Postcolonial Subaltern Agency in Arundhuti Roy's *The God of Small Things*

The present research work deals with the issue of postcolonial Subaltern agency in Arundhuti Roy's *The God of Small Things.* The text meticulously presents the process of claiming self identity and representation as the most interconnected and intersecting entities to each other. The politics of literary representation is supposed to be deliberate and complex in its nature and approach. The motivation, intent and agenda that direct such endeavor often result in domain of conflict, which leads to the crisis of social, political and literary representation. As Simon Featherstone points out, "In postcolonialism it [the crisis] is a truism that touches upon the crucial issues of representation and upon the economic and ideological control of production and reproduction of narratives of 'other' cultures (48). This dissertation is typically concerned with two dimensions of subaltern representation in literature which can be studied in two fold divisions. In the first section it has attempted to present the dominant discourses of Subaltern issues and its representation in literature. In the second section my concern is to study The *God of Small Things* in the spectrum of these discourses i.e. how domination and power exerted in the given social conditions prompts to generate an agentive role of subaltern. In postcolonial discourse, this research draws an argument that these two issues are interconnected in the representation of marginal and explore the voices of unheard in reconfiguring of subaltern theorization. The subaltern theorization is very much closely associated with the discursive issues of Marxism and postcolonialism that consequence in a realization towards the representation of marginal group who are culturally outcast and economically oppressed. In the sociological and anthropological term, the mode of human existence has been set, formed and directed under the defined power structures that are often contested and controversial as stated by Spivak "historic inequality is a structural property of alienation" (271). The afore said issues of representation doesn't remain stagnant nor static but a continued practices for gradual transformation with the aid of changing political, social and economic bondages with the society and history alike which

Karl Marx calls "…the history of human society is but an intermittent cycle of pottery" (31) in his famous essay "*The Communist Manifesto"*. The inferences above are drawn to view and examine Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* as how she has contributed to make the representation of the Third World subaltern more diverse by creating various portraits of women and underprivileged class of Indians who venture to exercise agency and subtle responsibilities despite their oppressed and marginalized status.

The notion of representation of postcolonial subaltern is based on argument that discursive focus can be shifted from hegemonic to the marginalized one. The main motivation of this transaction is to centralize subaltern's marginal position in society in terms of social and economic both of which is outcome of systematic and structural marginalization. The concerns about the representation of the marginalized group in national historiography prompted a group of Indian historians to form the subaltern studies group. The subaltern studies project initiated by progressive historians aims to revise and rewrite Indian historiography from Subaltern perspective. This is highly revisionist project which is stated by Spivak as "The most significant outcome of this revision or shift in perspective is that the agency of change is located in the insurgent or the 'subaltern" (330). The main agenda of this project was focused on very vast and heterogenous issues including peasant and insurgencies in colonial and postcolonial India that were motivated to compile them as strong and viable historical evidence which needato be taken in the extent of Indian history. In the realm of literature, Spivak heralded the subaltern discourse with the publication of her land mark essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and in her reply she said "no" (Spivak, 309). She further clarifies that when a subaltern does speak she/he is no longer a subaltern. It can be assumed that Spivak's argument is slightly related to speech rather than power and ability of subaltern to make them heard. It is her conception that subaltern studies group, even as a non-subaltern mediator is a medium to record subaltern narrative. She labeled it as distinctive self consciousness of locating the "subaltern" as the "subject" of history and not its

object. Ranjit Guha has stated as in the first subaltern series "Yet we propose to focus on this consciousness [subaltern] as our central theme, because it is not possible to make sense of the experience of insurgency merely as a history of events without a subject" (11). So what is the meaning of this subaltern consciousness and how it is different from other? Parthachaterjee opined on this as:

"Subaltern consciousness as self-consciousness of a sort is what inhabits the whole area of independent thought and conjecture and speculation…on the part of the peasant…what offers the clear proof of a distinctly independent interpretation of [Gandhi's] message".(172)

In the other dimension it can be stated that it is self consciousness that underwrites all innovation of the will of subaltern. John Beverley in the similar context states that the very idea of "'studying' the subaltern is catachrestic or self-contradictory" (21) in his famous book *The Subaltern and the Limits of Academic Knowledge.* Postcolonialism as a literary, historical and political theory has multiple recourses to study various representation of subalternity. Who can speak for whom, how discourses can best represent and interpret the experiences of subalternity, and who bears the cost? My approach in the selected text is to focus on the self consciousness discourse of subaltern representation. My aim in reading *The God of Small Things* is to take into a serious consideration of the different social constructions of subalternity. As subelternity being a social construct the common narrative should subvert the homogenous and "corrective" consciousness of subaltern. The present text deals with subaltern characters in a much diversified form with varying responsibilities, roles and identities. This research attempts to lead a finding in the text that "subaltern can speak" and to reclaim that subaltern narrate his/her own subalternity that presents the indictment of dominant cultural positions.

From Spivak's seminal essay that she answers with a qualified "no," to various literary representations of the subaltern in texts that are part of an emergent canon, the subaltern and

his/her other is represented as a binary (even a complex binary) of the oppressed/oppressor. To the extent that subaltern is made central character, literary discourse complements the agenda of Subaltern Studies group. However, in addressing the subject, literary discourse takes on the role of the "intellectual" who speaks for the subaltern, "granting" literary space but not voice. This is in keeping with Spivak's conclusion that subaltern who does speak is not a subaltern.

Consequently, representations of the subaltern function within that dichotomy of can/cannot speak. Within such a framework, there is no room for subaltern consciousness to be read as a complex negotiator of its own positional dilemmas and political impotence, which is transformed even as it is transformative of its environment. As Homi Bhabha suggests in "The Commitment to Theory", variant representations can only be understood if "we understand the tension within critical theory between its institutional commitment and revisionary forces" (27). For Bhabha, the task of postcolonial representation is simultaneously a rejection of the West as the centre and a renegotiation of an accommodating, continuing conversation with the imperial centres. As he explains:

> My use of poststructuralist theory emerges from this postcolonial contra modernity. I attempt to present a certain 'defeat' or even impossibility, of the 'West' in its authorization of the 'idea' of colonization. Driven by the subaltern history of the margins of modernity—rather than by failures of logo centrism—I have tried, in some small measure, to revise the known, to rename the postmodern from the position of the postcolonial. (175)

The study of *The God of Small Things* aims to re-examine the influence of the caste system in postcolonial/modern India and investigate the cultural conflicts/differences which are related to subalternity, history and transgression. It will further put light on Roy's appropriation of the imperial language, the discursive forms and modes of representation of the novel, and by so-doing it will lead to an exploration that how the dominated/colonized culture uses the tools of

the dominant/colonizer to resist cultural hegemony. Overall, the novel aims to trace the ways in which India transforms itself and re-define its position. Roy's novel represents the diversified elements of Marxism, Poststructuralism, Feminism, Subaltern History and Cultural studies mingling together in the broader banner of Postcolonialism. By actively returning to and interrogating the legacies of India's colonial and postcolonial histories, Roy's novel excavates the question of "belonging" and "displacement"--the dilemma of belonging to more than one culture and more than one nation. It then brings out the vexed question of India's identity crisis. English, which symbolizes the language of the colonizer and empire, becomes Roy's potent tool to dismantle the homogeneous western codes and to implement her literary decolonization.

Among the characters in the novel, Velutha is a prominent one because his "casted body/status" signifies the cultural difference of India from other nations. Moreover, the narration of Velutha reveals the intertwined relationship between caste and the social unities/divisions in India.Yet from the transgression committed by Ammu and Velutha, a liminal space is created by them which also dismantles the fixed boundary between national/personal, sacred/secular, moral/immoral, and so on. Velutha's case alerts us to the fact that under the generalized concept of "India," there exists many unheard voices and ignored "others/Others" that need more respect and attention. Within subordinate communities, people are primitivised and their collectivity is transformed into an index of heteronomy, of lack of individuaity (Lloyd 230). In the novel, Roy depicts India with plenty of the elements of hybridity, mimicry, difference and displacement. However, she also highlights the fact that it is through the act of transgression in the novel that Indian people articulate their own social/cultural identities and thus new potentials of heterogeneous cultures are explored. Furthermore, all the personal events in the novel are imbued with historical meanings and each individual is intertwined and correlated to historical events. The History House, which is a place holding small events and traumatic memories, is also the haunted house of "her-stories." To a certain extent, Roy creates a gendered space for her female

characters to narrate their own stories. In this space, women construct the language of their own to rebel against patriarchy and so-called high caste culture. In this sense it can be argued that Roy does not try to reverse history rather by dwelling on the small things she brings out big issues from history. It is also through the act of writing against empire that provides readers with ample chances to revise the stereotyped conception of India and its history. Most important of all, Roy's novel reveals a possibility of dismantling the western codes that is purely controlled by Eurocentric male ideology and performing postcolonial subversion through the process of literary decolonization.

