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A Trauma-Theoretical and Postcolonial Research of Memory, Violence and Identity in *the God of Small Things*

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ABSTRACT

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy is one of the most powerful and influential ways contemporary Indian English fiction talks about trauma. This paper examines how personal pain, family life and postcolonial history all tangle together inside the novel using trauma studies, psychoanalysis, feminism and postcolonial criticism. The research argues that trauma in the novel functions not merely as an individual psychological condition but as a historically produced and socially transmitted phenomenon emerging from caste oppression, patriarchy, colonial legacy, and institutional violence.

Through the fractured consciousness of Estha and Rahel, the gendered suffering of Ammu, and the caste-based victimization of Velutha, Roy shows how private emotional wounds are never separate from larger structures of power. The paper further analyzes the Ipe family as a traumatic domestic space where repression, silence, violence, and inherited emotional dysfunction circulate across generations. Simultaneously, the novel exposes the persistence of colonial ideology in postcolonial India through mimicry, Anglophilia, caste hierarchy, and institutional brutality.

By using nonlinear narration, fragmented chronology, child-like awareness, and linguistic play, Roy actually re-enacts traumatic memory right inside the narrative structure itself. Taking support from Cathy Caruth, Judith Herman, Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, Sigmund Freud and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, this paper argues that Roy turns trauma into both an aesthetic method and a political critique. The research concludes that The God of Small Things presents trauma as cyclical, collective, historical and stubbornly rooted in postcolonial identity making.

Keywords: Trauma, Postcolonialism, Caste, Memory, Patriarchy, Family, Violence, Arundhati Roy, Identity, Postcolonial Trauma

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of trauma studies as a major interdisciplinary field has transformed literary criticism by enabling scholars to analyze the psychological, cultural, and political effects of violence, oppression, and historical suffering. Trauma theory has become especially important when people study postcolonial literature because colonialism didn't just end with independence, it left these enduring psychological and social wounds, that continue shaping identity and cultural memory. In that critical space, The God of Small Things holds a very central place in contemporary Indian English literature, mainly because it keeps digging into trauma at personal, family and postcolonial levels.

Published in 1997, the novel won the Booker Prize and it made Arundhati Roy, internationally as a serious literary voice. The story is mostly set in Ayemenem, Kerala, and it follows the fraternal twins Estha and Rahel, along with the disastrous events around their childhood. The novel addresses themes such as caste discrimination, patriarchy, domestic violence, colonial mentality, political corruption, emotional repression, and social exclusion. Yet, under all these obvious concerns, there is this deeper focus, on trauma as a condition that steers memory, identity, relationships and historical awareness.

The main claim of this paper is that trauma in The God of Small Things is multidimensional and linked. Roy does not treat trauma as just isolated psychological misery. Instead, she shows it like a structural outcome made through caste hierarchy, patriarchal ideology, colonial inheritance and institutional violence. Personal trauma, familial

trauma and postcolonial trauma keep overlapping, so it becomes impossible to separate emotional suffering from social realities and historical conditions.

At the centre of the narrative lies a chain of traumatic incidents, Estha's sexual abuse, Sophie Mol's death, Ammu's social ostracization, Velutha's custodial murder and then the emotional fragmentation of the twins. The novel argues that trauma is personal and also collective, psychological and at the same time political.

Roy also gives the story a fragmented chronology with a nonlinear narrative shape that feels like traumatic consciousness. She refuses conventional linear storytelling because traumatic memory doesn't move in a tidy line. Instead, earlier moments keep crashing back into the "now" through fragments, repeat patterns, sensory triggers and sudden emotional ruptures. The narration is not only about trauma, it also does the same unstable, compulsive recurrence that trauma brings along.

The famous phrase, "the Love Laws," which basically holds the main ideological switch behind the trauma inside the novel. These laws decide "who should be loved, and how. And how much." Once Ammu and Velutha cross those rules, catastrophic violence follows, Their bond becomes unbearable because it threatens the overlapping structures of caste, gender and social respectability.

