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Patriarchal Society:
Three Generations of Oppression
in Arundhati Roy's
The God of Small Things

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Introduction

Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* is a story that affects people differently; however, as a woman, the issue of men's domination over women is what affects me the most. This novel shows how different men and women are treated according to the social norms that separate the views on men and women. The men oppress the women, who are not allowed to live their lives as they want since men rule over them. Women who stand against men and society are punished.

The main characters of this novel are Ammu, who is the daughter of Mammachi and Pappachi, and her twins Estha and Rahel. When Ammu divorces her husband, she returns to her parents' house, which is called the Ayemenem House. The others who are living in this house are Ammu's brother, Chacko, who is also divorced and Ammu's aunt Baby Kochamma. Later on Chacko's ex-wife, Margaret, and their daughter, Sophie Mol, come for a visit from England and they stay at the Ayemenem House.

Jon Simmons states in an interview posted on Roy's homepage that Roy was born and raised in Kerala, in India. She is politically active, both in her personal life but also in her fiction, where she points out her political views on certain issues. Since Roy grew up in Kerala, she is well aware of how it is like living there as she explains in the interview, "a lot of the atmosphere of *The God of Small Things* is based on my own experiences of what it was like to grow up in Kerala" (qtd. in Jon Simmons). Reading about Roy's life, one finds similarities to the twins' lives. Just as for Estha and Rahel, Roy's mother is also a Syrian Christian and her father is a Bengali Hindu. Furthermore, her parents are divorced just like the twins' parents, and Roy admits in an interview that she barely knows her father since she has only met him a few times in her life (Simmons).

The God of Small Things is a post-colonial novel, which *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* defines as the kind of literature that comes from Europe's former colonies and that deals with issues such as "history, identity, ethnicity, gender, and language" (*The Oxford Companion to English Literature*). Many post-colonial writers describe what people have experienced with "de-colonization" and how things changed as India became free by including political and cultural aspects in their writing (*The Oxford Companion to English Literature*).

The God of Small Things is also a typical post-colonial novel in that it treats the theme of oppression. Oppression is like a system consisting of "forces and barriers" (*Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* 370). Furthermore, it divides people into fortunate groups and groups that

are disadvantaged; these groups of people are, also, prevented from doing certain things. The oppressed group's choices and actions are punished in several ways (*Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* 370). Furthermore, Simone de Beauvoir describes women as the Other because they are not permitted by rules and traditions from claiming their "subjectivity" challenging their objectification by men, and setting up relationships where both parts are treated the same. Women, who are oppressed, are forced to forfeit their freedom; therefore, they adjust themselves to life as the Other, whereas men can claim subjectivity for themselves (*Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* 374) "Man is the positive, the norm, the universal; while woman is the negative, a deviation, a distortion" (*Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* 374). The women seem to accept their role as the Other as they do not succeed to claim their subjectivity as the men do.

Critic Tapan Kumar Ghosh declares in "Tomorrow Will Never Die: Arundhati Roy's Tryst with History in *The God of Small Things*" that Roy's purpose with *The God of Small Things* is to write about an unfair, male-dominated society that treats women and low-caste people very badly (184): "Her focus is on the small, individual lives of men and women who, without any heroic pretensions, break the long-cherished social taboos and tamper with the rules that lay down the social codes of behavior" (Ghosh 186). Arundhati describes the different treatment of the sexes and between the castes, which is decided by the social norms that determine how everyone should be treated.

The oppression that is mentioned even from the beginning of the novel is the oppression of women. The women are described as doomed from the day they are born; even when they are innocent, they are treated badly by patriarchal society. In brief, the women are oppressed first by their father, later by their husbands, and finally by society in general, which also includes the women who think it is wrong to break the social norms.

My aim with this essay is to find out whether anyone is to blame for the oppression of women in *The God of Small Things*. The women are oppressed because of the social norms laid down by men, and the oppression is handed down from generation to generation. The questions I intend to pose are as follows: how are the women from three generations oppressed and is there a difference in their oppression? Another question of interest is whether anyone/anything is to blame for the oppression of women. Since it is the men who rule society, they represent society. Furthermore, women are meant to obey the social norms in order to avoid trouble. In other words, everyone controls every step they take.

