

Tribhuvan University
Central Department of English

Representation of Untouchables in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Letter of Recommendation

Neelam Poudel has completed her thesis entitled “Representation of Untouchables in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*”, under my supervision. She carried out this research from March 2015 A.D to December 2015 A.D. I recommend her thesis be submitted for viva voice.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Representation of Untouchables in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*”, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Ms. Neelam Poudel has been approved by the undersigned members of research committee.

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Abstract

This present research work entitled “Representation of Untouchables in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*” has made an attempt to explore the superfluous and malicious treatment meted out to the untouchables in Indian society by applying insight from cultural studies. The untouchables have been undergoing the inexorable humiliation at the hands of so called higher classes of Indian society. They have not been able to improve their social status even after the concurrence of the political independence. Arundhati Roy has made her effort to dig out the problems of untouchability pervading the Indian society in her novel. The novel explores the caste system, gender biasness, corrupt police administration, molestation, emotional insecurity, clashes of the culture and other different social factors that still exist in the country even after attaining political independence. The novel discloses a very large gap between the touchable and untouchables; the exploiters and the exploited and the powerful and the powerless. Here in this research work, I will discuss the maltreatment meted out to Velutha, one of the characters in Roy’s *The God of Small Things* and how his situation changes from bad to worst through the perspective of cultural studies. This research work helps in understanding the unfavorable situation of the untouchables and their struggle throughout their life. Such study is new application in the text. Thus, it is claimed to be innovative within the context of scholarship.

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I. Introduction to *The God of Small Things* and Cultural Studies

The overall purpose of this research work is to provide an attempt to expose the maltreatment meted out to the untouchables in *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy through the perspective of cultural studies. The researcher opines that several characters in the novel are mistreated only because they are untouchables. The novel is a reflection of rebellious artistic zeal of Roy against the deep rooted caste politics, patriarchy, class hierarchy, anglophile and so on. Most of the novel's plot takes place in India the 1960 which clearly exposes the maltreatment upon the untouchables through the character Velutha along with the female character Ammu by the male dominated patriarchal society. The novel depicts the then society where the untouchables are denied from their respective rights in spite of being equally talented and capable as the touchable, rather they have to live a life full of hatred and difficulties. This research focuses on exploring the social, political and cultural transformation that untouchables experience under the influence of external and internal forces.

The God of Small Things deals with the issue of the despondent predicament of untouchables in India. The novel is concerned about the inhuman behavior that spring out from caste prejudices. Velutha is an untouchable, a dalit. He is an extremely gifted carpenter and mechanic who works at Paradise Pickle and Preserves factory owned by Ammu's family but he is not given any respective position in the pickle factory. His exceptional talents and skills, his keen understanding and deep sensibility did not get respect from any one of those who were far less talented than him. Hierarchical structure of power and oppression at various levels in patriarchal societies are explored in the novel. The character of Velutha has been powerfully

drawn in terms of his robust physique and in born talents of making wooden objects and mechanical instruments. “He was like a little magician. He could make intricate toys- tiny windmills, rattles, minute jewel boxes out of dried palm reeds, he could carve perfect boats out of tapioca stem and figurines on cashew nuts” (74). Not only this, he had exceptional talents for many other things. He used to mend radios, clocks, water pumps. “Mamachhi often said that if he only hadn’t been a paravan, he might have become an engineer” (75). Mamachhi is quite clear about how to draw lines and see that the paravans remain behind them. In the factory Velutha’s talent as a carpenter could hardly be ignored- he was always in demand, ever wanted by the factory for various jobs. This fact was silently resented by the other workers. But here also caste discrimination is clearly seen:

To keep the others happy, and since she knew that nobody else would hire him as a carpenter. Mamachhi paid Velutha less than she would a touchable carpenter but more than she would a paravan. Mamachhi didn’t encourage him to enter the house (except when she needed something mended or installed). She thought that he ought to be grateful that has been allowed on the factory premises at all, and allowed to touch things that touchables touched. She said that it was a big step for a paravan. (77)

Velutha’s subjugation is multiple. He is born paravan, son of a paravan, a community in Kerela, subjected to extreme ignominy through ages. To escape the inhuman humiliations, Velutha’s forefathers had embraced Christianity. But the Christians themselves had adopted, as a matter of natural form of adaptation, the strict and unavoidable caste –system; thus the paravans had only received the status of “untouchable Christians with separate priest and church” (74). Therefore, here in this

research paper, I propose to examine the maltreatment upon the untouchables in the so called high class society.

The God of Small Things (1997) is a master piece of Arundhati Roy which won prestigious Booker prize in 1997. Immediately it was recognised as a great work of social depiction due to the clear representation of different aspects of the society such as untouchability, gender discrimination, molestation, emotional insecurity, social hegemony, problems and clashes of cultures, corrupt police administration, patriarchal domination and so on. The book is semi-autobiographical and the major part of the novel captures Roy's childhood experiences in Ayemenam. The character of Ammu is based on Roy's mother, Mary Roy. Her husband was Hindu, but they got divorced as the cultural differences between them aroused in a life full of conflict. Roy's mother, just like the character of Ammu, had to raise two children by herself. In the novel the character of Ammu experiences local disapproval for being a divorcee as well as for marrying outside her religious community.

The way Roy problematizes this is probably based on first-hand knowledge, considering that her mother experienced the same. Furthermore, the character of Rahel is based on Arundhati Roy herself. Just like Roy, the character of Rahel goes to study architecture in New Delhi, where she meets her future husband. Considering that *The God of Small Things* contains autobiographical elements, it could be argued that the novel's portrayal of Ayemenem reflects the real Ayemenem. However, we should be aware of making simplistic connections between author and novel, or using Roy's personal experiences as a model for what is essentially an imaginative work of fiction. Indeed, Roy has herself stated that the texture is autobiographical, the incidents are not. Therefore, I consider my theoretical analysis of the novel as an interpretation of a piece of literary fiction, and it should be noted that my findings do

not make claims about the real world.

The God of Small Things is an ambitious work that addresses universal themes ranging from religion to biology. Roy stresses throughout the novel that great and small things are interconnected, and that historical events and seemingly unrelated details have far-reaching consequences throughout the community and the country. The novel is therefore able to comment simultaneously on universal abstract themes and a wide variety of ideas relating to the personal and family history of the members of the Ipe family as well as the wider concerns of the Kerala region of India. Some of the novel's most thoroughly developed concerns are forbidden love, Indian History and politics.

The God of Small Things vividly portrays the destructive power of caste and gender system and moral and political bigotry in general. The novel too explores the shocking consequences of pivotal events in the life of two twins: Estha and Rahel. It also gives emphasis on the vivid pictures of life in a town, the thoughts and feelings of two small children and the complexity and hybridity of the adults in their world. The novel tells us how life depends on small happenings in life. Roy has put more emphasis on the small things that combine to make up the texture of our lives. *The God of Small Things* stands for the life of the weak and the helpless. It represents all those people who are victimized by the forces of history, dead convention, the tyranny of the state and the politics of opportunism. All that leads to power, prestige and wealth is widely taken as 'big' while the rest is relegated to the position of 'small thing'. Even though the small things are considered less valuable they have a significant role in our life.

