

**A Psychoanalytic Deconstruction of Arundhati Roy's
*The God of Small Things***

Priya Saravanan, M.A., M.Phil.

C.T.T.E College for Women (Affiliated to the University of Madras)
Perambur
Chennai-600 011

priyaasaravanan@hotmail.com
privasaravanan001@gmail.com

=====
Abstract

This paper analyses Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*, under the light of Post Structuralism by employing Jacques Derrida's idea of deconstruction. Deconstruction denotes the idea of breaking down the contextual meaning by studying the text closely to look through the other possibilities, where it discloses the meaning that is buried deep within the constructed context. To deconstruct the text is to locate the circumstances in the novel that sets the basic binary principle and to subvert or dismantle its secured substructure of the plot line framed by the author. Roy presents the Passion and the Reason as a binary pair in the novel, while with preconceived notions the readers tend only to focus on the hierarchical binary 'passion'. The aim of the study is to prove the dominance of the exposed hierarchical binary in the novel that will subsequently fall dependent on the other hidden binary dual in the text. Hence, the study targets on the other unexposed binary dual 'Reason' over the exposed binary dual 'Passion'. Drawing upon the French psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud's books *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *The Ice Berg Analogy*, this research analyses Esthappen's tangled attraction towards his twin sister Rahel by applying oedipal complex formulated by Freud.

Keywords: Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*, Psychoanalytic Deconstruction, Oedipal Complex, Tangled attraction, Goddess

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, a post-colonial novel that revolves around a pair of dizygotic twins (two egg twins) and their traumatic past that ruined their lives and kept them apart for twenty-three years. The novel focuses on the lives of two innocent children that had been spoiled by the brutal rawness of the society and its ruthless norms. The novel ends with them reuniting as adults. This paper will analyse the novel from a psychological perspective by doing a deconstructive reading of the novel.

Arundhati Roy is not just a novelist but also an actor, non-fiction essayist and a political activist. Being a native writer, she knows India from inside about all its political, cultural and caste conflicts. She has her own peculiar way of using English words. She shows readers that each of us has

our own language, that which makes us different from the rest. Roy with her debut novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) created an imprint on the literary history of Indian English literature. This semi-autobiographical work, that mainly focuses on Roy's childhood experiences in Ayemenem, her family home, earned her a place in *The New York Times*' best seller list and won the Man Booker Prize Award in the same year. Followed by the success of her first novel she has written many essays, television serials and documentaries. In her late thirties Roy was one of the most celebrated writers of India.

This paper will analyse the novel *The God of Small Things* this Sigmund Schlomo Freud the German Psychologist and the founder of psychoanalysis, introduces the Oedipus complex in his work *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). In his psychosexual analytic theory, he draws five basic development stages in every individual from their childhood. The Oral stage, Anal stage, Phallic stage, Latency period and Genital stage.

The Oral Stage, from birth to one year, in the first stage and the libidinal position is in their mouth. They get pleasure biting, suckling and chewing, in this stage the child is completely dependent on their mothers. When the child gets fixated in this stage after growing up they can be orally aggressive or orally passive. They could develop habits such as smoking, biting etc. Anal Stage is the second stage from one to three years. In this stage the pleasure comes from learning to use their bladder and splinter muscles. At this stage the children are no longer completely dependent on their parents. The third stage is the phallic stage which is from three to six years; the erogenous zone here is the Genitalia. This is a crucial stage in one's childhood. In this stage the child gets to know about its gender. Freud believed that this is the stage where the child gets attracted to its opposite sex parent and develops the castration anxiety.

The fixation in this stage for boys leads to Mother Fixation and for girls it is termed as Electra complex or Father Fixation as suggested by Carl Jung. The Latency period is the fourth stage from the age of six to puberty and in this stage the sexual drive for a person is dormant and psychological peace. The Genital Stage is the fifth stage that starts from puberty till the end. As a grown-up individual in this stage, he or she is sexually mature. Fixation in this stage can lead to unfulfilled sexual life, impotence etc.

In each stage of the development the libidinal position of the body changes which was characterized by the erogenous zone, the source of sexual drive. Freud believed that human beings possess the instinctual libido, so when the child in any way experiences an imbalance in the development stage, it has a high chance of getting anxiety, and as an adult he or she would suffer from neurosis, or hysteria, or personality disorders. To avoid anxiety, the ego gets involved as the defence mechanism and the child gets fixated. As the result, it affects the ability of the person to form relationships and it also exerts a strong influence on one's personal behaviour.

