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Catering To the Strategies: A Game Theory Based Approach to Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Literature accommodates in itself the vicissitudes and values of life along with culture and creativity. In a world of chaos and displacement, the popularity of the scheduled ventures and game plans hail towards more authenticity in determining the multifarious denominations of the facets of life. The manipulations that often hurl above as a mammoth, determines the

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psychological pillars construed within an individual's psyche. This article is an attempt to break the fundamentals of Game Theory with the aid of the characters from the most celebrated work of Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*. The challenge here is not to conduct a linear study, but rather to plummet deep into the character delineations to explore their perceptions thereby tapering it to a Behavioural Approach of human race as a whole. Though scholars have plumbed to the depths of the art of Roy's fiction from multiple perspectives, no serious attempt seems to have been made in exploring the game strategies the writer has deftly woven into her art. **Keywords:** *Game Theory, Strategic characterisations, Game plans, psychological manipulations*

Science, as well as technology, will in the near and in the farther future increasingly turn from problems of intensity, substance, and energy, to problems of structure, organisation, information and control.

(Neumann 78)

Peppered with both sanguinity and skepticism, twentieth century globe has witnessed the unfolding of many literary theories. Theories shoot up in a scenario of profound scrutiny and in Literature they act as a device to gauge the spectrum of life beyond the entire milieu. Among these, Game Theory hangs about as a touchstone never mossed over by time. Though the seeds of Game Theory had been planted right from the epoch of Plato, it sprouted only during the 1940s. Game Theory, in a more evocative way is an interactive Decision Theory. The Theory had its breakthrough with John Vom Neumann's

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book in 1944 "The Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour". The theoretical facets were later developed extensively by John Forbes Nash and Robert Aumann.

As Freud suggests, human mind is mishmash of two forces- the life force and the death force and in a world of Polarities, these forces crash with each other in establishing their supremacy. Eventually, the Game Theory can in no way stand discretely off from Literature since Game becomes pretty extraneous without characters of flesh and blood. Game Theory provides both intuitive and counter intuitive results, but it furnishes astounding insights of human nature. Since Human nature outlines the hub of Literature and Literature forms the pedestal of human life, Game strategies are rather inevitable to any typical human being. The explicit name of the logic used by everyone was not named until it flourished as Game Theory in the 1940s. In a deteriorating world of games and tricks, the Theory of Games can in no way demystify the vision of the whole of human race. A miniature study of the novel in the light of Game Theory provides us with a superior revelation to read the national and the international associations in a diverse beam.

The world history in itself has determined Game Theory with its own statistics in varied perspectives. The economic collapse of Soviet Union had in it a Game Theory behind the scenes executed skilfully by the U.S. The "divide and rule" Policy of the British too acknowledge a string of Games in marauding India completely. Even Hitler's Holocaust and Concentration Camps had in it a well planned Game attribute. Choices made by Kennedy White House during Cuban missile

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crisis yet again brings to light a decisive selection. Game Theory often quantifies its outcomes either in the form of payoffs or utility. Game Theory can either slot in co-operation or competition and in most cases the second alternative takes reign over the first and it is succinct that Game Theory validates its emerging role all through the sphere. Roy's novel "The God of Small Things" has been explored at different angles since its publication. However, this article indeed is an innovative way of analyzing Roy's characters and one of the first of its kind with Game Theory.

Arundhati Roy, the winner of the Man Booker Prize, is indisputably a Mistress of Games in the aura of her novel *The God of Small Things*. Human subsistence in its true complexities and colours is precisely a Game and it is through a mysterious tactical perception from end to end that we contour and redesign our day by day existence with set goals. Game Theory indicates the intuition and penetration that an ordinary individual utilises in his premeditated thinking through which he/she envisages the estimated up-shoot of the reactions of the people around them. Roy brings out her story through the subtle changes that her varied characters employ in meeting their individual targets. Game Theory is not about winning a game of chess or structuring a role playing scenario. It is a study of the agents or the players which can be either individuals, groups or nations who formulate plans systematically and strategically. Uncertainty, Risk and Sequential Equilibrium take toll here in stabilizing the concepts of the Theory. The endeavour of this article is to embark on a reflective study

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of the Game Play which has been executed so dextrously by Roy all the way through her characters.