Having outlined the concise background information of the novel above, the study of the selected text is framed into three different chapters followed by conclusion. The First Chapter discusses on the diverse discourses of subalternity and the issues of representation in the Indian cultural framework; the one which is predominantly controlled by the hegemonic power of males and capitalists. This investigation shall be further followed and analyzed in the Second Chapter through the critical review on Marxism and postcolonial feminist discourses as represented by two prominent characters Velutha and Ammu. Likewise, issues raised by Subaltern Studies groups and the problems of colonial exclusion and domination shall be studied and critically examined in the Third Chapter by taking a departure from Spivak's concepts of muted voice of subaltern/a patient to active role of performer/ doer in Roy's *The God of Small Things*. This controversy shall be further studied by applying linguistic tool through the comparison and analysis of the different role relations represented by major characters in the novel. The concluding section will briefly draw to the focuses of previous chapters and examine the finding of this study.

Subaltern Agency: A Marxist Postcolonial Analysis

"… Let the ruling classes tremble at a communistic revolution.

The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

Working men of all countries unite!"(*The Communist Menifesto 33).*

"… Inquilab Zindabad !

Thozhilali Ekta Zindabad

Long live the revolution they shouted. Workers of the world unite!"(*The God of Small Things* 66).

The study probes into the argument of Marxism and postcolonialism through the citations above drawn from Karl Marx's historical work *The Communist Manifesto* and Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Both the literaray works share a coincidence in essence and spirit of Marxism creating an advocacy for the confrontation against the bourgeoisie and feudal lords. The novel poignantly projects class conflict underlying between the rich and poor class people in India. Accordingly the higher class has utilized every means of domination and oppression to the economically underprivileged and marginalized group of people in India. Roy approaches the situation with a revolutionary insight by epitomizing Velutha as the lower caste as well as a labor but still proving a hero and a warrior for his own cause. Generally speaking, "class" is referred to social and economic criteria while the term "caste" is usually used by those non caste or groups outside the pale of caste. Yet this kind of classification is not without any problem since in this case, caste becomes the product of collective power or political dominance. As is shown in the novel, Untouchables are not allowed to "touch anything that Touchables touched. Caste Hindus

and caste Christians" (Roy 71). Some people even convert to Christianity and join the Anglican Churchto escape the scourge of Untouchability. After Independence, however, the Untouchables find that they are still not entitled to any government benefits like job reservations or bank loans at low interest rates (Roy 71). Hence, they couldn't enjoy the benefits like other Touchables. Officially, they are Christians and therefore casteless. It is like "not being allowed to leave footprints at all" (Roy 71). In this way, caste is a source of inequality and disparity, yet belonging to a privileged caste can help people overcome barriers that hinder them from getting a better future and promising welfares. In Grossberg's words, "'belonging' opens up the possibility of another theory of identity and otherness, of identification and affiliation" (148). Yet ironically for those Untouchables in India, their quest for a sense of "belonging" will not necessarily put them in the right place. In contrast, their "displaced" positions make them different from others and their identity is even more thwarted than before.

Take Velutha's case for example. Despite his untouchability and poor background, Velthutha is a great help to Ammu's family. At first, it is Mammachi who notices little Velutha's "remarkable facility with his hands" (Roy 71). Apart from the carpentry skills, Velutha has a way with machines. In Mammachi's words, if Velutha hasn't been a Paravan, he might have become an engineer. Unlike the scholarly Oxford-training Chacko, it is Velutha who maintains the new canning machine and the automatic pineapple slicer. It is also Velutha who oils the water pump and the small diesel generator, and so on. Increasingly, the whole family of Mammachi depends more and more on Velutha. Yet it causes a great deal of resentment among the other Touchable factory workers when Mammachi rehires Velutha as the factory carpenter and puts him in charge of general maintenance. Actually, there is a rivalry between Touchable and Untouchable workers since both sides need money to maintain their lives. In addition, Roy reveals to us that there is a competition and struggling between the local factories, the People's Government and the communist party. Not surprisingly Velutha is an active member of the Communist Party who

participates actively in the communist movements. At first glance, the communist party seems to provide political protection for those minorities and subordinate--"They were also demanding that Untouchables no longer be addressed by their caste names" (67). For instance, when Comrade Pillai notices that "all the other Touchable workers in the factory resented Velutha for ancient reasons of their own," he "stepped carefully around this wrinkle, waiting for a suitable opportunity to iron it out" (115). In this way, the communist party becomes the second government/authority which monitors the social order to see if there is anything wrong. The preconditions of economic as well as cultural factors are what it create a great barrier in the growth of Velutha inspite of his skills and capacities. The hegemony of rich and higher caste people lead an essentialist approaches as a tool to dominate and subjugate the working class people which Marx calls "circumstances define the consciousness" (32). Marx's idea of economic structure and power relation got further diversified in the multiple disciplines like art, literature, philosophy, commerce, trade and so on. His ideas have left an influential departure to view and analyze the existing human societies in a more critical and analytical perspectives. In addition, his views are interpreted in the multiple territories of socio political concerns such as feminism, gender studies, and cultural studies with varying contexts and pretentions.

The title of the opening chapter, "Paradise Pickles and Preserves," refers, among other things, to the pickle business that Chacko has appropriated from his mother Mammachi and reorganized according to a patriarchal model. Chacko's petty bourgeois actions follow almost to the letter a classic shift in mode of production from home-working to factory-labor that marginalizes bourgeois women in a private sphere, while introducing the super-exploitation of subaltern groups, especially of working-class women and low caste laborers: "Up to the time Chacko arrived, the factory had been a small but profitable enterprise. Mammachi just ran it like a large kitchen. Chacko had it registered as a partnership and informed Mammachi that she was the Sleeping Partner. He invested in equipment (canning machines, cauldrons, cookers) and expanded

the labor force" (55-56). In an analysis guided by feminist Marxist this change can be identified as a process of capitalist accumulation that creates a proletariat class of mostly underpaid female laborers whose work is devalued by their re-inscribed status as housewives . In the novel, as if to stress their invisibility, the sentences describing their labor are subject less passive-tense constructions: "Chopping knives were put down . . . Pickled hands were washed and wiped on cobalt-blue aprons" (163). And, their identities are unhinged from their labor; they are ghostly presences who are merely background to the story, evidenced by a list of their names in a subsequent paragraph (164). If this analysis is pursued further,it is also possible to understand Chacko's deliberate effort to craft a brand for the business as an attempt to organize a coherent mythology that will justify the newly reorganized relations of production: "Until Chacko arrived in Ayemenem, Mammachi's factory had no name. It was Chacko who christened the factory Paradise Pickles & Preserves and had labels designed and printed at Comrade K.N.M. Pillai's press. At first he had wanted to call it Zeus Pickles & Preserves, but that idea was vetoed because everybody said that Zeus was too obscure and had no local relevance, whereas Paradise did. (56)

This naming is an exercise in commodification , that is an engagement with a mode of ideological mystification that fictionalizes identity, place, and history. According to Marx's definition of commodity fetishism, "a commodity is . . . a mysterious thing [because] a definite social relation between men . . . assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (320-21). In "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" from History and Class Consciousness, Georg Lukács expands on this point and argues that the commodity structure underlies every aspect of capitalist society. Generally, characters construct identity and place within a network of local and global commodification. Baby Kochamma and the cook Kochu Maria, for example, watch hours of satellite television, becoming interpellated within dominant consumer ideology, and thus assume the viewpoint of a white, middle-class subject: Baby Kochamma worries "about the growing numbers of desperate and dispossessed people. She

viewed ethnic cleansing, famine and genocide as direct threats to her furniture" (29). The absurdity of the ideology is made apparent by the contrast between the magnitude of suffering and her petty obsession with things. With much more tragic consequences, Rahel and Estha compare themselves to the "clean children" in The Sound of Music, internalizing a negative image of themselves which is compounded by the patriarchal inscription of Estha as deviant and dirty during the sexual assault by the Lemondrink man (100). The outcome, for the children, is a deeply embedded sense of isolation and traumatized paralysis. As a result of earlier colonial ideologies, most of the characters have interpellated an image of themselves as inferior, as living in a world apart on the margins.

Furthermore, in Gayatri Spivak's critique of trends in Marxist theory that attribute the dynamism of capitalism to Eurocentric teleologies or benign technological advances, she points to the exception of Samir Amin's theory of imperialism that foregrounds the practices of repression and domination as part of the global economics of accumulation: "The great shifting currents of global imperialism rather than the teleological narrative of capitalism . . . become the logic of [Amin's] analysis. This would allow for the possibility of making the full grid of dominations, as well as exploitation, our analytical tool kit, rather than consider domination as merely the subtext of the economic as the most abstract logical instance" (89).