Whether a particular obsessive attachment is a fixation, or the defensible expression of love is at time is debatable. Fixation to intangible (i.e., ideas, ideologies, etc...) can also occur. The obsessive factor of fixation is also found in symptoms pertaining to Obsessive Compulsive

Disorder, which psychoanalysts linked to mix of early (pregenital) frustrations and gratifications. (Fenichel 305).

Literature abounds with works capturing the above human psychology. *Oedipus Rex* (or Oedipus Tyrannus) by Sophocles is a tragic Greek play about a king named Oedipus, who killed his father and married his mother. This is the original model based on which the theory of Oedipus complex was formulated by Freud in psychoanalysis. This signifies the emotional urge and thought that was kept hidden in the mind of an individual through dynamic repression in the unconscious mind. Some more famous works in the history of literature the works with such complexities are Apollo the mythical reference from the Greek mythology, *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence.

This paper analyses the novel *The God of Small Things* using the above psychoanalysis as well as through the deconstructive theory propounded by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. In the late 1960s, there was a great paradigm shift in the literary critical theories, from structuralism to post structuralism. The movement that emerged in France, began with Derrida's lecture "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" at Johns Hopkins University in the year 1966. Many of the post structural thinkers such as, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault who previously supported structuralism later become more sceptical about the concept. Drawing from both Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theories and Claude Levi-Strauss' Anthropology, Derrida's Deconstruction challenges the basic ideas of structuralism that claims to know the absolute 'Truth', and the 'Author Centric' representation of the text.

The critical perspective of post structuralism is that, it strongly argues that there is no single 'meaning' in the text and it differs from person to person, and it is Reader centric, while deconstruction completely rejects the idea of language being in the centre. In post structuralism, the 'meaning' is fragile. *Discourse, deconstruction, genealogy, and intertextuality* are the fundamental concepts that post-structuralism discusses about. The primary principles of the post structuralism state that the transcendental signifier is absolutely absent, and most of the human beliefs are inhabited by the transcendental truths like philosophical, scientific, cultural, etc. The concept of truth is nothing but the output of relationships among signs. Although the connections between the signs contribute for the creation of contextual meanings, those relationships are not fixed or fully visible. The text reveals the trace of its own uncertainty. The careful reading of the text, logocentric view of the binaries and value interpretation of the text is purely contingent. There is nothing outside the text; it shifts critical attenuation from the author. In Derrida's words: "Il'y a pas de hors-texte" (There is no outside- text) (Derrida 173).

Derrida had written over forty books all of them are hypothetical and subtle. In his book *Of Grammatology* (*De la Grammatologie*, 1967), is referred as the corner stone for Deconstructive criticism. The book discusses twelve writers including Claude Levi Strauss, Ferdinand de Saussure, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Martin Heidegger etc. It was first translated in English by an Indian scholar Gayathri Chakravoty Spivak in 1976.

Derrida denounces the concept of absolute truth and objectivity asserting that the notion of the structure of a text is not stable. The 'Difference' dilutes the meaning of the text, he explains it with examples to make clear to the readers with words like "to differ" or "to defer". These words have two potential meanings, first one is to differ from something, the second one is to wait, to hold on and check or to delay. Thus, he proves that the meaning of a word is regularly in the state of arbitration and defence. He says that "Difference" destroys "Logocentrism", and the idea that objective truth can be obtained by the given signs in the text can be deceiving. Derrida also remarks about the duplicity of binary constructions, the interpretation that one is superior to the other. He argues that one cannot prevail without the other, thus, the text has no transcendental truth like structuralism declares, he concludes.

Derrida, in his work *Of Grammatology* frequently uses the terms like 'deconstruction', 'aporia', and 'logocentrism'. Deconstruction demands the readers to read the text without the influences of preconceived notions of the others, instead to give it a close reading to understand the prospect truth that was underestimated or hidden in the opposite. He deconstructs a set of basic binary pairs such as Masculinity over Femininity, Reason over Passion, Profit over Generosity, High culture over Low culture etc. He then uses the word *Aporia*, a Greek Word, which means puzzlement or impasse, a condition that humanity must accept and to visit constantly and to handle the confused state of mind that neglects, or not willingly accepts, the truth that might be entombed. One of the primary motives of Derrida's criticism was a thinking that he named "Logocentrism", with which he understood an excessive devotion to reason and unambiguous definition that has been tied down by a faith in the language. According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus, Deconstruction is the "Detailed examination of a text in order to show there is no fixed meaning but that it can be understood in a different way by each reader".

Roy's *The God of Small Things* is set in Ayemenem, a small-town village that is located in Kerala. With the third person narration, the novel shifts between the present and the past. It is May, a sweating hot month in Ayemenem the narrator introduces, Rachel one of the Twins, when she is returning to her home town after knowing about Esthappen's (the other Twin's) arrival through Baby Kochamma's previous letter. Rahel and Esthappen belong to an anglophilic South Indian bourgeois family that consist of the twins-Rahel and Esthappen, Ammu (their mother), Chacko, Mammachi, and Baby Kochamma.

