

A Study of Feminism in the Novels of Mulkraj Anand and Arundhati Roy

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Abstract - The majority of novelists in India's early nineteenth-century literary scene were male. The early English novels produced in India, even by male writers, portray a social reality that differs greatly from women since these men saw society and the people's predicament through their own lens. In search of their own unique voices, several female Indian authors have delved into female subjectivity. All of the main characters aspired to break free of the conventional gender norms and find their own unique identities. Because of this, Indian English novels now depict society quite differently. One that goes against the grain of societal consensus. The study's overarching goal is to catalogue the female undercurrents present in *TGST* and *untouchable*, a work of postmodern Indian fiction. Novelist and social activist Mulk Raj Anand has written extensively on women's oppression. Millions of Indian women suffer from unsympathetic husbands, cunning in-laws, blasé and censorious relatives, and most of all, crippling guilt and self-blame brought on by centuries of psychological oppression and bombardment. Mulk Raj Anand bravely stands by these women in his novel. Upon finishing this paper, women all around the world—on a global, national, and regional scale—may be able to grasp the empowering message of feminism and deconstruct a positive interpretation of their own femininity and womanhood.

Keywords - India, Arundhati Roy, Mulkraj Anand, Feminism, Women

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INTRODUCTION

While there were various manifestations of Indian literature in English, novels had the most impression on readers throughout the world. By the late 19th century, novels written in English that were both simple and successful and written in language that the average person could understand started to appear. Indian novels written in English first gained formal acclaim and recognition around the turn of the twentieth century. The early writers Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, and R. K. Narayan—commonly referred to as the "Trio"—left an indelible impression on Indian literature and culture by brilliantly capturing the complexities of a colonial-era Indian society gripped by extreme poverty, social prejudice, unemployment, and illiteracy through the medium of a foreign language.

This is a reference to Feminine psychology, a school of thought that has long concentrated on the personal, interpersonal, and societal challenges that women face. Sigmund Freud's perspective on female sexuality and other male-dominated views may be seen as a response to this. Male realities, according to Karen Horney's seminal writings, are uninformed by girls' and women's experiences, hence they cannot explain female psychology or define gender. Therefore, this new technique is necessary, according to theorists. One school of thought holds that comprehending women's psyches requires an appreciation of their

social lives. For example, it is said that some aspects of female psychology are shaped by men's societal expectations rather than inherent qualities of gender or mind. Women have historically been denied equal rights, including those to education, the law, and professional advancement, due to their perceived inferiority as compared to males. Being a wife and mother has always been seen as the most essential and consequential occupation for women. Many nations did not see women as a powerful gender until the twentieth century.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Zaheri, Shiva & Moosavinia, Sayyed (2019) *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy is the basis for this paper's effort at a postcolonial analysis of the aforementioned work. Some of the ideas explored in this book are orientalism, resistance, globalisation, history, diaspora, hybridity, and women's roles in Indian society. Postcolonial thinkers Edward W. Said and Homi K. Bhabha provide the ideas employed here. Since *TGST* features several female characters—Ammu, Rahel, etc. the prominent theme is the place of women in Indian culture. Change occurs in *Ayemenem* as a result of economic expansion. A community that is really globalised emerges. An essential theme in the book is postcolonial resistance. Roy is actively resisting colonisation when she employs English, a language

that has been historically used for that purpose. Roy says the kids are fighting back through their lives.