With this altered analysis of imperialism in mind, we are able to recognize that the acts of violent repression suffered by Velutha in the History House are not generated by age-old caste prejudice but rather are perpetrated by agents of a patriarchal order for which coercion is central, rather than marginal, to the requirements of capitalist accumulation. This violent history of capitalist imperialism is never far below the surface in the novel, and it implies a shared legacyof its victims when at the train station from which a deeply traumatized Estha will depart following the murderous events of 1969, we are provided with a grim catalogue of famine victims, beggars, and subaltern: "Gray in the stationlight. Hollow people. Homeless. Hungry. Still touched bylast

year's famine . . . A blind man without eyelids . . . a leper without fingers . . . A man sitting on a red weighing machine unstrapp[ing] his artificial leg. An old lady vomit[ing]" (285). What is significant to notice is how the novel associates Estha's traumatic departure with casualties from ongoing conquest and exploitation. In the novel, the History House is center stage. It is from there that the invisible lines of oppression and violence radiate outwards in a system of exploitation that depends on multiple dimensions of patriarchal domination, from the coercive enforcement of separate spheres, to the institutional violence used to put down subaltern insurgency, to the perpetuation of structures of global marginalization, and the rationalization of nature. Indeed, the novel hints that these dimensions of patriarchal domination are intertwined, mutually reinforcing, though sometimes contradictory. For example, it is Velutha's status as an untouchable that allows the Ipe family to exploit his labor in their pickle factory. A wayward daughter's affair with him threatens to blur the boundaries between class and caste, and given that the family's status is already tenuous, this latest threat pushes them toward greater acts of repression.

Feminism embracing Marxism was developed as Marxist Feminism in the western feminist world in the 1960 and 70's. The feminist thinkers saw the main reason of gender inequality in the unequal distribution of capital. Starting from the issue of the underpayment of women, sexual harassment of female workers by male workers at factories and limited employment of women in income generating sources, Marxist feminist go to the point of defining the position of women in terms of socio- economic basis. They argue that the secret of sexual oppression lies in the unanimous authority of men over property and capital. They place women as proletariat and men as bourgeois and propose to wage a war against that unequal distribution and disrupt the socio-economic structure and configure new which will institute equal opportunities to both sexes and economic hierarchy would be dismantled. Roy in this regard makes a subtle departure from the classical Marxist ideas often termed as vulgar Marxist with the diputes generated in the gendered space of females. There is a great disparity in the treatment of

Ammu and Chacko by the family members. While Chacko is sent to Oxford for higher education, investment for Ammu's education is considered to be a waste of money. Not only that, there is not much initiative as to arranging the marriage for Ammu. Frustrated, she meets a Bengali man in a marriage ceremony of one of her relatives in Calcutta, and decides to marry him. But, this marriage was frustrating, again. Her husband comes out to be a drunkard and a mean-minded person who even wants Ammu to have a sexual relationship with his boss in the tea estate so that he can retain his job. After this incident, Ammu comes to Ayemenem with her two children—Estha and Rahel to her father's home but, without any welcome. Their life in Ayemenem, is marred with humiliation, segregation and torture. Here, gradually, Ammu feels an irresistible attraction for Velutha, the untouchable carpenter. This 'illicit' relationship of her with Velutha is beyond the social 'laws' and they are eventually punished for that. But the severity of the punishment costs huge—it takes away life, love and childhood from the children. According to Elleke Boehmer: "In The God of Small Things, a tale of damaged lineages and dispossession, it is predictably in relation to the smaller, peripheral spaces that the lives of women, children and dalits are plotted" In a male chauvinistic social set up, women are often rendered vulnerable. The dominant male ideology subjugates them, and puts some normative and discriminatory 'laws' before them to follow without questioning ; it makes these 'laws' institutionalised, and enforce them through institutions like family, society, politics or administration. Spivak's comment in this regard needs special mention:

"It is rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow." (307).

In every social institution and context, Ammu and her two children are victims of discrimination, humiliation and injustice. The family is, quite contrary to the belief, the most

culpable institution perpetrating injustice to the women. In the novel, we see that Ammu gets the severest blow from her kith and kin. From her childhood Ammu experiences the discrimination. She does not get equal opportunity of education like her brother. The precarious situation that Ammu is in, can be understood, through an understanding of the relational positioning of who dictates whom. Within the family the divorcee woman has no position; she is out of place, belonging nowhere. A woman can have any value only in relation to a man; she herself is nothing.

In her introduction to The Second Sex, Simone De Beauvoir explains humanity as the male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. Roy's mouth piece Ammu is not only a woman but her identity is loaded with so many determinants: she is married, married to one belonging to different community, divorced and having children. These make Ammu all the more vulnerable and more fluctuating in her stand and her identity . Baby Kochamma holds the common view of the society:

"...that a married daughter had no position in her parents' home. As for a divorced daughter – according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochama's outrage"(45).

According to a feminist, Rose Bush Mass Kanter, who after a study of men and women in large corporations in the United States points to many ways in which organizational culture of corporation hinders women's advancement? She argues that management ethic is primarily masculine. By asserting that the class power and class oppression predate sexual oppression. Marxist feminist attack the prevailing capitalistic system of the west and advocate a revolutionary approach in which the overthrow of capitalism is viewed as necessary precondition to dismantling male privilege. Thus they combine the study of class with that of gender. They wish to focus on class along with gender as crucial determinant of literary production. Socialist feminism has combined Marxist and radical feminism; the former emphasizing the casual role of labor and

capital and the latter believing that sexual hierarchy is independent of economic class hierarchy. This theory offers therefore a dual system of social analysis; patriarchy and capitalism. Sometimes, it describes a unified system referred to as capitalist patriarchy. These references of radical feminist and social feminists are typically drawn to contextualize the oppressed state of female characters like Mamachi, Baby Kochama , Ammu and other female labours working at Chacko's pickle factory. Yet in a different light Roy throws a sarcastic reference towards the female being the greater oppressor of the female as Ammu has experienced. A good deal of contradictions can be noted on the ideals of Mamachi to look at her son Chacko whom she has privileged by all means to have an illicit relation with the female factory workers but the same mother can't stand to listen about the cross caste affair of Ammu with Velutha.

A deeper look at social space that is mapped in the novel shows that women live with multiple restrictions. At times, it pokes fun at the dour, confining mood created by separate spheres, which is overtly associated with patriarchy: "It was a grand old house, the Ayemenem House, but aloof-looking. As though it had little to do with people who lived in it. Like an old man with rheumy eyes watching children play, seeing only transience in their shrill elation and their wholehearted commitment to life" (157). In another passage on the house, this one playfully mocking gender-laden notions of respectability, gender and sexuality are linked with class status: "The doors had not two, but four shutters of paneled teak so that in the old days, ladies could keep the bottom half closed, lean their elbows on the ledge and bargain with visiting vendors without betraying themselves below the waist. Technically, they could buy carpets, or bangles, with their breasts covered and their bottoms bare" (157). While this passage evokes light-hearted transgressions against the control of women's sexuality, in others, the reality of limited possibilities is conveyed by a weary, despairing tone. Enforced spatial divisions are metaphors for the gender identity adopted by Mammachi, whose identity is described as "like a room with dark drapes drawn across a bright day" (159). Ammu's reflections on the bounded self of her social

space in this world are memorable as well: “For herself she knew that there would be no more chances. There was only Ayemenem now. A front verandah and a back verandah. A hot river and a pickle factory” (42). As a divorced woman formerly married to a Hindu man and now a single mother of “Half-Hindu Hybrids,” Ammu’s lack of inheritance rights (which the children memorably translate as “no Locusts Stand I”) is justified in the eyes of dominant ideology. Ammu should know she “really has no right to be” in Ayemenem House at all (44), in the opinion of Baby Kochamma or Mammachi, both of whom ironically maintain a rigid, unchanging view of respectability and status. Reflections from Mammachi, a character who herself suffers from her husband’s brutal oppression, indicate her interpellation of ideologies of class and gender: “Mammachi’s world was arranged that way. If she was invited to a wedding in Kottayam, she would spend the whole time whispering to whoever she went with, “the bride’s maternal grandfather was my father’s carpenter. Kunjukutty Eapen? His great-grandmother’s sister was just a midwife in Trivandrum. My husband’s family used to own this whole hill” (160).

Mammachi’s bitter rumor-mongering reveals that her world is constructed on fragile scaffolding of social relations that is beginning to collapse under pressure from social change. In such circumstances, social contradictions eventually drive her—and other members of the community—to hideous acts of repression aimed at containing subaltern insurgency. Ideological maintenance of caste hierarchies, as portrayed in the novel, follows much the same pattern as other practices of patriarchal domination. Just as ideology is like an image in a camera obscura (as described by Marx), elite ideology projects an upside down world, or the opposite of what is true. For example, instead of projecting the view that the wealth of a community is generated by those who labor to create it— the untouchable workers, the factory hands, the caregivers, the nurturing foundation provided by the land—this ideology attributes the source of wealth to those who legally own it, and the debt must be paid to them. In their eyes, Velutha “owed everything to [the] family” (247). As an ideology that conceals exploitation, reification in this instance facilitates a

disavowal of human connection and dependency, which is reinforced by restricting the visibility of untouchables. Mammachi recalls “a time, in her girlhood, when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards 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”; “[In her day], Paravans, like other Untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads” (71). Furthermore, when Velutha transgresses those restrictions, he is constructed as a sexual, transgender deviant to reinforce gender and caste subordination. In the social world of the novel, elite insecurity demands the hetero normative drama of humiliation and disdain. Ironies abound as the elite class, which must continually strive for hegemony in the local context, experiences marginalization in the global context within the contradictory logic of their own privilege.