This paper argues that Roy's depiction of trauma works across three connected levels:

- **Personal trauma**, lived psychologically by individuals like Estha, Rahel, Ammu, and Velutha.
- **Familial trauma**, passed on through domestic abuse, repression, emotional neglect, and generational conflict.
- **Postcolonial trauma**, produced by the colonial legacy, caste hierarchy, institutional brutality and cultural alienation. Silence, repression, and memory as political mechanisms.

By mixing trauma theory with postcolonial thinking, this paper shows that Roy's novel keep exposing the ongoing violence inside postcolonial Indian society, while also bringing back those kinds of locked away emotional histories.

This research uses trauma theory and postcolonial criticism as the main theoretical angles. Trauma theorists like Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman argue that experiences so overwhelming can mess up memory, language and identity. Postcolonial voices including Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak help explain the psychological and ideological aftershocks of colonialism, caste oppression and subaltern marginalisation.

The research also highlights the formal aspect of how trauma gets represented. Roy's nonlinear storytelling, disrupted timeline, linguistic experimentation and focus on the child do more than decorate the novel. The novel doesn't only talk about trauma, it also builds traumatic consciousness into the narrative technique itself. Like the structure is the argument.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical scholarship on The God of Small Things has expanded since its first publication. Scholars keep turning back to the novel from all angles, like feminist criticism, postcolonial studies, narratology, eco-criticism, Marxism, psychoanalysis and subaltern theory. Trauma theory has emerged as one of the more productive approaches for understanding the novel's thematic and structural intricacy.

Early feminist critics mostly zeroed in on Ammu's marginalization inside a patriarchal world. They said the novel lays bare gender inequality through the limitations placed on female sexuality and personal agency. Ammu's tragic end became proof of patriarchal violence working at once through the family unit and wider society.

Postcolonial critics focused on colonial aftermath, cultural hybridity and mimicry. They pointed to how the household admires English culture, their obsession with Western manners and how Sophie Mol's British identity carries symbolic weight.

Meanwhile, subaltern studies scholars concentrated on Velutha's situation as an "Untouchable." Relying on Spivak's idea of the subaltern, these critics argued that Velutha's voice, and even his basic humanity, get systematically pushed out by caste hierarchy and the grip of institutional power.

Studies on Estha and Rahel often talk about childhood trauma and psychic fragmentation. Estha's silence is usually read as a kind of post traumatic withdrawal after sexual abuse and a coerced feeling of complicity in Velutha's death. Rahel, her emotional instability and the way relationships keep falling apart, gets discussed in similar terms as the result of unresolved childhood trauma.

A number of scholars also shift the focus toward intergenerational trauma inside the Ipe family. Pappachi's domestic violence, Mammachi's emotional repression and Baby Kochamma's bitterness all build a home atmosphere that runs on fear, resentment and emotional neglect. In other words, trauma feels hereditary because oppressive behaviour keeps being repeated, passed along, reproduced across generations.

Narrative studies meanwhile look at Roy's experimental style, stressing how nonlinear narration and child consciousness end up recreating traumatic perception. The novels repetitive and fragmented structure, reflects the compulsive return of traumatic memory.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Trauma Theory

Trauma theory emerged prominently within literary and cultural studies during the late twentieth century. Influenced by psychoanalysis, Holocaust studies, and feminist theory, trauma studies examines how overwhelming experiences disrupt memory, identity, and representation.

Cathy Caruth defines trauma as an experience that cannot be fully comprehended at the moment of occurrence. Because trauma exceeds ordinary understanding, it returns belatedly through repetition, flashbacks, dreams, and fragmented memory. Trauma therefore produces temporal disruption; survivors remain psychologically trapped within unresolved experiences.

Judith Herman similarly emphasizes that trauma destroys the victim's sense of safety and coherence. According to Herman, traumatic experiences often result in emotional numbness, dissociation, silence, and relational instability. These characteristics are clearly visible in Estha and Rahel's adult lives.

