



## MEMORIES ABLAZE

### A Study on the play of colours in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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#### Abstract

Colours are those sparks that add pulse to one's life. These sparks have been used in paintings and stories from time immemorial. Writers and painters use colours to strengthen the ideas that they convey. Colours are also used to establish concrete images of characters, scenes, themes and events. So colours impart a deeper meaning to the text that uses it. The meaning of the same in literature is based on two aspects, one is 'colour psychology' and the other is 'colour symbolism'. While the former deals with the emotional effect of a colour, the latter is related to the cultural interpretation of colours. Use of colours in literature is not just a way to pass information regarding a character, a theme or an action, but is a simpler way to explore a reader's thoughts without going deep into too many details. Though this aspect was earlier seen mostly in the tales from French literature and Gothic literature, many post-colonial and postmodern works are also notable for the same. Here, colours take roles and play their part so as to help the writer convey ideas in ease. The meaning of colours changes with authors and poets and different group of writers. For example, though both Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath are Confessional Poets, the meaning conveyed using certain colours is different for both of them. Similarly, the implication of particular colour in a nineteenth century text might be entirely different from that of twentieth century. Some of the novels that are notable for the same are Gunter Grass' *The Tin Drum* (1959), where one can see the play of four colours, red, white, black and blue, and Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962), in which Anne Wulf records her life experiences in four notebooks, coloured red, blue, black and yellow, all the four tied together using a fifth notebook, a golden notebook. The hunt for a perfect novel that performs wonders over its pages using colours finally led to the threshold of Ayemenem. The paper is therefore trying to focus on the way Arundhati Roy uses the magic of colours in her one and only, the most celebrated, the Man Booker Prize winning novel *The God of Small Things* (1997).





“Colour is a human need like water and fire. It is a raw material indispensable to life.”

The words spoken by famous French painter, sculptor, and filmmaker Joseph Henri Leger emphasizes on the importance of colours in our life. Many people reflect that colour is just a matter of how things look and it is often dismissed as being purely cosmetic. However, the truth is that colours are those sparks that add pulse to one’s life. The reason behind it is that they help us to relate to anything that has happened or is happening or is to happen around us. A human being begins to perceive colours right from his/her birth. The two colours that a child begins to recognise at first are white and black. The first step towards the same is by distinguishing the black and white colours that the child is able to see on its immediate surroundings. Slowly his area of observation widens and it begins to recognise the same as light and darkness. Later on, he/she begins to recognise the other colours like red, green, yellow, blue, and so on. From birth to death, colours play a symbolic and emotional game in one’s life. For example, in some cultures, ‘black’ implies mourning and in some other, it is ‘white’. Also, for some the colour stands for gentleness, whereas for some others it carries an evil impact. However, it is important to understand that there is a great difference between colour psychology and colour symbolism. Traditionally, what is often described as colour psychology is actually colour symbolism. An example for the same is, red colour that is symbolic of violence can actually trigger aggression, but they are by no means the same thing. Through ages, colours have been used both symbolically and psychologically by painters and writers. The symbolic effects of the colours is termed as Colour Symbolism where as its psychological effects is called Colour Psychology. Depending on culture, different colours convey different meaning. Each colour has a story of its own to say. Colour Symbolism is deeply rooted in a particular culture, whereas, Colour Psychology deals with the emotional effects of colours. The Colour Psychology is also called the “Colour Affects” system. The psychology of colour is based on the mental and emotional effects colours have on sighted people in all facets of life. There are some very subjective pieces to colour psychology as well as some more accepted and proven elements. Colour is the source of life itself; there is nowhere that colour does not exist and our instinctive, unconscious response to it is a vital element in our survival. Colour is Nature’s own powerful signalling system. Scientifically, it is the first thing we register when we are accessing anything. Science has always recognized the link between colour and mood/behaviour and there is a large body of scientific research into it. However, no final interpretations or conclusions are





made by anyone on the same for the perception of colours is subjective. A colour that I feel to be attractive need not be appealing to another person in the same manner.

The colour Black is associated with power, elegance, formality, death, evil and mystery. It is synonymous to fear and the unknown. It usually has a negative connotation. Black also denotes strength and authority. It is also considered to be a prestigious and elegant colour, which in some cultures is used as a symbol of mourning. When black is combined with red or orange, it becomes a very aggressive colour. White is the purest one among them. It is the symbol of heavenly realm and piety. This is the colour of purity, light, goodness, innocence and virginity. As opposed to black, white usually has a positive connotation. White can always represent a successful beginning. Unlike, Black and White, the colour Red has a number of implications like alertness, ambition, aggression, battle, beauty, brilliance, charity, charm, communism, compassion, courage, danger, desire, determination, devotion, domination, emotion, energy, eroticism, excitement, fire, friendship, hate, heat, life, love, lust, madness, martyrdom, revolution, movement, murder, violence, pain, passion, prohibition, rage, patriotism, rebellion, sacrifice, sensuality, sin, strength, suffering, success, war and victory. Next, we have the colour of natural, living things that is Green. It is the colour of grass and leaves, youth, flowering, hope, and eternal renovation. It symbolizes adventure, aspiration, calmness, equilibrium, faith, fertility, foliage, generosity, good luck, life, security, safety, wisdom and youth. Another colour, Blue is considered as the colour of infiniteness of sky and is the symbol of another everlasting world or eternity. It is the colour of authority, caution, confidence, depression, despair, dignity, intelligence, introspection, isolation, order, quality, responsibility, sadness, solitude, tradition, trust, unity, value and virtue. The colour Orange denotes action, ambition, competence, cosiness, creativity, disorder, domination, dryness, earth, emotion, endurance, exaggeration, excitement, explosion, practicality, temptation, visibility, warmth and wisdom. The symbolic connotation of the colour Yellow are alertness, caution, confidence, energy, expression, fear, forgiveness, forgetfulness, idealism, imagination, intelligence, innovation, intuition, light, optimism, spontaneity and uncertainty. The colour Purple or Violet symbolizes aristocracy, art, elegance, conflict, drama, dignity, enchantment, enigma, fantasy, femininity, independence, justice, knowledge, leadership, luxury, majesty, mystery and meditation. Brown is the colour of dust and earth, is symbolic of all that is transient and perishable. Gold is the colour that symbolizes the divine nature of God himself, whereas Grey colour is used to show sterility, vagueness, void and non-existence.