Mimicry of the imperialist culture is at once, paradoxically, an assertion of privilege at the local level but a trap of degradation at the global level, one that imprisons them as outsiders, as Chacko remarks, to their own history: “Pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away. He explained to them that history was like an old house at night. With all the lamps lit. And ancestors whispering inside” (51). Chacko articulates the conditions of his and his family’s alienation, but he cannot overcome them. Unable to achieve a coherent identity from the tensions of home and world, Chacko cannot resist the advantages that the patriarchal order bestows on him, and so his non-identity within the dominant system alternates between despair (his “Oxford moods”) and pretend rebellion as a “self-proclaimed Marxist” who sexually harasses women factory workers (62-63). In the novel’s opening chapter, the overview of Baby Kochamma’s life portrays “in miniature” these dilemmas. In Baby’s world, the cultural boundaries of caste and class are rigidly enforced, and, in her old age, paranoia that these boundaries might be crossed has transformed her into a hoarder and shut-in, who spends long hours indulging in passive voyeurism watching satellite television. Her nickname “Baby” and grotesque embodiment imply the ways her

conformity to ideals of passive femininity has resulted in a distorted life, one led backwards, from active engagement to docile acceptance of the status quo. Her elite status derives from the comprador relations with British colonial power, and increasingly as she ages, she experiences the anxieties of living on its margin, always striving, yet always failing, to emulate the English. Her dominant mode is mimicry, as is clear in her attempts to impose English on the children, which involves "eavesdropp[ing] relentlessly on the twins' private conversations." Rebellion has its costs, quite literally, when Baby withholds allowance when the children disobey: "whenever she caught them speaking in Malayalam, she levied a small fine which was deducted at source. From their pocket money" (36). Her ornamental gardening, as well, which she pursues after training in Rochester, New York, involves the cultivation of an aesthetic from elsewhere; that is, her creation in Kerala of "a lush maze of dwarf hedges, rocks and gargoyles" may just as well grace the lawns of middle-class America (27). Just as deeply troubled, if not more, is Pappachi's attempted assimilation into the culture of imperialism. The photograph of him dressed in riding crops reveals as much: "He was a photogenic man, dapper and carefully groomed, with a little man's largish head. In the photograph he had taken care to hold his head high enough to hide his double chin, yet not so high as to appear haughty. His light brown eyes were polite yet maleficent, as though he was making an effort to be civil to the photographer while plotting to murder his wife. He had a little fleshy knob on the center of his upper lip that drooped down over his lower lip in a sort of effeminate pout—the kind that children who suck their thumbs developed. He had an elongated dimple on his chin, which only served to underline the threat of a lurking manic violence. A sort of contained cruelty. He wore khaki jodhpurs though he had never ridden a horse in his life . . . An ivory handled riding crop lay neatly across his lap" (50). He is "polite yet maleficent" and child-like yet violent with a head out of proportion with his body. As with the other characters, the inconsistencies in his appearance arguably reflect internalized social contradictions, in his case, his conflicted position in a political economy of imperialism as at

once oppressor and oppressed. Indeed, his institutional affiliation within the cadre of imperial scientists working on behalf of capitalist imperialism indicates much more profound conformity to its epistemology of space and nature. That Pappachi is an entomologist is a significant detail because as scholars have demonstrated, commercial forestry and land management under imperialism relied on the knowledge gathered by botanists, geographers, and foresters. Pappachi practices an instrumental approach to nature that is rooted in capitalist rationality, which is coexistent with his brutalization of his wife and daughter—and also with his confinement of them in a domestic space. Thus the novel argues that patriarchal control of nature and women, by means of violent repression, makes exploitation by imperialism possible. Pappachi's moth, alluded to frequently in the novel during moments of despair, may thus evoke not only his rage and disappointment at his failure to receive recognition for discovering a new species of moth, but also the legacy of imperialism under a patriarchal ideology of the domination and exploitation of nature.

The God of Small Things emerges out of the fusions of the intersecting ideologies of Marxism and postmodernism that properly accommodates the controversies and disputes so as to give an ideal twist to a different theme and concern. Marxist discourse as a mode of thinking the society and analyzing the circumstances, was lately advanced to expanded approaches over the various disciplines that aimed to cater to the issues of exploiters and exploited. Feminist critics adopted this tool to examine the injustice meted out to women in the patriarchal society. Similarly, this discourse penetrated into the territory of postcolonial criticism which treats the Marxist's haves as colonizers and haves not's as colonized. This concept was compounded with the post-structuralism and post-modernist criticism which tends to blur the hierarchy drawn conventionally between center and margin. Thus postcolonialism derived the impetuses from Marxism in one hand and post-modernism on the other. The postcolonial is used here as an umbrella term to cover a range of literary- critical and theoretical approaches that concentrate on

the economic, cultural and ideological experience of European colonialism and its historical legacy, especially in writings from formerly colonized countries. Postcoloniality encompasses in its meaning the dehumanizing otherness of the colonized world, or the transformation of colonized peoples into things. This brings the meaning of the postcolonial to the threshold of the historical and the cultural where it becomes more than a term. It becomes an oppositional form of discourse.

Young provides a comprehensive historical discussion of the subject of postcolonial discourse and its meanings. Postcolonial discourse is a historical condition "coming after colonialism and imperialism" and a critique which takes the form of "an active concept of intervention within such oppressive circumstances" (56). "It is also defined as an academic inter-disciplinary inquiry into the nature of culture contact, knowledge and representation in a global model of culture" (Buell 222). It constitutes theorizing about a temporal and historic distinction between an idea of the past and the present. Spivak refers to this historic distinction in time and power as the differential. A re-evaluation informed by a preoccupation with the past consists of a critical questioning of the past that contains a critique of the meanings of the term and the method of questioning as well. But in the process of interpreting this differential, one must ever be on the alert to ascertain whether history has deceived us.

Roy's outlook towards culture, politics, and environment is dexterously transcribed in the body of her novel The God of Small Things. In epic scale, she narrates through the perspective of small twin children, Rahel and Estha, the Indian post-independence society possessed by forces of colonial history, Hindu traditions and globalization. India,shrinked into the southern-Indian state of Kerala between 1960s and 1990s, becomes a society replete with racial and economic discriminations which scapegoats the "untouchable" Velutha, "the god of small things," and kills Sophie Mol, the Indian English cousin of the twins, implying the impossibility of true hybridity

due to the contradictory and brutal exercises and self-divisions inside the country.These two pivotal traumatizing events, related in the memory fabric and circular structure of the novel, brings about family tragedies whose momentous effects paralyze the lives of Rahel and Estha. Tickell declares that "fifty years after independence, India is still struggling with the legacy of colonialism" (73) which exhibits the failure of independence to liberate its subaltern members from the traps of caste systems, patriarchal traditions, and the mimicry of colonial cultures. However, despite the fact that Roy's characters are haunted by the disturbing shadow of the colonial past, most obvious in the linguistic inheritance of British colonialism and capitalistic enterprises, Roy rewrites and challenges this heritage and breaks religious and social boundaries by interracial marriages, cross-caste affair as well as transgressive sexuality. She asserts that much of her oeuvre portrays "the relationship between power and powerlessness and the endless circular conflict they're engaged in" (Tickell 74). To that end, in her delineation of the reciprocal cycle of misery, a genuine attempt to subvert the hierarchy of power positions is displayed. In this respect, Roy's The God of Small Things deals with "class antagonism and class exploitations, exposure of the tyranny and injustice the untouchables have to suffer without any rhyme or reason; the insult and abuse the woman of the society have to tolerate"(79).

The God of Small Things is a venture to narrate the turbulent history of the Indian nation, a colonial history written by the colonizers. The obsession of novel with history is clear right from the beginning where it designates a house for it and allots another chapter for the brutal chastisement of its riotous low-caste offender, Velutha, who demands more than history's unjust allocations for his caste; this juxtaposition explicitly embodies a forceful confrontation between Big and Small. In the opening chapters, Chacko talking about colonizing manacles of mind, which can never be unshackled without destruction and loss, likens history to a house from which the dispossessed are excluded: 'But we can't go in,' Chacko explained, "because we've been locked out. And when we look in through the window, all we see are shadows. And when we try

and listen, all we hear is a whispering. And we cannot understand the whispering, because our minds have been invaded by a war. A war that we have won and lost. They were worst sort of war. A war that captures dream and re-dreams them. A war that has made us adore our conquerors and despise ourselves''(52). In particular, the fateful heritage in the novel, be it colonial history or Hindu tradition, plays foul with the Ayemenem's house and turns it into a great tragedy. Here lies the significance of the title, as Roy asserts, in the connection between 'big' and 'small'in which very smallest things are connected to the very biggest. Therefore, the chain of connections delineates the multi-layered pattern of big and small in the novel, originating from the very title which challenges "the tyranny of big things'' and enunciates"creative potential of dissent. Here 'the God of Big things' indicates the God of certainty and authority, it also shares the message of Christian missionaries; the schemes of the Marxist and other political parties; the capitalist makeover of the wonderful pickle. The novel lurks into configuration of small things and marginalizes the small lives of history; namely, the untouchables. It narrates histories which have been silenced by History and erased from the national scene, evidently because of power relations.