Sigmund Freud's concept of repetition compulsion also informs trauma studies. Freud argues that trauma repeatedly returns because the mind compulsively revisits unresolved pain in an attempt to master it. Roy's repetitive narrative structure reflects this psychological process.

Trauma theory is especially useful for analyzing Roy's nonlinear narration. The novel's fragmented chronology mirrors traumatic consciousness, where memories emerge unpredictably rather than sequentially.

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial criticism studies the cultural, political and psychological effects of colonial control. Even though India achieved independence in 1947, Roy's novel still shows how colonial ideology keeps shaping identity and social relationships.

Frantz Fanon argues that colonialism generates psychological inferiority and cultural alienation. Colonized subjects internalize Western superiority, leading to self-division and mimicry. In Roy's novel, the Ipe family's admiration for Englishness reflects this colonial mentality.

Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry explains how colonial subjects imitate colonial culture while remaining excluded from genuine equality. The family's obsession with English manners and language illustrates this ambivalent cultural condition.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of the subaltern is equally significant. Spivak argues that marginalized groups are often denied meaningful representation within dominant discourse. Velutha embodies this condition because caste hierarchy systematically suppresses his voice and humanity.

By integrating trauma theory with postcolonial criticism, this paper examines how psychological suffering in the novel emerges from historical and ideological structures.

4. PERSONAL TRAUMA, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAGMENTATION

Estha and Traumatic Silence

Estha embodies the devastating effects of childhood trauma. His molestation by the "Orange drink Lemon drink Man" initiates profound psychological fragmentation. Roy represents the event indirectly, emphasizing confusion, fear, and sensory memory rather than explicit detail.

The incident destroys Estha's sense of security and innocence. Roy portrays the trauma indirectly through fragmented sensory details and emotional atmosphere rather than explicit description. This indirect representation reflects trauma's resistance to language.

Estha's silence later becomes his primary mode of existence. Trauma theorists argue that victims often struggle to articulate painful experiences because trauma overwhelms linguistic representation. Estha's muteness therefore signifies not absence but psychological overload.

The trauma intensifies after Sophie Mol's death when Estha is coerced into falsely identifying Velutha. His participation in the accusation creates unbearable guilt and self-loathing. The police exploit his vulnerability, transforming a traumatized child into an instrument of institutional violence.

As an adult, Estha lives mechanically, disconnected from ordinary emotional interaction. His repetitive routines symbolize dissociation and emotional numbness. Roy suggests that trauma freezes psychological development, trapping survivors within unresolved past experiences.

Rahel and Emotional Alienation

While Estha internalizes trauma through silence and withdrawal, Rahel lives it out through alienation and emotional dislocation. Her life after childhood feels shaped by instability, failed closeness and existential rootlessness. Roy portrays Rahel as emotionally broken up, unable to settle into steady attachments because her childhood injury never really gets resolved.

Rahel's failed marriage to Larry McCaslin shows her inability to participate in typical emotional patterns. Larry claims she is emotionally absent and makes it sound as if Rahel stays psychologically unreachable. Trauma theorists often say survivors struggle with intimacy, not just socially but internally too because traumatic memory scrambles trust and emotional continuity. Rahel's emotional distance reflects that condition.

Unlike Estha, whose trauma comes out through muteness, Rahel's pain shows up as detachment and an ongoing restlessness. She drifts, geographically and emotionally, unable to create belonging anywhere either inside the family or out in society. Roy keeps circling back to emptiness and absence inside Rahel's adult mind. The past keeps barging into the present, so psychological closure never quite lands.

The twins' separation after the catastrophe makes everything worse, it sharpens their emotional fragmentation. Estha is "Returned" to Calcutta, while Rahel stays in Ayemenem. That split symbolizes the collapse of their shared childhood identity. Because trauma can, isolate survivors from others, the twins end up emotionally stranded, even though they are deeply bound in mind.