The First Generation of Oppression

The God of Small Things is the story of women's misfortunate lives caused by male-dominated society with all its norms that separate women from men. In "Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*: A Study in Feminine Sensibility and Aspects of Style," critic Pratibha Verma points out that this novel deals with how the lives of women are controlled by men. We learn that the women are repressed and "denied basic amenities" since they live in a patriarchal society, defined as "a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Verma 180).

Roy presents a story of three generations in her novel *The God of Small Things*. In "Arundhati Roy's and Salman Rushdie's Postmodern India," critic Victor J. Ramraj remarks that the first generation is from the period before India's independence: characters such as Mammachi and Pappachi belong to this period. The time period of the second generation is the 1940s: characters involved here are Ammu and Chacko. Finally, Ramraj adds that the characters Rahel and Estha belong to the third generation, which dates from the 1960s. Furthermore, the women from these generations are oppressed by male-dominated society in different ways. Though the oppression changes from generation to generation, being very hard in the first two generations, it is reduced in the last generation.

In "Women in *The God of Small Things*," critic N. P. Singh claims that the first generation has a tendency to "defy the age-old norms of patriarchy" (65). Singh also adds that the women of the Ayemenem House do not have much freedom, since the men rule and decide for their lives (65). Mammachi's relationship to Pappachi is male dominated because he is of the belief that a man should have authority over the woman. It is as if the woman is nothing but a toy that you can throw away when you get tired of it because you do not have feelings for it. In "Man-Woman Relationship in *The God of Small Things*," critic Nirmala C. Prakash points out Pappachi's view of marriage as follows: "Wife is but a slave who can be driven out of the house at his will and whose precious possessions like piano can be as mercilessly broken..." (Prakash 180). No matter what happens in a relationship, the woman has no rights whatsoever; if the woman obeys the men and behaves in the way accepted by society for a woman, she is considered a good woman. However, if the woman instead chooses to fight for women's rights and just will not accept the life that is forced on her, then she is considered a bad woman. Bad women are those who are strong, talented, and rebellious; good women are those who are weak and not rebellious. Since men like women they can control, they like weak women. In this way, they become more superior. In fact, Prakash argues that

Mammachi's and Pappachi's marriage is filled with "jealousy, violence, and hatred" (80). Since Mammachi is a successful businesswoman who gets more popular as time goes, Pappachi becomes jealous of her. In the meantime, he starts to beat her as he places the anger of his situation on his wife: He does this mainly for the reason that she is a woman and he is the man; he can do whatever he wishes with his wife. It is difficult for Pappachi to see good qualities in his wife without evoking feelings of jealousy. When he acts on his jealousy, he oppresses his wife as he beats and treats her badly.

Since he believes that the man should be superior to the woman, Pappachi lives his life and never lends a hand to help his wife: "Though Mammachi had conical corneas and was already practically blind, Pappachi would not help her with the pickle-making, because he did not consider pickle-making a suitable job for a high-ranking ex-Government official" (Roy 47). However, Pappachi thinks with his patriarchal mind, as he does not even consider helping his wife, even though her eyes are bad. Pappachi is of the belief that since he is a high-ranked ex-Government official, Mammachi's job is not good enough for him. Moreover, he is in denial if he thinks that Mammachi's successful factory is low ranked; otherwise, he would not have been jealous of her success and popularity. He is also far too proud to admit that Mammachi is doing a great job. Instead of supporting his wife, Pappachi rejects her, since he does not believe in women's power over men or in the independency of women. Even though Pappachi is retired, he would rather stay at home doing nothing than help his wife. In other words, his actions are of a jealous man in a patriarchal society, where the female sex is degraded and the male sex is superior. Indeed, the oppression of Mammachi is caused by her husband's jealousy of her; but her mistreatment is effected by the social norms of Kerala. Further, these laws are set for the men's benefit because they show how superior men are to women and they also give men the right to treat women as they wish. In "Locusts Stand I': Some Feminine Aspects of *The God of Small Things*," critic Mohit Kumar Ray points out that Pappachi's jealousy of Mammachi does not begin the moment he retires because he has always been jealous of her. For example, there is the time when they spend a couple of months in Vienna; Mammachi takes lessons in violin, but when her teacher tells Pappachi that his wife is very talented, he does not let her continue to take lessons (56): "The lessons were abruptly discontinued when Mammachi's teacher, Launsky-Tieffenthal, made the mistake of telling Pappachi that his wife was exceptionally talented..." (Roy 50). Pappachi cannot and will not stand the fact that people actually might like Mammachi and give her compliments on her good work.