The plot of the novel revolves around Estha and Rahel, fraternal boy and girl twins living with their divorced mother, Ammu and her family. The whole event in

the novel takes place in the Southern Indian state Kerala, and circles around an outlawed relationship between a Syrian Christian divorcee and mother of two children, Ammu and a low caste carpenter, Velutha. A divorcee is not entitled any right to pursue for happiness in her life. The only itinerary open to her is to squander a static life, waiting for death. Any effort on her part to see life autonomously intimidates the existing order. She is at loggerheads with the society at large because she married outside her community and a divorcee too. Ammu's expedition for emotional support ends in Velutha, a low caste or 'untouchable' carpenter whose family has been serving in Ammu's family since a long time. The love relation between Ammu, belonging to a high class and Velutha, an untouchable is the major event which brings tragedy in the family. The death of Sophie Mol, daughter of Chacko and his English wife Margaret is the main reason behind all the drama in the novel.

While telling the story of Sophie Mol's death, the novel resonates with larger political and social issues. The society that the characters inhabit is largely shaped by the caste system, which defines social classes in India and dictates the status rules that persist and that still have to be obeyed particularly in terms of who is allowed to interact with whom. The novel pays particular attention to what the narrator calls the "Love Laws," which interpret the caste to explore who is allowed to love whom, how and how much. The violation of these social rules is the reason behind the childhood experience of Estha and Rahel and has a key role in forming the circumstances that lead up to Sophie Mol's death.

Ammu's higher caste Syrian Christian parents were not happy with her. They hated her for her "Inter-community love marriage" (45). Her brother Chacko had also got an inter-community love marriage with an English woman, Margaret. After

having a daughter she left him. Chacko returned to his family home and he was whole-heartedly welcomed by his parents. This reflects a mood of patriarchal society where women are extremely suppressed not only outside but within the family itself. It is clear that both got married out of their community. Ammu, the protagonist, marries a Hindu and Chacko, her brother, marries a British. After a while, their marriage ends in divorce but Ammu eternally pays heavy price only because she is a woman whereas Chacko enjoys a lot of privileges since he is a man belonging to the patriarchal society. Even while fulfilling their sexual desire, they are treated differently. When Ammu is called a prostitute for having sexual relation with Velutha, at the same time Chacko is made free to have relation with the factory worker women by telling it a “man’s need”.

The novel is stuffed with different illustrations of caste politics. Velutha is a lower-caste young man. In the novel, he is presented as the male protagonist. He maintained an affair with the higher caste woman Ammu and had attempted to transgress the prohibition of the caste system. For this he is savagely beaten to death and it is only because he is a ‘dalit’, an untouchable. This brought the wrath of Ammu’s so-called higher caste family upon him. Christianity does not observe the caste system. However, Ammu’s Syrian Christian parents paid their attention to it to a great extent. It is a sharp irony directed towards the hypocritical society of Kerala.

Baby Kochamma made a false charge against Velutha that he kidnapped and murdered the child and at the same time raped Ammu. The police administration, mainly representing and emphasizing higher caste of Kerala, tortured him to death. The caste prejudice still ruled all the higher caste. The issue of love between Ammu and Velutha is overspread blaming and maltreating Ammu as a prostitute. The police inspector Thomas Mathew “tapped her breast with his baton” (8). Right behind him

the board indicating politeness, obedience, loyalty, intelligence, courtesy and efficiency for POLICE was humiliating his behaviour and activity. The maltreatment meted out to Ammu and Velutha from whole police administration was an epitome of excessive domination and prejudice in the name of caste and gender.

Ammu became a victim of male-dominated patriarchal society. She was not allowed to pursue her studies. The unjust treatment she underwent at her home and in her family and the society made her virtually 'untouchable' although she belonged to a higher class Christian family. In the novel Roy has mentioned "Ammu, as a daughter, had no claim to the property" (57) which clearly proves that she was a victim of patriarchal society.

The God of Small Things presents many elements of traditional society through its characters and incidents. Pappachhi and his thought, behaviour and treatment over Mammachhi and over all females, depicts the whole contemporary patriarchal society. He has shown the brutal and barbaric nature through his activity, such as beating with a brass vase, and insulting Mammachhi (his own wife) and Ammu (his own daughter). He discourages the female ability preventing Mammachhi from playing violin even though she has exemplary skill of playing it and forbidding Ammu for getting education. Similarly, Inspector Mathew and his brutal, cynical and barbaric police administration victimize innocent Ammu and Velutha. Likewise, Chacko and his treatment over lower caste factory workers; Mammachi and her conventional, exploitative and rigid view of the caste system; Comrade Pillai and his self-centred politics all incidents move around social problems. In this regard, the novelist Arundhati Roy has very powerfully presented the miseries, discriminations, exploitations, hurdles and constraints in the name of caste, gender, culture and social norms and values.

The present research is a library based research. It uses a close, discursive analytical style which will draw on the concept of cultural studies and vocabularies. The research is based on the authentic cites. Guidance from the lectures and professors is taken as the supportive tool. In addition to this, the text on the issue of representation is taken as the tool in making the application of the novel from the view point of cultural studies. Stuart Hall's concept of representation, Foucault's concept of discourse, are used to prove the point. The different extracts of the novel are taken to prove the hypothesis.

My approach to my statement of problem draws on cultural studies. Generally speaking the term cultural studies is an innovative interdisciplinary field of research and teaching that investigates the ways in which culture creates and transforms individual experiences, everyday life, social relation and power. Research and teaching in the field explores the relations between culture understood as human expressive and symbolic activities, and cultures understood as distinctive ways of life. Combining the strengths of the social sciences and the humanities, cultural studies draws on the methods and theories from literary studies, sociology, communications studies, history, cultural anthropology, and economics. By working across the boundaries among these fields, a cultural study addresses new questions and problems of today's world. Rather than seeking answers that will hold for all time, cultural studies develops flexible tools that adapt to this rapidly changing world.

Cultural Studies is an interdisciplinary field in which perspectives from different disciplines can be selectively drawn on to examine the relation of culture and power. It is concerned with all those practices, institutions and system of classification through which they are inculcated in a population, particular values, beliefs, competencies, routines of life and habitual forms of conduct. The forms of power that

cultural studies explores are diverse and include gender, race, class, colonialism, etc. Cultural studies seeks to explore the connection between these forms of power and to develop ways of thinking about culture and power that can be utilized by agents in the pursuit of change.

Cultural studies is not one thing which can be accurately represented, but rather it is constituted by a number of ways of looking at the world which are motivated by different purpose and values. It is constituted by multiple voices that nevertheless have sufficient resemblances to form a recognizable 'family' connected by 'kinship' ties to other families. It is best understood as a language game that revolves around the theoretical terms developed and deployed by persons calling their work cultural studies. For Hall, in Foucauldian language, Cultural Studies is a discursive formation, a cluster of ideas, images and practices that provide ways of talking about forms of knowledge and conduct associated with a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in a society.