When Rahel returns to Ayemenem years later, memory comes back through sensory triggers smells, sounds, landscapes and objects. In the novel trauma works through involuntary remembering rather than careful recollection. Coming back to the childhood space reactivates supressed experiences.

The controversial ending of the novel, where the twins look for physical closeness, has caused a lot of debate. Instead of reading that whole scene just by using moral labels, many critics treat it more like a kind of traumatic attachment. Their closeness comes out of loneliness grief and what feels like psychological fragmentation. Roy does not frame the moment like erotic satisfaction so much as a frantic effort to piece back an emotional wholeness.

Rahel's trauma shows up as emotional misdirection, intimacies that fail and that constant existential emptiness. Like Estha, she stays locked inside the unresolved violence of childhood, even when time keeps going.

Ammu and Gendered Trauma

Among the novel's most tragic figures, Ammu carries that intersection of patriarchy caste pressure and deep emotional pain. Her trauma doesn't only come from private relationships, it also comes from larger structures that strip women of autonomy, dignity and sexual control.

From childhood, Ammu experiences gender discrimination within the Ipe family. Unlike Chacko, she is denied educational opportunity because investment in daughters is considered unnecessary. Patriarchal ideology defines women as temporary members of the household whose futures depend upon marriage rather than self-development.

Ammu's marriage becomes a site of trauma too. She tries to escape her oppressive house by marrying a Bengali man who turns out to be abusive and alcoholic. The marriage exposes the vulnerability of women within patriarchal systems where economic dependence limits freedom.

The most traumatic moment comes when Ammu's husband tries to offer her sexually to his English employer for professional favour. In that scene you can really see how colonial authority and patriarchal control overlap and how her body gets treated like a commodity instead of a person. Ammu's refusal then makes everything worse; more violence follows and later divorce.

However, divorce does not liberate Ammu. Instead, she returns to Ayemenem where she occupies an ambiguous and humiliating social position. As a divorced woman, she becomes morally suspect within conservative society. The family treats her as a burden rather than an autonomous individual.

Roy shows Ammu's longing for love and emotional comfort as something the patriarchal world simply can't accept. Her connection with Velutha is both a kind of resistance and also a direct risk because it exposes her. With Velutha she feels tenderness and equality that she doesn't get in her earlier relationships.

Yet, society reacts with violence because the relationship breaks more than one rule, not only caste order but also the patriarchal grip on female sexuality. Ammu is pushed out, gets insulted repeatedly and even in the end her dignity is not granted. The church even refuses to bury her properly, saying she is morally impure.

Roy also critiques the hypocrisy of patriarchal morality through Chacko. Although Chacko exploits female labourers sexually, his behaviour is tolerated because he is male. Ammu, by contrast, is destroyed for pursuing emotional and sexual freedom. This double standard reveals how patriarchal systems regulate women while protecting male privilege.

Ammu's tragic death in a cheap hotel room symbolizes the ultimate social abandonment of women who challenge dominant norms. She dies isolated, rejected by both family and society. Her trauma therefore extends beyond personal suffering to represent the structural violence inflicted upon women in patriarchal postcolonial society.

5. FAMILIAL TRAUMA AND INTERGENERATIONAL VIOLENCE

The Ipe family functions as one of the novel's primary sites of trauma production and transmission. Roy portrays the family not as a secure emotional refuge but as a hierarchical institution governed by repression, authoritarianism, resentment, and silence.

Domestic violence within the family mirrors broader systems of social domination. The household becomes a microcosm of postcolonial society where power operates through fear, emotional manipulation, and exclusion.

Pappachi, the family patriarch, exemplifies authoritarian masculinity. His frustrated ambitions and wounded ego transform into domestic brutality directed toward Mammachi and the children. Roy suggests that patriarchal violence often emerges from insecurity and resentment rather than strength.

Pappachi's abuse creates a culture of fear within the household. Mammachi internalizes this violence and later reproduces oppressive behavior herself. Trauma therefore circulates intergenerationally through learned patterns of domination and submission.

