

Tribhuvan University
Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus

Subaltern Consciousness in Roy's *The God of Small Things*

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English

By

Chuda Bahadur Niroula

Department of English

Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus

Exhibition Road, Kathmandu

17 Feb, 2013

Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus
Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled Subaltern Consciousness in Roy's *The God of Small Things* submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, Tribhuvan University, by Chuda Bahadur Niroula, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee.

Internal Supervisor

Kamal Thoklihang

External Supervisor

Head, Department of English

Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus

Date 17 Feb, 2013

Acknowledgements

I am heartily grateful to my thesis supervisor Mr. Kamal Thoklihang, Asst Campus Chief and Lecturer, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, Tribhuvan University. The present study would not have been completed without his scholarly guidance and encouragement. He provided scholarly guidance by going through the script and correcting my innumerable mistakes. Despite his busy schedule, he provided a lot of productive comments, materials and suggestions for the preparation of this dissertation. Without his constant supervision and intellectual guidance, this dissertation would never have been completed in this form. I am deeply indebted to him.

I would also like to thank Mr. Chiranjibi Kafle, the Department Head of English Programme who provided me an opportunity to write this thesis by approving my proposal with his encouraging and inspiring ideas. At the same time I would like to express my gratitude to my respected teachers Mr. Rudra Poudel (Campus Chief) and Mr. Yadav Prasad Adhikary for their help and research clues.

Similarly, the support provided by my life partner Mrs. Kabita Basnet, my brother Ganesh Niroula in computer typing and my friends during the preparation of this thesis is highly acknowledged.

Chuda Bahadur Niroula

17 Feb, 2013

Abstract

The novel, *The God of Small Things* by Suzanna Arundhati Roy, sharply raises and presents the postcolonial issues like social injustice, love and sexuality, marriage, gender, race and class discrimination. The novel makes the dichotomy between male and female, subalterns and elites and subalternity and sexuality. Here in this novel love and sexuality have been used as the tools of protest and resistance against all forms of discriminations and prejudices against the subaltern groups. The act of intercourse exposes the subalternity of Velutha and sexuality of Ammu that tries to break the age-old caste prejudices and traditional gender role and also the artificial wall created by the so called elite class. Love and physicality thus can be discussed as a medium of liberation from the chain of domination due to the state of subalternity.

Table of Contents

Letter of approval	
Acknowledgements	
Abstract	
Chapter I: INTRODUCTION	1
S. A. Roy and Her Literary Career	1
The Postcolonial Social Issues	2
Chapter II: Subaltern Studies	10
Subaltern and its Emergence	10
Subaltern in Broad Sense	11
Subalterns in History	12
Subaltern as a Heterogeneous Term	14
Subaltern and Elite	19
Subalternity	20
Chapter III: Subaltern Consciousness in Roy's <i>The God of Small Things</i>	22
Subalterns and Awareness	22
Social Realism and Politics in Marginalizing the Subalterns	34
Gender as Subaltern in <i>The God of Small Things</i>	41
Caste as Subaltern in <i>The God of Small Things</i>	51
Marriage, Divorce and Child's Psychology	55
Chapter: IV: - Conclusion	59
Subaltern Resistance	59
Work Cited	62

Chapter I: Introduction

S A Roy and Her Literary Career

Suzanna Arundhati Roy, one of the most vigorous literati in Non-Western literature, was born on 24th November 1961. She was the hybrid child of father, a Bangali Hindu tea planter and mother, a Syrian Christian woman. She spent her childhood in Ayemenam in Kerala, and went to school at Corpus Christi, Kottayam, followed by the Lawrence School, Lovedale, in Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu. She then studied architecture at the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi, where she met her first husband, architect Gerard da Cunha. Later she remarried with filmmaker Pradip Krishen, in 1984, and played a village girl in his award-winning movie *Massey Sahib*. Until made financially secure by the success of her novel *The God of Small Things*, she worked various jobs, including running aerobics classes at five-star hotels in New Delhi. The place where she was living was under the grim domination of caste system and traditional gender role.

Roy began writing her first novel, *The God of Small Things* in 1992, completing it in 1996. The book is semi-autobiographical and a major part captures her childhood experiences in Aymanam. The publication of *The God of Small Things* projected Roy to instant international fame. It received the 1997 Booker Prize for Fiction and was listed as one of the New York Times Notable Books of the Year for 1997. It reached fourth position on the New York Times Bestsellers list for Independent Fiction. From the beginning, the book was also a commercial success: Roy received half a million pounds as an advance; It was published in May, and the book had been sold to eighteen countries by the end of June.

The God of Small Things received wide reviews in major American newspapers such as The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times, and in Canadian publications such as the Toronto Star. By the end of the year, it had become one of the five best books of 1997 by TIME. Critical response in the United Kingdom was less positive, and that the novel was awarded the Booker Prize caused controversy; Carmen Callil, a 1996 Booker Prize judge, called the novel "execrable," and The Guardian called the contest "profoundly depressing. In India, the book was criticised especially for its unrestrained description of sexuality by E. K. Nayanar, then Chief Minister of Roy's homestate Kerala, where she had to answer charges of obscenity.

The Postcolonial Social Issues

Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things*, raises postcolonial social issues especially the concern of subaltern people like gender discrimination, caste and class discrimination, socio-economic injustice, love and issue of sexuality. The novel makes dichotomy between subalternity and love and sexuality, lower caste and upper caste, male and female etc. The main character, Ammu lives at Ayemenem in a village, in the state of Kerala, in Southern India. She completes her school education and tries to further her education but can not because of her father's objection. Her father says, "a college education is an unnecessary for a girl" (38). Then she decides to escape from house to Calcutta to search for future career. In Calcutta she happens to meet with a man working in a tea state in Assam. She falls in love with him and converts her affair into marriage. After their marriage in Calcutta, they move to Assam. In Assam she gives the birth of twins named Estha and Rahel. Her husband is uneducated and extremely alcoholic. She is misused by her own husband. She is forced to have adulterous relationship with English