Cultural Studies has always been a multi-or-post-disciplinary field of inquiry that blurs the boundaries between itself and other subjects. Further, we can say that it has been something of a magpie which has its own distinctive caste but still likes to borrow glittering concepts from others nests. Originality is best thought of as the rearrangement and juxtaposing of existing elements to form new patterns. That is to say we generate a new perspective of the world. Cultural Studies is concerned with culture as constituted by the meanings and representation that are generated by signifying mechanisms in the context of human practices. Furthermore, it is concerned with the construction and consequences of those representations, and with the matters of power.

For Hall, Cultural Studies is actual grounded terrain of practices,

representations, languages and practices, institutions and systems of classification through which there are inculcated in a population particular values, beliefs, competencies, routines of life and habitual forms and conduct. For the writer, Cultural Studies has sought to develop ways of thinking about culture and power that can be utilized by social agents in the pursuit of change. Hence, we come to the conclusion that Cultural Studies is a theory generated by thinkers who regard the production of theoretical knowledge as a political practice. The concept of cultural studies has been used in this research work to draw the conclusion of my thesis statement.

Although the issue of untouchables is one of the vital features of the novel *The God of Small Things*, different critics, reviewers and magazines have not given due importance to this issue. Instead, they have commented on the issues like setting, nature of the story, style, narrative technique, effect of the book, political awareness among the contemporary adults and so on.

Supriya Chaudhuri states that “Roy handles the shifting surfaces of past and present with extraordinary fineness and delicacy, producing a controlled, intricate narrative structure through which the themes of love, spite, betrayal, hatred and guilt run like a spider’s web.” Here, Supriya Chaudhuri describes the narrative technique and the theme of novel but she has not paid due attention to the issue of the untouchability. She is more concentrated on how Roy has arranged the setting, style, word play and other different factors. Another critic Carla Vanagrove in her article has explained about Roy’s incredible way of using the English language in her novel. She states;

Roy’s letter and word play also serves the purpose of exploring the theme of seemingly small things as having importance. Using capital letters in abnormal words, Roy places emphasis on big and small things alike in order to give them emphasis in the moment. Using this method, she gives emphasis to big concepts like “Age and

Death” and puts them on the same level of significance as small things like “Beautiful Ugly Toads” or “Gnap(s)” or other small things found in every chapter. The most direct example of this use of capitalization occurs in chapter 1, when the “Big God” and the “Small God” come together as representations of Pappachi’s large societal power and dominance verses Mammachi’s lack of power (20). Here, the Small God and the Big God both have their names equally capitalized, as if they both have their own significance.

Furthermore, Vangrove writes that Roy smashes words together to bring attention to the smallness of individual things. In the station scene in chapter 17, Roy creates words like “stationsounds” and “CocaColaFantaicecreamrosemilk” by smashing words together (Roy 284). In doing so, Roy suggests that each of these things going on or existing in the train station is too small as individual things to matter. By combining them into one word, however, Roy shows that each of these small things contributes to the environment around Estha and his family. Every component of the train station is small, but when put together they create the station where Ammu will leave Estha for the final time.

Similarly, Arunima Ray has written that Arundhati Roy’s novel, *The God of Small Things*, explores the reversal of the ordered world through Ammu – Velutha and Rahel – Estha relationship, relationships which are volatile and dangerous, for the desire that emanates from them have the potential to turn the ordered world upside down. Roy’s central theme in the novel seems to be transcendence/ transgression of ‘Love Laws.’ Laws, as she says. ‘Lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much’ (31). In other words, her novel explores the possibility of the breakdown of ‘History’/‘Order’ itself through desire. The high point of her novel is the breaking of these set laws by the characters and the main components that drive them are

sexuality, desire and eroticism that act as a challenge to the repressive powers, such powers which control and customize natural instincts. Desire/ eroticism/ sexuality can act as disruptive forces and lead to transgression and transcendence of the authoritarian and ordered society. The result may be punishment, but it also provides autonomy and identity to the marginalized.

Roy's novel like, *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh, demonstrates the truth that human relations need not be limited by the barriers imposed by society. Singh's Jugga loves a Muslim woman and lays down his life to save Muslims. Heroines of Roy marry beyond their religious and ethnic group and do not disapprove of such marriages. Baby Kochamma loves an Irish and Ammu falls in love with a Paravan. Women in Roy's novel liberate themselves from external restrictions imposed by society, culture or nature and internal inhibitions-their own fear and guilt feelings and establish themselves autonomous being. They also come to realize the fundamental truths that a person has to discover oneself.

The intention here is to point out a rich tradition of socially committed writings in India and that Roy deserves a place within this tradition. Her novel is concerned about the inhuman behaviors that spring from caste prejudices but the atrocities committed and the sufferings caused one no less palpable. Thus, we find that Roy's commitment has not come into being from nowhere. She has not projected some western model in to Indian background. Rather, she owes a lot to her predecessors and shares many of their worries. She belongs to a tradition and tries to promote and enrich it whatever her strengths and weaknesses.

C.C Sathyamala (1995) deters more than a passing resemblance between *The God of Small Things* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. She says, "The theme as well as some of the expression is similar in the two books"(395). Sathyamala suggests that

even the title bears the imprint of Toni Morrison because Poul D. reminisces in the *Beloved*: “So you protected yourself and loved small. Picked the tiniest stars out of the sky to own....” (395). We find in the title an indication of its mornings in myth. *The God of Small things* is clearly related to what sociologists and cultural anthropologists in India refer to as the title Gods of the Hindu tradition, the deities of the Great tradition, imposing, autocratic, awe-inspiring (qtd. in Amitabh Roy, 42).

Urvashi Bharat (2003) puts it: *The God of small Things* can at best bring about resilience and indifference to suffering; but Big God is manifested in the evil of Pappachi and Baby Kochamma, the hypocrisy of Mammachi and Comrade Pillai, the anger of Chacko and Margaret, the sense of superiority in Sophie Mol, the sodomizing orange drink lemon drink man (qtd. in Amitabh Roy, 42).

In contrary, Amar Nath Prasad is fascinated by the novelist's extraordinary linguistic inventiveness. He puts: “If the reader goes through this book, his heart is overflowed with many beautiful words and phrases, images and symbols” (245). Moreover he finds a confrontation between two big symbols „Laltin and the Mombatti, and the theme of the novel is taken as “cold and indifferent societal norms dominated by patriarchy; cruel and corrupt police administration; selfish and deceiving politicians; tyranny and injustice on the dalit and the deserted; and above all, the problem of divorce” (245). There can be no gains saying the fact that Arundhati Roy had read Rushdie and Morrison before she wrote the novel and the reading might have suggested the title. As for Urvashi Bharat, she has made her point well in her essay. But her emphasis is on the first part of the title, that is, the god of small things. Arundhati Roy's main concern is about the god of small things which has been, in the novel, crushed by the god of big things resulting in the tragedy.