The family's inability to communicate openly intensifies emotional fragmentation. Important experiences remain unspoken, producing psychological isolation. Trauma thrives within silence because unresolved pain cannot be processed collectively.

The twins grow up within an atmosphere of emotional instability where affection coexists with cruelty. Consequently, they develop fractured emotional identities shaped by uncertainty and fear.

6. POSTCOLONIAL TRAUMA AND HISTORICAL VIOLENCE

Colonialism and Psychological Alienation

Although the events of the novel occur decades after Indian independence, colonialism remains a pervasive psychological and cultural presence throughout the narrative. Roy demonstrates that political independence does not erase colonial mentality or its emotional consequences.

The Ipe family's admiration for English culture makes this pretty clear. Their respect for English language, Western education, trips to "abroad" and even British manners is tied to ideas of refinement and social prestige. This admiration reflects what Frantz Fanon describes as colonial alienation—the psychological condition in which colonized subjects internalize the superiority of the colonizer.

Sophie Mol's arrival from England intensifies these dynamics. Despite being only a child, she receives extraordinary attention because of her British identity. Family members idealize her while subtly marginalizing Estha and Rahel. This unequal treatment exposes the lingering prestige attached to whiteness and Englishness within postcolonial consciousness.

Roy critiques this colonial mindset using irony and exaggeration. The family's performative Anglophilia often feels staged and absurd, revealing insecurity beneath imitation. Their obsession with English pronunciation etiquette and cultural symbols works like a form of psychological dependence upon colonial standards.

Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry is particularly relevant here. Colonial subjects imitate colonial culture but remain excluded from genuine equality. The result is ambivalence and self-division. The Ipe family occupies precisely this unstable cultural position: simultaneously proud of Indian identity and anxious for Western approval.

The novel's multilingual style also challenges colonial linguistic hierarchy. Roy blends English with Malayalam rhythms, repetitions, and wordplay, disrupting conventional literary English. This stylistic experimentation resists colonial linguistic authority and reclaims narrative space for local consciousness.

Postcolonial trauma in the novel works more psychologically. It shows up through cultural alienation, mimicry and internalised inferiority.

7. NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND THE REPRESENTATION OF TRAUMA

One of Roy's most remarkable achievements is how she manages to represent trauma, not only through content but through narrative structure itself. The novel has a fragmented chronology, nonlinear temporality, repetitive imagery and linguistic experimentation. All of that reproduces the psychological logic of traumatic memory, even when it's difficult or messy to track.

Trauma disrupts ordinary temporal experience. Survivors often relive painful events through intrusive memories, sensory triggers and bodily recall chronological recollection. Roy mirrors this by refusing a straight-line narrative and it's not just stylistic, it feels structural.

The novel constantly shifts between 1969 and 1993, which creates temporal disorientation. Important events are revealed gradually through repetition and fragmentation. Readers meet consequences before causes and that reversal mirrors the delayed understanding that's characteristic of trauma.

The narrative keeps circling back to these big traumatic moments Sophie Mol's death, Velutha's murder, Estha's abuse—without immediately presenting them fully. This narrative withholding reflects trauma's resistance to direct representation.

Roy's prose style further contributes to traumatic aesthetics. Repetitions, fragmented syntax, sensory imagery, and disrupted grammar imitate child consciousness and psychological instability. Language itself becomes fractured under the pressure of traumatic experience.

The use of child perspective is especially significant. Estha and Rahel perceive events partially and indirectly, often misunderstanding adult behaviour while intuitively sensing emotional tension. This fragmented perception reproduces the confusion and incomprehensibility characteristic of childhood trauma.

8. SILENCE, MEMORY AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

Memory in The God of Small Things doesn't act like steady recollection. It works like a fragmented recurrence. The past keeps intruding into the present, showing how trauma won't stay neatly inside historical time. Roy's structure lines up with what trauma theorists often describe as the compulsive return of what was never resolved.