Furthermore, just when the physical abuse of Mammachi comes to an end, a psychological abuse is introduced. In “Dreams Re-Dreamed: A Study of Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*,” critic Surendra Narayan Jha writes that Chacko is the one who is responsible for forbidding his father from touching his mother again. As a result of this, Pappachi finds another way of oppressing her, as he never speaks to her from this day on until his death. The reason for this is that Chacko has hurt his pride (Jha 161). This way he still has power over his wife. Ray argues that Pappachi insults and rejects Mammachi every time he gets the chance (56). For instance, Pappachi insults her publicly as he sews buttons that are not missing onto his shirts; his reason for doing this is to make people feel sorry for him, but also to make them dislike Mammachi for not taking care of her husband.

Ray adds that Mammachi accepts her situation of insults and rejections. Ray points out that “she accepted the female role model imposed on her by the society – docile, submissive, ungrudging, unprotesting” (56). Anything beyond this definition of how a woman should behave would mean that she has broken the social norms laid down for women. Unless a woman wants to avoid being looked down at by people, she should live her life obeying the men. Since men represent society’s view of women, then women should just accept their situation; in other words, women should not attempt to improve their position in society, as this is a pointless thing to do. Even though Mammachi is doing a great job in the factory, she is still oppressed. If the circumstances were the other way round and Pappachi owned the factory, he would not have been oppressed. Instead, he would have been very proud of what he accomplishes and people would look up to him.

To sum up, no matter what Mammachi decides to do, her life is destined from the day she is born. She is doomed for the reason that women must be submissive to men. However, realizing that changes of the norms for the better are impossible, she just accepts her situation and does not fight for equality between men and women.

The Second Generation of Oppression

The second generation is the period that touches one the most as the oppression is at its worse; the women are treated badly by the men but also by the women that follow the social norms strictly. Ramraj points out that Ammu, the central character in *The God of Small Things*, was born in the 1940s (Ramraj 154). Singh declares that this means that Ammu belongs to the second of three generations in the novel, which can also be called the intermediate generation. This generation defies patriarchy and the “dominant sexual norms of the time” (Singh 65).

Ammu is a victim of the patriarchal society she lives in. Her crime is that she was born as the wrong sex. Roy adds that the oppression of Ammu begins when her father, Pappachi, does not allow her to educate herself at college (50): “Pappachi insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl” (Roy 38). Although she would have liked to be educated, she is neglected for the simple reason that she is a girl and also that her father thinks he knows what is best for her. Pappachi does not want to waste his money on his daughter’s education; girls will get married and leave the house anyway. Instead, he thinks she should stay at home and help her mother with daily chores.

Ammu and Chacko are not treated as equals by their parents; while Ammu is denied education, Chacko gets educated at Oxford. Furthermore, Verma writes that every time Chacko is out of money, his mother sends him more (180). The reason for the different treatment of their children is that one is a woman and the other is a man.