Jarin, Tasnim & Zahin, Aftab (2023) In order to derive conclusions regarding the inter-caste gender performativity in Indian Hindu culture, this research employs Judith Butler's idea of "gender performativity" to analyse "*Untouchable*" by Mulk Raj Anand and "*The God of Small Things*" by Arundhati Roy. Despite the historical and theological animosity against inter-caste connections in Hindu society of India, certain autobiographical works have retained proof of voluntary and "non-theatrical inter-caste connection" that goes beyond the border of untouchability. Women, being the subaltern gender, are never certain of their caste affiliation in a consensual inter caste relationship. It is more common for them to be branded by the caste of the men who handled them than for them to be born into any particular caste. Men from higher castes use physical force to keep women in non-consensual inter-caste relationships silent, although this has no impact on their social standing. The upper classes have power over both settings, therefore there is a double standard. The subtle backdrop questions the elitist discourse around 'impurity' and the idea that interaction across castes would lead to punishment in the hereafter. This link proves that the idea of theatre is exclusively a political instrument of the ruling class to control the lower classes. This research was carried out utilising a closed-textual-reading technique and is qualitative in nature. Discussion is on the effects of inter-caste gender performativity on the writers, while four contexts (theatrical, non-theatrical, public, and private) are used to analyse the gender performativity of Hindu castes. The research shows that gender performativity is conditional among the Hindu castes in India, and that it affects each author in their own special manner, whether onstage or off.

Roy, Romeena & Jose, Antony (2023) India stands out due to its diverse cultures, beautiful scenery, and abundant history. Curiously, gender and caste disparities are still very much present in Indian culture, and several billionaires have used the current financial crisis as an excuse to oppress minority communities by limiting their access to fundamental freedoms. People who don't conform to the rigid binary gender standards enforced by these organisations often suffer as a result of the pervasive gender stereotypes that exist in our culture and society. People are sorted into several castes according to their social rank, birthplace, and economic level; their caste classification is mostly dictated by their immutable family lineage. The interrelated and dominating nature of Caste and Gender is on full show in both the 1935 Indian book *Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand and the 2015 novel *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy. Using the narratives of *Untouchable* and *The God of Small Things*, this article examines the dominant and interdependent aspects of gender and caste and asks what role this plays in creating victims.

Suleman, Danish (2018) Many of India's most pressing problems, such as those pertaining to the rights of women and children, persist far into the modern day. The most serious violation of human rights in India, according to this research, is the mistreatment of children and women. This study utilises Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* as a lens through which to analyse the root causes of child abuse and gender inequality in India. Indian society still has several serious problems, such as child abuse and gender discrimination, even after the country gained independence. The present article examines Arundhati Roy's perspectives and experiences as shown in her chosen book *The God of Small Things* (1997) to comprehend the reasons that generate obstacles for women and risks for children in Indian culture. In order to gather and evaluate pertinent data, it employs a qualitative research approach based on textual analysis. Readers will have a better understanding of the relevance of women's and children's rights and freedoms in India as a result of this research. This study explores the challenges and violence that children and women in India face on a daily basis, and how literature (novel) education helps shape their identities so that they may make positive contributions to Indian society.

Suleman, Danish & Ab Rahman, Faizahani (2020)

Transgender people have always been a part of society. Documentation of their presence dates back thousands of years. However, society always managed to bury them. They were never given the opportunity to establish themselves and their existence—the one thing that was really necessary. They spiraled downhill in terror of the outside world as a result of the tortures. The hijras exemplify the existential aspect of precarity with their unclear sense of self that shapes their perception of life, their vulnerability, marginalisation, and displacement, all while living in the midst of a culture that fails to understand and scarcely tolerates them. The purpose of this piece was to draw attention to the root causes of the problems encountered by the transgender population in India. This essay studied the transgender character Anjum from Arundhati Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* in order to explore these concerns.

FEMINISM IN MULKRAJ ANAND'S UNTOUCHABLES

Due of its breadth, feminism makes it hard to say whether or not it has achieved its goals. "Feminist," "female," and "feminine" are words that feminists have used in a wide range of contexts during the last fifteen years. A new women's movement began in the second part of the 1960s, and the political adjectives "feminism" and "feminist" indicate allegiance to the goals of this movement. Feminist critique, an independent political discourse, challenges patriarchy and sexism by critical and theoretical work that goes beyond a focus on gender

in literature. criticism that is rooted on feminism is known as feminist criticism.

