

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Study

*The God of Small Things* is one of the most popular novels in the world. The novel takes place in Ayemenem, a village in the southwestern Indian state of Kerala. *The God of Small Things*, which Arundhati Roy wrote between 1992 and 1996, has sold over 6 million copies and has been translated into 40 languages. The novel published by Flamingo in 1997 that consists of 21 chapters and 320 pages. *The God of Small Things* is about a family living in India after the Declaration of Independence. Their story isn't told in chronological order but it is revealed bit by bit to the reader.

Suzanna Arundhati Roy grew up in Ayemenem, a village in the state of Kerala, in southern India. She was born on 24 November 1961. Her father, a Hindu tea planter from Bengal, was divorced from her Syrian Christian mother when Roy was very young, and Roy was raised by her mother, who ran an informal school. Roy left home when she was sixteen and lived in a squatter's colony in New Delhi, selling empty beer bottles for a living. She eventually went to architectural school and married a fellow student, Gerard Da Cunha. In recent years, Roy has published several non fiction books, such as *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2001), *Power Politics* (2001), and *The Ordinary person's Guide to Empire* (2004), just to name a few.

*The God of Small things* is about two children, Rahel and Esthappen (Estha) are seven year old fraternal twins. They are living in Ayemenem with their mother Ammu and her brother Chacko, their grandmother Mammachi and their great-aunt Baby Kochamma. Their father Baba lives in Calcutta. Ammu left him when the twins were two years old. The family is expecting the arrival of Margaret and Sophie Mol, Chacko's ex-wife and daughter, who are living in England. Since Margaret's second husband Joe had died in a car accident, Chacko invited them to spend Christmas in India in order to get over the loss. When they have arrived, Sophie Mol is taking centre stage. So Rahel and Estha stroll around on the river bank and find an old boat. With Velutha's help they repair it and frequently cross the river to visit an abandoned house on the other side. Velutha is an Untouchable, whom Ammu and Chacko have known since their childhood.

During the guests' stay Ammu is more and more attracted by Velutha. One night they meet at the river where they sleep with each other. As it is not possible for an Untouchable to have a relationship or even an affair with somebody from a superior caste, they have to keep their meetings secret. But one night Velutha's father observes them and, reports everything to Mammachi and Baby Kochamma. As a consequence they lock up Ammu in her room. There Rahel and Estha find her and, through the locked door, ask her why she's being locked up. As she is angry and desperate, she blames the two children that without them she would be free and they should go away. Hurt and confused they decide to run away and stay at the abandoned house. But Sophie discovers the twins' plan and demands to be taken along.

While the three are crossing the river, which has risen from heavy rainfall, their boat capsizes. Rahel and Estha are able to reach the other shore but Sophie cannot swim and is carried away by the current. After a long search for Sophie, the twins go to the abandoned house and fall asleep on its veranda. Neither do they see Velutha, who is sleeping on the veranda nor does he notice the twins' arrival. Earlier that night, Velutha had visited the house of Ammu's family, not knowing that their affair had been discovered. When he arrived Mammachi insulted him and chased him off. In the morning the children's absence is detected. Then they receive the message that Sophie Mol has been found dead by the river. Baby Kochamma goes to the police and wrongly accuses Velutha of attempting to rape Ammu and kidnapping the children. When the police find Velutha sleeping on the veranda of the abandoned house, they beat him up so heavily that he almost dies. The twins wake up and observe the whole procedure. At the police station they are forced by Baby Kochamma to confirm the wrong statement which she has made.

After Sophie Mol's funeral Ammu and the twins have to leave the family's house because Chacko, manipulated by Baby Kochamma, accuses them of being responsible for Sophie Mol's death. Estha is sent to his father in Calcutta where he attends school and later college. Ammu is forced to leave Rahel in Ayemenem in order to look for employment. But Ammu is not able to earn enough for a living and so she dies of bad health a few years later alone in a hotel.