The above mentioned critics have given multiple views to the novel but the

issue related to the untouchables has not been properly discussed. I have not found detail research work done in it. This is an innovative research work which will have a great significance within the context of scholarship. With the help of different characters, imageries and various instances, Roy attempts to demolish the boundary set forth by the society. In the novel her concern is for those who are unable to raise their voice against the injustice they have been facing throughout their life. By using taboos as weapons to brush the structural and ideological set-ups established in the society, Roy wants to create a new history with new socio-cultural and political institutions where the untouchables can enjoy a life based on peace, happiness, love and equality. So this proposed research aims to fulfill the gap by making the study of this novel from the perspectives of cultural studies.

This thesis has been divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher introduces the topic, elaborates the hypothesis, and quotes different critics' view regarding the text. In the same chapter researcher shows the departure also. In the second chapter the researcher makes a thorough analysis of the text by applying representation and cultural studies. The last chapter holds the conclusive ending of the research. The present research, in its three chapters, addresses the problems faced by the untouchables and their social status in the Indian society.

II. Representation of Untouchables in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Within the framework of contemporary cultural studies, the research critically examines *The God of Small Things* in order to express the unjust and malice treatment summoned to the untouchables in India since time immemorial. The untouchables have been undergoing the inexorable humiliation at the hands of so called upper section of the Indian society. Even after attaining political autonomy, there has been no improvement in their status. 'Caste' still continues to play a highly important role in shaping the lives of the masses. The government has banned the caste system but the prejudice still continues. Different political parties in India have made the untouchables and other castes occupying the lower hierarchy in the society a political tool through which they construct their own identities. Caste in Indian society can be highly paradoxical. The novel explores the caste system, gender difference and the police- politician relationship that have existence in the country even after six decades of independence. The novel discloses the cavernous gap between the touchables and the untouchables; the exploiters and the exploited, and the powerful and the powerless. It is all about how the human values of children, youth, women and the untouchables have been impinged upon and how they have been deceived.

Before I proceed, it would not be a bad idea to have a look at the word 'untouchable'. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary the untouchable is defined as "a member of the lowest-caste Hindu group or a person outside the caste system, contact with whom is traditionally held to defile members of higher castes." Before I advance, it would not be a bad initiative to have a glance at the word 'caste'. According to *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, the word 'caste' is derived from the Portuguese word 'casta' which means pure or unadulterated. The caste system in India is an important part of ancient Hindu tradition. In ancient India there developed

a social system in which people were divided into separate close communities known as caste. It is generally believed that the origin of the caste system can be found in Hinduism, but it has plagued the entire Indian social system. The caste system in the religious form is basically a simple division of the society where four castes are arranged in a hierarchy and below them the four Varnas were founded, but they do not explain how the jats (castes) in each varna or the untouchables were founded.

According to the Rig Veda, an ancient Hindu book, the primal man- purush- destroyed himself to create a human society. The different varnas were created from different parts of his body. The Brahmins were created from his head; the Kshatriyas from his hands; the Vaishyas from his thighs and the Sudras from his feet. The hierarchy is determined in the descending order of the different parts of the body from which the varnas were created. And this caste system has been followed in India even after attaining political autonomy.

Arundhati Roy, in her novel *The God of Small Things*, has illustrated the intense caste conflict but the conflict is not taking place between touchable Hindu and untouchable, rather it is between Syrian Christian and untouchables. This shows that the untouchables are not only suffering torture and harassment from Hindus but also are victimized by other religious communities in democratic India. The problem doesn't end up to Hindus, it is scattered everywhere. Roy has dealt with the problem of untouchability plaguing the Indian society in her Booker prize winner novel. She is appalled at the barbarous treatment meted out to the lower section of the society, even in this postcolonial age. In this regard, she says that: "Fifty years after independence, India is still struggling with the legacy of colonialism, still flinching from the cultural insult and we are still caught up in the business of "disproving" the white world's definition of us". Even the escape from the blood-thirsty period of Colonialism has

not brought any respite to these Untouchables. The condition of the untouchables is still the same.

The God of Small Things written by Arundhati Roy is a story of a character larger than life itself. It is a story based on life, death, fear, loss, courage, sacrifice and determination. The novel is all about atrocities against minorities, small things, women and untouchables. Velutha, the central character had to go through different painful and stressful conditions during his life – hatred from higher Christian society, disrespect in spite of being very talented, and ultimately moving from bad to worse situation in his life. The novel is replete with instances of caste politics. The novel represents the animalistic behavior of the patriarchal male dominated society towards the lower caste. The unfavorable situation of lower caste Velutha is depicted as follows in the novel:

As a young boy, Velutha would come with Vellya Pappen to the back of the Ayemenem House to deliver the coconuts they had plucked from the trees in the compound. Pappachi would not allow paravans into the house. Nobody would allow paravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that the touchable touched. Caste Hindus and caste Christians. The dizygotic twins Estha and Rahel were told by their grandmother Mammachi that paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom sweeping away their foot prints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a paravans footprints. (73)

This amply demonstrates how a feeling of hatred and superiority is installed in children who are rather innocent to understand all these racial myth. Paravans were treated as animals and taken as an outcast in the society. People from so called higher

society would make them work hard but would not allow them in their homes. Even their footprints were supposed to be swept away by themselves. They could only opt for the least living standards; lowest possible work, no possibilities of growth and then their each and every move were under the supervision of higher society."Cultural Studies is not one thing," Stuart Hall asserts, "It has never been one thing."(Hall 11) It is an engaged mode of understanding the complex terrain of the culture in connection with relations of power. Hence, we can find the relevance of the implantation of the tool of cultural studies.

The novel, *The God of Small Things* is an anecdote of solid social reality in the context of socio-political and cultural violence against the untouchables in Indian society. It unveils the victimization of these people by the state and society in social, political and cultural forms. The untouchables were highly discriminated in the Indian society. They were not given equal opportunity of education and social participation. The society generally thought that higher education is an unnecessary expense for them. They were considered as lower cast so they had to go to a separate school. As Roy writes; "Mammachi persuaded Vellya Pappen to send him to the Untouchables' school that her father-in-law, Punnyan Kunjuu had founded" (74-75).