To investigate the subject positions in the novel, Roy's attitude can be succinctly described in two inclusive respects: one featuring the relationships and events in the childhood of the twins in Ayemenem house and the other revolving around the global marketing and consumerism which establishes a re-constructed relationship of the colonizer and the colonized. Indeed, these two facets, deftly juxtaposed in the circular structure of the novel, pointing to past and present simultaneously, cite the traces of capitalist and neocolonialist subject positions. The Ayemenem family with factory-owner Mamachi and Imperial Entomologist Pappachi is the epitome of an upper-middle class which, owning private property and a position in the ex-British governmental system, takes for granted its superior status to other groups. Their pride is specifically manifested in Mammachi's manner of presenting her English bride to the strangers.

The desire for a superior position is additionally projected on the icon of the commercially prosperous pickle-factory the products of which Chacko intends to sell in the overseas markets; however, the sequence of tragic events hampers the dreams of success in the marketplace. This is the panoramic view the novel offers of the roots of capitalism in the past and its global dreams and reach in the present with the same master-slave dialectic.

Discussing so far the multiple guises of subject positions, centering on the disempowered and disenfranchised, the novel dwell on another set of domination and control relations which concerns the women's question in the novel and the fact that women as the subaltern cannot speak. Overall, Roy depicts a double pattern of women's lives since at the one end there are Mammachi's silent toleration of domestic violence and Baby Kochamma's culturally-disempowered position as a female who cannot openly express her love, and at the other end, there are Ammu's insurgent refutation of the patriarchal tradition in Kerala by her uncommon marriage and her cross-caste affair, as well as Rahel's diasporic marriage and transgressive sexuality. As Young declares " undifferentiated colonial subject or subaltern is problematized because of the factors of class, race, and sex, which negating monolithic dominating power, create a heterogeneous field" (203). In this context, women as subaltern in the novel cannot be examined merely on the grounds of sex and gender roles but the issues of race and class should also be taken into account. Given the oppressive patriarchal structures the novel shows how a woman's social and economical agency is not welcomed, but condemned and undervalued. As such, Mammachi's thriving pickle and jam business is ignominious to the old Pappachi who resents the attention his wife receives and despises her vigor and productivity. In revenge, he beats her with a brass flower vase every night and when he knows visitors are expected, sitting on the verandah, he sews buttons that are not missing onto his shirt, only to create the impression that Mammachi neglects him in order that he changes Ayemenem view of working wives (47).

Chacko, an ideal of male hegemony, demonstrates his male ego and bourgeois mentality when he tyrannizes his wife and child.

Ammu's sexual transgression is a stigma which dishonors their family reputation. Already disempowered and dismissed as a woman and then as a widow, because of her caste-breaking affair, she is dispossessed of home. Chacko throwing Ammu out of their family house shouts: "Get out of my house before I break every bone in your body!"My house. My pineapples.My pickles (214). The narrator's ironic repetition of "My" intimates her impatience with the patriarchal possessive language and delicately questions its equity. In this ground The novel demarcates a long conflicting gap between the touchable, male, educated, wealthy bourgeois and the untouchable , poor, female and illiterate proletarians. The subjugated or subaltern people are subject to suffer culturally, socially, politically and professionally by the hand of bourgeois class. They are helpless to raise their voice and powerless to resist the exploitation and humiliation entrusted on them. Through they remain inarticulate but they have strong desire to come out of this mess in which their destiny has confined them. They have the instinct of rebellion, but keep them checked, by remaining in the service of their masters; they become well acquainted with the life style of their masters, their strengths and their vulnerability and then wait for the opportunity to strike back in order to get the ultimate goal of being counted. They also have the seed of evils in them and this evil finally force them to challenge the existing order- the man made order of discrimination on the basis of caste and class- the downtrodden people revolt against their oppressors. This is done by Ammu and Velutha in the novel.Velutha as an untouchable bears a fictional representation of the subaltern especially as the social structures he inhabits only allow him to 'speak' in a limited ways.This limitation is what Michael Foucault in his theory of discourse calls ' language encroaches upon historiography'. Discourse for him is a historiographic means of narrating an event within a structured field of reference. Spivak acknowledges the perils of such a claim and although she does not dismiss possible criticism,

she still favors Foucault's theory of discourse. The language of historiography is a discourse which has two dimensions: "the analysis of how the what is made" and the enunciatory somewhere or position of the subject in the vacant place that may in fact be filled by different individuals (Foucault Qtd. in Spivak 242-243). Velutha simply appears in the novel as a body or as the object of other character's fears and desires. Thus it can be argued that Roy's limited representation of Velutha is a creative choice and emphasizes the lack of political agency available to the subaltern. Indeed , while exploring the instances of subaltern resistence in *The God of Small Things*, Velutha's chimerical appearences and disappearences , his quiet suggestions and his bold technical design aesthetic can be interpreted as an evasive protest at the 'touchable logic' that confines him.

The ideas of colonial discourses and ideologies are vehemently discussed and interpreted in the context of Subaltern study that shares legacy both in Marxism and post-colonialism. The subaltern is a broad category that attempts to characterize individuals whose voices and actions have been muted, drastically reinterpreted, lost, or consciously swept away. Implicit in the term are related to the question of power, agency, and representation: does the subaltern have the ability to define or represent her/himself in the public arena in any sort of lasting way? In different historical contexts, the subaltern has been understood as synonymous with women, children, colonial subjects, the poor, the illiterate, the proletariat, or the religious or ethnic minority. Today's subalternist scholars, however, do not intend for the term to be reduced to any single oppressed group or minority. To set for the dispute regarding the paradox of Subaltern and Agency Gyan Prakash, a post colonial thinker and critic states "The establishment of colonial power in the figure of the native was also a displacement and relocation of colonial oppositions. For, as the authority of the civilized was articulated in the speech of the uncivilized. Colonial oppositions were crossed and hybridized. It is on this liminal site of

mixtures and crossings produced by the exercise of colonial power that boundaries were redrawn and the colonizer/colonized divide was reordered" (3).

In postcolonial theory, the study of the subaltern is vital to the analysis of agency and power relations because postcolonial thinkers are intent on categorizing social groups, which have the potential of transcending their subaltern condition. Young credits Gramsci with the original use of the term subaltern in Gramsci's analyses of class structure in reference to the subordination of dominated groups devoid of class consciousness (Young 353). He also notes, subaltern has become a synonym for any marginalized or disempowered minority group, particularly on the grounds of gender and ethnicity. The meanings of subalternity are determined by a scholars' theory of revolution or social transformation within a particular society and period. Whether in the context of peasant insurgency, proletarian revolution or non-violent resistance, the subaltern is the class with whom an absent and a putative agency are identified in the power relations dynamic. The concept of the subaltern ascribes "a new dynamic political agency to those who had formerly been described as the wretched of the earth, the oppressed and the dispossessed. By means of the subaltern the oppressed assumed political agency to become the subject of history no longer its abject object" (P. 355). These notions of subaltern revolt, insurgency, transgression and conflict are the major binding logical threads of *The God of Small Things*. Roy has succeeded in intertwining the multilayered issues of politics, social injustice, gender, class , caste in the threads of narratives with heterogeneous themes and intentions. Ammu's depiction in the novel is implied for a strategic confrontation against the age long war between touchable and untouchables in India whereas Velutha's projection can be interpreted as the waging war against the Indian bourgeoisie for the social justice and emancipation of proletarians.

Young's reference to the subaltern as the medium of assumption of political agency recalls Spivak's speculations on the retrieval of subaltern agency. It is vital to briefly reconstruct

Spivak's operation of thinking on this subject. Spivak raises the important question of whether there can be agency without consciousness. She earlier referred to the portrayal of the subaltern in historiography as "subject-effect" rather than subject (204). According to Spivak, traditional history-writing denies consciousness to the subaltern, which the Subaltern Studies historians are intent on restoring as a transitional operation of strategic essentialism. “Is there a causative link between agency and consciousness? Is one the predicate of the other? Spivak explores this through the moment of change / crisis from subalternity to that of political signifier in which agency can be situated” (206). Agency is then contingent on locating the signifier that summons subaltern insurgency. How does consciousness arise through the signifier at such a moment? In her reflections, Spivak points to an important nuance between the double movement of a theory of consciousness and a theory of change as it relates to the identification of the signifier that precipitates subaltern agency. It can be presumed that to consider the subaltern means also to consider the subject and consciousness. The subject comes into play in connection with the subaltern as a desubjectified being in the context of inequality in human relations between the self and the other. In the linguistic term an “Agent function is that of the doer responsible for an action or event taking place” (P.192) who invokes action and stimulates the effect of the performance. The absence of agency is void of neither any action nor the outcomes.