After her separation from her husband Ammu moves to Ayemenem, her home town. Although her mother Mammachi (Grandmother) likes them there, she always takes the side of Chacko, her son. Chacko likes the children on a very superficial level, and Baby Kochamma their Grand Aunt never liked Ammu nor the children. She has always been bitter towards their behaviour she calls them Satan. Growing up under such circumstances the children grow up feeling isolated and unwanted that makes them emotionally weak and forces them to doubt their own Self Image. In this situation Velutha an untouchable servant of the family, shows them the fatherly love that they long for. Being Ammu's childhood friend she likes the fact that Velutha acts like a father-figure for her children. Since Ammu herself feels deserted and unloved she also eventually gets attracted to Velutha.

In this situation, on his request Chacko's ex-wife Margaret and daughter Sophia, visit Ayemenem from London. Already being secluded and criticised the twins consider Sophia as a threat for the love that they receive from Ammu and Velutha. This can clearly visible when Rahel asks her uncle

“Chacko, Is it necessary that people HAVE to love their own children most in the world?”
“There are no rules,” Chacko said. “But people usually do.”
“Chacko, for example,” Rahel said, “Just for *example*, is it possible that Ammu can love Sophie Mol, more than me and Estha? Or for you to love me more than Sophie Mol, for example?”
(Roy 118)

Even though Sophie Mol likes her cousins, the twins preferred to maintain a safe distance from her and the family. Thinking of escaping the house they prepared a hideout in Akkara, an old hut which is closer by the river Meenachal. “‘Because Anything can Happen to Anyone,’ Estha Said. ‘it’s Best to be Prepared.’” (Roy 198). When the twins are running away, Sophie Mol insists on going with them in the boat. “The Boat that Ammu would use to cross the river. To love by night the man her Children loved by day.” (Roy 202). When crossing the river, unfortunately the tiny boat that they row collapses, pushing the three into the river, unlike the twins who know how to swim, Sophie Mol drowns.

Baby Kochamma, wanting to take revenge on Velutha, files a false complaint against him, claiming that he Molested Ammu and abducted the children. The local police beat up Velutha brutally as the kids watch them from their hiding spot. When the station Inspector Thomas Mathew asks, Baby Kochamma for the victim or the witness to file FIR on Velutha, Baby Kochamma, threatens the children with Sophie Mol's death, and asks Estha to agree to whatever the police say. The twins forced to choose between their mother and her lover, they obviously choose Ammu over Velutha. “‘Save Ammu.’ Save us. Save our mother.” (Roy 319). “The Inspector asked his question. Estha's mouth said Yes. Childhood tiptoed out. Silence slide in like a bolt. Someone switched off the light and Velutha disappeared” (Roy 320).

Jean Jacques Rousseau, one of the most prominent figures among French philosophers in the eighteenth century, gave birth to modern philosophy, basing his arguments under the key idea of how the civil society contaminates Humanity. In his work *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* (1750), he says, “When there is no effect, there is no cause to seek. But here the effect is certain, the depravity real, and our souls have been corrupted in proportion to the advancement of our sciences and arts toward perfection” (Qtd in *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau* 218). Starting from Pappachi, Baby Kochamma, Chacko and to an extent Ammu, all are more conscious about the society and its norms.

After the deaths of Velutha and Sophie Mol, the family splits up. Ammu was asked to leave the house by Chacko for having an affair with the untouchable servant. As for the twins, “it had been decided that one twin could stay in Ayemenem. Not both. Together they were trouble. *nataS ni right seye*. They had to be separated.” (Roy 302). Therefore, Esthappen was sent to Calcutta to live with his

father. He never sees his Ammu after that. Ammu dies of poverty in a small lodge when she was thirty-one. The church refused to burry Ammu on many accounts.

Left behind, Rahel, with each passing day grew more indifferent with the world around her “In matters related to the raising of Rahel, Chacko and Mammachi tried, but couldn’t. They provided the care (food, clothing, fees), but withdrew the concern.” (Roy 15). Rahel remained a problematic child in all her schools that she attended. She always invited troubles and was expelled from schools for being rebellious; bothering her seniors and teachers: “in each of the schools she went to, the teachers noted that she: (a) Was an extremely polite child. (b) Had no friends.” (Roy 17). Not only did this condition of Rahel, stop with her school but also continued in her college: “the other students, particularly the boys, were intimidated by Rahel’s way-wardness and almost fierce lack of ambition. They left her alone. She was never invited to their nice homes or noisy parties. Even her professors were a little wary of her- her bizarre, impractical building plans, presented on cheap brown paper, her indifference to their passionate critiques.” (Roy 18). All through her life, she fights a constant battle in maintaining her own self-image, she feels unloved and isolated. The series of traumatic events that shakes her personality and mental behaviour is clearly visible. As mentioned above the fixation in the latency period leads to sexual dissatisfaction and a loose behaviour.