Colours have been used in paintings and stories from time immemorial. Writers and painters use colours to strengthen the ideas that they convey. Colours are also used to establish





concrete images of characters, scenes, themes and events. So colours impart a deeper meaning to the text that uses it. Use of colours in literature is not just a way to pass information regarding a character, a theme or an action, but is a simpler way to explore a reader's thoughts without going deep into too many details. Colours also help the writer to transform his text to a very powerful instrument. Though this aspect was seen in the tales from French literature and Gothic literature, many post-colonial and postmodern works are also notable for the same. Here, colours take roles and play their part so as to help the writer convey ideas in ease. The meaning of colours changes with authors and poets and different group of writers. For example, though both Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath are grouped under the group, Confessional Poetry, the meaning conveyed using certain colours is different for both of them. Similarly, the implication of particular colour in a nineteenth century text might be entirely different from that of twentieth century. Some of the novels that are notable for the same are Gunter Grass' *The Tin Drum* (1959), where one can see the play of four colours, red, white, black and blue, and Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962), in which Anne Wulf records her life experiences in four notebooks, coloured red, blue, black and yellow, all the four tied together using a fifth notebook, a golden notebook. The hunt for a perfect novel that performs wonders over its pages using colours finally led to the threshold of Ayemenem. The paper is trying to focus on the play of colours in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997).

*The God of Small Things* plays the role of a mediator between the writer and the reader. A number of socially, politically and globally relevant matters of concern are discussed by the author through her little protagonist. The themes that are discussed in the novel are Indian history and politics, class relations and cultural tensions, forbidden love, social discrimination, betrayal, and so on. Roy is known for her style and techniques. The use of colours to suggest meaning is one of the techniques used by Arundhati Roy in the novel. There are many other techniques and style too that Roy uses to make the novel a feast to the reader. *The God of Small Things* is a novel that has hidden its complexity in its simplicity. Its language and its setting are astoundingly novel for the Western eyes. Along with the characters, their classes and their names; the use of certain Malayalam words without even providing the reader with a glossary or note is an immediate challenge to the apathetical reader that adds to the mystery hidden within the language.

It is indeed in the area of language and style of the novel that the book has excelled. Roy is at her best in manipulation of the English language. Says she, "Language is a very reflective thing for me. I don't know the rules, so I don't know if I have broken them." The common language that we have throughout India is English. And for somebody like Roy, the choice of language is made "before I'm old enough to choose." Roy forges a





unique expression out of her native discourse and a wilful command of the English language. Says Roy, “My language is mine. It’s the way I think and the way I write.” (Dhawan, 21)

For all its superficially random stylistic devices, *The God of Small Things* appears as a perfectly symphonic work because of an underlying thread work of linking ideas. One such connecting link is the use of colour codes within the novel. This gives it both direction and logic. Colours are used as devices to invoke the required feelings and emotions in the reader.

As it is discussed earlier, in more recent years, theories of colour psychology have gained ground in many subject areas. The term “mental colour” today normally stands for qualitative psychological characteristics of colour experiences. L. C. Hardin claims, “There are pairs of hue perceptions produced by light stimuli which, when mixed in appropriate proportions, will yield an achromatic response” (Hardin, 117). In fact, colour psychology has become an effective tool as means of silent manipulation in marketing and advertising fields as well. There is a new concept present in ‘colour theory’ that is called ‘Subjectivism’. Subjectivists claim that all physical objects are hueless. It is our personal experience that gives colours to these physical- colourless objects. The strategic use of colours, especially primary colours in the novel echoes a colour subjectivism that is hard to ignore.

The most common analogical characterization of the difference labels red and yellow as the “warm” hues and green and blue as the “cool” hues. Some are inclined to use kinetic rather than thermal terms, so that red and yellow are “advancing” and blue and green are “receding”. Still others assimilate the distinction to a variation in brightness, with red and yellow as “light” and blue and green as “dark”. (Hardin, 129)

The same analogy can be made use in *The God of Small Things*, where four colours control the narrative: Red, Blue, Yellow and Green. Hardin in Chapter III of his book maintains that, among the four colours, red is the most salient and arousing in all languages, and blue the least important of the four colours. In the novel the colour *red* appears 113 times, *blue* 96 times, *yellow* 72 times and *green* 59 times. Although these four colours dominate the pages, other colours are also used explicitly by Roy that exhibits the real magic of colours that jostle for control over the pages.

The most salient colour among the four, *red* and the least significant one, *blue* are the conflicting colours of the novel. They are the warring parties. The colour is usually used to denote alertness, ambition, aggression, battle, beauty, charity, charm, communism, change, compassion, danger, desire, domination, energy, martyrdom, rebellion, sacrifice, sin, strength, violence, pain, passion, prohibition, rage, suffering, war, death and so on. *Red* is mentioned





almost 113 times. In the novel, it is used to imply change, hope, bad omen, violence, danger, destruction and pain. The *Red bananas* (1), mentioned in the first chapter gives us a clue regarding the changes that the years have brought not just to the village, but also to their family. One can see Roy criticising a very celebrated political leader of the period, E. M. S. Namboodiripad by calling him *Running Dog, Soviet Stooge* (69). The same criticism can be related to the character, K. N. M. Pillai who always pretended to be a person with great socialist and communist ideology, but now on the roof of his house, Rahel can see, *The flag that fluttered on the roof had grown limp and old. The red had bled away* (13), again an image of change. Also, even in the midst of the authority of *blue*, Roy is using images of a *red car* (63) and a *red mug* (63) while talking about *Muralidharan, the level-crossing lunatic* (62), implying the change that is to come to the social order of the village. The *red wave* (65) mentioned with regard to the march also gives one the clue regarding the efforts that led to the upliftment of the lower classes of the society. This can also be seen as symbolic of hope. Likewise, the *red fish curry cooked with black tamarind* (79) by Velutha is *The best fish curry, according to Estha, in the whole world* (79). The combination of *red* and *black*, here adds to the aggressive nature of the colour.