Realizing that her parents do not care about her as much as they do about Chacko makes Ammu understand the injustice of patriarchy. Sometimes Ammu feels as if she does not exist. A good example of this is her eighteenth birthday: “Her eighteenth birthday came and went. Unnoticed, or at least unremarked upon by her parents” (Roy 38). This makes Ammu feel that her life is doomed because she was born as a girl and that she must adjust herself to a male dominated society. Ammu is forced to obey the men and to live a life she does not like. In search for more freedom and hoping to escape from this cruel reality Ammu experiences at her parents’ house, she runs into a marriage that ends in divorce. Her reason for marrying is that “she thought that anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem” (Roy 39). Verma points out that the reason for the divorce is that Ammu’s husband wants her to stay with his English boss in order for him to save his job. As Ammu refuses to obey him, he beats her (Verma 180). Even as a married woman, Ammu is treated badly because of the patriarchal society she lives in. Ammu’s husband, who is a Bengali Hindu and not a Christian, wants to take complete control over her. Furthermore, when he asks Ammu whether she can stay with his boss, he expects her to obey him. However, as Ammu goes against his wishes, he thinks she deserves to be punished and therefore he beats her for the reason that he thinks he has the right to treat his wife the way he wants.

Ammu is the kind of woman who does not think about the consequences of her actions, even when they entail taking a stand against society’s laws. Although Ammu knows that she, as a Syrian Christian, should not marry a Hindu, she marries him anyway. Even though she knows that it is against the social norms of Kerala for a woman to divorce her husband, Ammu breaks the rule again and divorces her husband since she cannot tolerate his treatment

of her. As a strong woman living in a patriarchal society that oppresses women, Ammu does not listen to others; otherwise, she would not have dared to act the way she does. She could have stayed with her husband and just accepted things the way they were, as many other women in her position probably would have done.

As a divorced woman, Ammu has no other choice than to return to her parents' home, to Ayemenem, unwelcome and with two children. According to Ray, a woman has only one chance of choosing a husband, and Ammu makes the mistake of choosing the wrong man (52). Now that she has made her choice, her family and society treats her as if she is worthless. Baby Kochamma informs Ammu about her position in the family and in society and about her opinion of Ammu returning home with children. Baby Kochamma points out to Ammu that:

A married daughter had no position in her parents' home. As for a divorced daughter - according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, [...] As for a divorced daughter from an intercommunity love marriage [...] (Roy 45-46).

Baby Kochamma represents society here because she believes in its patriarchal norms as she explains to Ammu what society thinks about divorced women. While divorced women are unfairly treated, divorced men continue their life as if nothing has happened and they are welcomed home. Prakash claims that a divorced daughter is unwelcome in her parents' house whereas a divorced son is welcomed home and becomes the inheritor of the family fortune (81). Critic Amina Amin agrees in "Breaking Laws, Crossing Forbidden Territory: An Analysis of *The God of Small Things*," where she points out that even though Ammu works as much as Chacko in the factory, she would not inherit anything from her parents because daughters do not inherit (107). Chacko, aware of his power over women as a man, tells Ammu that she has no "Locusts Stand I" (Roy 57) and declares "what's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine" (Roy 57). It is the men who rule the society in Kerala, and a good example of this is the pickle factory. The factory is, until the day Chacko returns from Oxford, Mammachi's factory; however, when he returns, he takes it over because he knows he is allowed to act that way. Furthermore, Verma adds that Chacko does not believe that women should hold power over men (182-183).

Another important difference in the view of women and men is the unfair treatment of Ammu's and Chacko's desires and how their parents fulfill or oppress those desires. Mammachi defends Chacko's sexual needs, declaring, "he can't help having a Man's Needs" (Roy 168). Chacko is allowed to have relationships with the beautiful women workers in the

factory, who by the way come from different castes. However, when Ammu fulfills her desires with a man from a lower caste, she gets banished because it is sinful for a woman to express her sexual desires.

The reason why Ammu breaks the “Love Laws [...] The laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much” (Roy 33) – is that she wants to revolt against the society that has neglected her for so long. Velutha – who belongs to the lowest caste, the Paravan caste, also called the ‘untouchable’ caste – rebels against society because he does not fear it. In fact, what draws Ammu to Velutha is that she sees a fighter in him, someone who is against society just like her. Ammu gets punished for breaking the social norms and gets both society and her family against her. Her family banishes her instead of supporting her. Instead of treating their daughter as an equal to her brother, they make Ammu feel like a nobody, which is also the reason for her breaking the rules that the society has laid down for its people.