Rahel returns to Ayemenem at the age of 31. She hasn't seen Estha since they were separated after Sophie Mol's funeral. She married an American and moved with him to Boston. After their divorce she has been working to make a living. Now Rahel returns to Ayemenem because she wants to see Estha, who has already returned to their family's house. After spending a whole day together in Ayemenem, Rahel and Estha, sister and brother, are sleeping with each other. The fact that Estha has stopped speaking and that Rahel and Estha sleep with each other are only two aspects in which one can see how deeply hurt they still are by the events with Velutha and Sophie Mol that happened long ago.

The reactions to this novel were mostly positive throughout the world, because it gives lessons about life. *The God of Small Things* received stellar reviews in major American newspapers such as *The New York Times* a "dazzling first novel," "extraordinary," "at once so morally strenuous and so imaginatively supple and the *Los Angeles Times* "a novel of poignancy and considerable sweep"and in Canadian publications such as the *Toronto Star* "a lush, magical novel"By the end of the year, it had become one of the five best books of 1997 by *TIME*.

Although the novel was generally well-reviewed in Britain, there was some controversy about its success, and a minority of critics, including the previous Booker Prize Committee Chairperson Carmen Callil, said on television that "it did not deserve the prize. "

In India it received negative response from some lawyers. *Chindu Sreedharan (1997)* in his article explain that Arundhati Roy's just-won Booker

prize doesn't make any difference to lawyers G M Idikkula and Sabu Thomas in the dock they want her, and in the dock, they say, they will see her sooner or later. Sabu Thomas, the lawyer who has dragged Roy to court, says the sexual passages in the novel are an affront to Indian tradition, culture and morality. "Moreover, it deeply hurts the Syrian Christian community on whom is the novel based," Thomas told *Rediff On The Net*. "Before the high court," says Idikkula, "Roy claimed her novel is not vulgar and that it was not submitted before the Pathanamthitta court. Which is not true the judge issued the summons after he went through the book." The lawyers's claim is that the book, especially the culminating chapter, where in a sexual encounter between the upper caste heroine and her lower caste lover is described violates 'norms of decency.'

Beside that, D Jose (1997) explain that EMS attacks on Roy's morality to Ajaz Ahmed's political reading , and all labelling Roy anti-communist and anti-left on the basis of her portrayal of CPI (M) in Kerala since the 1960s. For veteran Communist Party of India-Marxist leader E M S Namboodiripad, Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* is nothing more or less than anti-Communist propaganda. In his latest column in *Frontline*, English fortnightly, Namboodiripad argued that the "unrealistic presentation" of the Communist movement in Kerala by the author was indicative of her antipathy to the movement. And this, says EMS, is the main reason why the book has been appreciated across the world since the ideology of 'world literature' was basically anti-Communist. Agreeing with Marxist critic Ajaz Ahmed that Roy's description of himself as a landlord in Kottayam area whose ancestral home had

been converted into a modern hotel amounted to 'libel and defamation', EMS said he did not care a hoot for the criticism, but did take issue with her description of three Communist leaders, of which the only real-life one was he himself, as grossly caricatures in nature.

Although the novel has provoked sharp critics from political parties and become controversial, *The God of Small Things* has values that overall, the novel is a scathing critique of gender structure, caste structure, and communism in India. According Shrutti Chandra Gupta (2010), "The novel is a modern masterpiece, truly telling a sad story in the most appealing and innovative narrative, conveying the feelings of the characters casually thereby increasing its effect. It is a deep study into the rules which society has made and which we follow blindly."

*The God of Small Things* was an unprecedented international success for a first-time author. It won a publishing advance reputed to be near one million dollars, and it won Britain's most prestigious writing award, the Booker Prize, in 1997. It reached fourth position on the *New York Times* Bestsellers list for Independent Fiction. Reviews in the United States were very positive, often including high praise such as that of Ritu Menon in her review for *Women's Review of Books*: "*The God of Small Things* is a seduction from start to finish."