man, Mr. Holick (boss of the office where her husband works) by her own husband in the madness of drink. When she is unable to bear the violence done upon her by her own husband, she decides to have a divorce. She divorces too. After divorce, she returns her maternal house back at Ayemenem with her two children. She is ill treated at Ayemenem because she is a divorced daughter living in a maternal house. Baby Kochamma says “for a divorced daughter had no position anywhere at all.”(45). In the course of living in her maternal house, she happens to develop emotional closeness with a man, Velutha, a lower class and caste man who works there in Mammachi’s house as a carpenter. When their affair is exposed to all in the family and society, she is extremely hated and expelled from the house. She is outcaste in the society. Despite she persistently keeps relationship with Velutha. Similarly Velutha too goes on having physical relationship with Ammu, so called upper caste woman. Both of them try to protest but are helpless. The sorry thing is that Velutha is beaten to death regarding the same case. Here the love and sexuality have been stood as a strong form of protest and resistance against all form of discrimination and prejudices against subaltern group. The love affair between so called lower caste and upper caste and the act of physicality have broken the age-old castiest prejudices and also the artificial wall created by elite class. Thus love and sexuality can be taken as a means of liberation from the chain of subalternity.

Ammu, the main character of the novel, tries to break the hierarchy of the society. She is doubly subalternized; on the one hand, she is dominated in the society because she is a divorced lady living in her maternal house with her two children and on the other hand, due to her physical relationship with the lower caste carpenter, Velutha, she is hated very bitterly in the society. Their relation cannot be accepted in the society. Velutha

is accused of kidnapping Sophie Mol and finally he is beaten to death by the police because he tries to break the hierarchy of the caste system by keeping the physical relation with Ammu. Ammu herself cannot live in such grief and she, too, loses her life. Due to the social hierarchy in the society both of them lose their lives. It is the age-old caste problem which leads them to death. They both try to break the rules of the society does not take it as normal. The sublaternity has been exposed very clearly in text. Ammu and Velutha both are dominated in different ways. They both try to protest through the sexual relation but such task brings them to a tragic end.

By presenting the story of Indian subaltern groups, Roy shows the picture of sexual indulgence. The task of Ammu problematized the Ayemenem family. The desire of sexual instinct leads her to the violence at the end of the novel. So, it is a story of forbidden, cross-caste love and what community will do to protect the old ways. It is the society which leads them (Ammu and Velutha) to ultimate death.

The novel goes deep into the roots of social relationship and presents the tensions and prejudices that remain in Kerala even now. Possibly the significance of the scene lies in its projection of love as the ultimate answer to all class and caste prejudices in society. The novelist seems to view sex relations as purely personal matters which need not be interfered with as long as they are based on equality and consent. The love-making scene in the novel is the example of breaking hierarchy. And, it is love which doesn't see any barrier in the society.

The God of Small Things represents all those people who are victimized by the forces of history, dead convention, false pride and respectability, the tyranny of the state and the politics of opportunism and andro-centric order.

Arundhati Roy, in her novel tries to show that whatever leads to power, prestige and wealth is widely held as 'big' while the rest is relegated to the position of 'small things' and these 'small things' are the subaltern in the novel. The 'small things' need not refer to inanimate objects only. There is no lack of selfish, cruel people in our society who treat the poor and the powerless no better than 'small things'. They reduce beings or persons to object which can be broken, crushed, thrown away or destroyed at the sweet will of the powerful. Their faith nay even their life, is immaterial (unimportant) to those who wield (exercise) power. They are unable to raise their voice against the injustice done to them. As they are voiceless, as they cannot resist, they are but 'small things'. 'small things' are the victims of state, society and sheer will of the unthinking powerful. Though, the term 'small things' implies a lot and defies as exhaustive enumeration and elaboration, we can broadly put it in the following four categories: 1) Women who are placed in a subordinate position by society and left defenseless by the state. 2) The workers and the downtrodden exploited and abused traditionally. 3) The environment which is subjected to wanton acts of manipulation and destruction, they are the voiceless. They are the subaltern groups and they are deprived of their rights. 4) Children who are unable to defend themselves and suffer a lot to survive.

Since its publication the novel has been critiqued by many scholars. In the history of subaltern, most marginalized groups are silenced; their voice is not heard seriously, especially of the women and the low caste. Talking about the novel and its characters, Christina Bertrand says:

Although immense unbalances of power exist that work against the women in *The God of Small Things* they are neither completely powerless

nor voiceless. It is not possible to simplify the struggles of the characters by looking at only one factor such as race, gender, class, or caste; the matrix of factors influence each character differently, and empowered. The woman finds herself alternately marginalized and empowered. The women actively resist (with varying degrees of success) the dominant culture's hegemonic structures. (3)

Bertand's reading clearly states how the characters are oppressed and how they challenge the social imposition.

The novel's development and significance depend upon the untouchable man, Velutha. He is a Paravan and suffers untold miseries at the hands of people whose attitudes are guided by age-old caste prejudices. HW always lives on the margin of society and is deliberately obstructed from getting into the central place. To relate the statement, another critic Anna Paige Rogers says:

In *The God of Small Things*, the oppressed characters challenge the social structures, normative conventions, and prevailing dominant ideologies of their respective societies through their own resistance to personal and social identity constructions. In order to maneuver through identity categories which attempt to essentialize and oppress, these characters employ strategies which subvert and destabilize the boundaries of classification, thus shattering conceptions which posit identity as solidified. (17)

Rogers in the lines mentioned above shows the resisting nature of the characters in the novel.

Roy left home at the age of sixteen to live on her own. Her parents married life was not success. Making some departure from Bertrand and Rogers, Joy Press asserts:

As the daughter of a divorcee activist, Roy was something of an outcast; Mary Roy, was the founder of a liberal, Westernized school and later instigated a court case that changed their state's inheritance laws in favor of women. Roy once told *The progressive*, "Given the way things have turned out, it's easy for me to say that I thank God that I had none of the conditioning that a normal, middle class Indian girl would have. I had no father. I didn't have a caste, and I didn't have a class, and I had no religion." (58)

Press makes a biographical reading of the novel and relates Roy's own experiences with that of the characters who suffer in the novel.

