

Twins' Estrangement in *The God of Small Things*

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The time comes, the father falls sick of cradling his 'toddlers' as he calls indignantly, and then he desires to get rid of them. One day he lowers them alone and turns his back thereupon forever. The mother is bowed down with double responsibility. She is, now, both their "Ammu" and "Baba". She is bound to observe this responsibility for she has suffered a lot to achieve them. She has suffered labor pains to bear them, her "two egg twins". That is why she can't lower them as their father did. Days passed, months passed, years passed away, and "Ammu -grew tired of their proprietary handling of her. She wanted her body back. It was hers. She shrugged her children off the way a bitch shrugs off her pups when she's had enough of them."¹ First Baba and now Ammu too alienated them. This is observed herein that she seems not much careful about their daily small requirements such as food, bath, cloths etc. She could be seen only to sleep with her back to them at noon in the novel. The children, who are deprived of parental concern, often get out of control. The two egg twins remain outside home whole day; and the mother is not aware of their whereabouts. An element of the estrangement of the twins is rampant across the novel. A study is attempted to reflect Roy's concern for the estranged in the novel *The God of Small Things* (the bestseller that won her the Booker Prize circa 1997 and then immediate popularity far and wide). Roy, herself has experienced the sting of estrangement in her life. Like Rahel and Estha, she also remained deprived of her father's love. When Roy was at college, her classmates and class teachers as worse ignored her. The author narrates her own estrangement from the family and the society as well through that of "the two egg twins".

Alienation can be felt in the stunning taciturnity of Estha. The boy was very playful and happy with her twin sister in the early days of the arrival to Ayemenem. However, gradually they began to realize that they were fatherless and strangers in the house of their maternal-grandparents. Baby Kochamma, the aunt of their mother, plays a cynical to make the twins realize that they were parasite. She hates them for they would stay with her permanently until they are force-turned away. She does not bear their naughtiness and specifically the silence of Estha and non-causal distraction of Rahel. She can be seen designing how to exorcise them. In addition, from time to time, she is found to harass them and their mother Ammu too. The twins feel desperately alone amid the kiths and sometimes with their mother too. They feel more secluded when Sophie Mol comes in between them and attracts the total attention of the family. Sophie is the real and only daughter of Chacko and his ex-wife, Margaret Kochamma. She deprives the twins of Chacko's small concern, Baby' Aunt's soft comments and Maria's polite suggestions. With Sophie's Arrival, they all turn hard to them. Thus, the foreign girl helps enough to estrange the twins in the family. Now they are filled with a sense of personal hatred and curse their fate and even the idea to be born. Estha befriends 'loneliness'. Whenever he feels dejected, he hides himself in the pickle factory and finds there comfortable amid the viles. Silence has seeped through his veins and has taken the hold of his tongue. Reportedly he "stopped talking together, and it was not an exactly when"(p.10). Sophie Mol dies a suspicious death. Ammu is strictly ordered to leave the 'refuge' immediately with her "millstones" and never appear in the hamlet again. She is accused that her children plotted the end of the girl. Reportedly, her "two egg twins" carried the girl towards the Meenanchal at noon and

made her boat while she was a novice to swimming. As she was the smallest of them, Estha, the captain of voyage, the day, should have paid her special care. Later it was investigated that Estha was the first who alighted from the boat; Rahel, the second to leave it; and Sophie, the last left by the captain to drown into the water. The novice was drowned to "Death by Water". Eventually Estha and his sister too are held accountable for the death of their cousin. Despite all, they are children; and their effort to save the girl, shows that they are innocent. They cannot be charged with a serious crime. They are seen running along the bank of the river trying to take her out; but they fail and repent over terrible disappearing of their cousin. Therefore, they did not intend to do all this. Yet they are accounted for the deed; and as a result, they are isolated not only in the house but in the society too. Ammu also vilifies love and turns hardhearted towards them. Like others, she also believes and blames her children for the murder of the girl. She believes it for the close affinity they developed with the girl so soon. Moreover, because of this, she accompanied with them towards the river where she met her end. She criticizes them for their 'indirect' innocent alliance in the murder, and calls them "millstones"- the stones that are used to keep down the person under the water until he is dead. Thus, the twins are proved as "millstones" for the departed girl, but for their mother as they have abased her image in the society and in the house as well. They are so much despaired by the incidence that they feel "weighed down by their mother's words". She now considers them as 'hoodoo' who caused to bring misfortune to the mother of the gone and to herself too. Thereby they are accused to put Ammu in utter shame and irreparable misery. Henceforth Ammu regrets: "If it weren't for you, I would be free. I should have dumped you in an orphanage the day, you were born. You are the millstones round my neck! - carried nothing"(p.29). Ammu's bitter words engraved the minds of the twins. They expect no moral aid from the mother when they suffer from guilt-complex. Now they are sure they have lost their mother's affection forever. This notion alienates them from the mother and the society together. Ammu repents the day when she gravely reproached her children and hurled "irrational rage" upon them. Nevertheless, very soon she finds reason in the reproach, and again targets her boy: "Estha was somehow responsible for Mol's death; because the boy broke the rules and rowed Sophie Mol and Rahel across the river in the afternoon in a little boat" (p.263). Estha's crime is confirmed, and the mother decides his penalty. Though his crime is not so serious, against which he is so much sinned. The end of Sophie deeply wounds his self-respect and he feels very down at heart. Baby Aunt curses him for the death by water and calls the two "murderers". Chacko cries at Ammu to immediately leave the house. Eventually, Estha is sent to Kolkata to his father for disciplined supervision.