London bookmakers have tipped Roy's *The God of Small Things* to bag the coveted literary award for the best English fiction from Commonwealth countries. Besides Roy's book, the nominations for this year's award, announced by the Booker Trust on 15 September 1997, include *Grace Notes* by Bernard

MacLaverty, *Quarantine* by Jim Grace, *The Underground Man* by Mick Jackson, *Europe* by Tim Parks and *Essence of the Things* by Madeleine John. Rave reviews and the popular success of the book have placed the 37-year-old Roy within striking distance of the 20,000 pound award. Following its release on 5 April 1997, *The God of Small Things* has sold more than 350,000 copies worldwide, making it to the bestseller list in almost every country. (<http://aroy.miena.com>)

*The God of Small Things* is an interesting novel, there are some aspects that makes this novel really interesting based on the structural elements. The first is *The God of Small Things* has themes that people normally do not talk about. Roy reveals a complex conflict in the state of Kerala, India, such as caste system, law love, communism and religion. From here, beside forbidden love in the novel, the reader knew the Indian history and politics from the story.

The second aspect is characters in the novel. Among the characters in *The God of Small Things*, the dominant is Estha and Rachel, because in the story use the point of view of seven-year-old child. This is one of the uniqueness of this novel. Velutha is prominent because his “casted body/status” signifies the cultural difference of India from other nations. The narration of Velutha reveals the intertwined relationship between caste and the social divisions in India. The transgression between Velutha and Ammu poses challenges to the traditional norms and social hierarchy of India. Moreover, Rahel and Estha’s transgression brings out social taboo and incest.

The third is setting, it describes the situation and condition in the story, Arundhati Roy talks of Kerala as a state's religious diversity, it is a testament to the many groups that have inhabited the land throughout history, and this is one reason Roy's novel takes place here. Inhabitants have included Portuguese, Dutch, British, rulers from all over India, and religious groups escaping persecution in their own countries.

The last is plot in the novel. *The God of Small Things* uses spiral plot, which tells the events of the past and the present, the reader confuses if the reader do not read carefully and repeatedly. It makes the novel is an attractive, if the reader knew the theme of this novel, it may help to understand the contents of the novel.

In this study of the *The God of Small Things* novel, Indian multiculturalism is the central concern. There are some issues in the novel, one of them is transgression of the twins violates all biological norms. Throughout history, societies have circumscribed certain forms of intimacy in the family setting. Disturbing a family relationships with generate an individual responsibilities to do incest. Incest and cultural values which is reflected in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is one of appealing aspects that is interesting to be studied. Roy describes how the incest happened in the twins and the relation of the culture and family. It is one of the issues that make this novel's story is interesting.

Based on the previous reasons the writer will observe Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* by using sociological theory by Swingewood and

Laurenson. So the writer constructs the title **Incest and Cultural Values in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997): A Sociological Approach**

## **B. Literature Review**

*The God of Small Thing* (1997) novel by Arundhati Roy is an interesting novel. As far as the writer concern, the research on the *The God of Small Thing* (1997) novel has been conducted by Siti Aisyah, a Muhammadiyah University student (2003), entitled "Protest Against Social Stratification in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*". She uses sociological approach to analyze the data. The aim of the study is to depict problem that happened in India, which is social stratification in the society. The result of the data shows that one of the problems is the events in society described complexity and its relation with others, so it forms a series of inoculations between one event to others. She tries give issues about social stratification and the mixture of exotics, mysticism, and India local history, which is nationally discussed, are not very often found in a book, which effectively takes off all the clothes of nationally, castes, and religion to eventually show what humanity is all about.

The second research related to the study entitled "Untouchability and Social Exclusion in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Thing* (1997)" by Veena Sukla, Rae Bareli, India. He proposes to examine the maltreatment meted but to Veluta, one of the characters in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997). The result is caste, whereas the caste in India is a very important part of ancient Hindu tradition. He tries to explain that there are many other instances of social exclusion in *The God of Small Things* (1997). He gives an example, the

unjust treatment meted out the zygotic twins. They are treated in this way because they have no father or no home. The maltreatment meted out to Ammu can also be seen as an outcome of this absurd reality.