The novel is set in the world of post-colonial India, which gained independence from its British occupiers. As the postcolonial writer, she explores the dislocated identity of formerly colonized people. Pappachi's life and career are played out in the schizophrenic, before and after world of Empire. Chacko, further clarifies how they are identityless. He further says;

We're prisoners of war.....our dreams have been doctored. We belong nowhere. We sail unanchored on troubled seas. We may never be allowed ashore. Our sorrows will never be sad enough. Our joys never happy enough. Our dreams never big enough. Our lives never important enough. To matter. (53)

Roy doesn't only try to show the disrupted identity of formerly colonized people, but also tries to show the hybrid culture of postcolonial texts. The narrator in the novel, talking about the hybridity, says;

Baby Kochamma dislikes the twins, for she considered them doomed, fatherless waifs. Worse still, they were half-Hindu Hybrids whom no self respecting Syrian Christians would ever marry. She was keen for them to realize that they (like herself) lived on sufferance in the Ayemenem house where they really had no right to be. (45)

Rahel, Estha and their mother enter into a new world where they are not recognized by their community as well as society. Intercommunity marriage and early divorce of their parents is the main cause of their suffering. Their dual identity was not accepted by new territory where they were like marginalized, facing communication gap.

Arundhati Roy, presenting the story of subaltern groups, provides the senerio of sexual indulgence. The perspective to look at the sexual relationship is totally different in the society. The illicit relationship which is kept by the elite is not considered as crime. But if such act is done by the inferior people it is considered as great crime against the society.

Mr. Hollick, an Englishman, makes many illicit relationships in the society but he is highly respected due to his post. As the author writes:

Mr. Hollick proposed that Baba go away for a while. For a holiday. To a clinic perhaps, for treatment. For as long as it took him to get better. And for a period of time that he was away, Mr. Hollick suggested that Ammu be sent to his Bunglow to be 'looked after'. (42)

Already there were a number of ragged light skinned children on the estate that Hollick had bequeathed on the tea-pickers whom he fancied.

This was his first incursion into management circles. (42)

Even today, it is considered that the illicit relation kept by the elite group is considered as the men's needs but the same things which is done by the untouchable is Celutha and Ammu is unbearable in the society. She is expelled from the society as well as from the parental home. Velutha and Ammu and their sexual indulgence that causes death in the end. Ammu is punished because she develops an illicit sexual relationship with an untouchable. The subalternity has been exposed very clearly in the novel. Ammu and Velutha are dominated in different ways.

Arndhati Roy in her novel tries to show how forbidden love in the caste system is treated and how women in general are marginalized. Ammu relationship with Velutha not only worsened matters at home, but in the society too. Their forbidden love affair broke the love laws and the very traditions that the country was founded upon. Roy uses Ammu and Velutha's forbidden relationship to show how love transcends castes and shouldn't be forbidden as it is. It leads to the violence in the end. Velutha is badly beaten to death and Ammu cannot survive in such grief. In the end, both of them lose their life. They try to break the rules of the society but the society does not take it as normal. Velutha and Ammu are subalternized in the novel. They are dominated in different fields. Sexual intercourse and the plight caused after it is the main subject matter of the novel, *The God of Small Things*. In the following chapter, this research has made an attempt to focus on the subaltern theory.

Chapter II: Subaltern Studies

The Term Subaltern and its Emergence

Subaltern, meaning 'of inferior rank' is a term first adopted by Marxist Antonio Gramsci to refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. Subaltern classes may include peasants, workers and other groups denied access to 'hegemonic' power. Since the history of the ruling classes is realized in the state, history being the history of states and dominant groups, he was interested in the historiography of the subaltern classes and also opined that the history of subaltern people is fragmented and dominated by the ruling classes. It is basically a school of colonial history and the term subaltern is used in post-colonial studies. The exact meaning of the term is used in current philosophical and critical usage to oppose the elite and their cultures. Some thinkers use it in a general sense to refer to marginalized groups and the lower classes.

The term, subaltern has been adapted to post-colonial studies from the work of the subaltern group of historians, who aimed to promote a systematic discussion of subaltern themes in South Asian Studies. It is used in *Subaltern Studies* as a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian Society whether that is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and any other way.. It aims at restoring 'suppressed' histories-of women, non-whites, non-Europeans- as well as the subordinate of colonial south Asia.

This project engages with the identification of forms of power in fields and relations far removed from the domain of the political as we familiarly understand it, such as colonialism's production of new forms of knowledge of South Asian societies; with ways of conceptualizing the nature of resistance and its possibilities in a deeply

coercive social context; and, in the overt commitments of the project and particularly of its editor, with the political status of the historian or critic. The extraordinary interest of the project viewed in this way is thus that it illustrates both the present possibilities of, and the likely limitations in a challenge to the kind of rationalist and universalizing historicism.

Subaltern in Broad Sense

The “subaltern” is a broad category that attempts to characterize individuals where voices and actions have been silenced drastically reinterpreted lost or consciously swept away. Implicit in the term are related questions 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 tend for the term to be reduced to any single oppressed group or minority. Though the study of subalternity has been central for generations of Marxist, Feminist, and Postcolonial scholars, though they may not have used that terminology, it should not be assumed that terminology; it should not be assumed that subaltern studies in necessary in cahoots with any of these intellectual scholars.

One important project of this latest wave of subaltern studies has been to resurrect specific stories of individuals whose lives near so little to history that their stories have been all but lost. Another project worth nothing has been to track resistance, even to the smallest degree, in attempt to represent the subaltern as an active agent in her/his own

history. An example of reclaiming a document for history, Ranjit Guha in his essay “Chandra’s Death” writes:

the relative was woman and was preferred to as “any daughter” “my sister”, or “my sister-in law”. The paucity of male offenders in our sample is a letting index of patriarchal concern to exercise greater control over female than male sexuality. For the response of a ‘samaj’ to sexual deviance was not the same for both genders. (47)

Guha examines the story of a young Bengali widow named Chandra who became pregnant during the affair and during the abortion she died. It is the society which leads the women to the miserable death. The power imbalance is implicit in the system. In a patriarchal or male dominated society, female are subalterns.

