietness of other” (Arundathi Roy: 20) brings the readers a glimpse of the cocoon like stage to which the twins gradually fall after the experience that Estha had in the theatre. Non-reproductive sexuality is considered as a 'disorder' in the otherwise reproductive heterosexual world. Though there are a wide range of sexual identities that an individual acquires in the world, the identity that he/she acquired is in relation to the nature of sexuality and sexual relation that they undergo. The problems of non-reproductive sexuality is further analysed by Giti when it is explained that:

Gender crossover is not enough to establish male hood. Non-reproductive sexuality is enough to constitute abnormality. Tarulata can never be a 'normal' man and hence is considered to be incapable of 'normal' (procreative) sex, the only legitimate, sanctioned and approved kind. (Giti: 1999, 151)

Though, debates still prevail in the society regarding sanctioned or approved sex, it could be considered as a 'natural' urge in an individual that needs to be fulfilled. But, if it is fulfilled without the consent of the partner, then the 'naturalness' of sex becomes a threat to the society. Estha was a victim of such a sexual urge that the Orangedrink Lemondrink man had. The presentation of this refreshment seller itself hints that such sexual threats could occur even in public domains where individuals of all age seek leisure. The victimization that Estha faced is further reflected through the twin Rahel. Rahel is the double or alter ego of Estha, the monozygotic twin. The divided self of the twins provide a holistic picture of the traumatic situation. Rahel presents the explicit fragmentation of Estha's self which is a process of doubling. Doubling as an act of dividing oneself or meeting oneself. He classifies doubling into several categories.

Doubling may be implicit or explicit; multiple or dual; and by multiplication or division. Implicit fragmentation concerns the fragmentation of a single character, whereas explicit fragmentation concerns the distribution of selfhood. (Bharathi: 1999, 52)

Rahel and Estha are the duality of the same emotional experience. They present monozygotic image of a gendered experience. They are the animus and anima in any individual experience. Jung applies the term based on its application in various personalities:

Animus refers to a woman's image of a man and anima, a man's image of a woman. Both these are personifications of parts of personality opposed to the conscious ego. The anima has an erotic, emotional character and the animus has a rationalizing character. (CollectedWorks: 7)

The character of Estha after his sexual experience at the theatre, made some drastic changes in his nature. Childhood sexual abuse has made him to enter into a world of seclusion and silence. The animus and the anima together functioned in Estha from the peripheral level when he started to behave in a more feminine manner. Gay intuitions hence could prove traumatic. It could affect the psyche of the victimised and hence the free and forceful flow of one's desires could end up in the physical and mental castration of the other.

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