Roy's story, set in the background of Ayemenem swirls multiple characterisations to the realm of analysis for its readers. The story cuts through three generations tracking down the assumptions and beliefs each character takes hold of. Being unaware of the fabrications shuffled out by the other characters, the dilemma they fall into and the mechanisms they conspire with, forms the crux of the plot. Each character can be determined in terms of Game Theory through which a new reading of the work stands with chance.

The first generation of the Ayemenem family including Pappachi, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma traces the initial development of the story along with the game plans they cater which ultimately leads to the upcoming generations to a sphere of trauma. Pappachi, being an entomologist has his own subtle negotiations about everything that he meets in his life. His patterns of game is well crafted in his behaviour and his approach to his wife Mammachi. His approach towards his children are totally methodical. His arch importance is retained through the brutality that he metes out towards them. It is this scheme of Game theory that devises his superiority over his family until his son Chacko, starts weaving his own Game plans finally putting an end to his atrocities.

He worked hard on his public profile as a sophisticated, generous, moral man. But alone with his wife and children he turned into a monstrous, suspicious bully, with a streak of vicious cunning. They were beaten,

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humiliated and then made to suffer the envy of friends and relations. (Roy 180)

Pappachi's age difference of seventeen years with his wife Mammachi, which places him in a pedestal of inferiority complex is overcome by the way in which he restricts her personal freedom. The ignominy she suffers becomes a tool for him to exercise his masculine authority all through his life. He even determines to sew buttons of his shirt sitting in the verandah to showcase that his wife never cares and eventually stops talking to her completely. If it is to analyse his strategies, they work in a cyclic pattern where all images merge with his ego and inflated ideals.

Mammachi, on the other hand, neutralises her disillusionment by lashing it out at others, including her daughter Ammu. Even her scheme is patterned as she never infiltrates her hatred towards the menfolk but only towards Ammu and her children. She treats her son Chacko, his wife, Margaret, and his daughter Sophie Mol in a much better light compared to that of Ammu, Estha and Rahel. Her manipulations are worked out in a different way from Pappachi and she struggles in her own way by targeting just the women around her.

Mammachi, however, becomes a target of playfulness when she is utilised by more superiors with a wider game plan enriching a better magnitude. She is manipulated and redeemed in a manner as per the frontiers decided by Baby Kochamma in ousting Velutha and breaking the ties between Velutha and Ammu.

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Baby Kochamma, who portrays the most noxious character within the structure of the novel has cast her own malicious magic that roots out to each and everyone around her. The only character who enjoys sadism in all aspects throughout the novel is Baby Kochamma. She is never regressive in her methods and works hard to create havoc in everyone's life. She is the most structured and planned villain of the piece and carries out her strategies in the most subtle ways. Her past which speaks volumes about her life at the nunnery and her unreciprocated love with Father Mullighan creates a basis to foreground her malice that keep spurting out throughout. However, the capriciousness with which she carries it out looms larger than her character sketch. She is the one who plots against Velutha and who triggers the locking up of Ammu which becomes instrumental in the death of Sophie Mol. She becomes the real murderer behind Velutha's physical death and Ammu's mental death. She succeeds even in her master game plan where she makes Estha give his alibi against Velutha at the Police Station. The dark tragedies and the secret mysteries that boom around the Ayemenem home is in a way switched on with her malevolence and wretchedness. Despite her larger presence within the novel, the dynamic strategies that she employs kicks off even years later when Estha and Rahel meets after a span of amorphous years.

Although Game Theory began in the field of Economics, it has since steadfastly established its footprints in a range of disciplines like Psychology, Mathematics, Politics, Sociology, Biology, Humanities, Anthropology, Literature etc. Arundhati Roy is

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conclusively a Chief of Games when she employed an array of characters influencing, interacting, conflicting and competing with each other to furnish their individual motives. Portrayed as a mouthpiece of the twentieth century, her chief subject matter swivels around the psychological mechanism behind a human mind, thereby pointing out its connotation in a world of cyber crime and psychoanalysis.