The linguistic analysis of agency has a far fetching role to perform in the contemporary literary and critical discourses. Agency in the context of subaltern representation is based on the presupposition that the desubjectified subaltern has been divested of agency. Subjectivity and agency are also linked both to the phenomenology of the rhetorical process and to history, or to what words mean and praxis. Such a study entails thinking about language as the medium of encompassing an interpretation of history as a relational history of which agency and alterity are constitutive. Another underlying

assumption of subaltern discourse is that agency can be appropriated through evolutions of psychic and political consciousness that cause the power of an oppressive order to be subverted. The subject of an action is its agent and agency is the capacity of being an agent, the doer or subject of an action. The definition of agent is conditioned by the freedom or social condition of the actor. In antiquity and in the European colonial system, a slave was without agency and could not be a subject. Descartes' conceived of the subject as the source of consciousness and of certain knowledge. He defined the subject as "a thing which thinks, a thinking being, res cogitans, une chose qui pense through the thinking that led to understanding" (P. 26). *The first principle of Book IV of the Meditations*, "I think, therefore I am" (Cogito Ergo sum) led Descartes to the certainty that he was" (27) a substance the whole essence or nature of which is to think. The subject is the subject of a thought existence of mind. But for Descartes, heir to scholasticism, mind could in its essence be the soul, the 'I' distinct from the body. The being that was thought had to be related to a more perfect entity than itself it brought into being. That entity, according to one's reason and judgment, was God who necessarily existed as a matter of metaphysical certainty.

The above explanations derived from the classical Greek philosophy to contemporary meditation of being and existence sets a fundamental trajectory to bring closer to the concept of the subaltern as a person or class of persons without agency. Hence this debate of subject and agency has created ample rooms for questions regarding the position of Velutha and Ammu in *The God of Small Things.* Their position in the respective society signifies the open debate about subject, agency and subaltemity.The silencing of subaltern women, as Spivak argues, marks the limit of historical knowledge. It is impossible to retrieve the woman's voice when she was not given a subject-position from which to speak. Spivak's point, however, is not that such retrievals should not be undertaken but that the very project of recovery depends

on the historical erasure of the subaltern voice. The possibility of retrieval, therefore, is also a sign of its impossibility.

Subalternity in Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Before proceeding with the analytical base of this research, a few words about the plot, style and form of the novel seems to be essential to be mentioned to streamline the discussions ahead. The major events and narratives in *The God of Small Things* take place in the divided chronology of time between the late 1960s and the early 1990s.The novel carries its entire setting from Ayemenem, a town in the south Indian state of Kerala. Most of the events and circumstances are presented from the narrative perspective of Rahel, Ammu's daughter. The narrative makes constant movement to and fro with a retrospective effect in weaving the events . The perspective applied in the plot subsequently switches between Rahel seeing things as a seven year old girl and as an adult and a matured woman. The year 1993 marks a retrospective onset of the novel and a primal detail for the novel to unfold the layers of narratives, when Rahel returns to Ayemenem to meet her twin brother Estha after being separated for about the duration of 31 years. Haunted by an array of bitter memories from the past, the novel is something of an intentional exploration of a trauma that Rahel looks back at her life to examine it. In addition, the novel subsequently entails the postmodern drive and influences in matters of narrator's skill towards handling of time. The unparallel structure of plot, its complexity is yet another distinctive feature in the novel that serves a purpose towards reader's curiosity and unpredictable movements due to the cross cuttings of multiple narratives in between. The plot mainly circles into the maze of present and past, through non-sequential narrative style as a predominant authorial tool which Lyotard calls "the meta narratives or petty narratives" (P.27). Digging deeper and deeper into the tragic secrets of Rachel's life with an effect similar to that of a gothic tale, the unprecedented occurrences of events has kept well the readers quite in dilemma and confusion about how things really happened to the very end. Abrupt ending of the story with the word tomorrow is a dominant rhetoric that seeds onto an optimistic twist of the annals of tragedies and sufferings of Ammu, the protagonist of the novel.

More and more details are added, more and more perspectives are offered as the narrator flashes restlessly forwards and backwards. Out of the many qualities about her novel, one is that the reader has the privilege to see a course of events from several and very different vantage points, and this is also reflected in the novel's epigraph "Never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one" (John Berger). Roy weaves her plot thread by thread into a colorful, multifaceted story; added to the narrative are different cultural references to Shakespeare, The Sound of Music, Kathakali (traditional drama-dance), The great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzerald and the music of The Rolling Stones which create a patchwork of associations and connotations. But the novel is not just a beautiful and intricate postmodern saga; it is definitely an intervention into (especially Indian) culture with its close, almost overdone description of caste transgressive intimacy, and its critical account of the local communist leader and Kerala communism in general. And to this, we may add that it is a novel written by and seen through the eyes of a woman and almost all of the central characters are Third World women and the voices of minority who have been the living witness of social discrimination under the banner of women and untouchables. The entire story revolves round the platform of gender and issues of caste, quite prevalent in the Indian context with subtle implications and irony towards the colonial impacts in India. Having borne with these socio- political junctures in mind, I would like to share some analytical perspectives on the novel.

"… Inquilab Zindabad !

Thozhilali Ekta Zindabad

Long live the revolution they shouted. Workers of the world unite !" (Roy 66)

The reference above outlines an utmost desire of freedom and a voice of working class people, the proletarians resisting against the rising capitalism in post-colonial Indian context.

More than a mere citation, the above lines further epitomize an outcry of workers for the much desired freedom from an unwanted exploitation, suppression and hegemony of elites to the lower middle class and the proletarians. The experience of abolition, segregation and exploitation has remained an implanted fate that the proletarians in India were doomed to undergo since the time immemorial. Yet in another perspective it's a voice filled with angst and fury to overthrow the existing sociopolitical ideology of India and fight against the authoritative power of government, to break away the pseudo ideology of emancipation and promissory of equality and freedom, which remained in vain to the millions of proletarians and the untouchables. This further implicates to the double victimization of labors first by colonizers and then by the anglophile Indian elites who possessed vast majority of wealth and capital, though minority in number, leaving the majority of population quite destitute and subservient to elites' interest and expectations. Sprouting from the setting of Southern Indian state of Kerala Arundhuti Roy's *God of Small Thing*s probes into the most recurrent and the essentially emerging issues of politics, history , culture, power relation, authority and socioeconomic plight of contemporary India in general and the issues of caste, racial segregations, class conflict and gender discriminations in particular.

The history of Indian independence dates back to 1947, sharing a coincidence with the aftermath of World War II that was formally called off in 1945.The aura of global freedom from the danger of war and much awaited freedom of India from the British imperialism became a rejoicing experience for the Indians when they obtained political autonomy and sovereignty of Indian nationhood. However the experience of joy and excitement of independence was much limited to the handful of Indians those who have the access in the higher authority. The poor and proletarians couldn't much realize the changes in their destiny nor in their every day existence. Even after three score years of Indian independence and more (about 65 years) , it has failed to meet the basic promises shared to the citizens on the eve of revolutionary move towards freedom

fighting popularly known as Quit India movement led by Mahatma Gandhi and his predecessors. Despite these revolutionary changes in the socio political scenario proletarians, workers, women and lower caste people living in India are yet to experience the freedom and equitable treatment in its true sense. Among the several folds of narrations and issues dealt in the novel, the status of women and untouchables are put at the center as the pivotal binding logic and nexus of heterogeneous concepts dealt by Roy.

The plight of women is shown very much deplorable and is brimmed with miseries under the patriarchic domination. Almost all the female characters of the novel are presented as the victim of traditional Indian male hegemony in one way or the other. To view it from the Feminist Marxist perspective they have been the victim of sexual harassment and domination from the males who epitomize the bourgeoisie and the females as the proletarians in the novel. Ammu, the protagonist of the novel, is a prototypical character who embodies the victimized destiny of a middle class woman with her hybrid diverse cultural identity . She faces lot of exploitation and domination first by her orthodox Christian father known as Pappachi and her alcoholic husband, Baba. Her level of personal suffering has been projected to the height of traumatic experience of the entire women of her race who are destined to accomplish, accept and follow the male domination as a social decorum of south India. She undergoes both the physical, psychological and cultural trauma who is outcast by her husband and then by her paternal lineage and last of all as well as by the whole community. Ammu is placed in the lowest strata of family for being a woman , a divorcee with her two kids, a Syrian Christian in India, an unwanted member , a returnee at Pappachi's family and the last of all a burden to her brother Chacko who call her "a mile stone in his neck" (P. 53). Her state of misery and despise can be further elaborated in Chacko's words " Whats your is mine and what's mine is mine" (P. 57) These statements clearly denote the male hypocrisy of Chacko, the only son of Ipe family who intentionally discredited Ammu from the property even though she contributed a lot in the factory as much as Chacko

would do in his life. Despite her contributions in the family, she was treated as a milestone by her own brother simply as being a woman, and a divorced mother with kids at mother's home. The dispute in the family between Chacko and Ammu got more intensified when he returned from his job in Delhi as the only heir to his late father. As being the son of Pappachi family, Chacko enjoyed the heir of whole property along with the industry established by his hypocrite mother "The paradise Pickles & Preserves". Having described this hilarious scene of male domination, Roy has created a significant platform to beset with Marxist criticism where daughters are the 'others' in their own home just because they couldn't be the male members.