A major driving force behind the feminist movement was the outcry against patriarchy's sexist portrayal of women in media. Women are either seen as belonging to a lower social level or as having less prestige than men in patriarchal societies. No matter where they are, women are always subservient to men's direct and indirect control. This holds true all throughout the globe. In Indian culture, a woman is seen as nothing more than a sexual object or a means to procreate.

Mulk one of the most well-known Indian authors to have written for the English-language publishing firm is Raj Anand. He enjoyed unparalleled fame on a global scale as a writer. All throughout the globe, his writings continue to shape people's thoughts and opinions. Despite his prodigious output, the vast array of topics addressed in his novels, short tales, and essays was really remarkable. His depiction of the common struggles and terrible living conditions endured by Indian people has earned him the title of "pioneer" in the genre of Anglo-Indian literature. His paintings provide a vivid and heartbreaking picture of the repressed subaltern reality, and they convey a piercing clarity on many occasions.

Casteism, untouchability, classicism, and other types of discrimination are brought to light in Anand's *Untouchable* through the tragic tale of Bakha, a young Dalit sweeper in a cantonment town in north India, and Sohini, her sister and a representation of the hardships faced by Dalit women in India. Although the practice of that phenomenon has greatly decreased owing to the involvement of legislation, its historical roots may be traced back to the ancient Hindu religion in India. The ancient scripture penned by Rishi Manu, the Manu Samhita, served as the catalyst that set-in motion the notion of casteism, which subsequently permeated all Hindu communities. The four Hindu castes—the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Shudras—were already well-established when Manu made his divisions.

However, these distinctions did not stem from social position but from how well individuals fulfilled their social duties. For example, the Brahmins were charged with overseeing religious affairs, the Kashatriyas with protecting the populace, the Vaishyas with economic management, and the Shudras with assisting the other two categories. Then some greedy Brahmins turned Manu's idea into a genetic or hierarchical social code; they climbed to the top of the caste system, while the Shudras were demoted to the lowest social level and labelled with the degrading term "untouchability." A charming young woman named Sohini is one of the pivotal figures in Anand's story. She looks like a sylph. When describing her attractiveness, Anand says:

She had a Sylph-like figure within her elegant frame, not skinny but full-figured, with a

narrow waist that dipped to show the salwar folds and full, round, globular breasts that peeked out slightly from under her see-through muslin shirt (no bodice).

When Bakha returns home after cleaning the toilet—followed by his humiliation—he asks for the water that is already there. Because the well platform is off-limits to the outcasts, Sohini discovers a long line of people waiting for an upper-caste man's reward before she can fill her pitcher. Then Sohini joins in. In the background, there's Gulabo, a middle-aged Dalit woman who treats Sohini like a beauty pageant. As stated by the author:

Gulabo had gotten a rash from her fragile looks after she became famous. The girl might be seen as a rival by some. Gulabo hated looking at the sweeper-girl's innocent, truthful face, but she would never confess that she was jealous of her. But her genuine emotions were on display in her lighthearted bashing and mockery of Sohini at their greeting.

Sohini is a vehicle through which Anand illuminates the plight of Indian women, who have been oppressed by male-dominated societies from the dawn of time. Women from the Dalit caste face double enslavement: public humiliation at the hands of higher-caste members and domestic torture at the hands of their husbands. They face humiliation from both outside and within their own group in this scenario. On the one hand, they face it from the patriarchal idea and the upper-class women. Sylvia Plath expresses her deepest sorrow at seeing the suffering of women, stating, "I must get my soul back from you; I am killing my flesh without it."