The adult lives of Estha and Rahel are dominated by memories they cannot fully articulate. Their psychological development remains suspended because the traumatic events surrounding Sophie Mol's death and Velutha's murder were never properly processed. Instead of fading over time, these experiences intensify through repression and silence.

Roy repeatedly uses sensory details to trigger memory. Smells, textures, sounds and landscapes seem to act like triggers; they reawaken experiences. Ayemenem—itself turns into a haunted geographical space, where memory persists materially. The river, the History House, the pickle factory and the monsoon scene, all work like storage rooms for emotional history.

This relationship between place and trauma is significant because it demonstrates that memory is not purely internal. Trauma inhabits environments, objects, and bodily sensations. The twins' return to Ayemenem years later initiates the resurgence of suppressed experiences precisely because space itself contains historical residue.

Repetition also structures the novel stylistically. Certain phrases, images, and scenes recur throughout the narrative, creating rhythmic patterns resembling obsessive remembrance. Roy often repeats words with slight variations, suggesting the instability of traumatic memory.

For example, "Things can change in a day" gains emotional intensity by being used again and again. At first it sounds plain, but gradually it collects tragic meaning, because the readers start to see the catastrophic outcomes hidden inside seemingly ordinary moments.

Trauma theorists often argue that repetition comes from the mind's failed attempt to control what is unbearable. Roy's narrative repetitions represent both psychological compulsion and emotional shutdown. The characters don't seem to be able to walk past trauma because they remain trapped within cycles of remembrance.

At the same time, memory in the novel is politically important. Roy uses personal recollection to recover suppressed histories that official talk keeps excluding. Velutha's suffering, Ammu's humiliation and the twins' emotional devastation would otherwise remain socially invisible.

Thus, memory functions simultaneously as psychological burden and ethical necessity. Although traumatic remembrance causes pain, forgetting would reproduce historical erasure and injustice.

9. FEMINIST DIMENSIONS OF TRAUMA

Although the novel engages deeply with caste and postcolonialism, its feminist critique remains equally central. Roy demonstrates how trauma is gendered within patriarchal social structures.

In the novel, women undergo systematic limits on autonomy, sexuality, mobility and emotional expression. Their pain is not some random mishap, it is made, steady and structural, by social ideology.

Ammu's life, makes the condition feel unavoidable. She is refused educational chance, stuck in an abusive marriage, blamed after divorce and in the end destroyed for loving across caste boundaries. In her story you see patriarchy showing up on multiple levels.

Roy critiques not only overt male domination but also the subtle normalization of female suffering. Family members treat Ammu's emotional needs as insignificant while prioritizing male authority and social appearance.

The contrast between Ammu and Chacko exposes patriarchal double standards. Chacko's failures and sexual behavior are tolerated because masculinity grants institutional privilege. Ammu, however, is denied dignity for pursuing emotional fulfillment.

Baby Kochamma and Mammachi show how patriarchy can shape female awareness itself. They do not only suffer the rules, they also internalize them and end up policing other women's behaviour. Roy thus suggests patriarchy survives culturally and psychologically too, not merely through outside force.

Roy links gender oppression with caste and colonial history. Female bodies end up as the places where multiple systems of power collide. Ammu's sexuality becomes a threat to patriarchal control and caste hierarchy at the same time.

The novel also critiques social definitions of "respectable womanhood". Women who challenge normative expectations—through divorce, desire, or independence—face exclusion and humiliation.

Trauma in the novel isn't really separable from gender politics. Emotional suffering shows up partly because patriarchal systems deny women agency, recognition and emotional freedom.

At the same time, Roy portrays female desire as resistant and transformative, despite all that social repression. Ammu's relationship with Velutha is an attempt to reclaim emotional and bodily autonomy, against the oppressive structures.

The novel's feminist dimension deepens the exploration of trauma, because it keeps showing how gendered violence reshapes both private life and the broader social organization, not just one room at a time.