Arundhati Roy has presented many other instances of social exclusion in the novel. We can see the unjust treatment meted out to the dizygotic twins as well. They were treated in that way only because they didn't have their father and their own home. The maltreatment done upon Ammu can also be seen as an outcome of this absurd reality. Similarly, what Vellya Pappen, father of Velutha got in his life is the outcome of cruel mentality of the high class society. Roy has presented Velutha as a boy of exceptional talent. Although he had skills on different fields, he was not given due respect in the society which is evident in the following description:

He was like a little magician. He could make intricate toys- tiny windmills, rattles, minute jewel boxes out of dried palm reeds; he could carve cashew nuts. Velutha not only had carpentry skills, but also good knowledge of machines. 'Mammachi often said that if only he hadn't been a paravan, he might have become an engineer. He mended radios, clock, and water-pumps. He looked after plumbing and all the electrical gadgets in the house. (75)

Velutha was exceptionally talented but he was taken as granted. This is a perfect example of cultural constructivism. Despite the fact that Velutha was a highly talented person with proven skills of carpentry, yet what he got in his life is the perfect example of social exclusion. He had skills on different fields. She writes; "Velutha knew more about the machines in the factory than anyone else (76)". Since, he had knowledge about almost everything; he was in need everywhere which is very clear from the following lines mentioned in the novel:

When Chacko resigned his job in Madras and returned to Ayemenem with a Bharat bottle-sealing machine, it was Velutha who reassembled it and set it up. It was Velutha who maintained the new canning machine and the automatic pineapple slicer. Velutha who oiled the water-pump and the small diesel generator. Velutha who built the aluminium sheet-lined, easy-to-clean cutting surfaces and the ground-level furnace for boiling fruit. (76)

Through these lines Roy makes us clear that he was a master to every work, but his identity as a paravan made him a slave. The cruel irrational orthodoxy didn't respect even a highly talented person like Velutha with proven expertise in every field.

The untouchables have been exploited by the so called higher class to a larger

extent. The exploitation can be seen in the behavior of most of the members from the high class. Mammachi hiered Velutha as the factory carpenter and put him in the charge of general maintenance. To keep the others happy, and since she knew that nobody else would hire him as a carpenter, Mammachi paid Velutha less than she would a touchable carpenter but more than she would a paravan.

Mammachi's double standard is seen further more in her behavior.

"Mammachi didn't encourage Velutha to enter the house except when she needed something installed. She thought that he ought to be grateful that he was allowed on the factory premises, and allowed to touch things that touchables touched. She said that it was a big step for a paravan"(77). Mammachi, representing a high class society tried her best to keep a distance with the untouchables. She never allowed the untouchables to enter her house but at the time of need, she never hesitated to take help from them. This clearly depicts the extreme form of discrimination, domination and underestimation of the lower caste people.

According to Stuart Hall, "The people who are in any way significantly different from the majority-'them' rather than 'us' are frequently exposed to the binary form of representation. They seem to be represented through sharply opposed, polarized, binary extremes- good\bad, civilized\primitive, ugly\ excessively, attractive\ repelling. And they are often required to be both things at the same time" (229). Same thing can be seen in the life of untouchable Velutha in the novel. He is not allowed to enter inside the house but Mammachi would allow him if she had to mend or repair anything. This double standard is seen not only in Mammachi but in every member of high class society.

The novel depicts the exploitive nature of the touchables and their strong desire to keep the Untouchables under their control. It is a story of untouchable-

Velutha who struggles hard till the last breathe of his life. The actual conflict is between the oppressive power represented by the higher class society and the administration and the exceptionally talented boy Velutha who struggles throughout his life for his family and his love. The novel crafts an assail on the patriarchal philosophy of Kerala's touchable society; the high caste Syrian Christians and the high caste Hindus. The problem of patriarchal supremacy and female subalternity is rooted in so called high class Indian society.

The inspiration of untouchability is seen at two levels in the novel. At first, we can find socially untouchables or paravans, who are not at all permitted fundamental human rights. Secondly, we have emblematic untouchables within high caste itself. Here prejudice articulates itself in marginalizing the women in their personal and public life. Ammu, although she belonged to Syrian Christian high class society, she was made away from right to property only because she was woman. Ammu being a divorcee and a single mother had no right to inheritance. Chacko, her brother told her "What is yours is mine, what is mine is also mine" (57). She was not allowed for her further studies. Pappachi, Ammu's father believed that higher education was not useful for girls as it corrupts them. So he sent Chacko to England but not Ammu. Due to his male ego, he tyrannized his daughter. He often said that "A college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl" (38). Ammu being economically and socially marginalized from the property and education made her virtual untouchable although she belonged to so called high class society.

"Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. There are two processes, two systems of representation. The relation between things, concepts and signs lies at the heart of the production of the meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what

we call representation"(8). It is an important part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, signs and images which represent things. Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things. And it is not a simple process.

Representation is the way of presenting the things in a meaningful way. Representation connects meaning and language to the culture. "There are two processes, two systems of representation. First, there is the system by which all sort of objects, people and events are correlated with a set of concepts or mental representations which we carry around our heads." Second, Language is therefore the second system of representation. "The relation between things, concepts and signs lies at the heart of the production of meaning in the language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call Representation" (17). The relationship in the system of representation between sign, the concept and the object to which they might be used to refer is entirely arbitrary. The meaning is constructed by the system of representation. One way of thinking about culture is in terms of the shared conceptual maps, shared language system and the codes which govern the relationship of translation between them. Not because such knowledge is imprinted in their genes, but because they learn its conventions and so gradually become culture person. They unconsciously internalize the codes which allow them to express certain ideas and concepts through their system of representation. But of our social, cultural and linguistic conventions, meaning can never be finally fixed; we can all agree to allow words to carry somewhat different meanings. Social and linguistic conventions do change over time. In the reflective approach, meaning is thought to lie in the object,

person, idea or event in the real world, and language functions like mirror, to reflect the true meaning as it already exists in the world. We can also call it a mimetic approach.

The second approach to the meaning in representation argues the opposite case. It holds that it is the speaker, the author, who imposes his/her unique meaning on the world through language. Words mean what the author intends to mean. This is the intentional approach. The language can never be wholly a private game. Our private intended meanings, however personal to us, have to enter into rules, codes and conventions of language to be shared and understood. Language is a social system through and through. This means that our private thoughts have to negotiate with all the other meanings for words or images which have been stored in language which our use of language system will inevitably trigger into action.

The third approach recognizes this public, social character of language. It acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. Things don't mean: we construct meaning, using representational systems- concepts and signs. Hence it is called the constructivist or constructionist approach. According to this approach, we must not confuse the material world, where things and people exist, and the symbolic practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language operate.

Constructivists do not deny the existence of the material world. However, it is not the material world which conveys meaning: it is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts.

Foucault studied not language, but discourse as a system of representation. By 'discourse', Foucault meant "A group of statements which provide a language for talking about a particular topic at a particular historical moment. Discourse is about

the production of knowledge through language” (23). ” Discourse is articulated on the basis of social relationships” (769). Discourse, Foucault argued; ’never consist of one statement, one text, one action or one source’ (24) The same discourse, characteristic of the way of thinking or the state of knowledge at one time, will appear across a range of texts and as forms of conduct, at a number of different institutional sites within society. However, whenever these discursive events refer to the same object then they said by Foucault to belong to the same discursive formation. Nothing has any meaning outside of discourse.

Roy in her novel has depicted the sorrowful situation of the Untouchables as well as the pitiful condition of a divorced woman which is actually her own experience. The problem that Ammu faced in her life is similar to the story of her own mother, who too was a divorcee and the character of Rahel is based on Arundhati Roy herself. The problems that Roy has approached in her novel are something that she grew up with. The novel is not completely autobiographical but a semi autobiographic. *The God of Small Things* is a book representing the life of a single mother and the problems faced by the Untouchables in an Indian society. The society demands its member to act accordingly. Society always demands the untouchables to be low, submissive and powerless and same things have been represented by Roy in her novel. Untouchables are always treated in a dominating way and are always discriminated on the basis of caste by the society. As Roy writes; “After the independence they found that they were no entitled to any government benefits like job reservations or bank loans at low interest rates, because officially, on paper they were casteless (74)”. The Government itself has played an important role in sustaining caste based discrimination by not allowing the privileges to the untouchables as touchables.