Rahel then married Larry McCaslin, whom she met in Delhi when persuing a course in architecture. “He (Larry) held her (Rahel) as though she was a gift. Given to him in love. Something still and small. Unbearably precious. But when they made love he was offended by her eyes” (Roy 19). Larry was of course annoyed by the look that she had in her eyes but was unable to fathom what the look in her eyes meant.

What Larry McCaslin saw in Rahel’s eyes was not despair at all, but a sort of enforced optimism. And a hollow where Estha’s words had been. He couldn’t be expected to understand that. That the emptiness in one twin was only a version of the quietness in the other. That the two things fitted together. Like stacked spoons. Like familiar lovers’ bodies.” (Roy 19-20)

After Larry and Rahel separate, she works in an Indian restaurant as a waitress in New York for a few months and then she works as a night clerk in a gas station for few years. Rahel, almost all of her growing up years, she misses a part of herself, living a dead life, careless, in exile from her own self.

Jacques Marie Emile Lacan, another renowned French psychoanalyst, created a very significant impact on philosophy and psychoanalysis since Freud. He examined the ego, the id, the castration anxiety, the self-identity, and language subjective insight. As a post structural critic, he inspired many French thinkers, around 1960s and 70s. His thoughts have had a remarkable influence on the literary criticism. Lacan draws from *Wunsch*, the Freudian concept of ‘Desire’ that examines the true reason behind one’s desire, but this is obtainable only if the desire is expressed. Lacan writes that “it is only once it formulated, named in the presence of the other that desire appears in the full sense of the term” and moreover this identification of desire “is not a question of recognizing something which would be

entirely given. In naming it, the subject creates; bring forth, a new presence in the world” (Qtd. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 37). The Psychoanalyst thus instructs patients “to bring desire into existence” (Qtd *Foundation of Literary Criticism- II*, 288) this discourse somehow brings out the true reason behind one’s desire but, whenever the discourse tries to expose the entire truth about the desire, it is never revealed.

This is the same with the twins’ situation, the most debated incest scene in the novel, although one could still argue that what had happened between them is just a momentary thing. “Nothing that (in Mammachi’s book) would separate Sex from Love. Or Need from Feeling.” (Roy 328). The desire here is expressed via Esthappen’s twin sister Rahel. Even after the twenty-three years of separation she is the one who understands him better than anyone else in the novel.

Lacan in *The Signification of the Phallus* differentiates Desire from need and demand. Need is a basic biotic sense, that is expressed in demand. Ultimately demand handles a dual function. On the one side, it creates need, and on the other, it also causes a demand for love. Even after the need gets appeased or fulfilled, the demand for love stays unfulfilled. Now the remaining is called desire. “Desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction nor demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second” (Qtd *Foundation of literary criticism- II* 288). He also says that “desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand becomes separated from need” (Lacan, 222). Therefore, the desire can never be gratified.

Thus, according to Lacan’s theory of desire Rahel is the one who articulates the desire and creates the need by provoking Esthappen. “TWENTY –THREE YEARS LATER, Rahel, dark women in a yellow T-shirt, turns to Estha in the dark. ‘Esthapappychachen Kuttappen Peter Mon,’ she says. She whispers.” (Roy, 327). To Rahel, Estha is the only person with whom she feels complete, her only sanctuary where she will find the love that she aches for all through her life. He had always been ubiquitous in her life like Ammu’s ‘Faraway man’, even during her intimate moments with Larry.

Her love for Esthappen is unconditional and nameless - no one saw Esthappen like Rahel did, “Except perhaps that no Watcher watched through Rahel’s eyes.” (Roy 328). After twenty-three years, when she saw Esthappen “Rahel watched Estha with the curiosity of a mother watching her wet child. A sister a brother. A woman a man. A twin a twin.” (Roy 93). Her love for Estha gets crystalized and it takes the shape of desire, what follows next is the impulsive emotion that was activated instantly without consciousness. This is what Lacan means when he says the subject formulates, creates, names and brings forth ‘desire’.

In Esthappen's case the things that he happened to experience in his childhood change him into a different person altogether. He became silent and with abnormal social behaviour, he never talked to anyone. From the day he left Ayemenem, his Ammu and Rahel he started talking less. No one exactly knew when he had stopped talking.