In order to keep the family’s honour, pride, and good reputation, Ammu is punished for her crime. Ray points out that when Ammu goes to the police station to try to save Velutha who has been arrested, the officer offends her as he taps her breast with his baton. Ray continues by suggesting that the police officer represents society’s view of a woman who has broken the “Love Laws” (Roy 54). Her lover gets killed, Chacko banishes her, and finally she dies alone in misery. Amin claims that even as a dead person, Ammu is oppressed because the church does not bury her (109). Instead, Ammu’s body is cremated, which only happens to the lowest people. In the crematorium “nobody except beggars, derelicts and the police-custody dead were cremated there” (Roy 162). This shows the power of patriarchy that lays down the laws that tell how one should live one’s life to avoid getting into trouble.

Ammu revolts against patriarchy. She struggles partly against history, but she also struggles for changes in the situation of women. Ammu believes in equality between the sexes as she does not like the fact that social norms should decide people’s lives. All Ammu wants from her family is recognition as a woman and to be treated as an equal to her brother. She wishes that her family, which follows the rules of patriarchal society strictly, had not denied her the things she wants. Ray summarizes Ammu’s oppressed life by stating that:

Ammu had been humiliated and cornered by her father, ill-treated and betrayed by her husband, insulted by the police and rendered destitute by her brother. Each of them voiced the patriarchal ideology which commanded that she should have no right anywhere – as daughter, wife, sister and citizen. She was no individual to her society but just an object, a role necessarily submissive. (Roy 54)

Ammu is a victim of society because she wants the freedom to decide how to live her life; in fact, Ammu is a victim because she is a strong woman who believes in the freedom for women to choose their own lives. Although she knows that she will never be treated as equal to men, she also knows that she has society against her; she tries to free herself from the tyranny of the men in fulfilling her desires, until her life is taken from her.

The Third Generation of Oppression

The third generation is a period that is filled with rebellion against patriarchal society: the women do not accept their situation as oppressed. Singh claims that Rahel was born in post-independence India, which was a period of decreased oppression compared with the previous two generations (65). Singh also points out that Rahel lives as a rebel her whole life, as she does not think of the consequences of her actions (70). Rahel has a strong personality and revolts against society's norms; however, she is denied by society, mostly because of Ammu's actions, but also because of her own.

Furthermore, in *Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: Critique and Commentary*, critics R.S. Sharma and Shashi Bala Talwar claim that since Rahel and Estha are products of an inter-community marriage, the family treats them as strangers (48). All Rahel ever wants is to be loved by her family. Rahel is only cared for by her mother and brother, whereas the rest of the family never really cares about her. As time goes by, with the arrival of Sophie Mol to Ayemenem, Rahel realizes that her family does not love her anymore. Although both of them come from inter-community marriages, they are, however, not treated the same. Verma points out that her family sees Rahel as a demon while Sophie Mol is seen as an angel (181). For example, Rahel is compared with Sophie Mol as follows: "Littleangels were beach-coloured [...] Litledemons were mudbrown [...] with forehead bumps that might turn into horns." (Roy 179). Rahel feels left out by her family when Sophie Mol arrives; she is also jealous of the attention she gets and the special treatment she receives. On the way to the airport to receive Sophie Mol and Margaret, they bring boiled water for them while the rest of the company have to be content with tap water (Verma 181). Besides, Rahel does not think that Sophie Mol deserves the love she gets from everyone, since she does not appreciate it.

Still, Rahel is an innocent victim of her mother's mistakes in life; in the society they live in, it seems as if sons are more valued than daughters, which also affects Ammu's children. So while Sophie Mol is loved, spoiled, and welcomed, Rahel is only tolerated out of obligation since she has no other place to go. She is not even cared for even though she works

hard to earn people's love. Sophie Mol, however, is "Loved from the Beginning" (Roy 135). Rahel feels that it is unfair that she is treated as she is; in other words, she thinks that her own family should not be the ones who oppress her. Rahel wishes to be treated as an equal to Sophie Mol, but her uncle, aunt, and grandmother make sure that it will not happen.