Representation is a process of secondary importance, which enters into the field only after things have been fully formed and their meaning constituted. The rules once made for the untouchables have been made to follow all the time as a hall mark. As Roland Barthes argues 'difference' has been marked. How it is then interpreted is a constant and recurring preoccupation and the representation of people who are racially and ethnically different from the majority of population. Meaning depends on the difference between opposites. Though binary oppositions- white\black, day\night, masculine\ feminine, British\alien- have the great value of capturing the diversity of the world within their either\or extreme, they are also a rather crude and reductionist way of establishing meaning.

One pole of binary is usually the dominant one, the one which includes the other within its field of operations. There is always a relation of power between the poles of a binary opposition. The one who is in the power always treats himself as the superior one and demands the powerless to be very low and submissive. The powerless is supposed always to be in his knees all the time. Velutha and his father Vellya Pappen had served the Ipe family since long. They had done much for the family. Once Vellya Pappen had an accident with the stone chip, Mammachi had paid for his glass eye. He hadn't worked off his debt yet, and though he knew he wasn't expected to that he wouldn't ever be able to – he felt that his eye was not his own. His gratitude widened his smile and bent his back. Vellya Pappen spent his whole life serving the Ipe family, but when Mammachi paid for his eye glass, he felt that his whole life is not enough to pay his gratitude towards her. Whatever the powerless does is supposed to be his duty but if something even a very small is done by the person in the power then it is taken as something great.

Mary Douglas, following the classic work on symbolic systems by the French

anthropologist, Emile Durkheim and the later studies of mythology by the French anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss, argues that social groups impose things into classificatory systems. In the novel too, the society has been divided into touchables and untouchables. Binary oppositions are crucial for all classification because one must establish a clear difference between things in order to classify them. Mary Douglas argues that what really disturbs cultural order is when things turn up in the wrong category or when things fail to fit any category- such as a substance like mercury, which is a metal but also a liquid, or a social group like mixed race mulattoes who are neither 'white' nor 'black' but float ambiguously in some unstable, dangerous, hybrid zone of indeterminacy in between. Stable cultures require things to stay in their appointed place. Symbolic boundaries keep the categories 'pure' giving cultures their unique meaning and identity. What unsettles culture is 'matter out of place'- the breaking of our unwritten rules and codes. Dirt in the garden is fine, but dirt in one's bedroom is 'matter out of place'- a sign of pollution, of what we do with 'matter out of place' is to sweep it up, throw it out, restore the place to order, bring back the normal state of affairs. The retreat of many cultures towards 'closure' against foreigners, intruders, aliens and 'others' is same.

In the novel too, the higher class Christian society think themselves as a culture and the untouchables as others because of which the touchable society try their best to keep the untouchables under their feet and make them follow everything that the touchables put on their way. They are supposed nothing more than dirt. The line mentioned in the novel, ' Paravans were supposed to crawl backward with a broom sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a paravan's footprint' (74) makes us clear about the cruel mentality of the touchables regarding the untouchables. The so called

touchables have a kind of hatred and arrogance towards the untouchables which encouraged them to hate even their footprint. *The God of Small Things* is a great book which is written from the viewpoint of how the untouchables have been represented in an Indian society.

The story starts in the year 1960 and goes up to 1992 during which the central character Velutha goes through various ups and downs. Roy has explored not only his bad days but also his love life and his beautiful moment with Ammu. Roy writes, “The lovers. Sprung from his loins and hers. His son and her daughter. They had made the unthinkable thinkable and the impossible really happen” (256). But still we can find him suffering throughout his life. He was mistreated not only for being a paravan but also for having an affair with a woman from higher Christian family. Velutha grew up in such a society where love was not meant for the untouchables and within a high class society, it was a big no, no.

Velutha and Ammu grew up together. After divorce with her husband, Ammu was living a single life which was difficult for her. She could not stop herself when Velutha came into her life. Ammu’s quest for emotional support ended in Velutha, a low caste carpenter; whose family had been serving in Ammu’s house since a long time. A clandestine love-affair between the two stars. They had series of furtive love-meetings across the river in the haunted house. They didn’t realize that by doing so, they were trying to dismantle the traditional rules put down by the so called protectors of Indian culture. For Ammu and Velutha, caste or status did not matter. What mattered most was to preserve the bond of pure love, and without a trace of doubt we can say that they loved each other passionately. Even though Velutha knew that Ammu was a divorcee and a mother of twins, he didn’t hesitate to offer his full commitment to her.

It was Vellya Pappen, Velutha's father who exposed their love relation to Mammachi. Vellya Pappen explained everything what he had seen. "The story of the little boat that crossed the river night after night, and who was in it. The story of a man and woman, standing together in moonlight. Skin to skin" (255). Every word spoken by Vellya Pappen was torturing Mammachi. She could not tolerate the truth which is evident from the following lines:

Suddenly the blind old woman in her rickrack dressing gown and her thin grey hair plaited into a rat's tail stepped forward and pushed Vellya Pappen with all her strength. He stumbled backwards, down the kitchen steps and lay sprawled in the wet mud. He was taken completely by surprise. Mammachi was out of control and shouting 'Drunken dog! Drunken paravan liar!'. (256)

Mammachi, a woman from a high class society could not accept the truth about the love relation between her daughter and a paravan. Loving a paravan was something out of thought among the people from so called high class society. And, here, Mammachi's own daughter had crossed the limit and made unthinkable thinkable. The way Mammachi reacted listening her daughter's relation with a paravan makes us clear about her cruel caste based mentality.

Velutha could never understand why his father Vellya Pappen scolded him for his love affair with Ammu. For Bennett, 'Cultural Studies is concerned with all those practices, institutions and systems of classification through which there are inculcated in a population particular values, beliefs, competencies routines of life and habitual forms of conduct'. Part of taboo, untouchables were supposed not to touch anything that the touchable touched. And of being locked into a physically impregnable cocoon, it was out of thought. So, when Mammachi learned Ammu's attachment with

a paravan, she was spitting into the rain, 'THOO! THOO! THOO!' (256). It shows, in spite of long strides made in the field of technology and scientific knowledge, which caused major changes in the society, the caste hatred in our communities and the caste mindset has remained as rigid as ever. The progress in the political history has not been able to change the mind of the people and the society. The caste based hatred is still prevalent in the Indian society.