The *Red Herring* (47) remark of Ammu about the label on their pickle bottle emphasizes the truth regarding the loss of red in the battle against blue, the downfall of love in the war against the love laws that ruled over the lives of five souls, Velutha, Sophie Mol, Ammu, Estha and Rahel. Similarly, the image of *dark blood spilling from his skull like a secret* (7) that Rahel sees on the day of Sophie Mol's funeral can be considered as a bad omen for what Rahel has foreseen:

The lockup was pitch-dark. Estha could see nothing, but he could hear the sound of rasping, laboured breathing....Someone turned on the light. Bright. Blinding. Velutha appeared on the scummy, slippery floor. A mangled genie invoked by a modern lamp. He was naked, his soiled mundu had come undone. Blood spilled from his skull like a dark secret (319-320).

The *dark secret* has two implications here. The first is nothing but the secret about the relationship that was going on between Ammu and *the Paravan* (69). The other one is the truth regarding the death of Sophie Mol. Prior to returning Estha to Baba, the result of 'As ye sow, so shall ye reap' 31) as Baby Kochamma points out as if *she has nothing to do with this Sowing and Reaping* (31), Rahel saw that her (Ammu) eyes were a redly dead (31). The phrase denotes not just the pain that Ammu is suffering but also as a forecasting of something worse that is to happen in their life. The *yellow rimmed red plastic sunglasses made the world look red* (37) for Rahel. In her sunglasses, Rahel is a hushed foreseer of the future. The *red sunglasses* (301, 311)





seem to help Rahel see things that others don't and can't. That is the reason why *on that skyblue December day, it was him that she saw through the sunglasses, marching with a red flag at the level crossing outside Cochin* (79). She calls it *Angry Coloured* (85, 185, 197). Of course, for her the colour of anger is *red*. Through her sunglasses she also becomes unconsciously conscious of the threat, and instead of what was until now a *skyblue* sky, she *could see pieces of red sky. And in the red sky, hot red kites wheeled, looking for rats. In their hooded yellow eyes there was a road and red flags marching* (79).

It is through her eyes that readers get to hear caution bells regarding the worse occurrences of the novel:

Rahel walked across to the old well where there were usually some ants to kill. Red ants had a sour farty smell when they were squashed..... Rahel put on her sunglasses and looked back..... Everything was Angry-coloured. Sophie Mol standing between Margaret Kochamma and Chacko, looked as though she ought to be slapped. Rahel found a whole column of juicy ants. They were on their way to church. All dressed in red. They had to be killed before they got there. Squished and squashed with a stone. You can't have smelly ants in church. (185)

Through the *red ants* Rahel is foreseeing the upcoming threat that is the impending danger on the Paravans for breaking the rules and laws of convention. The ants provide a crystal-ball reflection of these smelly Paravans marching with red flags. Her perceptivity to red is afflictive. All she could see is *red-mouthed roos with ruby smiles moved cemently across the airport floor* (139). The red feeling stays with Rahel, obviously as a bad omen, throughout her airport experience. Later, while Estha makes his ill-fated runaway plans in the pickle factory, Rahel follows him there, and red plays its part again:

A gauze door creaked (...) and yellow-rimmed red plastic sunglasses looked in with the sun behind her. The factory was Angry-coloured. The salted limes were red. The tender mangoes were red. The label cupboard was red. The dusty sunbeam was red. (197)

Their secret is called *A red, tender mango-shaped secret* (200). It is at this very moment that the reader is informed that Estha's *Red Agenda was worked out* (200), resulting in the death of *the seeker of small wisdom* (16). Velutha's nails polished red by Rahel, *blood-red nails* (191) also can be seen here as a forecasting of the bloody end that he faces.

Apart from symbolizing change and bad omen, red is also the colour that symbolizes rebellion. Mammachi's *mounds of red chillies* (47) for pickle-making shows the first sparks of rebellion.





He slouched around the compound in his immaculately tailored suits, weaving sullen circles around mounds of red chillies and freshly powdered yellow turmeric, (.....) Every night he beat her with a brass flower vase (47).

This rebellion became victorious after the arrival of Chacko first from Oxford to warn his father not to beat his mother again, *'I never want this to happen again', he told his father. 'Ever'* (48), and secondly to take over the factory reminding Ammu in all possible ways, *'What's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine'* (57). Other than Mammachi, *The red flag* (64, 65, 71, 79, 80, 81, 205) supporters, Velutha, Ammu, Rahel and Estha are also the images of rebellion. Red is also symbolic of danger and death. *The bumpy red road* (171) and *the red mud* (7, 190) symbolize the death of both Velutha and Sophie Mol. Also *the red roses* (137) that Chacko present to Sophie Mol on her arrival are also the symbol of the same. When they reached *Abhilash Talkies, They had to rush up the red steps with the old red carpet. Red staircase with red spit stains in the red corner* (97). The red colour in these passages is symbolizing the impending danger that is about to strangle the innocence in Estha. It was from the *Abhilash Talkies* that Estha was subjected to sexual harassment by *the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man* (101). The sentence, *The red sign over the door said EXIT in a red light. Estha EXITed* (101), also is a clue to what worse is to occur. Finally, *the red roaring* (163) of Ammu's funeral fire adds to the psychological trauma that Rahel goes through. Red here is denoting not just trauma but destruction too. The most crooked and cruel character of the novel is Baby Kochamma. She is the perpetrator of evil. Her violent thoughts, ideas and plans are well portrayed by Roy using the colour red. *The peaked red cap on the pink plaster-of-Paris gnome* (26) in her ornamental garden and *the red pen* (36) with which she scored the impositions she made the twins to write for their silly childish mistakes are the examples for the hidden violent nature of Baby Kochamma. Also, *the red soap in her act of force-bath(ing) a poor village child at the well with hard red soap that hurt its protruding ribs* (23) is symbolic of her only youthful rebellion to win Father Mulligan's heart at any cost.