Once the quietness arrived, it stayed and spread in Estha. It reached out of his head and enfolded him in its swampy arms... It stripped his thoughts of the words that described them and left them pared and naked. Unspeakable. Numb. And to an observer therefore, perhaps barely there. Slowly, over the years, Estha withdrew from the world. (Roy 11, 12)

The narrator of the novel calls him “the little man with spoiled puff” for a reason, although he is a little boy when he knows better than everyone in the novel, he takes responsibility for what had happened to Ammu, Velutha and Sophie Mol. He feels the guilt that is eating him alive throughout his life. Twenty-three years later, when Rahel meets the other part of herself, her twin brother Estha, he no longer talked, no one cared, and no one could understand the way he communicated except for Rahel who does not need words to understand Estha. ““Watch! Baby Kochamma said. She seemed excited. ‘He’ll walk straight to his room and wash his clothes. He’s very over clean...he won’t say a word!’” (Roy 90).

Thus, it is seen that both Esthappen and Rahel are fixated. While Esthappen is fixated in the third stage, Rahel is in the Latency period which is the fourth phase of the psychosexual developments. If an individual remains fixated in this developmental phase, they are more likely to have unsatisfied sexual life. Rahel missed her brother ever since the elders had decided to split them up.

When Rahel saw her twin brother after twenty-three years, Estha no longer talked. Baby Kochamma said that he had become abnormally silent and over-clean. As Estha in the novel rightly said, anything can happen in a day. Anyone can die. Estha from being an active kid, the things that he had experienced in his early stage of childhood have turned him into a very silent person with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (ODC).

Freud in 1915 used the ‘Iceberg Analogy’ to describe the workings of mind. “The mind is like as iceberg it floats with one seventh of its bulk above water” (Qtd eNotes). He divided the mental structure into three parts. Conscious or Ego, the mental process that the person is aware of, like the tip of an iceberg; Preconscious or Super ego, are the things that an individual is currently unaware of but can be easily brought into consciousness when tried, that lies right below the conscious mind and above the unconscious; Unconscious or Id, this part of the mind comprises of the deep hidden thoughts of the person that are not accessible to the conscious mind, the deep root of the iceberg that cannot be predicted.

Id or unconscious mind is the first developed, basic mental process of an individual. This process works on the basis of Pleasure Principle and acts as the storage place. The pleasure principle is concerned with avoiding pain, receiving immediate gratification; it consists of the basic biological instinct and the primary urge for sexual satisfaction. Ego or Conscious mind develops after the unconscious or Id in an individual. This works on the reality principal, diplomacy between the id and the social norms. This is the superficial side of an individual, who is bound by the societal norms. This is the part that thinks rationally and maintains defence mechanism. Superego or the pre-conscious, this is the last process that develops at the age of five or above. This is the stage where a person thinks of

the consequences of what is wrong and right. The ego often jumps between Superego and Id. All these three processes that take place in the mind of an individual are unconscious. He or she is not aware of the processes.

Freud, after dividing the working process of the mind, came up with the concept called Defence Mechanisms. People possess the unique range of defence mechanism individually. Ego or the conscious mind of an individual gets involved when the person is feeling vulnerable about something, it takes necessary steps to defend one from feeling worse. But human beings are never consciously aware about the process of self-defence. When they become aware of exhibiting these sets of self-defence techniques, it stops being the defence process. When the Conscious mind of the person is dealing with the tremendous amount of anxiety, chances are the individual might manifest some behaviour, which is based on what is dormant and hidden in the id or the unconscious.

Some of the defence mechanisms identified by Freud are: Repression, that pushes the thoughts into the deep to our unconscious mind; Denial, not accepting the ego threatening truth; Regression, going back to the old comforting form of behaviour; Rationalization, comforting oneself with the beneficial result of an unwanted better outcome; Intellectualization, the individual think in the more academic way of looking at it by separating oneself from emotionally getting involved, an unemotional study of an issue; Displacement, redirecting one's anger or hurt through other person, this is also called kick-the-dog syndrome; Projection, believing that the feelings one has toward someone else are actually held by the other person and directed at oneself; Reaction Formation, expressing the opposite of how one truly feels; Sublimation, this can be a healthy option, focusing on the different goal after the failure.

These are some of the defence mechanisms that can be used by the ego to protect oneself from the conscious level damage. So, anything that threatens our ego gets pushed down to the unconscious level of our brain. But psychological issues occur when the ego is defeated by the trauma that an individual experience. It is the projection of the ego's inability to dodge the anxiety. Freud used various methods get into a person's mind. Through Hypnosis, Dream interpretation - he said, "Dreams are the royal road to the unconscious" (Qtd. Cleantis). Free association is having them to talk and keeping up a random conversation with the patients. Psychoanalysts also use projection test, giving them a picture and asking about its theme. These are some of the ways to access one's unconscious state of mind.