Subalterns in History

The subaltern historians have two objectives 1) the dismantling of elitist historiography by decoding biases and value judgments in records, testimonies, and narratives of the ruling-classes: 2) the restoration to subaltern groups of their “agency”, their role in history as “subjects”, with an ideology and a political agenda of their own.

As quoted by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *Key Concepts in post-colonial Studies*, Gramsci outlined six-point plan for studying the history of the subaltern class in “Notes of Italian History” which included:

- 1) their objective formation; 2) their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formations; 3) the birth of new parties and dominant groups; 4) the formations that the subaltern groups produce to press their claims; 5) new formations within the old framework that assert

the autonomy of the subaltern classes; and other points referring to trade unions and political parties. (52)

Cramsci claimed that “the history of the subaltern classes was just as complex as the history of the dominant classes” (52). Gramsci categorizes subaltern in place of ‘proletariats’ who are by any way exploited and dominated by elite group of the society. For him, the history of subaltern social group is necessarily fragmented and episodic (54), since they are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel.

Randjit Guha in his volumes of *Subaltern Studies* raises the issues that, Guha in his programmatic note, offered that the prosaic critique, that the study of Indian history had been strangled by elitism”, both of the “colonialist and bourgeois-nationalist” variety and that henceforth history would have to engage with the “politics of the people. “Doubtless, some monographs had been written on peasant rebellion, but the real question, Guha suggested, is how far various subaltern groups, whether women, peasants, outcastes, the working class, tribals, the downtrodden or other marginalized people who had been relegated to the periphery of Indian society, had been able to make history and constitute their politics as an “autonomous realm”. As readers were to surmise, subaltern history promised more than “history from below”. As the idea is captured by Gramsci, and the “Subaltern School” historians would also build upon the semiological analysis of Jakobson and Barthes, and the critique of Enlightenment epistemologies associated with Derrida and others. For Indians who might have been distressed that the theoretical trajectories which were findings a receptive audience in the Western academy were somehow passing them by, subaltern history must have seemed a godsend, offering not only new insights into Indian history, but a bridge to critical reformulations of the

Europeans past and the intellectual traditions of the west. Guha sought to establish how insurgency might be read from the gaps, fissures, interstices, and rhetorical strategies that marked dominant discourse.

Subaltern is a term that commonly refers to the perspective of persons from regions and groups outside the hegemonic power structure. In the 1970s, the term began to be used as a reference to the colonized people in the South Asian subcontinent. Subaltern studies emerged around 1982 as a series of journal articles published by Oxford University Press in India. A group of Indian scholars trained in the West wanted to reclaim their history. Its main goal was to retake history for the under classes, for the voices that had not been heard previously. Scholars of the subaltern hoped to break away from histories of the elites and the Eurocentric bias of current imperial history. The primary leader was Ranajit Guha who had written works of peasant uprisings in India. Another leading scholar of subaltern studies is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. She draws on a number of theoretical positions in her analysis of Indian history. She was highly critical of current histories of Indian that were told from the vantage point of the colonizers and presented a story of the colony. Especially, she and other historians wanted was to reclaim their history, to give voice to the subjected people. In the work of subaltern studies group, they use the term to describe the 'insurgents' and the 'peasants', who tried to rise up against the oppressor or the elites.

Subaltern as a Heterogeneous Term

It is a heterogeneous term. It does not have a single criterion to identify as a subaltern. The purpose of the Subaltern Studies project was to redress imbalance created in academic work by a tendency to focus on elites and elite culture in South Asian

historiography. The goals of the group stemmed from the belief that the historiography of Indian nationalism, or instance, had long been dominated by elitism-colonialist elitism and bourgeoisie-nationalist elitism and these are the consequences of British colonialism.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues:

Subaltern is not just class word for oppressed, for other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie.... In postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern-a space of difference. Now who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern.....many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus, they don't need the word 'subaltern'... They should not call themselves subaltern. (3)

Subaltern people are dominated and exploited in the society by the so called elite group. It does not have a single criterion to identify as a subaltern. It is a heterogeneous term to describe. Sumit Sarkar in his "The Conditions and Nature of Subaltern militancy: Bengal from Swadeshi to Non-cooperation" also opines that the term is ambiguous because it doesn't have a stable identity. He writes:

subaltern is no more free of ambiguities and problem than its rough equivalents (for example 'popular mass', 'lower-class'); it does have the advantage however of emphasizing the fundamental relationship of power, of domination and subordination. Nor does the subaltern concept exclude more rigorous class-analysis where the subject or material permits it. (273)

Subaltern can be defined as the lower class, who doesn't have identity in the society.

They are the people who are neglected as well as they are called inferior in rank.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" says:

there is always a counter pointing suggestion in the work if the group that subaltern consciousness is subject to the cathexis of the elite that it is never fully recoverable, that it is always askew from its received signifiers, indeed that it is effaced even as it is disclosed, that it is irreducibly discursive. (339)

Subaltern people are always looked from the view of negative consciousness. They are never viewed from positive consciousness. They are not generalized as a group in the society. What the elite thought is subaltern people cannot appear without the elite. When elite tries to expose the subaltern people, they are exposed only for the purpose of discussing negative things.

Many subalternists like Dipesh Chakrabarty in "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: who Speaks for Indian Pasts?" writes, "Indian history itself is in a position of subalternity: one can only articulate subaltern subject positions in the name of this history" (203-204). Here, he suggests that it is really impossible to fully break from the Western narrative.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is one of the best known postcolonial theorists. She is one of the leading figures of Subaltern Studies. In her essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" originally published in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg's "Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture", Spivak argues, by speaking out and reclaiming a collective

cultural identity, subalterns will in fact re-inscribe their subordinate position in society. Also, they have to depend upon western intellectuals to “speak for” the subaltern condition rather than allowing them to speak for themselves. The subalterns are relegated to the position of subjects rather than participants in a two-way dialogue. Spivak encourages academics to understand how their positions of intellectual and economic privilege limit their integrity in serving as a spokesperson for the subaltern. In another discussion, the critic posits women in the role of subaltern questioning the male-constructed voice of women within a patriarchal society.