Yet another but a great contrast can be seen between Ammu and Chacko, the daughter and son of Ipe family , the former lived a degraded life without much privileges for education, chauvinist brutality of her father whereas Chacko was afforded for his best of education at oxford. The greater paradox can be further drawn from the ideals of Pappachi who represents a British colonial spirit in heart, spirit and his life style but at the same time he exercises a male chauvinist power in the family. His intellectual conscience and pseudo idealism has become a great irony to pro British Imperialist "a college education was unnecessary expense for a daughter, so Ammu had no choice but to leave Delhi and move with them. There was very little for young girl to do in Ayemenem other than to wait for marriage proposals while she helped her mother with the house work. Since her father didn't have enough money to raise suitable dowries no proposals came Ammu's way" (P.38). With very little or no options ahead Ammu was left helpless to find the alternative escape from the troubled house where father comes furious and beating Mammachi, Ammu's mother and herself as routine family norm. Being depraved from every other chances and hope for her better luck ahead, she had her luck to spend few time at distant aunt's home in Calcutta. Her journey to Calcutta became another great tragedy in her life when she fell in the grip of cruel man working at Asaam tea estate who finally turns out to be her husband. For her, to marry and settle with him remained an obligation rather than the choice, instead of just returning

to her home back as an unwanted spirit at home. Baba, Ammu's husband happened to be a violent alcoholic who not only beat his wife and children, but attempted to prostitute his wife to his English employer Mr. Hollick. He made attempts of seduction to Ammu, as a favor to her alcoholic husband to get his job continued in the tea estate, despite his irregularities in the job. In line of maintaining her 'self dignity' she choose to adopt a revolutionary step to divorce with her husband and run away from his relation which was very much odd and unacceptable in the society at the moment. She happily chooses to leave the relation and make an undefined and undecided quest for the survival of herself and the helpless twins. In this regard her bold step of calling for the divorce is definitely a hall mark of feminist revolution and a radical response to male domination in the contemporary Indian context.

Ammu's transgression from an ideal wife to a single mother with twins was much challenging and risky in her life. In addition to the victimization of male domination , she was further tormented by her aunt Baby Kochama, the sister of Pappachi who was too jealous to accept the band of returnees like Ammu and her twins Rahel and Estha, the unwelcomed destitute. Baby Kochama's fury and her personal jealousy can be read in her pseudo idealism "she subscribed whole heartedly to the commonly held view, that a married daughter had no position in her parent's home. As for divorced daughter – she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a divorced daughter from love marriage, well words can't be described … as for a divorced daughter from an intercommunity love marriage… Baby Kochama choose to quivering silent on the subject" (P. 45). This statement of Baby Kochama , an unmarried spinster of Ipe family, etches the question of Ammu's status in the post-colonial Indian context raising the serious question regarding her presence, existence and representation as a subject in the community. Never in her life that Ammu could experience her presence in the social and economic mainstream nor could her voice ever be heard. Thus it sparks in Gayatri Spivak's term *Can Subaltern Speak?* The dichotomy of male verses female in the patriarchal society, touchable

verses untouchable in the orthodox post colonial India, rich versus poor class remained a question regarding their position, representation and voices. The minorities have never had the chance to expose nor make their any ventures ahead to make their struggle for their selfhood and personal identity. The voice is always subdued and repressed just because they remained foreshadowed and forbidden in the tentacles of orthodox feudal male chauvinist society.

In addition to the gender binaries, *The God of Small Things* has foregrounded the power structures in two different layers i.e; caste and class, sometimes in separate and often in a submerged form as epitomized by Velutha, an untouchable labour. Mamachi , Baby Kochama, Mr. Matthew , the policeman etc; stand aloof within their realms of power and they see to it that transgressors Ammu, Veluth, Rahel and Estha who hold no power in the social hierarchies, left vulnerable and hence overruled. It has been an essential fact that characters in the novel, although they have adopted the western ways to suit their needs, they remain stoutly depended onto the power structures as meted by existing socio cultural traditions. To view it further from Jameson's perspective "How urban squalor can be delight to the eyes when expressed in commodification and how unparalleled quantum leap in the alienation of daily life in the city can now be experienced in a strange new hallucinatory exhilaration" (P. 562). In the similar light Pappachi is the British entomologist who is hailed as British gentleman in the whole of Ayemenem. Even after his retirement he refuses to go around in his native Indian attire rather prefers to project himself western suiting in public. He drove Plymouth and smoked a cigar – seems a feudal Brtitish flavor still hanging round him in his manners and attitude. Despite all the carnal British tapestry and artifact he remained a chauvinist at heart and a hypocrite bourgeois in his manner and attitude that mainly stems from his wealth.

The issues of caste and class are the resounding themes of Roy's *The God of Small Things* with multiple disputes, controversies and rebellion. Ammu's affair with Velutha forms the

centrality of dispute often ending up with family row that consequences in the Martyrdom of Ammu's self exile, probably a suicide and Veluth's plotted murder. Their relation has been viewed as a serious social and cultural crimes committed in the eyes of Mamachi family and the whole clan. Velutha a prototype of untouchables and thus representing a lowest social stratum with no fortune with him at all and a depending case to the high class and rich people of his community. Besides, he represents to a clan who are enslaved by the higher class community since the time long as a paid labour and domesticated for their personal benefit and comfort who earn boundless riches for others but remained bare handed for their personal shake. Rebellion as being the instrumental practice of socialism and communism, Velutha emerges a haunting image of terror and fear to the feudal ideology of contemporary Indian society. His spirit of reformation and desire of revolutionary changes are misinterpreted and often wrongly represented for social cause and an act of doing away with 'love laws'. As transgressor of the established social decorum of high caste and rich class people, baby Kochama created a false yet an orchestrated story with view to put Velutha in the maze of bourgeois power with a narrow escape. Indeed, the brutal beating by the police of a helpless Velutha, the novel's only instance of bloody violence, is dealt silently and efficiently. Viewed through the eyes of the unfortunate witnesses Estha and Rahel, the narrator characterizes the event in terms of its dampened sounds and its noticeable absences. The on looking children hear "the *muffled grunt* when the stomach is kicked in," "the *muted crunch* of skull on cement," and "the *gurgle of blood on a man's breath* when his lung is torn by the jagged end of a broken rib". Gauging the emotion in the room, the children notice "the absence of caprice in what the policemen did," "the abyss where anger should have been" as if they were "opening a bottle or shutting a tap. Cracking an egg to make an omelette." The narrator thus lays bare the inhumanity of Velutha's treatment by emphasizing the backwards nature of the violence as efficient, responsible, and silent as "unlike the custom of rampaging religious mobs or conquering armies running riot, that morning in the Heart of Darkness the posse

of Touchable Policemen acted with economy, not frenzy. Efficiency, not anarchy. Responsibility, not hysteria. They didn't tear out his hair or burn him alive. They didn't hack off his genitals and stuff them in his mouth. They didn't rape him. Or behead him. After all they were not battling an epidemic. They were merely inoculating a community against an outbreak." (P. 293/340)

The issue of transgression is considered to be one of the most essential departures introduced by novelist. Ipe families transgress in different ways. Roy puts perhaps Estha and Mamachi were the worst transgressors. But it wasn't just them it was others too they all broke the rules and crossed into forbidden territory . They all tampered with the laws that they lay down who should be loved and How much. "The laws that make grandmothers grandmothers and uncles uncles, mothers mothers ,cousins cousins, jam jam, jelly jelly… it was a time when unthinkable became thinkable and impossible really happened" (P. 31). Significantly patterns of order and transgression also shape the structural arrangement of novel's regular alteration between present and past suddenly changes in the final sections confining events to the past. This effectively breaks the chain of the narrative. In the midst of its interwoven thematic network of regulation and transgression, Roy still distinguishes between characters who negotiate order and rules generally and more negative, authoritarian figures such as comrade Pillai and the police inspector Thomas Matthew.

Roy's capacity as a novelist further stems from her subtle and strategic qualities in settling and yoking the diverse and heterogeneous ideas of Big and Small into an aesthetic connections of powerful and powerless. The essence of small things is relatively presented, in order of interdependence and interconnections to the power and ideology of the Big as binary currents of the development of novel. To counteract the tyranny of big things she develops an aesthetic of connection in other words an artistic process of forging meaning and tracing the reach of power

that has the creative potential of dissent. For her, the process of connecting the very smallest to the very biggest is politically significant in two related ways. The first of these depends on the revelatory power of connecting cause and effect and is hinted at strongly in her novel. In globalized context of modern world where governments and multinational companies operate at increasing distances from the people that affect, Roy's aesthetic of connection forces power to remain accountable drawing attention to its hidden political alliances and profit motives. In the similar context Jean Paul Satre mentions "The function of the writer is to act in such a way that nobody can be ignorant of the world and that nobody may say that he is innocent of what it is about" (Satre Qtd. in Tickell 97). Less obvious but equally important is a second pattern of connection which tends to be holistic rather than investigative. This mode is most evident in Roy's literary focus on the value of smallness and small things and their vital place in the larger political formulations in the novel. Roy's constant privileging of the small refuses the conventional ordering of politics in its public or national guises and replaces it with a radical equivalence in which a sense of community and personal relationships and individual's imaginative response of his/ her surroundings become as momentous as supporting the ongoing political moves- the naxalities by Velutha who counteract the existing ideology of power and subjugation. Symbolically the presiding examples of interconnection in the novel is of course , Ammu and Velutha's affair, an act that denies the dehumanizing, exploitative of caste, class or ethnic difference and becomes in the process , a symbol of future change.