Freud in his psychoanalytic theory focuses mainly on the ego or the conscious of the person, repressing the trauma that they have experienced in the early stages of their lives, into the unconscious regions of their mind. The majority of the children who experienced trauma, the battle-scarred veterans who had seen so many loses and holocaust survivors experience the imbalance in their ego, the damage that they gone through is beyond repair. Their ego is unable to deal with the process of repressing the experiences into the unconscious mind and it intrudes in the day to day activities leaving lasting effects on the person's personal behaviour.

Modern researches show the exact working process of one's unconscious mind as well as Schemas which accordingly controls interpretation and perception; aligned processing in the midst of vision and thought flow; inherited memories; and emotions that trigger immediately without conscious. Roy, in her novel, often uses Dreams, and Thoughts as tools to make readers clear about the unconscious condition of the mind of the characters. All the major characters in the novel are affected psychologically in various ways – not to mention that this is also a semi-autobiographical work. Therefore, many of the characters in this novel are in fact Roy's real-life characters. Ammu dreams of the one-armed man, that is clearly Velutha.

Estha - the – Accurate replied. 'She dreams a lot.' If he touched her, he couldn't talk to her, if he loved her, he couldn't leave if he spoke, he couldn't listen, if he fought, he couldn't win. Who was he, the one-armed man? Who could he have been? The God of loss? The God of Small Things? The God of Goose Bumps and Sudden Smiles? Of Sourmeal Smells – the steel bus –rails and the smell of the bus conductor's hand from holding them? (Roy 217)

Rahel also dreams about a faceless fat man that symbolically represents Chacko's words to Ammu. He said that he would break every bone of Ammu's body if she stayed in the house any longer. After that incident for several years Rahel would dream of "A fat man, faceless, killing beside a woman's corpse. Hacking its hair off. Breaking every bone of its body. Snapping even the little ones. The fingers. The ear bones cracked like twigs. Snap snap the soft sound of breaking bones. A pianist killing the piano keys. Even the black ones." (Roy 225). Freud in his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, mentions that for a neurosis patient, through the form of Dream, their mind always plays back the situation or the traumatic incident that it had experienced previously, from which they happen to wake up with different battles and this shocks people far less.

For Estha it is a parallel processing of vision and thought: "The Orangedrink Lemon drink Man could walk in any minute. Catch a Cochin – Kottayam bus and be there. And Ammu would offer him a cup of tea. Or pineapple squash perhaps. With ice. Yellow in a glass." (Roy 194). This is the outcome of Estha's encounter with the Lemon drink man, who physically molests him outside the talkies near the refreshment counter. While Baby Kochamma's is different from the others, she grows up in the situation where she has to be very cautious about everything. Being disturbed by their childhood traumas, all the chief character in the novel are partly the victims of their past. Thus, it is evident that Roy in her novel employs many psychological elements sequentially to make the readers emotionally connect with the plot line and its characters.

The twins in the novel, Estha and Rahel, grow up having no father figure beside them. As the result these two children, probably would have never experienced the castration anxiety like that which other unexceptional kids go through on their third developmental stage between the age of Three and Six. Freud says that the phallic stage plays a major role in developing the child's mental health, considering that is the stage where the person's ego unlocks something called defence mechanism to protect the self from feeling depressed. Repression is one of the defence mechanisms, an unconscious

emotional action that pushes the crisis down to the id or the unconscious mind, that is unacceptable by the Ego or the conscious mind of an individual.

This third developmental stage that acquires the idea of defence mechanism by the Ego is the second developmental mental process after the id or the unconscious mind. This stage is a crucial development in a child, and it plays a very important role in building up the psyche of the child, paving the way for a healthy adulthood, physically and mentally into a strong personality. Thus, the children who are fixed in the third stage of their developmental process are called mother fixated or father fixated. Those individuals have the high chance of getting drawn to the person who resembles their parent. In Estha's case it's Rahel. His Sister.

On following Derrida's post structural deconstruction theory, which instructs readers to give a close reading of a text in order to find the binary dominance that was pre-installed in the work. It denotes the idea of breaking down the contextual meaning that is buried deep within the constructed context. To deconstruct the text is to locate the circumstances in the novel that sets the basic binary principle and to subvert or dismantle its secured substructure of the plotline framed by the author. Roy presents the passion and the reason as a binary duo in the novel, while with preconceived notions the readers tend only to focus on the hierarchical binary 'Passion'.