Spivak resists the idea that one voice can represent a way of thinking, particularly when the way of thinking strives to recognize the significance of multiplicity and positionality in the creation of the text. In “Can Subaltern Speak?” she explores the idea of how the subaltern or non-elite finds ways to express its oppression. She argues that the wish of intellectual to provide a space for this voice becomes problematic because of their respective positions. In the process of speaking about or for the subaltern the radical intellectual cannot avoid reading a representation of the non-elite. This representation does not allow the subaltern to speak and represent itself, rather, the intellectual further colonizes the subaltern by positioning the non-elite as a subject. The subaltern merely becomes a subject of intellectual pursuit instead of a responsive participant in a dialogue.

The questioning of who speaks for whom is an integral aspect of Spivak’s ideas on feminism. She compares how the feminine has been treated in a similar way to the subaltern by pointing to deconstructive criticism and certain types of feminist criticism as spaces where this treatment occurs. She contends that it is because of the colonial production of history and male dominance that women have been silenced through their

absence in historiography, not because they have not participated. She points to subaltern historiography as a way to resist this type of representation.

Ranajit Guha, an intellectual founder of the groundbreaking and influential subaltern studies group, describes from the peasants view point the relation of dominance and subordination in rural India. In his essay “The Elementary Aspect of Peasant Insurrection in Colonial India” argues by saying that , “the history of peasant insurrection indeed of all subaltern protest can be written from two diametrically opposed points of view: the rebel’s and the darogah’s” (108). Challenging the idea that peasants were powerless agents who rebelled blindly against British imperialist oppression and local landlord exploitation. Guha emphasizes their awareness and will to effect political change.

In this essay “The Mentality of Subalternity: Kantanama or Rajdharm” Bhadra says; “It is well known that defiance is not the only characteristic of the behavior of subaltern classes. Submissiveness to authority in one context is as frequent as defiance in another. It is these two elements that together constitute the subaltern mentality” (63). By nature, there are two types of mentality of subaltern people. On the one hand they try to be free from domination and exploitation. They want to rebel to secure the position in the society. But another characteristic of the behavior of subaltern class is their subversiveness. They consider that it is due to their faith they are victimized, and this faith destined to be suppressed by elite. Due to this the dominant elite continue to dominate and rule, because of the poor mentality of subaltern people. As a result, the elite group always gets chance to make progress.

The notion of “autonomy” while being empirically untenable, also leads at times the king of embarrassing difficulties. Gautam Bhadra, for instance, has to explain away when he makes Manulla, a relatively prosperous headman, represent in the poem Kantanama, the “culture” of subordinate classes. There must have been, Bhadra concedes as an afterthought, “important and interesting differences between the thoughts of a poor peasants and those of a Mandal (headman)”, and Kantanama consequently cannot be made to the “thought-world” of the latter. Bhadra does make it do so, nonetheless, by introducing into the presumably. “autonomus terrain” of subaltern mentality some elements of elite thoughts and beliefs.

However, it seems to me (Bhadra) that we would be erring in the opposite direction to think that there could be no exchange or sharing of ideals or ideas between classes, or those classes, even when they were in conflict, did not learn from each other. There is, *prima facie*, no reason to assume that classes, like scholars, are deaf to each other that ideas cannot travel across the boundaries of class. The cognitive map that Manulla had of the world may easily have been shared, although not necessary wholly, by a poor peasant. (94)

Subaltern and Elite

The serious problem has to do with the use of the terms “subaltern” and “elite” as descriptive of contending social forces which are, in actuality, far more complex than this simple dichotomy would suggest. At no time in any historical conflict have the material interests of the entire spectrum of the ruling elite classes, on the one hand, and of the contending classes of the other, been identical. Subaltern historians recognize this, but in their actual analysis. “Subalternity” as a theoretical concept seems more like a description

of identity as an oppressed group rather than of differences in degree of the king oppression suffered, or of divergent interests within those groups once a particular source of oppression is removed.

The relationship between hierarchical orders of caste leads the society to the tragic end. The focus on the superior position of the Brahman, on the one hand, and a conception of sovereignty focused on the Hindu king or the royal function of the dominants caste at the level or the village, on the other has been a central reverberation issue in the anthropological view of Indian society puts caste at the centre of Hindu social life and assumes that caste is grounded essentially in a hierarchical or rank ordering and that this ordering has as its conceptual foundation the purity and preeminence of the Brahman. The novel, *The God of Small Things*” is the perfect mixture of Hindu and Christianit, and is the main aspect of the background of the plot. In this view, caste is seen as a very narrowly defined “religious” phenomenon, and th eking and the dominant caste are taken to represent only a devalued and non-ideological sphere of “political” and “economic” relations. And caste, in the view, is the most fundamental and pervasive feature of Hindu society, the king and the dominant caste have been relegated to a peripheral place in anthropological analysis and they have been seen as unequivocally inferior to the Brahmin in the village and the polity. It is the caste which leads the ultimate end of Ammu and Velutha.

Subalternity

Subalternity is a term that usually focuses on the group which is subordinated or effacted from the society. The group which is subordinated from the society does not speak against the oppressor. Submissiveness towards authority is the only way to live in a

society. They are segregated from the society. The rich people usually mark themselves as elite and the poor as subaltern. Subaltern people are usually exploited and segregated from the society by elite groups. Although the marginal group in the society try to rebel against the domination but they cant rebel easily because of the power network. Ranajit Guha in his essay “On some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial Indian” says:

The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism-colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism. Both originated as the ideological product of British rule in India, but have survived the transfer of power and been assimilated to neo-colonialist and neo-nationalist forms of discourse in Britain and India respectively. (1)

Some monographs had been written on peasant rebellions, but the real question, Guha suggested is how far various subaltern groups, whether women, peasants, outcastes, the working-class, tribals, the down trodden, or other marginalized people who had been relegated to the periphery of Indian society had been able to make history and constitute their politics as an autonomous realm. On the one hand, they try to rebel against the elite group and on the other they try to be free from combination and exploitation. But in the context of India, when the British rule was over, still there was exploitation by the imitators who were the Indians. Subaltern people have to bear injustice by the so called superior groups. In one way or other the people of Indian were suppressed or exploited. The upcoming chapter will analyze the subaltern consciousness in different aspects of the text.