Blue is the colour that represents infiniteness of sky, acceptance, authority, care, coolness, depression, despair, faith, frankness, flexibility, and so on. The characters Pappachi, Baby Kochamma and Margaret Kochamma, the representatives of the old social order that is under the threat of losing its grip on the local community, are represented with the colour *blue*. Everything related to them is blue, symbolized by the *skyblue Plymouth* (35, 48, 65, 113, 153, 172) which stands rotting and unwanted outside the Ayemenem House. It is this difference in the colour code between the twins and Sophie Mol that draws the dividing line between love and hatred that Mammachi and Baby Kochamma had in their store. Sophie Mol stands for the







colour blue, for she is half Indian and half English, someone adorable for the Anglophiles. But the twins born out of Ammu's youthful rebellion stands for red and it was not acceptable for them. Mammachi's *mounts of red chillies* (47) is the rebellion against Pappachi's skyblue rule. Chacko, who otherwise appears neutral, establishes a preference when he alters the shade of *Paradise Pickles & Preserves* stickers from an earthy green to distant shades of blue (276), soon after the arrival of Margaret Kochamma in the Ayemenem House *with her blue dress and legs underneath* (270). From the beginning itself readers are tend to focus on the car. Even the various body parts of the car are described as *skyblue*, for example, *skyblue bonnet* (70) and *skyblue door* (80), Even the sounds it makes are *skyblue carsounds* (171). It is also important to note that *skyblue* appears as one word and is not hyphenated. The reader is told that Pappachi bought it from an Englishman and that he would never allow Mammachi or anyone else to sit in it because *the Plymouth was Pappachi's revenge* (48). Blue can also be seen here as the symbol of ignorance and envy for Pappachi envied the attention that his wife was receiving, and the reason that added to his envy was that she was way too young than Pappachi. He finds it unbearable *he did not consider pickle-making a suitable job for a high-ranking ex-Government official* (47), and, being a jealous man, he resents his wife getting attention. The red of Mammachi's chillies is an obvious disturbance to the rule of the colour blue. After the warning that he receives from Chacko, Pappachi stops beating Mammachi and buys the Plymouth.

The colour Blue all through the novel draws a powerful dividing line between the old and new forces. Blue reflects shades of the last remaining remnants of British superiority. It is not surprising, therefore, to see everything conservative as blue, and everything radical as red. In the novel, the sky above the Ayemenem is *skyblue* (6,125,139,154,204). This blue sky is not symbolic of freedom, but a claustrophobic enclosure. The reader is told that, following her husband's death, Margaret Kochamma's *grief was a fresh, shining blue* (143). The Orthodox Syrian Christian church is also resistant to social change, and as such more favourable to the blue order. It too has painted *blue sky* that is repeatedly referred to as *a blue church sky* (6,153,215,339). The church has its own blue bell-jar. Even days are labelled *skyblue* (34, 45). On a *skyblue day*, a *skyblue Plymouth* takes the children to watch *The Sound of Music* (35). Seen through Estha and Rahel's subjective eyes, the movie starts with *the camera soar up in the skybue Austrian sky with the clear, sad sound of church bells* (99). The *electric blue foamleather car-sofa in the Abhilash Talkies Princess Circle Lobby* (101) reinforces the exclusiveness of the Anglophile upper class.

As mentioned earlier, the colour blue also has certain negative connotations such as envy, sadness, fear and depression. On the positive side, it signifies harmony, confidence and





cleanliness. Inside the Ayemenem house, Ammu's is a *bedroom with blue curtains* (224). Estha's vision of her, as he watches Ammu sleeping, is *smearred with blue* (119). However, any possible positive connotations of blue are cancelled out by the attachment of the word *barred* (119) alongside it. The streetlight falling on Ammu's sleeping face is an abstract *barred-blue*. So is the window, which instead of an opening to the outside world, is also barred-blue. The choice of this compound adjective is interesting because it informs upon itself instead of the noun following it. It is a subjective reflection of an internal state of fear and sadness. The dolphin imagery and the elemental blue of water in Ammu's dream, is not beautiful. Instead, it is a silent scream, reflecting a fear of drowning in the seas of convention. While Rahel's vision was all about *red*, Estha's vision becomes the *blue cross-stitch afternoon* (201, 217,220,226,321). It's the phrase that is repeatedly used. It stems from Estha watching Ammu, who *had pressed roses from the blue cross-stitch counterpane on her cheek* (217) as she lay asleep. It is interesting that while Estha speculates on the outward manifestation of her blueness, Ammu is dreaming, matching blue dreams inside her head. She dreams of a man holding her, who has only one arm and *could do only one thing at a time* (215). The setting is a beach littered with broken blue glass bottles. Each wave brings new *bluebottles* (1) to be broken. The blue metaphor speaks volumes. In the novel, Ammu's defeat by blue is complete. Dying alone, her dead face with the *deep blue sac under one eye that was bloated like a bubble* (162) . Rahel, riding to the crematorium in the hired van with Ammu's corpse like *a dead Roman senator* notices that *it made the blue sky bluer* (162) in its revenge, where the red colour just 'roared' and became a part of the flame that ate her body.