The interwoven identity and insight that they both have between them is an important stand point: "Esthappen and Rahel thought of themselves together as Me, and separately, individually, as We or Us." (Roy 2). After the Madras Mail Incident for twenty-three long years, Rahel never wrote to Estha, not even to notify him about their Ammu's death, she clarifies, saying that "There are things you can't do – like writing letter to a part of yourself. To your feet or hair or heart" (Roy 163-64). This is very crucial to understand the vastness of their separation.

After the separation, when Rahel saw Estha, she followed him to his room that was once Ammu's. "The room had his secrets. It gave nothing away. Not in the disarray of ruffled sheets, nor the untidiness of a kicked off shoe, or a wet towel hung over the back of a chair. Or a half-read book. It was like a room in a hospital after the nurse had just been" (Roy 91). The bond that Estha and Rahel shared was out of ordinary, they knew each other so well just like one knows the back of one's hand. After studying him for the good fifteen minutes, she saw him as a stranger. "A dark brown man in pale honey clothes. Chocolate with a twist of coffee. High cheekbones and hunted eyes. A fisherman in a white – tailed bathroom, with sea-secrets in his eyes" (Roy, 92). The Esthappen that she knows as her twin brother 'The Little Man with spoil puff' is no more. This is the crucial point where Rahel realises how far Esthappen had gone to keep his emotions buried, where no one could access them.

The following incidents can be seen as Rahel's efforts to mend her brother's insecurities. Esthappen had always been the mother's boy from the beginning, was both guilty and grief-stricken about his mother's state and his ensuing separation from Ammu. Roy, on the one hand repeatedly reinforces the image of Ammu through Rahel, on the other hand Rahel is the only one who could empathise with Esthappen, "Except perhaps that no watcher watched through Rahel's eyes" (Roy 328).

She even goes beyond the twin bond that they both share and sees him as her son who needs to be cherished. “Rahel watched Estha with the curiosity of a mother watching. Her wet child.” (Roy 93). There are plenty of instances in the novel where Estha perceives Rahel as his mother that he lost. “It was his fault that the faraway man in Ammu’s chest stopped shouting. His fault that she died alone in the lodge with no one to lie at the back of her and talk to her. Because he was the one that had said it” (Roy 325). He strongly believes that he is the one who is solely responsible for his mother’s death and feels miserable for what he had done to her.

As both, the author Roy and as the narrator Rahel, they desperately try to mend the image of ‘Ammu and Rahel’ in Estha’s mind in all the given opportunities. In every image and symbol, the author never seems to forget about bringing in the image of ‘Ammu’. After leaving Baba, Ammu goes to the nearest goldsmith in Ayemenem and melts down her wedding ring and makes that into a thin bangle with a two headed snake for Rahel. When Rahel chooses to approach Estha for the first time after the separation, this bangle is the first thing that Roy presents the readers to acknowledge the existences of ‘Ammu’ in the episode. “A thin, gold, serpent-headed bangle glowed like a circle of orange light around her wrist. Slim snakes whispering to each other, head to head. Her mother’s melted wedding ring. Down softened the sharp lines of her thin, angular arms” (Roy 92). Roy then goes on to compare Rahel’s appearance with ‘Ammu’s’ “At first glance she appeared to have grown into the skin of her mother. High cheekbones. Deep dimples when she smiled. But she was longer, harder flatter, more angular than Ammu had been. Less lovely perhaps to those who liked roundness and softness in women. Only her eyes were incontestably more beautiful” (Roy 92). For the second time the author stresses Ammu’s presence by associating Rahel’s image with Ammu.

Roy, as a narrator continues to emphasise Rahel’s resemblances to their mother, this time through Estha. When Estha notices Rahel for the first time after years, she looked attractive, her features reminded him about their mother and his past.

A nagging sound started up in his head. The sound of passing trains. The light and shade and light and shade that falls on you if you have a window seat. He sat even straighter, he could see her. Grown into their mother’s skin. The light glint of her eyes in the dark. Her small straight nose. Her mouth, full lipped. Sometimes wounded-looking about it. As though it was flinching from something. As though long ago someone – a man with rings-had hit her across it. A beautiful, hurt mouth. Their beautiful mother’s mouth, Estha thought. Ammu’s mouth. That had kissed his hand through the barred train window. First class, on the Madras Mail to Madras. (Roy 300)

Estha visualizes, his mother (Ammu) in every aspect of Rahel’s physical features, with her she bought all the things that Estha could relate to his ‘Beautiful Ammu’. “Their beautiful mother’s mouth, Estha thought. Ammu’s mouth. That had kissed his hand through the barred train window. First class, on the Madras Mail to Madras.” (Roy 300). To the readers it seems strange that he always compared Rahel, his twin sister with his mother and not once with Rahel’s childhood appearance.