Chapter: III

Subaltern Consciousness in *The God of Small Things*

Subalterns and Awareness

Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997) raises postcolonial social issues especially the concern of subaltern people. Roy, in *The God of Small Things*, clearly presents the heart touching plight faced by subaltern people and their consciousness. There are many characters in the novel. The women characters and mostly the main characters of the novel like Ammu and Velutha have been extremely subalternized in the multiple ways. As a woman in patriarchy, Ammu is terribly dominated. In the case of Sophie Mol when she went to police station, she met Inspector Thomas Mathew and he addresses her as Veshya. As narrator says, "He stared at Ammu's breasts as he spoke. He said the police knew all they needed to know and that the Kottayam police didn't take statements from Veshyas or their illegitimate children. Then he tapped her breasts with her baton. Gently. Tap, tap"(8).

She is even marginalized and victimized by her own father before marriage. When she finished her schooling, she wanted to further her study but her own father made a bar saying "A college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl"(38). The village Ayememem is under the grim domination of typical Hindu culture and caste system. She is ill treated at Ayememem because she is a divorced daughter living in a maternal house. Baby Kochamma says "for a divorced daughter had no position anywhere at all."(45). Then she decides to escape from house to Calcutta to search for future career. In Calcutta she happens to meet with a man working in a tea state in Assam. She falls in love with him and converts her affair into marriage. After their

marriage in Calcutta, they move to Assam. In Assam she gives the birth of twins named Estha and Rahel. Her husband is uneducated and extremely alcoholic. She is misused by her own husband. She is forced to have adulterous relationship with English man, Mr. Holick (boss of the office where her husband works) by her own husband in the madness of drink. When she is unable to bear the violence done upon her by her own husband, she decides to have a divorce. She divorces too. After divorce, she returns her maternal house back at Ayemenem with her two children. In the course of living in her maternal house, she happens to develop emotional closeness with a man, Velutha, a lower class and caste man who works there in Mammachi's house as a carpenter. She is supposed to be an outcaste when her sexual relationship with Velutha is known to all. It is supposed to be a great crime against the society. So, she is segregated from the society. Despite she persistently keeps relationship with Velutha. . This is how Ammu is exploited and dominated in the society very bitterly. She is victimized by the patriarchal society due to her identity as a female, divorcee and living in maternal house. So, Ammu is considered as a real subaltern woman in the novel. Women are considered as burden in the maternal house. When she comes to the level of consciousness, she becomes bolder thinking about her act is natural and justifiable on the ground of biological ground. This is how she breaks the rigid social rules of age-old caste system rooted in the village, Ayemenem.

Mammachi is the hard working and deserves to be called better at business than. She is the founder of Paradise pickles and it remains "a small but profitable enterprise" under her (57). Mammanchi is the sister-in-law of Baby Kochamma, the wife of her brother Benaan John Ipe. Her real name is Soshamma but she is generally known as Mammachi while her husband is Pappachi in the novel. Baby Kochamma suffers because

she fails to have the man of her choice. Mammachi has got a husband from arranged marriage seventeen years older than herself. Yet the marriage doesn't prove happy as her husband develops some disorder in his personality. Mammachi experienced severe violence from her husband all throughout her life. Her husband, Pappachi used to beat her every night but as a woman she had to accept all the beatings. Every night he beats her with a brass flower vase (47). Likewise, due to bias nature of men towards women, men used to suppress their talent too. In this case, her own husband has been seen jealous and more jealous to his wife than anybody else. For example Pappachi had been to Vienna for the study of Entomology. Mammachi had been there with him in order to serve him. She had been taking the lesson of violin classes in her leisure time and doing excellent in her classes. But the narrator says, "the lessons were abruptly discontinued when Mammachi's teacher made the mistake of telling Pappachi that his wife was exceptionally talented and, in his opinion potentially concert class"(50). Later at Kottayam "he breaks the bow of the violin one night and throws it in the river" (48).

The same jealousy is expressed again when the pickle making business brought attention to her. Though she is practically blind, he refuses to help her because 'pickle making is not a suitable job for a high-ranking ex-government official" (47). The reason is expressed explicitly. "He had always been a jealous man, so he greatly resented the attention his wife was suddenly getting" (47). Thus her married life is devoid of love, understanding and co-operation. It means nothing but domination by a bully who lives a bored life himself and bores others too.

Mammachi spent her life with this kind of husband who harasses her with persistent interruption, destruction, disturbance, beating, discontinuity, devastation and criticism.

The narrator states the consequences of her beating. “On her scalp, carefully hidden by her scanty hair, Mammachi had raised, crescent-shaped ridges. Scars of old beatings from an old marriage. Her brass vase scars” (166). Her skull was permanently damaged and deeply marked by physical injury from her husband’s beatings. She was destined to be beaten up frequently by her husband from the beginning of her married life. The narrator states his brutality as, “Every night he beat her with a brass vase. The beatings weren’t new. What was new was the frequency with which they took place”(47). Critic M. Dasan opines that Roy strongly criticizes misbehaviors against women in Kerala society. This is how women in the novel suffer. They all suffer in different ways. In the country like India where patriarchal system is very strong, women suffer mentally, physically and sexually (66). The patriarchal is biased and prejudiced which never accepts female empowerment wholeheartedly. Roy has powerfully projects the violent behaviors of a patriarchal family in her novel and this she has done to protest against such cruelties. Though, the female characters of the novel belong to the same religious group, they do have differences in age group and they belong to different generations.

It is the gender which creates discrimination in the society. Many of the contemporary debates about gender in India reflect aspects of the older, long struggle over the “women question” mainly there are three overlapping dimensions are relevant for understanding how gender is conceptualized in the Indian context. Firstly, there is a tension between scholars who have foregrounded gender and those who adopted a more intersectional approach. Secondly, the epistemological roots of work on gender are not inevitably based on feminism. Thirdly, there is a considerable emphasis on the role of the nation-state and international structures in fostering gender inequality.