Yellow in the context of colour psychology and colour symbolism represents activity, alertness, brightness, caution, confidence, energy, expansion, expression, fear, forgetfulness, forgiveness, gaiety, idealism, cowardice, illness, imagination, intelligence, innovation, spontaneity, thought, uncertainty, hunger, frustration, anger, and so on. But in the novel, yellow predominantly represents fear. The colour is also used to represent the negative characteristics such as illness, cowardice, dishonesty and weakness. The most important representation of the colour is the *yellow church* (4, 5, 6, 13,139,171,224,263,331). This yellowness of the church can be related to the way the church treats the low classes. A chapter in the novel explains the struggle of the *Paravans* and other *untouchables*, who were attracted to Christianity under the impression that they treated people as human beings, not as *Parayan, Paravan or Pulayan* (69). But they were ill-treated even within the religion, for they were discriminated by providing them with a church of their own. They weren't allowed to enter the church of the high class people. Twice the reader is told that *the yellow church swelled like a throat with the sound of sad singing* (4, 6).





Roy gives us an account of the condition of Meenachal now. The *yellow bullfrogs* (2) is symbolic of hope here. The emphasis on Sophie Mol's *yellow crimplene bell bottoms* (4) visually extends the analogy of church bells. That is the reason behind using the phrase, *yellow bottoms of bells* (141, 186), emphasizing the word bell more than the shape of the attire itself. It is almost as if Sophie Mol's movement in her bellbottoms is indicative of silent, fearful bells. Roy even uses, *Sophie Mol's yellow church* (13) to underline the clue on the danger that ends in her death. The *Red bananas* (1) of change, here becomes *bananas that hung in yellow bunches* (13) of fear. Instead of telling turmeric or turmeric stains, Roy emphasizes on the colour yellow, like, *yellow turmeric stains* (20) and *yellow turmeric* (47). As symbol of fright, yellow is nowhere more apparent than in the *yellow teeth* (102, 103) of the *Orangedrink Lemondrink Man*. His *teeth, like yellow piano keys* (102) watch Estha and make him feel troubled and petrified. Estha's choice of a lemon drink is a reflection of both cowardice and fear of the man. More generally, yellow is attached to bodily excretions and dirt, such as, Kuttapen's catheterization to a *bottle of yellow liquid* (209), Khubchand's urinating *unsteadily, bright yellowy* (12) inside the house, Baby Kochamma's urinating reflected in Rahel's imagination as a *yellow brook burbling through a mountain passm* (95), and the *yellow municipal garbage truck* (296). Even the red ants mentioned earlier as an analogy of marching rebellion are later quelled by yellow urine, when *Police-piss* leaves behind a sad picture of *drowned ants in yellow bubbly* (307) as the policemen prepare to beat Velutha to death. These are all manifestations of disgust. Roy is actually bringing together what is profane and real, which can be related to Bakhtin's 'Carnivalism' or 'Grotesque Realism'.

Yellow is also associated with some kind of evil that is approaching them, *the broken yellow moon* (123) in the twins' imagination soon after the *Orangedrink Lemondrink Man* incident suggests that. The reference to *the yellow sponge spilled out* (113) is also associated with the same. The colour is also used to refer to oblivion or decay.

On the top shelf, the leather binding on Pappachi's set of *The Insect Wealth of India* had lifted off each book and buckled like corrugated asbestos. Silverfish tunnelled through the pages, burrowing arbitrarily from species to species, turning organized information into yellow lace (155).

The *yellow lace* reference is used to suggest decay. Anything that is referred to the *Orangedrink Lemondrink man* is related to the colour yellow. Estha thinking of the visit of the man and Ammu treating him by giving him the pineapple squash is phrased as *yellow in a glass* (194). The man hides his evil, dishonest side in his *yellow smile* (121) and the drinks that he provides to the customers.





Green is the colour of earth, freshness, fertility, warmth, health, envy, youth, hope, frankness, generosity, security, safety, and so on. Readers face an intoxicating march of green sentences dribbling with visions of *dust green trees* (1), *green mossing* (10), *green nettles* (10), *green rice fields* (121), *green mangoes and peppercorns* (193). Green gains an upper hand here. Roy uses this glut of *immodest green* (1) to reflect choking harassment. Mother Nature and nature, if oppressed, can go rotten and worse. The river Meenachal is described in both positive and negative green. At times labelled stunningly as *a slow green whisper* (204), the river transforms into an unhealthy picture of *thick, viscous water covered with a luminous film of green scum* (205). The metaphor of sickening green water occurs whenever the twins have a bad sensation. Estha has a *greenwavy, seaweedy, bottomless-bottomful* (109) feeling of helplessness that makes him vomit in *Abhilash Talkies*. The same *green-wavy, thick-watery, lumpy seaweedy, floaty, bottomless-bottomful feeling* (323) overpowers him in the train when he is being separated from his twin and Ammu, and sent away, referred to as *returned* to his father.

Every First Class train thing was green. The seats were green.

The berths green. The floor green. The chains green. Darkgreen. Lightgreen.

TO STOP TRAIN PULL CHAIN, it said in green.

OT POTS NIART LLUP NIAHC, Estha thought in green (323 – 324)

The same oppression can be read in the word *greenheat* (173, 182, 186, 193), used repeatedly for the Ayemenem surroundings. Usually heat is represented with the help of the colour red, but here Roy is using *greenheat* instead of *redheat* to convey the same. Another instance of the same is *green midday heat* (154). Many shades of green are also used in the novel by Roy, some are, *opaque green* (12), *tinged green* (13) and *cabbage green* (154).