A mud-walled colony of social misfits is depicted in Anand's story. The idea of this colony is to portray the antiquated concept of untouchability. In this moment, Bakha learns of their predicament while he is in trouble for touching a guy on the street and inadvertently infecting him. Sohini is tasked with cleaning the temple restrooms when Pandit Kalinath asks her to do it again. As he works, he delicately caresses her breast. If the temple priest's younger sister Sohini turns him down for sexual favours, he'll accuse her of contaminating him. At some times, they may be subject to severe abuse from both the Brahmin and members of their own higher caste. Note that the points raised by E.M. Forster are given more weight in this setting:

The sweeper's plight is much more precarious than that of a slave because, unlike the slave, he is enslaved from birth and has no way to escape; moreover, he has no refuge in religion or social connections. He infects everyone he comes into contact with because of his lack of cleanliness. They should start by changing

their routines and being clean. As she walks throughout public streets, he must warn the traditionalists that this obnoxious and disturbing woman is drawing near.

After this occurrence, Sohini calls attention to the hypocrisy of the caste Hindus, who say touching a sweeper makes them dirty, yet the holy priests, who are responsible for protecting Hinduism, aren't scared to molest a lady who is considered an outcast. According to her, Dalit women are men's ultimate domestic and public gratification targets.

The Horrifying Situation of Women in M. R. Anand's Fiction

Anand has brilliantly depicted the plight of the average Indian lady in his book *Gauri*. The heroine, Gauri, is married to the guy with the clay feet, Panchi. As a result of her subservient and uncommittal behaviour, Gauri is doomed to endure the most abhorrent kind of humiliation throughout the story. To get the housework done, she needs to put in a lot of time and effort. She is almost unhorsed and alone, and she carries the stigma of an unlucky presence with her. Because of all her unconscious indiscretions, her spouse even beats and abuses her. Her mother-in-law treats her badly and even questions her innocence. She goes back to her village, but her mother-in-law sells her to a banker in Hosiarpur named Seth Jairam Das instead of giving her money. In exchange, Das wipes out the two homes and a cow named Chandri that she had mortgaged.

Consequently, she did not enjoy her homecoming. A guy who had moral dilemmas bought her. She runs away from the banker's romantic approaches and finds solace in the nursing facilities run by Colonel Mahindra, a kind and honest doctor. However, she still had to defend herself from Dr. Ratan Chand Batra, who was Mahindra's business partner and an attempted molestation victim. But she shows incredible patience and makes do with what she has with Dr. Mahindra's help. In the end, it is the new mother's contrite heart that returns Gauri to her husband. Even though her husband was overjoyed to see her again, he still wants a taste of her virginity. The situation has completely evaporated, and Gauri complains with an obstinacy befitting her heroic fortissimo and moral calculation. According to her:

I shall not be swallowed by the ground since I am not Sita.

After telling this, she returns to Hosiarpur and begins a new chapter in her life there. Hi there, Permila! According to Paul:

*Is Anand's only work in which a female protagonist plays a pivotal role, *The Old Woman and the Cow (Gauri)*? The heroine, Gauri, aligns herself with Anand's subjugated heroes. Gauri, in contrast to most of his characters, flees the stifling household coils*

before they can choke her to death and enters the revitalising contemporary world. This allows her to express her complaint within the framework of wicked society. She comes out of it as a reborn woman, full of life, whereas most of the heroes die too soon.

The need of achieving a creative synthesis between tradition and modernity is something that Anand has emphasised in his work *Old Myth New Myth: Recital Verses creative*. The risks of perpetuating the essence of ancient stories via modern language are something he is well aware of. While he was trying to paint a picture of Sita via the role of Gauri. While Anand has some success in making her relatable, innocent, and lovable, he falls short when it comes to developing the supporting characters. If we take Anand's depiction of Panchi as an example, we see him struggling to balance the conflicting demands of society and his own moral compass. In contrast to Gauri's "Cow like" kindness, Panchi seems to be an unheroic figure—a cardboard cutout without any redeeming qualities—yet she retains her inherent innocence and purity of character. And so are the traits that define a lady of Indian descent. She refuses to cower in the face of society's unreasonable expectations and instead forges her own path, freeing herself from both rigid societal norms and the shackles of male chauvinism. The excellent brushwork on Gauri's character is a kind of self-assertion, as is her slow but steady rebellion against the traditional male dominance. As pointed out by Anand:

As a devout Hindu bride, Gauri was prepared to wait patiently and courageously through anything in her quest to win her lord and master over.