A key issue in the research on gender is the ongoing debate, beginning in the mid 1979s between scholars who foregrounded gender and those who emphasize the intersection of class, religion, caste, age, and gender. Some of the scholars then even discussed the violence done upon women by patriarchal society. Most feminist literatures in India define violence against women as any form of coercion, power, or control perpetrated against a woman by her intimate partner or his extended kin and include physical, sexual, verbal and mental abuse. Violence against down-trodden and women in particular, which has steadily climbed since 1994, is an extreme form of the intolerance against lower castes and tribes. In the novel, when Ammu develops an illicit sexual relationship with Velutha, she is said to be an outcaste or fallen from the caste. Here, she is highly discriminated by the society. In the novel too, when Chacko develops the sexual relationship with other, it is said as “Men’s Needs.” So, it is the society which creates gender discrimination and the subalternity upon women.

If a nation gets the point about the subaltern of gender discrimination than it may lead to success. The nationalist movement to overthrow the British included a significant component of resistance at the level of symbolic representation and formal knowledge construction, and these knowledge systems inspire some of the work on gender. Concepts of independence and nationalism have developed to subvert the imperialist notions of writings. Postcolonial writers became conscious about local culture history and their own traditions. The postcolonial discourse emphasizes the identity of the natives. They consider that their culture is not inferior as it is supposed by white people. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin write in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, “The term

has subsequently been widely used to signify the political linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonies” (186).

After the colonization, mostly the writers started to write about their own identity. Among many writers, Arundhati Roy is one of the post-colonialist writers and in her novel *The God of Small Things*, she symbolically questions on the ‘real’ history of India. Roy attacks the British mission who learned native language and system and exploited the real culture and history by imposing their own culture. And, it is the culture and history which creates discrimination on gender especially women. It is the masculine power which dominates female and tries to keep under their feet. Women are not given equal rights of education, social participation and property rights. It is generally thought in Indian society that the women should remain at home and must do the household things. Mainly women are considered as burden to the family.

The God of Small Things attempts to tell the stories of characters whose lives have been rewritten by society’s and history’s higher power. Velutha 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 to local gender rules and constructions.

This highly stylized novel *The God of Small Things* tells the story of one very fractured family from the Southernmost tip of India. It is a tragic story of a Syrian Christian Indian family. Here is an unhappy family, unhappy in its own way and through flashbacks and flash-forward *The god of Small Things* unfolds the secrets of these characters unhappiness. In the novel, the norms and laws of the Indian caste system are broken by the activities of Ammu and Velutha. The novel deals with the ravages of caste

system in South Indian state, Kerala. Roy presents both the miserable plight of untouchable and also the struggle of a woman trying to have fulfillment in life in a patriarchal society. Velutha, being a paravan or untouchable, transgresses the established norms of society by having an affair with women of high caste. It is a rebellion against love laws, “Where the Loves Laws lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much”(177).

Velutha works at the Paradise Pickles and Preserves factory owned by Ammu’s family. Being an untouchable he is paid less money for his work. The idea of untouchability is explored at two levels in the novel. Firstly, we have socially untouchables, or paravan who are never allowed basic human rights. Secondly, we have metaphorical untouchables in high castes. The narrator says, “Mammachy often said that if only he had not been a paravan, he might have been an engineer”(75). He is neglected, he is just a ‘small things’ for them. “Mammachi paid Velutha less than she would a touchable carpenter but more than she would a paravan. Mammachi didn’t encourage him to enter the house”(77).

When Ammu’s family and society find Velutha and Ammu close to each other, Ammu becomes outcaste. The ultimate outcome of this love affair is the tragic death of an “Untouchable” by the “Touchable Boots”. Sexual passion leads them to cross the forbidden territory. They are able to break the social barriers. People in a society cannot even imagine the bodily contact and sexual relationship between an untouchable carpenter and touchable upper caste woman. Velutha breaks the rigid social rules of the caste system and therefore the authorities punish him. He is seen as a non human. Both the characters and subalternized in the novel.

Females in the novel are subaltern at two levels: on the one hand, they are dominated by patriarchal monopoly in the society: and, on the other, being the colonized, they don't have their own history and identity of their own. The Kochamma family has a history of poor relations between its male and female members. Ammu's mother Mammachi, for example, is severely beaten and abused by her husband and she becomes the victim of his anger and frustration. The narrator says "Pappachi would not help her with the pickle-making, because a suitable job for a high-ranking ex-Governmental official. Every night he beats her with a brass flower vase" (47)

Ammu, too, is not able to get the comfortable life. Ammu is herself exposed to the world where she has to search for her own identity and position. Being a divorced lady, Ammu's world is not acknowledged by the cultivated society. She is punished in the society for not following the traditional rules and is thus expelled from her paternal home. Such concept of caste system was deep rooted in Kerala society. The communist leader of Kerala, Comrade K.N.M. Pillai, an advocate of equality and socialization, doesn't allow Velutha to enter his house because he is a Paravan, or an untouchable. Talking with Chacko, Comrade Pillai confesses, "He may be very well okay as a person. But other workers are not happy with him. Already they are coming to me with complaints.....You see, Comrade, from local standpoint, these caste issues are very deep-rooted" (278).

Although, Velutha is a dedicated as well as sincere member of the Maoist Party, his untouchable status makes other party members dislike him, and so, local party leader Comrade K.N.M. Pilli would be more politically successful without him.

The God of Small Things is third person narrative anchored around seven years' old twins Rahel and Estha born from inter-caste and inter-religious marriage. Rahel and Estha live with their mother, Ammu who was married to a Bengali man but is was not a successful marriage. They live in their maternal house with sufferance. Ammu did not get enough space to breathe in. They live with their grandmother (Mammachi), uncle (Chako), and grandaunt (Baby Kochamma). Ammu being a touchable of high class family develops the physical relationship with Velutha, an untouchable family carpenter, which is regarded as a great crime.

According to religious belief being an untouchable is punishment for having been bed in a former life. By being good and obedient, an untouchable class obtain a higher rebirth Velutha's luck of complacency causes him many problems throughout the novel. "It was not entirely his fault that he lived in a society where a man's death could be more profitable than his life had ever been" (281).