Psychologically and symbolically, the colour *white* usually stands for purity, innocence, cleanliness, sense of space, neutrality and mourning. The first thing that has to be pointed out while discussing the relevance of the colour white is the name Vellutha. *He was called Vellutha-which means white in Malayalam because he was so black* (73). Though his complexion is black, Roy uses this name for him, which can be considered as one of the techniques of decolonizing the white man's language and culture. The *white trails* on the *newly painted dome of the yellow church* (5) is doing nothing but implying the divinity of the religion. It is said that the trails are *crisscrossed in the clouds* (5), meaning that even a fabricated piece of divinity cannot overcome the colour blue-controlled yellow church. Rahel some moments later imagines *someone who had taken the trouble to go up there with cans of paint, white for the clouds* (6). The someone she imagines is none but Velutha who is trying to draw a sky of his own that is infinite and free. The white in this passage symbolizes the sense of space that he is longing for. The *white T-shirt*





(18) that Rahel is seen wearing when she met Larry McCaslin symbolizes attraction. McCaslin even thinks *There goes a jazz tune* (18) after following her that day to *a bookshop* (18).

The phrase, *snow white* (18) is used by Roy in opposition to another phrase, *coal black* (18). Here, Kochu Maria's hair is *snow white* whereas, Baby Kochamma's hair is *coal black*, as a result of frequent dyeing. The snow white here emphasizes on the number of years that have passed after those unforgettable incidents, though Baby Kochamma is living back her youth in her old age. The *White walls* (88) of the Ayemenem house denote the past glory of the house and its people. Now that glory has gone away, turning the white walls to *uneven grey* (88). The same meaning is conveyed by *the walls white* (91) of Ammu's room that is used by Estha after his re-return to Ayemenem by his Baba. The *white Terylene shirt* (102) and the *white muslin dhoti* (103) are the attires of the wicked *Orangedrink Lemondrink Man*. The white here is used as a facade to his real character. His hypocritical behaviour is emphasized through the pure colour of his shirt and dhoti. The *white doors and windows* (.....). *The clean white children* (105) are symbolic of the way the twins are brought up. Estha and Rahel have been brought up as Anglophiles aspiring English view of goodness and acceptability. They yearn to be on the list of Julia Andrew's favourite things in the motion-picture *The Sound of Music*, which includes children in *white dress with blue satin sashes* (106). Yet they know they can never quite attain that elusive level. Sophie Mol, the half Indian, half English child of Chacko and Margaret Kochamma is referred to as *White and blue* (118), the Julia Andrew way of life that the twins love and is longing to live. *The white chatta with a v- neck and her white mundu* (170) of Kochu Maria is the part of the dressing style of the Syrian Christians. So it stands for the tradition and culture of the people of the Ayemenem household. The *white bedsheets* (201) again is symbolic of the past glory of the *Punnyan Kunju* family. Mammachi's *off- white and gold* ( 201 ) saris also symbolizes their wealth and position in the past.

Black is the colour that symbolizes evil, depression, fear, death, elegance and wealth. The *black crows gorge(ing) on bright mangoes* (1) soon after Roy mentioning the condition of the river as, *The river shrinks* (1) gives the reader a sense of depression. The *small black bat* that climbed up *Baby Kochamma's expensive funeral sari* (6) can be seen as the breaker of the hypocritical and deceitful character lying inside the woman. She can be considered as the most villainous among the characters. The *carbon black* (9) making factory in which the twins' Baba works is also symbolic of the evil that once strangled Ammu's life. Baby Kochamma's *hair, dyed jetblack* (21) is symbolic of the loss that she had to confront. She had lost her youth in her love for Father Mulligan. She is trying to live that life black in her old age. Similarly, the *coal-black eyes* reference in *Father Mulligan was more than merely flattered by the emotion he aroused in the attractive young girl who stood before him with a trembling, kissable mouth and blazing, coal-*





*black eyes* (23), implies the love that she had for him, that led Baby Kochamma to the extent of choosing the life of a 'nun' throughout her life. The flowers in her ornamental garden had the *shades of mottled black to blood red* (26), both the colours that represents blood and evil.

*Black moods* (49) of Pappachi after his failure in naming a moth after his own name denotes his violent, evil, uncaring character. This is also symbolic of his ignorance. The colours of the hair on the level crossing lunatic Maralidharan's body as *armless armpits was wispy black, and the hair in his crotch was black and springy* (64) can be seen as part of a little girl's observation. But at the same instance, the colour black here symbolizes negligence or ignorance. The *black knob on the handle* (65) of the car's door is an indicator of the losing battle of aristocracy in their war against the red wave. Though they win, it's momentary and they lose the battle in the later years. The column of dense black smoke that the train leaves behind denotes the tragedy that is awaiting the twins and their Ammu. Estha who is returned to her Baba loses his beloved Ammu forever. It is not just Ammu whom he loses, but also himself. He loses his childhood. Baby Kochamma listening to the song that a *Black busker singing Somewhere Over the Rainbow* is also signifying her lost youth. Even at this age, she is hopeful. The busker himself is living a *life of privation and despair* (88). His song is like his account of the miseries of his life. The *black ants* (155) walking across a windowsill is the image of the victory that the *red wave* won in their years of battle against the *Blue Army*. The ants here stand for the *Parayans and Paravans* who weren't even were allowed to enter the Ayemenem household. The *opaque fifties sunglasses* (166) that Mammachi used can be seen as symbolic of her ignorance towards Ammu and her twins. Mammachi never accepted Ammu's marriage with Baba, but secretly accepted Chacko's illicit relationships with the factory workers. The *black iron cauldron* (194) is pointing at the impending danger. The blackness gives us the clue regarding the tragedy that awaits the twins as a result of their *Red Agenda*, their secret.

Orange is the colour that symbolizes action, ambition, appetite, celebration, change, disorder, determination, domination, dryness, exaggeration, explosion, and so on. Baby Kochamma's *bright orange gardening gloves* (26) denote her creativity as a gardener; as well her place in the family as a destroyer of all happiness. She can grow beautiful flowers but at the same time can grab from the lives of five people, their right to live a happy and beautiful life. The five souls are Estha, Rahel, Velutha, Ammu and Sophie Mol. It is her crooked-vicious thoughts and plans that led to the tragedy of these lives. *The orange pipette* (50, 156) of Mammachi is pointing at the dryness that she suffers all through her life. The colour also denotes the domination of her principles and *Love Laws* (33) above all human considerations. The *orange sun* (187) that is up the sky is an emphasize of the destruction and explosion that had occurred in the twins' life.