10. TRAUMA AND NARRATIVE ETHICS

Roy's representation of suffering raises important ethical questions regarding literary narration itself. How can literature represent trauma without simplifying, sensationalizing, or appropriating pain?

The novel addresses this challenge formally through fragmentation, indirection, and emotional subtlety. Roy avoids melodramatic representation, instead emphasizing the difficulty of understanding traumatic experience fully.

Readers encounter trauma gradually through partial revelations and shifting perspectives. This narrative structure resists voyeuristic consumption because painful events are never reduced to spectacle.

Roy also foregrounds emotional ambiguity. Characters are neither purely innocent nor purely guilty. Baby Kochamma, Mammachi, Chacko, and even Estha occupy morally complex positions shaped by historical and psychological forces.

This complexity reflects ethical seriousness because trauma rarely produces simple moral categories. Violence circulates through institutions, families, and emotional relationships in contradictory ways.

The novel's child perspective further contributes to ethical representation. Estha and Rahel perceive trauma incompletely, forcing readers to recognize the limitations of understanding itself. Adult explanations never fully resolve emotional confusion.

Roy's lyrical prose style also complicates conventional distinctions between beauty and suffering. The sensuous descriptions of landscape and memory coexist with brutality and grief. This juxtaposition reflects the contradictory texture of lived experience rather than reducing trauma to abstract theory.

Importantly, the novel grants emotional visibility to marginalized individuals excluded from dominant historical narratives. Velutha, Ammu, and the twins become central subjects rather than peripheral victims.

The act of storytelling itself therefore becomes politically and ethically significant. By narrating suppressed experiences, Roy resists systems of forgetting that sustain oppression.

Trauma in the novel is not represented simply to evoke sympathy. Instead, suffering becomes a means of exposing structural violence and challenging ideological normalization.

Thus, Roy transforms literary narration into ethical witness against historical silence and institutional injustice.

11. CONCLUSION

The God of Small Things presents one of the most profound literary explorations of trauma in contemporary postcolonial fiction. Through its fragmented structure, emotionally complex people and sharp political critique the book shows how trauma is never just "one person" thing. It instead seeps out where psychological experience meets familial conflict, caste hierarchy, patriarchy, colonial legacies and institutional violence.

Personal trauma shows up most strongly through Estha, Rahel, Ammu and Velutha. Estha's silence, Rahel's alienation, Ammu's emotional abandonment and Velutha's brutal victimization each point to different faces of psychological suffering. Yet these experiences cannot be separated from the larger social systems shaping them. They remain entangled with larger social systems that quietly shape what a person can even feel, or say.

Familial trauma works through domestic violence, emotional repression, generational conflict and inherited patterns of domination. The Ipe family becomes a microcosm of broader social hierarchy where fear, silence and emotional neglect keep reproducing suffering across generations.

Postcolonial trauma appears through colonial mentality, cultural mimicry, caste oppression and state violence. Roy critiques how postcolonial society often fails to dismantle historical inequalities despite political independence. Institutions like the police, religion and party politics continue reinforcing exclusion and brutality.

Narratively, Roy reproduces traumatic consciousness through nonlinear chronology, fragmented memory, repetition and linguistic experimentation. The novel doesn't only describe instability it also formally enacts it, showing that traumatic experience isn't stable, it's more like broken, echoing and stubbornly recurring.

At its deepest level, the novel explores how love and power are tangled. The tragedy of Ammu and Velutha shows that oppressive societies don't just control behaviour, they regulate emotional possibility itself. The "Love Laws" symbolize systems that determine whose humanity deserves recognition and whose suffering remains invisible.

By recovering silenced histories and marginalized voices, Roy transforms trauma into an act of resistance against forgetting. The novel insists that emotional suffering must be understood historically and politically rather than reduced to private psychology alone.

The God of Small Things suggests that trauma is collective, inherited and structurally embedded within everyday social life. Still, through storytelling, memory and emotional witnessing, the novel affirms the ethical necessity of remembering what dominant systems try to erase.

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