Roy presents a cast of characters strategically designed to explore subalternity from a number of different angles. Perhaps most obvious to the novel's Western readers is the form of subalternity introduced by the postcolonial situation; British film, culture, and educational values seem to have an almost oppressively entrancing hold on many of the Indian characters, even half a century after India's national independence. Through this lens, the death and glorifying funeral ceremony of the British child Sophie Mol contrasts sharply against the irreverent, unceremonial

deaths and burials of Velutha and Ammu. It becomes evident in comparing these exactly which deaths matter and which do not, and the difference seems to be accounted for by the British/Indian dichotomy. Spivak, however, wrote that her intention was "not to describe the way things really were or to privilege the narrative of the history as imperialism as the best version of history. It is, rather, to continue the account of how *one* explanation and narrative of reality was established as the normative one" (P. 2198). A strictly postcolonial subaltern reading of the text neglects to account for other significant forms of subalternity. Velutha, for example, becomes a victim of oppressive caste politics. Ammu's identity as female divorcee, particularly after the discovery of her love affair with Velutha, renders her politically and socially worthless according the local gender rules and constructions. All three of the children, Rahel, Estha, and even Sophie Mol, are forced, by virtue of their age, into roles in a play over which they are to have little or no control. The critique of the many oppressions and discriminations is all the more felt because it is performed in the language of children and their world is shown as one of love, communication, fierce loyalty, gentleness, resistance and survival. The novel even critiques Communism a theoretical system designed to combat economic domination in a manner that supposedly looks past boundaries of nation and race, for its failure to give voice to the subaltern in its multiplicity of forms, one of those forms being the Paravan Velutha, a devoted party member whom the party at the end betrays.

Blending together the Marxist and post-colonial critical visions, Roy's *The God of Small Things* projects the issue of Subaltern in line of tussles depicted in the development of plot. The essence of subalternity is very subtly posed by the author mainly in positioning the gender, class and caste disputes as the underlying theme of the novel. Borrowing the ideas of Gramsci subaltern was an implied suggestion of the issue of proletarian which he designates to less organized working class groups such as peasants, and farm labors who are always marginalized and left unrecognized in the national mainstream history and suppressed by the meta - history constituted

by so-called elites and people of higher social stratum. Thus Gramsci's idea of subaltern, as an equivalent term to working class proceeds beyond the economic territory to the broader scales of socio-political rifts expressed also in terms of caste, age, gender, class etc. Roy as a novelist attempts to deconstruct the conventionalized historiography uncovering the issues of subaltern resistance seems to have been an alliance to Spivak's methodology of subaltern studies and her efforts "to restore the historical agency of peasants and tribal people what she calls deconstructive self awareness objectified in the discursive history of elites. This awareness would acknowledge the power involved in the act of historical representation, as process for speaking for minorities and would result ideally in 'strategic essentialism in which the retrieved subaltern consciousness is recognized as a politically expedient but unrepresentative image of intending identity rather than the true thoughts and wishes of Subaltern themselves" (Spivak qtd. in Tickell 83)

This is necessarily a very basic approximation of the complexities of Spivak's notion of Subaltern; a number of issues are found relevant in Roy's novel. In the figure of Velutha, as an untouchable and the poor class representation in the contemporary society is nothing more than a subaltern, at least privileged image despite his expert insights in carpentry. Despite his calibers he is granted very few or even no chances to speak in a limited way and he often appears in the novel as a body, or as the object of other characters fear and desires like Mamachi and communist leader KNM Pillai. Hence Roy's limited representation of Velutha is a creative choice and emphasizes the lack of political 'agency' available to the subaltern. By staging Ammu and veluth's affair as one of the central events of novel, Roy seems to suggest a possible commonality in their differently experienced subalternity. However Ammu- Velutha equation of representation is a very minimal and economized but still sharing the common fate as a gendered image of Ammu and low caste image of Velutha. Both of these identities are infused together in their degraded love affair and the unnoticed death they were meted by the contemporary socio-political scenario of India.

Conclusion: Subaltern Agency and its Implications in *The God of Small Things*

Keeping in the mind of Spivak's riddle "Can the subaltern speak"? that this research entitled "Postcolonial Subaltern Agency in Arundhai Roy's *The God of Small Things*" has been initiated .Hence the entire study was structured and modeled in line of exploring the relevant debates of agency, speech and subjectivity of subalterns in Roy's novel. Beginning with the reflections on the classic discussion in Marxist theories, Neo-Marxist theories to Postcolonial circles, it has come to a realization that one of the central points in contemporary feminist postcolonial theory has been the theme of voice and agency. Spivak details how and why the subaltern women lose their voice and what intellectuals ought to do to speak for them. On the basis of stark conceptual divisions between the two theoretical perceptions of Marxism and Postcolonialism, this research has been sparked to draw the ideas on Subalternity and its Agency. This explains from where this write up derives its subject and how it comes into being.

Obviously, the postcolonial world is infused with pluralistic cultures, contrasting ideologies and all forms of political forces as well as subtle and disguised expansions and hegemonies. For once-colonized countries, they have been experiencing the full impact of the postcolonial world. People in those nations have immense difficulties in self-identification. Lodged in the middle of a series of binary conceptual oppositions, while suffering from a severe psychic trauma, they have no other option but to dismiss themselves as hybridities. To illustrate this phenomenon, postcolonial studies, as a new school of thought, have arisen to explore all the issues in the banner of Postcolonialism. In the midst of this study, the Marxist criticism, Postcolonial study and Subaltern Studies have made quite special contributions. These theories make a comprehensive and detailed focus on the least privileged, the most marginalized and the people who are doomed to submerge at the bottom of social hierarchy. In this case, the subaltern in the Third World become the centre of discussion. Viewing the long history of ruthless disregard for the subaltern women and current backlashes on feminist movements, postcolonial

feminists have been striving for their own rights and succeeded in bringing the unprivileged gender back to the public attention. Not only do they survive in the male-dominated societies, but also thrive at the forefront of the postcolonial academic circles. Subalterns are none the less positioned as speechless, and their muteness can be overcome with the help of postcolonial intellectuals.

It is no longer a puzzle as why the subaltern women cannot speak, but what continues to perplex the reader is whether or not the silenced women themselves are aware of their oppression. It can be understood that they cannot tell their story. But, it seems that the problem is whether they realize they have a story to tell about their unfair treatment. As far as this research is concerned, subaltern should be allowed to hold responsibility for them. Subaltern women's voice cannot be heard but instead it can be vocalized from a self-consciousness coming from within. Roy presents several different female characters and working class people in her novel *The God of Small Things*, all in different ways trapped in a system of oppression but also with a substantial degree of agency. The comparison of the three female characters in terms of their roles and status, it can be clearly drawn an idea that that the very notion of subalternity does exist in relative term as performed by Ammu in the rich Ipe family who is discredited from every other privileges. She never had an opportunity to execute her plans and decisions and mostly oppressed by an ardent orthodox female, Baby Kochama. However, she ventures to perform the subtle role of its kind, though in a different from and pattern, mostly in silence by garnering the strength and spirits from Velutha, an outcaste subaltern hero of the novel. In this concern the critic states "In the spirit of strategic essentialism she has ventured to give voice to some of those who are seldom referred to in the official history writing of India" (Spivak qtd. in Tickell 109).

From a postcolonial feminist perspective, Roy has contributed a lot to make the representation of the Third World subaltern women and marginal communities more diverse, through giving us various portraits of women and the low caste communities despite their

oppressed and marginalized status are not depicted without agency or responsibility. The woman who most clearly rejects the intricate system of oppression in the story, Ammu, is punished severely by her mother and aunt. But as one of the main characters in Roy's novel, Ammu represents people who actually dare to do the unthinkable, to transgress the very line that upholds the system of difference that caste inherently maintains. She represents all those who have suffered due to transgressions against the pre established social decorum, preferably by the males and gender-specific expectations imposed upon them, sometimes even by paying with their own lives.

Subalternity primarily reflects on mariginality based on socio- cultural system however it conjures up different variables i.e; location, geography, economic conditions, socio cultural circumstances in a certain packaged form. Similarly agency in the entire study is projected in the most linguistic term as a doer and a performer who has subtle intentions to perform and plans to execute. This argument of subaltern agency has been dealt through the comparison of the varying roles of three female characters Mamachi, Baby Kochama and Ammu. Among all the female characters portrayed in the novel, Ammu is not entitled with the power yet she is trying to exude power in the given circumstance with her personal consciousness. In this sense *The God of Small Things* makes a kaleidoscopic observation on Spivak's argument with a distinct departure. For Spivak subalterns are robbed off their voices and their right of voice is confiscated by socalled privileged class of people and thus they are patient whereas Roy presents her subaltern as an agent, doer and performer of the action. The novel depicts the fictional Ammu and Velutha as the epitomes of the thousands of cross-caste relationships in the real India whose voice resonates all over the world.

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