The colour is also an indicator of the lost glory of the family, referring to the condition of the ornamental garden and the Ayemenem house. The *orange walls (that) held hands and bent over* (207) Kuttappen is symbolic of the cruelty and domination of the powerful over the powerless.

Pink is the colour of romance, love and happiness but is also the colour of agitation and disturbance. The *crushed- strawberry- pink T-shirt* (10) that Estha is wearing emphasizes on the agitation he has for his past and present. The phrase conveys perfect sense- the *strawberry pink* is *crushed*, adding to the height of his sense of agitation. *Pink tickets* (99) and *Pink receipt* (163) mentioned in two crucial situations of the novel is symbolic of the pain, agitation and helplessness of the characters. The *Pink tickets* come in the context of the Abhilash Talkies incident, the place that grabs from Estha his self-respect and innocence. Later, the *pink receipt* that Rahel and Chacko receive after Ammu's funeral is symbolic of the pain, agitation and helplessness. Rahel, though a little girl, is forced by the situation to go through all these pains alone. The *pink plaster- of- Paris* (26) with which Baby Kochamma beautifies her ornamental garden is symbolic of happiness that she derives, at least momentarily, from her hobby. Also, the *pink froth* that Estha notices on the jam's *sticky scarlet surface* (194) is also denoting the same. Here, Estha imagines of the *Orangedrink Lemondrink Man* walking in. The child is helpless for he cannot share his suffering with anyone.

Grey is the colour that is neutral, timeless and practical. But it also signifies sterility, vagueness and non- existence. Grey is often considered as an unemotional colour. The *greying Artex vest* (13) of Comrade Pillai symbolizes the almost non- existing existence of his ideology. The *greyed undershirt* (144) of the roomboy is denoting the insignificance of the poor though they work for the rich. The *pale grey* stain on Baby Kochamma's skin of her forehead as a result of frequent dyeing shows the sterile, pointless life that she had been living. The *curly grey hair* (64) on Estha's head that Rahel notices is symbolic of sterility present in his life too. He is living a mechanical life after he became alone, without Ammu, without his twin. The *grey gristle* (82) in the context related to Rahel looking out through the glass of the car window symbolizes the vagueness of their lives. It also is symbolic of their 'non- existence' in the blue- controlled social system and Ayemenem house. The *white walls* that have turned *uneven grey* (88) is pointing at the lost glory of the house. The house that was once at its prime is now falling into oblivion. The specification using the word, 'uneven', stresses on the same. The *grey sky* (90) symbolizes the sterile nature of Estha. He, as told before, is living an almost non- existing life.





Purple is the colour that is often associated with royalty, wealth, prosperity, prestige, mystery, magic, power and luxury. The colour is used to portray rich powerful kings, leaders, magicians and even sorcerers. The purple reference in

Heaven opened and the water hammered down, reviving the reluctant old well, greenmossing the pigless pigsty, carpet bombing still, tea- coloured puddles the way memory bombs still, tea- coloured minds. The grass looked wetgreen and pleased. Happy earthworms frolicked purple in the slush. Green nettles nodded. Trees bent (10).

The words *frollic* and *purple* together evokes an enchanting super pleasant mood in the reader. The purple colour alone makes wonders for it shows the pleasant memories that Rahel cherishes about her childhood. Kids are the better explorers of nature and it's magic. The *happy earthworms* that *frolicked purple even in the slush* can be compared to the twins who are having fun staying within their restricted background. *The bedroom window reflected in his (Khubchand) smooth, purple balls* (12) conveys the idea of loss and power. Khubchand was dearest only to Estha. For everyone else he was an insignificant existence. The colour can be taken as symbolic of the escape that he had from the insignificant life. The colour purple in the purple-robed Syrian Bishops is showing nothing but the power, nobility, royalty, wealth and luxury they had. The clergy were the powerful and their height of power was always a reason for feud between them and the crown. The *Purple orchid in the green vase* (166) is associated with wealth, prestige and power of the family. The *cold purple juice* (167) Mammachi is thinking of serving to Sophie Mol in a glass is again symbolic of the prestige, prosperity and power of the family that Mammachi wants to pass on to the newcomer. Through the colour given to envy, that is purple, in

She was surprised at the extent of her daughter's physical ease with him. Surprised that her child seemed to have a subworld that excluded *her* entirely. A tactile world of smiles and laughter that she, her mother, had no part in. Ammu recognized vaguely that her thoughts were shot with a delicate, purple tinge of envy (176).

Ammu is wondering about the intimacy between Velutha and Rahel. Even the envy that she feels for the relationship is purple, indicating the happiness and joy that he has for the child.

Brown is the colour of earth that stands for stability, structure, support, protection, sense of duty and responsibility. It also stands for poverty. The *cheap brown paper* that Rahel used to present her *bizarre, impractical plans* (18) makes her an alien in the fun loving world. She is alienated not just by her fellow students but also by her professors. The cheapness emphasis of the brown paper underlines the financial status of Rahel, who had no one to help her with either her studies or with her living. The *light brown* (51) of Pappachi's eyes in his photograph







shows this maleficence. The Anglophile is trying to hide his genuine 'qualities' so as to appear polite at least to the photographer. The birth mark on Velutha's back is presented as *light brown birthmark, shaped like a pointed dryleaf* and as *A brown leaf on a black back* (73). The colour here symbolizes his social status and the life of a underprivileged he, along with his brother and father, is living. Chacko who had to leave Sophie Mol when she was an infant is memorizing the day he left her. The *brown down on her soft skull* (117) maintains that though in appearance she is an English child, she is Indian in many perspectives, the reason behind the intimacy that she maintains with her cousins, with Velutha and even with the nature. The brown colour reference in *He (Velutha) saw her (Ammu) brown arms were round and firm and perfect* (176) indicates his attraction towards and fascination for her. He right from his childhood had cared for her, making toys for *Ammukutty*. The *brown* colour in this context emphasizes on his attitude towards Ammu, whom he considers as a woman who has feelings and emotions, who is in need of a man, and never considers the *Love Laws* (33).