This oppression continues and gets much worse when Ammu dies and Rahel is left in the hands of Chacko, Mammachi, and Baby Kochamma; these are people that do not care about her. As she grows up with nobody to look out for her or to teach her about certain things, her childhood is difficult. In fact, Rahel is being punished for her mother's mistakes, and if they could, they would have got rid of her. Verma adds that Chacko sees the twins as a burden, mostly because they do not belong to Pappachi's family, but also because of Ammu's punishment, which is enacted on her children (181).

Having no one loving, raising and teaching her about how to behave, Rahel gets into trouble in school. Singh points out that Rahel drifts from school to school since she gets expelled for the reason that she does not know how to behave correctly (68). Sharma and Talwar argue that the schools refuse to admit that the women's sexuality exists (50). An explanation of Rahel's behavior is the treatment and lack of love she receives of her family, but also that she feels left out at school, as she has no friends. All these are important factors that form Rahel's development and lead her to act independently (Sharma and Talwar 50). Rahel is against the patriarchal norms as she rebels against society. She acts against the value system of society that puts people in different positions by describing what is considered low as "she decorates a knob of dung with flowers" (Sharma and Talwar 72). Rahel protests against society, which thinks it has the right to determine what is considered low and what is seen as good. According to social norms, Rahel is considered as a low person, partly because she is a woman, but also because she comes from an inter-community marriage. Rahel does not believe that her treatment should be based on her background; she thinks that people should get to know her before they judge her.

Another example is when she is expelled because of the senior girls, repeatedly complaining about her behavior:

She was accused (quite rightly) of hiding behind doors and deliberately colliding with her seniors [...] she eventually admitted that she had done it to find out whether breasts hurt. In that Christian institution, breasts were not acknowledged. They weren't supposed to exist and if they didn't could they hurt? (Roy 16).

Sharma and Talwar suggest that Rahel rebels against the oppression of the female sexuality in conventional education (72). In this society, a woman's breasts are not supposed to exist, so

when Rahel tries to figure out whether breasts exist or not, she gets expelled. The reason for the expulsion is that as a woman Rahel should not let others get to know her body, and if breasts do exist, then men might not be able to control themselves sexually. Therefore, a girl should learn at an early age that her breasts should not be exposed to others; but also that challenging the laws would mean problems.

Eventually, Rahel is expelled “for setting fire to her Housemistress’s hair bun” (Roy 17); she revolts against meaningless things in life (Sharma and Talwar 72). Rahel does not like the fact that women choose to be obsessed by vanity, when they should just be themselves, and avoid to copy the looks of others. Women should refuse to let men decide their appearances. Moreover, Rahel burns the hair bun because she wants women to act more independently as she fights for the right for women to choose their own look.

Later, Rahel is expelled for smoking, which obviously is not allowed for women. As a result of breaking the rules, which are set by men, she is expelled. Since Rahel does not know how to behave as a girl, she cannot possibly know that smoking is only meant for men. Men have set all these rules to be able to rule over the women; furthermore, women are not supposed to do things not approved by the men. According to all the teachers from all her schools: “It was...as if she didn’t know how to be a girl” (Roy 17). Actually, Rahel’s teachers are right about the fact that Rahel does not know how to behave as a girl since her family has not raised her well.

In time, Rahel grows into a woman and marries a man of her own choice, just as her mother had done. However, Prakash points out that, in contrast with Mammachi and Ammu, Rahel divorces her husband the moment he stops to fulfill her needs. As a highly educated and modern girl, Rahel is rebellious as she refuses to accept the fates of Ammu and Mammachi (Prakash 83). Even though Rahel’s husband does not oppress her as Pappachi and her father have done to their wives, she leaves him anyway. She leaves him because she believes that it is better to leave a man if you feel miserable with him than to stay with him. Finally, Rahel would have been oppressed if she had stayed with her husband, because she would have forced herself to stay in a loveless marriage and hold back her need to be loved by someone who can fulfill her and make her a complete person.