She, too, was betrayed by the religious goddess and prepared to face her wicked destiny, much like Hardy Tess. Just like Nora in *A Doll's House*, she abandons the society that rejected her as her dollhouse falls apart. S. C. Harrex notes:

With its premise as a contemporary Indian folk tale, the book may be described as a pastoral realist work. Archetypal situations put the story in motion and complicate the plot.

The novel's central plot is on the heroine's struggles, and it follows a traditional progression, going from disaster to survival in line, you could say, with the unavoidable rule of dharma (Harrex 142-58). *The Old Woman and the Cow (Gauri)*, a book by Anand, vividly portrays the Indian setting where societal norms and the dreadful force of genetics take precedence over individual agency. The expertly fused myth and reality traces the collective mentality.

**ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*:
A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF POSRMODERN INDIAN
FICTION**

It was in the United States that the modern feminist movement was born. There is a political, economic, and social reflection of women's uneven standing. Collectively, these factors contributed "to the rise of a new feminist movement in the 1960s" (The Politics Protest 927), which occurred in the United States. It is undeniable that its teachings have permeated all areas of study, especially literature. In response to preexisting societal norms, feminism emerged as a social movement. It is also an anti-patriarchal ideological movement. Its goal is to bring about changes related to women. Along with men's legal, educational, spiritual, and religious rights, feminism argues that women should have the same opportunities in these areas. In an otherwise patriarchal Indian culture, the subject of women's emancipation is brought up by Indian women authors writing in English. It is the human condition, with all its muddled context, that postmodern feminist authors believe must be found. Thus, they are not content to limit themselves to depicting the oppressed, traumatised, and troubled existence of a woman who has been mistreated by a civilization that was created by humans. Their joyful hunting area is the human condition, not just women's problems. Arundhati Roy depicts her female characters as complex, multi-faceted human beings who are often perplexed and seen in a variety of human roles. The protagonists frantically try to unravel the deep secrets of human existence.

In a patriarchal culture, women's status is pitiful. In her seminal essay *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir exposes her dissent with women's situation as "She -a free and[an] autonomous being like all creatures- nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men coupled her to assume the status of the other" (Beauvoir 13). You are not born a lady; you become one, she explains (Beauvoir 13). Phallocentrism, gynocentric critique, and perspective criticism are the three main branches of feminist theory. Gynocentric critique focuses on women writers, while phallocentrism operates with male-authored literature reflecting female-imaged authors. In the end, Prescriptive Criticism aims to provide criteria for artistic production that might justify feminist advancement. A desire for identification and quest for a definition of self-have become the key factor of women in literature under the spell of feminism, according to feminist critic Veena Nobel Dass (Dass 11). Postmodernists have addressed important topics such as sexism and feminism. The emancipation and rights of women have always been central to feminism's historical focus. By demonstrating how enlightenment discourses globalise the western, middle-class male experience, feminists have uncovered the hidden dominance tactics inherent in the concept of objective knowledge. The feminist movement disproves the idea that sexuality is a fundamental component of the body and that social

structures do not reflect inherent human diversity. More importantly, the author elevates the status of women in Indian culture.