The boy reaches his new home and here he meets his new mother –his stepmother and his biological Bengali father, Baba. Some days later, he found that his new mother did not love him and hated his stay there. She was proved all indifferent to him. Therefore, he finds himself more estranged than earlier. The father and new mother both embarrassed him and their humiliation could be seen clearly when the boy was "made to do the house work. "He did sweeping, swabbing and all the laundry. He learned to cook and shop for vegetables" (p.11). He remained silent and pliant carried out the commands of his father and stepmother. This is very shameful if a son is treated like a servant in his own father's house. The readers are moved to tears when they find the poor boy mentally tortured and making no complaint against the wrongs. He tolerated sufferings silently. It seems that perhaps he made a contract with his fate. He believed that his distress was due to the sins he never committed deliberately. He was like "A quiet bubble floating on a sea of noise"(p.11). Taciturnity settled deep into his behavior which "reached out of his heed and enfolded him in its swampy arms" (p.11). Estha is the terrible figure of taciturnity, which dislodges old sentences "whisking them off the tip of his tongue" (p.12). This silence shrinks the boy inside himself and creates a microcosm around him wherein only his sister is allowed. Other people are prohibited to enter it. Whoever dared break into it, met tragic end. Sophia Mol dared break into their world, tried to befriend with them, and met with "death by water". Velutha dared get into it in order to be in touch with their mother, met a brutal end. So none is safe; only those who are away from them, and specifically those who hate them are safe. Rahel feels uneasy when she comes to know about the arrival of her cousin, Sophie Mol from England. Nobody can tolerate the division of love. That is

why she envies Sophie and doesn't like to wish her 'hello' at the Cochin Airport. Instead, she hides herself behind the curtain and feels cool and comfortable there away from the world of pretensions. The people wear false smile on their face and have the hearts blackened to the core. They live dual life. And the things can change in a day, who knows. Everything changes with the arrival of the foreign girl. Chacko shifts his total affection from the twins towards the new guest, his own daughter. Now he no more carries them in Plymouth, nor takes them to the new release movies and nor defends them from Ammu's scolding. The children are deprived of love. They seek love around in their playmates. They find love in Velutha, their playmate and teacher both. A child needs love from others when he is denied of parents' and that of the kiths. They loved Velutha for the small things he made for them. They loved the small games he taught them to play. They loved him for he taught them how to swim in the deep waters of the river and swim across on its other bank. Estha loves liberty as do the Marxist and proclaims it unfurling the party flag. He learns the real meaning of freedom from his master, Velutha. He wants to set himself free from the shackles of his vulnerable mother and dependence on his uncle, Chacko. However, very soon, the spirit of freedom wanes away and he falls into dependency and utter gloom of destiny. Taciturnity glooms over his free spirit and he becomes silent; stops talking together. Velutha dies and contracts their world to a much smaller microcosm.

The fall of Velutha snatches smiles from the lips of the twins and strips their interests in the games. Eventually, Estha gets irresponsive to the beautiful nuances of nature. He does not "feel the wetness of the rain"; "the sudden shudder of the cold puppy"(p.15). He no more enjoys playful sights of nature. He doesn't find any relief on the cool sands of the riverbanks. He no more believes in 'water washes away even tough stains'. He does not enjoy twittering of the birds, and voices of the wild animals. The prime days were gone -he repents bitterly, when he used to "squat on his haunches and rock himself in the rain" with his "god of small things" (p.15) - but now he finds no interest. He feels utterly desperate and shattered down on the day when the Madras Mail gathers speed; his mother runs on the platform and her fingers are unlocked from his forever; she is left behind shedding tears, and assuring her son - "As soon as I get a job. As soon as I can go away from here and get a job"(p.324). She will surely come to take her lovely son, her own Estha back to Ayemenem. Then they will live happily together. But the day never comes and Estha inadvertently also speaks. "But that will be never.(p.325)" And that comes true, the day never came; the dream of living together happily shattered and Ammu died alone in a hotel room. The microcosm of the twins is reduced much narrower to accommodate only two persons -Estha and Rahel. Ammu departed; Estha parted away from Rahel. She was left alone to withstand the worst of Baby Aunt. She drifted from one school to another; but she could adjust neither with her classmates nor with her class teachers too. She was happy in her own world- in her microcosm; which was open only to her brother after the death of Ammu and Velutha and Sophie Mol. Her classmates also left her alone. None tolerates a gloom headed person. None wants to befriend with a desolate person. Amiability attracts friends. Rahel was never taught what is being amiable. She was totally aloof from college fraternity and that's why "she was never invited to their nice homes or noisy parties"(p.18). She was not even interactive with her professors. That's why they were also "a little wary of her - her bizarre, impractical building plans, presented on cheap brown paper, her indifference to their passionate critiques." (P.18) .She is found attracted towards the small things of life. She is observed making things of cow dung. A Christian child cannot be supposed to play with excrement of animal. She is unique; unlike her age-mates, she loves doing small things of nature; she loves them unto the core of the heart.

The twins are the most empathetic figures in the novel. They succeed to draw adequate attention of the readers towards their desolate life, and move them to the core with their taciturnity and silent suffering. Roy seems to be sympathetic towards the "two egg twins" and quite cynical to those who caused to put them into such critical state of estrangement. They deeply suffer the syndrome of estrangement at every stage of life.

Works Cited:

Roy, Arundhati. (1997). *The God of Small Things*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, p.222

(All consecutive citations available in the text refer to the caption novel.)

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