Rahel is a woman who breaks the social norms of Kerala, which are rules for how a woman should behave. In fact, she lives her whole life the way she wants and does not care about the consequences. Rahel represents contemporary women in India, where the women live their lives as rebels and do not let social norms decide their lives.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have studied the female characters in *The God of Small Things* with the aim of analyzing the situation of women, in particular their oppression. I have analyzed the characters Mammachi, Ammu, and Rahel, in order to show that the women are doomed from the day they are born because, as women, they have society against them. As the oppression of women in *The God of Small Things* goes on for three generations, I have analyzed each woman and compared her situation with the one of men to see how they are treated differently. Another reason for this comparison is to look at the reason for the oppression caused by men and society. No matter what the woman does, she cannot escape from her destiny, from being oppressed, since she lives in a patriarchal society. Living in a society like this, a woman should not try to improve her situation because she is aware of the consequences of doing this. Another purpose of this essay is to investigate whether the situation of these women improves or if it becomes worse from generation to generation.

I have shown that women like Mammachi who are from the first generation do not choose how to live their own lives since their lives are controlled by the norms of patriarchal society, where women have no right to stand against a man. Even though Pappachi has abused Mammachi her whole life, both physically and psychologically, she does not leave him since she does not dare to rebel against man and patriarchal norms, but also because she does not want to put her reputation at risk. In other words, she is willing to do anything to save her reputation as a good wife, which means that she does not stand against her husband because she is aware that the man is superior to the woman and that she cannot change society's attitude against women. This also explains why Mammachi does not divorce Pappachi. The reason for this abuse is Pappachi's jealousy of his wife's success. I have shown that men will not tolerate any success for women, as revealed in Pappachi's behavior. In their marriage, the wife is seen as nothing but a slave for Pappachi, which shows how little he values women. Since Mammachi accepts her situation, one cannot see any changes in her life because she is treated the same throughout her life.

Ammu represents the second generation, and, as I have shown, this period is full of taboo breaking because Ammu revolts against patriarchy. The oppression of Ammu changes for the worse in the second generation, which turns out to be the worst among the three because Ammu breaks several laws. Eventually, it goes so far as she pays with her life for her affair with Velutha. Ammu has been oppressed by all the men in her life: her father, her brother, her husband, and also by the rest of society. I have compared Ammu's situation with Chacko's;

Ammu is denied education while Chacko is educated at Oxford, Ammu is punished for divorcing her husband while Chacko is treated as usual, and, finally, Ammu is punished for fulfilling her sexual desires with Velutha while Chacko is allowed to fulfill all his desires. Compared to Mammachi, Ammu is a fighter who struggles for equality between the sexes; Ammu is rebellious as she does not care about the consequences of her actions. I have shown that Ammu is a strong person who fights for equality, by breaking several laws, but she is also punished for her actions.

I have discovered that the third generation is, despite the continuing oppression, the most rebellious one. Rahel who belongs to this period, is a product of an inter-community marriage, and she is treated very badly as she grows up, unloved by her family. Rahel represents contemporary women, who are modern and educated; they are rebellious all the time, and they refuse to follow the patriarchal norms when they do not fit them. According to the social norms, Rahel should be punished for her mother's mistakes; as a result of this, Rahel revolts against society since she does not want others to rule over her. In short, Rahel's family oppresses her because of her mother's mistakes, and she is also oppressed by society for the reason that she is rebellious and does not know how to behave like a girl. Rahel's actions cause several expulsions from schools. I have shown that, compared to the previous two generations, this period demonstrates the most improvement for women. It is obvious that Rahel is oppressed, but the difference between her and the previous generations is that she stands for what she believes in and fights for equality right from the beginning when she ignores the patriarchal laws.

I have, moreover, come to the conclusion that the women I have analyzed are oppressed by the social norms, laid down by men. The men in this novel are superior to the women since they have the laws on their side that help them degrade women. I have also shown that the oppression changes from generation to generation because the women become more rebellious for each period. The women revolt against the unjust treatment of them because they want the same opportunities as the men. Even though the women in this story develop and become braver with each generation, the men do not change their patriarchal behavior against the women at all. The women are treated more or less badly through all the generations.

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