***The God of small Things*: A Feminist Perspective**

A look at the lives of Southern Indian females living in patriarchal households is the central theme of this book. There are hints about the formation of masculinity as authoritative figures in this type of social arena. Even Roy's nonfictional works, such as *The Great Indian Rape Trick I* and *The Great Indian Rape Trick II*, provide light on her feminist visualisation. She harshly criticises the acclaimed picture *Bandit Queen*, directed by Shekhar Kapur, in both pieces. The novel's female characters, including Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Ammu, and Rahel, allow author Arundhati Roy to express her feminist views. Roy shows how women's roles are shifting via these fictional figures, who are all leaders in their own postmodern culture. A woman is shown as 'the other' and 'the marginalised' on many occasions. A young woman's harrowing descent into her upbringing is the epicentre of Roy's work, which explores several themes and realities. As the first-generation female figure, Mammachi represents the Imperial Entomologist Pappachi's wife. She spins a profitable yarn out of her culinary skills. She quickly turns her pickle company into a thriving cottage industry after its tremendous success. Because he is very jealous of his wife's success, Pappachi becomes more aggressive at night and mercilessly beats her. Also, Pappachi finds it bothersome since he and his wife are different ages. The shame of retirement was too much for Papa Chini to bear. He couldn't believe he was an elderly man while his wife was still in her prime; he was seventeen years Mammachi's senior (Roy 47). Pappachi abruptly ends his wife's violin lessons once he discovers her talent. As a result of his frustration, Pappachi savagely beats his wife. The most distressing part, however, was when Pappachi would sometimes resort to physical violence against Mammachi. Soshamma, Ammu's mom, is a survivor of long-term physical abuse; Rahel and Estha call her Mammachi. The battering Mammachi received from a metal vase is visible on her head in the form of weals and pimples.

Supposedly, the frequency with which her spouse beats her is proportional to the level of success her business venture, *Paradise Pickles and Preserves*, obtains. Mammachi has been a quiet sufferer for years, despite the fact that the Syrian Christian Community in Kerala, India is mostly a matriarchal one. She grieves even for Pappachi's death. A profound feeling of loss had settled within her. The thing is, Ammu explains to Rahel, she is very habitual. She is shielded from harm by her son Chacko. At last, Chacko puts a stop to his father's antics. At one point, he twists his dad's hand and tells him not to do it again. Telling his father, "I never want this to happen again," he makes a statement. For all time (Roy 48). Upon this incident, Pappachi

ceased all communication with his wife. Even now, it's the son, not the daughter, who rescues mum.

In this patriarchal system, where men have all the cards—sexual, economic, political, and physical—it's easy to see how Mammachi's frailty and Pappachi's dominance play out. In a subservient manner, Mammachi agrees and obeys. This is her way of acknowledging the gender role that society has imposed on her. She doesn't fight, doesn't complain, and is completely obedient. Her son Chacko is likewise plagued by the same issue. Upon his return from England, he assumes the role of pickle plant owner. However, Mammachi is the one who coordinates everything to keep the plant running smoothly. The factory runs at a loss due to Chacko's confused socialist and capitalist views. In addition, Chacko is not told when problems arise; only Mammachi is. Despite Velutha's low status, Mammachi musters the courage to hire him as head mechanic. The oppressed Dalit man Velutha is a Paravan. He comes from a long line of servants that have worked for Chacko's. Velutha is an exceptionally gifted and energetic worker. Velutha has a distinct way that sets them apart from other oppressed groups. Even though he is indispensable in the pickle plant thanks to his skills in equipment renovation, he faces several animosities from the higher classes who see him as a downtrodden servant. As a result, she skillfully navigates the delicate balance between her dual roles as an independent businesswoman and a subservient housewife, without crossing the line between them. In the male-dominated culture, Mammachi is repressed despite her several admirable traits.

CONCLUSION

We might claim that the differing experiences of the sexes in India's past inevitably result in different perspectives, behaviours, and portrayals of society today. There are still vestiges of patriarchy in today's culture. It is being actively opposed by women. Also, unlike male authors, their portrayal of society is shaped by their own biological and emotional characteristics. This causes a shift in their writing style and the way their characters develop across their books. For women already at a disadvantage, societal norms and political practices are major factors. There are strong societal forces that legitimise the oppression of women. This is due to the fact that patriarchal social systems are prevalent in the majority of cultures. Feminism is only one of many themes explored in Arundhati Roy's work that questions this stance. One of the most well-known Indian authors to have written for the English-language publishing business is Mulk Raj Anand. He enjoyed unparalleled fame on a global scale as a writer. All throughout the globe, his writings continue to shape people's thoughts and opinions.

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