Both the colours silver and golden are used in literature to refer to charm, confidence and magnetism. The colours can also symbolize something divine and sacred. The *silver ropes* (1) in the first chapter is nothing but rain. The attribution, silver to the rain drops adds to the charm of God's bliss. The *silver for the jets* (6) reference in Rahel's fantasy of Velutha painting the yellow church's dome also symbolizes charm. Similarly, the *gold pocket watch* and *silver hair brush* (49) that are there on Pappachi's dressing table explains his charm and charisma. The *silvers of (his) white scalp* (90) used instead of Estha's grey hair weakens the strength of the colour grey. *Silver crucifix* (156) and *silver bowl* (188) are used as the signifiers of the glory of the Ayemenem house.

There are many coloured words and phrases in *The God of Small Things*. These words have a visual impact on the reader. These usages suggest meaning better than colours. Some of these usages are, *dark star* (6), *dark blood* (6), *tea coloured puddles* (10), *tea coloured minds* (10), *chocolate robes* (24), *dark sepulchral* (24), *in certain colours* (55), *dark puddle* (69), *colours of the dark* (73), *angry coloured* (85, 185, 197), *honey coloured* (91), *dirt coloured rag* (101), *coloured fingerguards* (172, 193), *coloured breeze* (216).

These usages conspire with the context to convey meaning. For example,

She thought of what would happen if the rope snapped. She imagined him (Velutha) dropping like a dark star out of the sky that he had made. Lying broken on the hot church floor, dark blood spelling from his skull like a secret (6).

The *dark star* image stands for his position in the society and class system as an invalid, whereas, the adjective *dark* added to the word *blood*, emphasizes the criticality of the accident.





The *dark* in the *dark sepulchral* and *dark puddle* (24) are just intensifying the darkness of the scenes portrayed or the objects displayed. Also the phrase, *colours of the dark* is emphasizing the darkness that covers the twins' childhood.

She wondered why it was that when she thought of home, it was always in the colours of the dark, oiled wood of boats, and the empty cores of the tongues of flame that flickered in brass lamps. (73)

Rahel's thoughts in connection with her childhood and the Ayemenem house is smothered with darkness.

The reference, *angry coloured* (85, 185, 197) is frequently used by Rahel in the novel. Through her *yellow rimmed red plastic sunglasses* (37), the world appeared *angry coloured* for her. The colour that she attributes for the emotion, anger in the novel is red, which again stresses on the violence and hatred that surpassed the emotion of love and care, around her. Similarly, she uses the term *honey coloured* (91) while referring to her beloved brother, Estha. The reader while coming across the term can feel her love for her brother hidden in the sweetness of honey. One can be sure that it is not the colour of honey she is referring to, but the compassion diluted in it for Estha by Rahel. The dirt reference in the *dirtcoloured rag* (101) that the *Orangedrink Lemondrink Man* uses to wipe his marble counter stands for the aversion that the twins feel for the man. He hides his true nature behind his *yellow smile*, like wise he cleans his dirt covered stall using a cloth. By molesting the child, knowingly or unknowingly, the child receives the negativity that lies within him, like the clean cloth that turns *dirtcoloured*. The *chocolate robes* (14) reference in connection with Father Mulligan is again denoting the sweetness lying within the adjective, chocolate. It can also be used as indicating the colour of his robe. But when gone in depth into the term, it displays Baby Kochamma's fascination and love for the priest. All other phrases like, *tea-coloured puddles* (10) and *tea- coloured minds* (10) are just beautifying the contexts in which they are used by Roy. These are used just to mention the colour. And the term, *coloured fingerguards* (172, 193) is used by Roy to point out the different coloured finger guards used by the *Blue Army*.

For all its superficially unpredictable stylistic devices, *The God of Small Things* appears as a perfectly symphonic work because of an underlying thread work of connecting ideas. One such connecting link is the use of colour codes within the novel, which give it both direction and logic. The advantage in the same that is made use to its maxim by Roy is the age of the narrator of the novel. A child whenever refers to anything uses certain codes to make others understand what he/ she is referring to. One of such codes is colours used by the little narrator in the novel.





Colours are used as devices to invoke the required feelings and emotions in the reader, and these colours are used as metaphors, having both psychological and socio-cultural relevance. In short, Arundhati Roy's novel focuses on the issues of love laws, political conflict, and familial relationships embodied by the Ipe family, as seen through the eyes of Rahel, one of its youngest members. The non-linear structure alternates between Rahel's life as a child and a grown woman. In many passages, one can see the upper hand of colours over words. The colours that are specifically used by Roy are red, yellow, blue, and green. Though these four colours dominate the pages, a reader can also see the brilliance of other colours like, black, white, orange, brown, purple, pink, gray and certain coloured words. While dialogue is primarily thought to establish mood in a work, this dissertation maintains that colour is also an essential component of creating literary tone. Certain colours carry specific emotional connotations. Roy uses colour as a device to evoke the feelings necessary for a reader to understand the novel and its implications. Roy's paintinglike novel stresses on the pulse that is added to life by colours. In the 340 pages novel, they take certain roles and play it. Many studies in connection with colour symbolism and colour psychology give emphasis to the cultural and emotional effects of these colours. This philosophy of colours is explicitly used by Arundhati Roy in her *The God of Small Things* (1997), her debut novel that is often considered as her magnum opus.

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