The third research is conducted by Katja Losensky, a Humboldt University student (2008), entitled "Globalization and Colonialism in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*". The major aim of the study is to show that "India's colonial histories cannot be ignored. The result is globalization and colonialism are phenomena which cannot be looked at separately when speaking about India's history and present. He tries to give examples of how globalization and colonialism are linked and how that is shown in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* (1997). One of the examples is draw the authors political beliefs and understanding of how India has been shaped and is still shaped by globalism and colonialist policies. (Roy: "Is globalization (sic) about the eradication of world poverty or is it a mutant variety of colonialism, remote controlled and digitally operated?". He looks at India's economy, India's role as an exotic Other and the novel's own position within the global market of literature, the Indian Diaspora, examples for othering and self-othering at how and why caste and colonialist ideals still have major impacts on the construction of identity in times of globalization.

Different from three previous writers, the writer has different perspective; the writer analyzes Incest and Cultural Values in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) by using sociological approach.

**C. Problem Statement**

Knowing that the problem is the important of the research, the writer proposes “How is Incest and Cultural Values reflected in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Thing* novel?”

**D. Limitation of the Study**

The writer focuses this research in analyzing Incest and Cultural Values in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Thing* novel based on sociological approach.

**E. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are mentioned as follows:

1. To analyze *The God of Small Thing* novel based on the structural elements of the novel.
2. To describe Incest and Cultural Values in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Thing* novel based on sociological approach.

**F. Benefits of the Study****1. Theoretical Benefit**

The study is hoped to give a new contribution and information to the larger body of knowledge, particularly the literary studies on Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Thing* novel.

**2. Practical Benefit**

The study is hoped to enrich knowledge and experience of the writer and another students of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta or another

University who have interest with literary study on the novel from Sociological Approach.

## **G. Research Method**

### **1. Type of the Study**

In the research, the writer uses a qualitative research. It is library research while data source are using literary data. It purposes to analyze the novel using sociological perspective. The steps to conduct this research are:

- a. Determining the type of the study
- b. Determining the object of the study
- c. Determining data and data source,
- d. Determining technique of data collection and
- e. Determining technique of data analysis.

### **2. Object of the Study**

The object of the study is Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Thing* (1997) novel. It is analyzed by using sociological approach.

### **3. Type of the Data and Data Source `**

There are two data source that are needed to do this research.

#### **a. Primary Data Source**

The primary data source of the study is Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Thing* (1997) novel.

#### **b. Secondary Data Source**

The secondary data sources are books and other sources that support the analysis.

#### 4. Technique of the Data Collection

The technique of the data collection is library research, the steps are:

- a. Reading the novel.
- b. Determining the character and summary that will be analyzed.
- c. Taking notes of important parts in both primary and secondary data.
- d. Classifying and determining the relevant data.
- e. Taking notes from the material and some other resources related to the novel.

#### 5. Technique of the Data Analysis

The technique used in analyzing the data is descriptive analysis. It concerns with the structural elements of the novel and sociological approach.

#### H. Research Paper Organization

The research paper organization of Incest and Cultural Values in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997): A Sociological Approach is as follows: Chapter I is Introduction; it consists of Background of the Study, Literature Review, Problem Statement, Limitation of the Study, Objectives of the Study, Benefits of the Study, Research Method, and Paper Organization. Chapter II is Underlying Theory: it consists of Sociology of Literature, Aspects Sociological of Literature, Structural Elements of the Novel, and Theoretical Application. Chapter III is Sociological background of Kerala, India which covers social aspect, politic, economic aspect, science and technology, cultural aspect, and religious aspect. Chapter IV is Structural Analysis of Arundhati Roy's *The*

*God of Small Thing* (1997); (1) The Structural Elements of *The God of Small Thing* (1997) novel; it consists of Character and Characterization, Plot, Setting, Point of View, Style, and Theme; (2) Discussion. Chapter V is Sociological Approach of *The God of Small Thing* (1997) novel. It consists of the social aspect, cultural aspect, and religious aspect. Chapter VI is Conclusion and Suggestion.