
I read the book twice; the first time for its plot and the second time for the beauty of its language. I do not normally read works of fiction. This was an exception.

I had difficulty following the story line to begin with. The story goes forward and backward in time. It is not a linear description.

Set in a southern Indian state of Kerala in 1969, *The God of Small Things* is the story of a 7-year old girl, Rahel and her twin brother Estha, who live with their divorced mother Ammu surrounded by tradition bound relatives and neighbors. The children soon learn that their whole life can change in a day and that love and happiness can be lost in a moment. The children’s half British cousin, Sophie Mol, on a visit to their home from Britain, is drowned. Their mother, an upper-caste Christian, gets involved in an ill-fated love affair with the untouchable Velutha. For this transgression, the untouchable is beaten to death by the police. Shunned by her family and insulted by authorities, Ammu aged 31 dies at a viable die-able age. It is true that things can change in a day.

The book is autobiographical in parts. Arundhati reported in an interview: A lot of the atmosphere in *God of Small Things* is based on my experiences of what it was like to grow up in Kerala. Most interestingly, it was the only place in the world where religions coincide, there is Christianity, Hinduism, Marxism and Islam and they all live together and rub each other down. When I grew up it was the Marxism that was very strong, it was like the revolution was coming next week.

I was enchanted by her writing style: short crisp sentences, novel and memorable idioms and cute turns of the phrase. Roy is master of the English expression even though English is not her first language. The work is very imaginative. Descriptions of people, places and events are vivid.

Some phrases in the book repeat like the sound of a drum beat-- is true that things can change in a day, who should be loved, and how, and how much? History’s laws. She impressed me by the range of her knowledge on a variety of the topics. I learnt

about Kerala rivers and bayous, with fish in it; with the sky and trees in it; and at night, the broken yellow moon in it.

about 1960s Kerala politics that brought to power the *first elected* Communist government
anywhere in the world;
about backward walking untouchables, and color bars;

about Kerala = Syrian Christianity community;

about the fading art of Kathakali dancers and their attempts at survival;

about A[history@ laws, and what happens when they are violated;

Arundhati Roy is the daughter of a Keralite Christian mother (Mary Roy) and a Bengali Hindu father. She studied architecture in New Delhi. She has been married and divorced. She has two children: Pia and Mithva. She is now married for the second time. She taught aerobics in New Delhi. She is socially and politically active and fights to protect the rights of tribals in India.

Her book has earned her in excess of one million U.S. dollars.

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