Chacko, the son of Pappachi and Mammachi and the brother of Ammu is another interesting character within the play who is a master in games. He plays with his gender supremacy and wields a space for himself within the same Ayemenem house where he engages a number of factory girls in the name of "Man's needs" in his mysterious bedroom. Mammachi, being a silent hand in all his deeds allows and agrees to his norms whereas she rejects all advances made by her daughter Ammu. Chacko, despite being a neo-colonialist and an Oxford scholar, makes his mother a sleeping partner in the pickle factory that the family owns. He tells Ammu, "What is mine is mine and what is yours is also mine" (136). His track where he swiftly encroaches into the family property and tries to oust his sister Ammu is a plan he devises gently, though it looks rather surprising for an average reader.

His tampered relationship with his ex-wife Margaret and his selfish nature within the family makes him a prototype of Pappachi, his father. In spite of the selfishness that lurks in his mind, he becomes a hero in the mind of the twins, Estha and Rahel.

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An individual mind even in its simpler outline is for all time multifarious and this complexity has been set open by many great psychologists although not completely. The heroine of the novel, Ammu is also a manipulator in her own ways though her intention is not to harm anyone else. Being a tragic victim, she struggles against the tyrannical orb around her and fights in her own ways.

The novel portrays a detail picture of the lady's childhood to adolescence, to the experience of marriage to a sympathetic and affectionate mother, to a rebel wife who challenges the age long hypocritical moral stand of a patriarchal family. (Prasad 194)

When she goes to stay with her aunt in Calcutta, her meeting with Baba, the tea-planter and the consequent marriage that result from the relationship is nothing more than a marriage of convenience. She thinks of a plan to escape from her family and she knew that her family will not have enough dowry to get her married off. She invents her own strategical plan of marrying someone from another community. Game Theory is fundamentally a mathematical arrangement since the moves and counter moves of the characters surrounding us need to be planned systematically and advantageously. It is in accordance with such a schedule that most of the characters within the novel slide on.

Just as an economic man makes his attempts to maximise his share of goods, a participant in a game tries to maximise his winnings systematically. This triumph can be applied to human life further where every day of a

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human being's life is moulded by plans and strategies and these methods systematically turn towards accomplishments. These accomplishments can range from trivial settlements to more psychological skirmishes where the untold stories are being told and the unheard mysteries are being revealed.

K.N.M. Pillai too becomes a part of this Game plan as he is the most refined manipulator of the novel and stands as a solid accomplice for Baby Kochamma in murdering Velutha and disintegrating Ammu psychologically. Being a part of the Communist Party, he keeps himself away from aiding Velutha and seals his trust with the Police Inspectors in murdering Velutha. "In addition to being used to describe, predict, and explain behaviour, game theory has also been used to develop theories of ethical or normative behaviour to prescribe such behaviour" (Camerer 6).

The character roles get inherently connected with the schema of games such as the Prisoner's Dilemma, the Snow Drift, the Payoff Matrix and the Battle of Sexes. Thus the resonance of Game Theory is vibrant in all current realms of disciplines and it re-establishes the link between how sociological aspects come into conflict with the psychological facets.

Apart from character delineation, the structure of game theory contours the underlying tensions in gender differences, cultural clashes, communal binaries and even individual psychological discords. In a nation where everything stands in a diverse platform with co-operation and conflict at the same time, nothing serves better than

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the study of Game Theory. Nevertheless, Roy's "The God of Small Things", the novel set in the backdrop of India with Male chauvinism and Politics, Game Theory finds an unsoiled natural ground to nurture and bloom. Though the novel extensively lavishes in stereotyped themes, Game Theory is associated with Roy's novel for the primary instance. In a land where Sino-Indian borders gear up conflicts and barbaric attacks of Maoists terrorize the populace along with 'behind the back games' of IPL, Game Theory undoubtedly has cast its indelible space.

Roy as the mistress of Games had definitely built in a new future in determining ourselves and the people around us. The Faustian Bargain which is quite often held in our unconscious finds an unusual twirl here. The novel, "The God of Small Things" has definitely replicated one's self image and showcased how one assumes and operates strategically and often unwittingly. The schemes employed unintentionally and the study that cater us towards those strategies are also amplified within the article. Moreover, a clear vision to enhance the contemplation of others where one can articulate life in a better and more soothing way is also acknowledged with. The application of this classical and evolutionary Theory has indeed convinced the readers of the tremendous and constantly expanding utility of this literary tool.

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