TWENTY –THREE YEARS LATER, Rahel, dark woman in a yellow T-shirt, turns to Estha in the dark. ‘Esthapappychachen Kuttappen Peter Mon,’ she says. She whispers. She moves her mouth. Their beautiful mother’s mouth. Estha, sitting very straight, waiting to be arrested, takes his fingers to it. To touch the words it makes. To keep the whisper. His fingers follow the shape of it. The touch of teeth. His hand is held and kissed. (Roy 327)

In this scene he once again brings back the memory of the railway station, the window seat, his Ammu, her beautiful lips, the lips that had kissed his hand through the window. Rahel, perfectly knowing what he aches for, kisses his hand that traced her lips, just like her Ammu did in the station the last time where Estha saw his mother. Moreover, the phrases that Roy frequently uses for both Rahel and Ammu commonly like “Old. A viable die-able age.” (Roy 92), “once again they broke the love laws. That lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much.” (Roy 328) are lines that symbolises ‘Ammu’ and highlights her presence often in all the things that Rahel does to Esthappen like their mother. In other words, that is exactly how Esthappen perceives Rahel, like his ‘Ammu’, their mother.

On analysing the circumstances that prevailed in the novel, it can be observed that the twins both Rahel and Esthappen try too hard to hide their emotions, and grow up withdrawn from the outside world. They keep everything to themselves. Applying Freud’s theory of psychosexual analysis, Rahel was fixated in her fourth developmental stage and this might have caused her to be always sexually displeased with her partner. As far as Esthappen is concerned, there is a high chance of him being mother fixated and affected by Oedipal complex, and this could also be one of the reasons that he was so obsessed with cleaning and the cause of his Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) remaining absolutely mute and disconnected with the outside world. This novel can be taken as one of the many examples of children who are growing up in the abnormal situations with traumatic past, suffering its great influence as it impacts the shaping of their personality as adults.

To conclude, Esthappen’s tangled attraction toward the Goddesses (Ammu and Rahel) of the novel, can be partly viewed as an Indian Hamlet or Paul Morel, in the early English play and novel respectively. Hamlet, who saw Ophelia as an alternate option for his mother, but never really cared about breaking Ophelia’s heart or Paul Morel who abandoned his lover Miriam for his Mother. In comparison to these characters, Esthappen also felt his mother’s (Ammu) presence in Rahel, who is in fact his sister, has a very close resemblance to Ammu. “And the air was full of Thoughts and Things to Say. But at times like these, only the Small Things are ever said. Big Things lurk unsaid inside.” (Roy 142).

Works Cited

“Deconstruction” The Cambridge English Dictionary.” Google, Google. Web:
<https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/dictionary.cambridge.org/amp/english/deconstruction>

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 19:5 May 2019

Priya Saravanan, M.A., M.Phil.

A Psychoanalytic Deconstruction of Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*

- Cleantis, Tracey. "Freudian- Express: Dreams, the Royal Road to the Unconscious." Posted. Jan 14, 2011. Accessed 27th Nov 2017, Web: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/freudian-sip/201101/freudian-express-dreams-the-royal-road-the-unconscious>
- Cornell, Drucilla. Michel Rosenfeld, David Gray Carlson, eds. *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Routledge, 2016.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Geschlecht II: Heidegger's Hand." Trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. *Deconstruction in Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida*. Ed. John Sallis. U Chicago Press, 1987. P.173.
- Dhami, G.S. "Foundation of literary Criticism." Vol. II. Greenwood, 2003. P. 288.
- eNotes, 1 Nov. 2015, Web: <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-did-sigmund-freud-mean-when-said-mind-iceberg-542873>. Accessed 27.Nov. 2018.
- Evans, Dylan. "An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis." Taylor and Francis e-library, 2006, P.37. Web: <http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk/>.
- Fenichel, Otto. "The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis." London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, p.305.
- Keenan, Dennis King. ed. *Hegel and Contemporary Continental Philosophy*. U NewYork P, 2004. P.222.
- Masters, Roger. D. *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*. Princeton U P, 2015. P.218.
- Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. Penguin, 2002.
-
-



Priya Saravanan, M.A., M.Phil.

C.T.T.E College for Women (Affiliated to the University of Madras)

Perambur

Chennai-600 011

priyaasaravanan@hotmail.com

priyasaravanan001@gmail.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 19:5 May 2019

Priya Saravanan, M.A., M.Phil.

A Psychoanalytic Deconstruction of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

186