Love is supposed to be something pure but in case of untouchables, it is taken as a taboo. Roy has figured out very pitiful condition of Velutha after the revelation of his affair with Ammu. He was maltreated not only by Ammu's family but also by the police administration. 'Out!' Mammachi screamed, eventually. 'If I find you in my property tomorrow I'll have you castrated like the pariah dog that you are! I will have you killed!' (284) Mammachi couldn't control her anger; she couldn't believe that her daughter slept with a paravan, whom she hated much throughout her life. Mammachi went out of her mind.' When she found Velutha standing in front of her, 'Mammachi spat into Velutha's face. Thick spit. It splattered across his skin. His mouth and eyes'(284). Velutha could do nothing. He was not in that state to explain anything on his behalf in front of the cruel high class society. He just stood still and moved away. The way Mammachi treated Velutha shows disgusting behavior of so called high class mentality. The untouchables are always reduced to the object which can easily be broken, thrown away and destroyed at the will of the powerful one.

Velutha kept moving in the rain but he could not come out of the incident that happened to him. "Though the rain washed Mammachi's spit off his face, it didn't stop the feeling that somebody had lifted off his head and vomited into his body. Lumpy vomit dribbling down his insides. Over his heart. His lungs. The slow thick drip into the pit of his stomach. All his organs awash in vomit. There was nothing that

rain could do about that” (286). The way Mammachi behaved with Velutha is something unbearable. Velutha was completely broken by the humiliation at the hand of a lady whom he had served for a long time. If there was someone else from a high society instead of Velutha, she would have welcome him with gratitude. But, Velutha was humiliated only because of his paravan identity. The barbarous treatment meted out to Velutha makes us clear about the obnoxious attitude of so called touchables towards the untouchables.

Baby Kochhama never liked Velutha so she often tried her best to maintain a distance between Velutha and the children. “ Please stop being so over-familiar with that man!”(184). She had a kind of arrogance towards him so, she filled a wrong FIR that he killed Sophie Mol, daughter of Chacko and Margaret, raped Ammu and kidnapped Estha and Rahel. Without proper investigation, the police representing the administration caught the paravan and punished him severely as it was a FIR filled by a high class woman. ‘They woke Velutha with their boots’. ‘Boot on bone. On teeth. The muffled grunt when stomach is kicked in. The muted crunch of skull on cement. The gurgle of blood on a man’s breathe when his lung is torn by the jagged end of a broken rib’ (308). This proves the cruel mentality of the police. The police representing the administration too was in support of the touchables instead of truth. Stuart Hall’s concept of what we do is “all about the representation of our culture” proves the relevance of cultural constructivity. The concept that the paravans are always wrong is all set in the mind of everyone. Just because Baby Kochamma representing high culture filled a wrong case, Velutha had to lose his life. He was put behind the prison by Inspector Matthew, where he was severely beaten to death. The novel clearly shows that Baby Kochhama, the guardian of the system, would go to any limit to hoard the so called family honor. The existence of untouchables being

segregated, bullied and dehumanized, remains a historical phenomenon in India. The indifferent and callous attitude of the police administration towards Velutha is narrated this way:

He was semi-conscious, but wasn't moving. His skull was fractured in three places. His nose and both his cheekbones were smashed, leaving his face pulpy, undefined. The blow to his mouth had split open his upper lip and broken six teeth, three of which were embedded in his lower lip, hideously inverting his beautiful smile. Four of his ribs were splintered; one had pierced his left lung, which was what made him bleed from his mouth. The blood on his breathe bright in his abdominal cavity. His spine was damaged in two places; the concussion had paralyzed his right arm and resulted in a loss of control over his bladder and rectum. Both his knee caps were shattered. (310)

The touchable police played an important role in sustaining the caste based division of the society by oppressing the untouchable, Velutha. Since, Velutha was lower in rank, he couldn't put even a word in his defense. He was born paravan and died paravan. Velutha, falls a victim to the police cruelty and dies in the night. Roy describes his death, "The God of Loss. The God of Small Things. He left no foot prints in the sand, no ripples in the water, no image in the mirrors" (265). Velutha's dead body was discarded in a pauper's pit where the police dump their dead. This shows how cruel the society is towards the untouchables. This shows the extreme form of the exploitation, discrimination, domination and underestimation of the lower caste people. The lower classes are always denied from their basic right to equality. It is a warning to the transgressors of laws laid down by traditional, caste-ridden conservative and oppressive society.

The maltreatment meted out to Velutha was only because of his identity as a paravan. He was all innocent. His only mistake was that he loved a woman from a high class society and her children who lacked love from their own people. Baby Kochamma could not tolerate the truth. Since she could not get the love of her life, she could not accept the love relation between Ammu and Velutha. Although His innocence is narrated as follows:

The Kottayam police had acted on the basis of FIR filed by her. The paravan had been caught. Unfortunately he had been badly injured in the encounter and in all likelihood would not live through the night. But now the children said that they had gone of their own volition. Their boat had capsized and the English child had drowned by accident. Which left the police saddled with the Death in custody of a technically innocent man. True, he was a Paravan. True, he had misbehaved. But these were troubled times and technically, as per the law, he was an innocent man. There was no *case*. (314)

In spite of being innocent, Velutha was proven a guilty by the police administration. This is an insult to the police who are supposed to be the guardian to the public. The police was much aware about the truth. Their duty was to take action against Baby Kochamma but they proved Velutha a criminal and closed the case in favor of her. Velutha was tormented not only by the people from high class society but also by the police administration, who too is in support of the caste discrimination.

According to Straut Hall, culture is concerned with the production and the exchange of meaning- the 'giving and taking of meaning'- between the members of a society or group. Culture is also about feelings, attachments and emotions as well as concepts and ideas. The emphasis on cultural practices is important. It is the

participants in a culture who give meaning to people, objects and events. We give meaning to the things by how we represent them- the words we use about them, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize about them, the values we place on them' (3). Meanings are produced at several different sites and circulated through several different processes or practices. Meaning is what gives us a sense of our identity, of who we are and with whom we belong to. Meaning is constantly being produced and exchanged in every personal and social interaction in which we take part. Meaning is also produced whenever we express ourselves. Meaning also help to set the rules, norms and conventions by which social life is ordered and governed.

In the novel too, we can find that the society had made some different rules, norms and values for the untouchables and they are supposed to remain within their limits. The result of crossing those limits is terrible. Velutha, a paravan crossed his border and happen to love a woman from high class society, whose result was worst. His boldness in carrying on his restricted love-affair proved a deadly menace for him. He had to lose his life for what he had done. Of course, Ammu too was punished but he was given a death penalty. Ammu too dies helpless, sick and alone in the lodge. The church declines to bury her body on several counts. Chacko takes her body to crematorium where nobody except beggar's derelicts and the police custody dead were cremated. Both of them suffers tragically for ignoring the love laws and dies at its altar. Roy has presented how the repressive society has compelled the protagonist to close his mouth and accept everything that the society had claimed for him. The author has presented a heart – wrenching story for everyone. Love and hatred are portrayed beautifully as two sides of the same coin by Roy. Tragedy is carefully blended with little moment of joy and romance in the novel.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, popular representation of daily life under slavery, ownership and servitude are shown so 'natural' that they require no comment. It was part of the order of things that white men should sit and the slaves should stand; that white women rode and slave men ran after them shading them from the Louisiana sun with an umbrella; that white overseers should inspect slave women like prize animals, or punish runaway slaves with casual forms of tortures (like branding them or urinating in their mouths), and that fugitives should kneel to receive their punishment' (245).

These images are a form of ritualized degradation. The novel portrays India after the establishment of political independence but the picture of untouchables is similar to the condition of the slaves during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Roy has presented the similar picture of the untouchables. Velutha and his father Vellya Pappen went through the most brutal treatment one can imagine a human being receiving at the hands of another human being. "The Untouchables were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouth when they spoke, to divert their polluted breathe away from those whom they addressed" (74). Paravans were denied even from their minimal requirements like putting on their clothes, breathing freely, etc. They were brutally and mercilessly persecuted by the aristocratic and hypocrite society. Even after attaining political independence, the people were treated in a barbarous way. Roy has presented a social picture of the democratic Indian society where the untouchables still have to face a hostile society which encourages them to search their identity. The untouchables were never welcomed in the society. This presents the contemporary life of the paravans who were forced to live a life full of hatred and difficulties.

Edward Said argues, 'Orientalism' was the discourse 'by which European culture was able to manage- and- even produce the orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during post enlightenment period'. Within the framework of western hegemony over the orient, he says, there emerged a new object of knowledge – 'a complex orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial and historical theses art mankind and the universe, for instances of economic & sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personalities, national or religious character '. This form of power is closely connected with knowledge, or with the practices of what Foucault called power/ knowledge.' (259)

Said's discussion of Orientalism closely parallels Foucault's power/knowledge argument; a discourse produces, through different practices of representation (scholarship, exhibition, literature, painting, etc), a form of racialized knowledge of other (orientalism) deeply implicated in the operations of power (imperialism). Said defines 'power' in similar way of Foucault's and Gramsci's idea of hegemony.

In any society not totalitarian, then, certain cultural forms predominant over others; the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as hegemony, an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial west. It is hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, that gives orientalism its durability and its strength. Orientalism is never far from the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying 'us'. Europeans as against all 'those' non European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe; the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non European people and cultures. There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas

about orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over oriental backwardness, usually overriding the possibility that a more independent thinker may have different views on the matter. (Said, 1978)

The west created the orient. In the similar way, the so called high class society created a different world for them and the untouchables with different rules and regulations where the rules could be changed as per their need. When Velutha had relation with Ammu, he was given a death penalty but Chacko, who belonged to high class society, enjoyed all the privileges calling it a man's need. "He would call pretty women who worked in the factory to his room, and flirt with them outrageously. Much to their embarrassment and Mammachi's dismay ,he forced them to sit at table with him and drink tea"(65). When the love relation between Ammu and Velutha was revealed, it was Mammachi who reacted much but when Chacko maintained illicit relation with the factory workers, Mammachi instead of getting furious, tried her best to hide the things. It is as per their needs, rules are made and broken.

Straut Hall argues; power, always operates in condition of unequal relations. For Gramsci; power, always operates between classes. Foucault always refused to identify any specific subject or subject- group as the source of power, for him power operates at a local, tactical level. But both Foucault and Gramsci insist that power also involves knowledge, representation, ideas, cultural leadership and authority, as well as economic constraint and physical concern. Both of them agreed that power cannot be captured by thinking exclusively in terms of force or coercion: power also seduces, solicits, induces, and wins consent. It cannot be thought of in terms of one group having a monopoly of power simply radiating power downward on a subordinate group by an exercise of simple domination from above. It includes the dominant and the dominated within its circuits. For both of them, power is everywhere but Foucault

insists that power circulates. The circulatory of power is especially important in the context of representation. The argument is that everyone- the powerful and the powerless- is caught up, though not on equal terms, in power circulation. Neither its apparent victims nor its agents can stand wholly outside its field of operation.

There is a power politics between the so called high society and the untouchables who are supposed to be very low in rank. The powerful one, all the time entertain them with the power but the powerless has to be submissive to them. The novel unravels the prevalent socio-politico cultural system for its exercise of power that, by creating injustice and oppression, crushes the identity of the weaker section of the society. Each and every instance in the novel is illustrated in a way to disrupt and discontinue social anomalies and aberrations to draw up new system which can establish the identity of the untouchables.

The novel peeps into the life of Keralite society and their rites and customs, tradition and patriarchal domination; a caste ridden mentality of some certain section of people. It is more concerned about the inhuman behavior that sprung from caste prejudices. Through different characters and illustrations, Roy has represented a gamut of socio- cultural and religious problems that has been faced by the untouchables in the Indian society since a very long time. Roy has become successful in presenting a heart wrenching story of the untouchables through the description of their social, mental and political status.

III. Untouchables as an Oppressed Lot

The present research work uncovers the pitiable situation of the untouchables in the Indian society which has been exposed by Arundhati Roy in her novel *The God of Small Things*. She has illustrated an altercation between The Big Man and The Small Man as compared with Laltain and Mombatti. Both Laltain and Mombatti give us light but the former is well fed and well procted and it can easily endure the blow of the wind while Mombatti has no glass, no protection, and no support because of which it can easily be blown out by a small blow of air. The struggle for the existence in the society has become miserable for the untouchables and they are unsure about their identity. The untouchables have to seriously suffer the impact of the caste politics, nepotism, social injustice and the cruel administration. The novel unveils the maladjustment between The God of Big Things in terms of Pappachi, Baby Kochamma, Chacko, Mammachi, police administration and The God Small Things in terms of Velutha and Ammu.

The novel represents the gamut of traumatic experience of the untouchables aggravated by the socio-political orthodoxy that has been long persisted in the Keralite society. It also advocates the need of reconstructing the value system and the institution of love, sex, marriage, kinship and other social relationship through the disruption and discontinuity of indecent taboos in view of redeeming the identity of the people who are lower in rank. Being a female writer, Roy has depicted the sufferings of the untouchables and the atrocities of the touchable represented by the higher class society in the novel, *The God of Small Things*. In the novel, Roy has attacked the society ridden with untouchability, orthodoxy and outworn taboos that frustrate us. She has thrown light on the exploitation of the labour, oppressed people and their pitiable, social and economic condition. The novel ends with a word

'tomorrow' which makes us clear that there is no end for the emotions and the passions of human heart where the dead are not exactly dead.

Through the characters and different illustrations, Roy has made an effort to demolish the boundary set forth by cultural and social legacy manifested in the perverted and decadent treatment of orthodoxy. Her concern is for those people who are unable to raise their voice against injustice. She wants to create a new history with new socio-cultural and political institutions where the untouchables can have a respected and harmonious life based on peace, happiness, love and equality. Roy's novel represents socio-political violence of the Indian society and by means of such representation; she strongly opposes those who continue to promote such violence. In other word, we can say that she has protested against the discrimination meted on the basis of caste issues. Roy has advocated the need of restructuring the indecent institutions to redeem the identity of untouchables by going deep into the roots of social relationship and presenting the prejudice that exists in Indian society. There has to be some proper implementation of laws to curb this social discrimination.

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