When Velutha has an affair with Ammu, he breaks an ancient taboo and encounters the wrath of Ammu's family and the Kerala police. He is accused of kidnapping Sophie Mol and killing her. He is beaten to death. He breaks the rigid social rules of the caste system and therefore, the authorities must punish him. Roy describes the policemen's violent actions as being done out of fear, "[...] civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear for powerlessness" (308). Ammu also dies in grief. She dies alone and there is nobody to support her. "She died alone with a noisy ceiling fan for company and no Estha to lie out the back for her and talk to her. She was thirty-one: "No old, not young, but a viable, die-able age" (161). Even church denies burying her.

The division between the touchable and untouchable is so ingrained in Kerala society that Velutha is seen as a non-human. “If they hurt Velutha more than they intended to, it was only because any kinship and connection between themselves and him, any implication that if nothing else, at least biologically he was a fellow creature-had been severed long ago” (309). Being an untouchable, the other workers of the Paradise Pickles and Preserves factory workers resent him and he is paid less money for his work. Velutha presence is unsettling to many who believe and act above his station. His own father notes this problem “Perhaps it was just a lack of hesitation. An unwarranted assurance. In the way he walked. The way he held his head. The quiet way he offers suggestions without being asked. Or the quiet way in which he disregarded suggestions without appearing to rebel” (76). In the novel, Velutha is presented as the ‘God of small things’. Hierarchical structure of power and oppression at various levels in patriarchal societies are explored in the novel.

Velutha can do many things that the so called touchables are not able to do. However, he is paid less because he is an untouchable. The narrator, says, “Mammanchy paid very less than she would a Touchable carpenter but more than she would a Paravan. Mammanchy didn’t encourage him to enter the house” (72). He further says, “Mammachi often said that if he had not been a paravan, he might have become an engineer. He mended radios, clocks, water pumps”(75). Velutha represents the untouchable who has been since a long time exploited by society simply because he belongs to the so called lower caste. Velutha has been powerfully drawn in terms of his robust physique and in-born talents for making wooden objects as well as other. His skills impress all. But, he is hated due to his lower caste.

Traditionally, a woman who has had sex with a man from a lower caste would be expelled from her caste. Ammu is an outcaste. She is not allowed to take part in her niece's funeral ceremony with her family members. "Though Ammu, Estha and Rahel were allowed to attend the funeral, they were made to stand separately, not with the rest of the family. Nobody would look at them" (5). Traditionally, it is believed that a woman who had an affair with lower caste must be punished. She breaks the rigid social caste system of the society. So, she is relegated from the society.

The characters in the novel break the social system and transgress the social values and norms. Sexual passion is considered as a baser desire and instinct of human being. It is not bound by laws, norms and systems. Sexual passion leads them to cross the forbidden territory. They tried to break the social norms. Velutha (subaltern as untouchable or Paravan) breaks the social hierarchy by keeping the relationship with Ammu. The people of the upper class cannot imagine the physical contact with lower caste. They think it as a great crime against god. Ammu, (subaltern as women), she too breaks the social norms of the society. She crosses her limit by keeping the physical relation with Velutha. She is outcast. People think that if someone has an affair with the lower caste, then she or he is expelled or isolated from the society. The relation is taken as an extreme crime. And also for a divorced lady it is difficult to adjust in the society. People do not welcome them wholeheartedly. She is supposed to be lowered down by having divorce.

In the novel, the narrator tries to show the same type of Indian social and family structure. The narrator, through the example of Baby Kochamma, an archetype

conservative Indian woman, vividly describes the attitude of the family towards a divorced woman. The narrator says:

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 Kochamma's outrage. As for a divorced daughter from an intercommunity love marriage-Baby Kochamma chose to remain quivering silent on the subject. (45-46)

So, *The God of Small Things* is an attempt to self-discovery of creating subalternity through sexuality as rebellion and protest against the existing norms values. Love death, social relationship, family relationship, business are most significant themes in the novel.

In the novel *The God of Small Thing*, the inability to 'hear' or 'listen to' what the subaltern says is represented as a structural condition of colonial nationalist, and Marxist historiographies that, in their realized or anticipated aspiration of power, acquire their focus and coherence by suppressing or disregarding the many subaltern voices. However, Roy deftly employs revolutionary character such as Ammu not only to have women's voices 'heard' by the state but also to represent and recuperate other innumerable suppressed voices. As in *The Small voice of History* we can find the harassment and a painful experience of subaltern-especially those woman and other subaltern people who actively participated in popular Jay Telangana movement that led to widespread violence and deaths of hundreds of people (mostly women) and students of Telengana region in Andhra Pradesh India. As Guha says:

The leadership, and the male, while the other active elements are all relegated to a state of instrumentality subject to no change under the

impact of the developing moment. In a new historical account this metaphysical view will clash with the idea that women were agents rather than instruments of the developing movement which was itself constituted by their participation. This will inevitably destroy the image of women as passive beneficiaries of a struggle for 'equal rights' wage by others on their behalf. (11)

In the history of Indian society women were not given the equal rights. They were always dominated by the patriarchal society. Women's were thought as a burden for the family. They had no power to do any decisions for the welfare of the family. In the Indian context the project of allowing women's voice to activate and make audible the other voices is fraught with its own racism and classism. In other words, even within the women's community, there exists the long rooted elitist-statist indoctrination of patriarchal cultural innuendos. Susie Tharu and Tejaswini Niranjana, in their essay "Problems For a Contemporary Theory of Gender" also address the new possibility of women in variety of domains and across the political spectrum where "women seem to stand in for the subject (agent, addressee, field of enquiry) of feminism itself to raise the issue of its problematic status" (93).

Social Realism and Politics in Marginalizing the Subalterns

Arundhati Roy introduces the power structure in society and shows how the more powerful victimizes and deprive and depresses. In addition to the oppression of the lower castes; the gender oppression, there is a nexus between the local police and the politicians like Comrade Pillai and Inspector Thomas Mathew in the novel. It is also ironical that the

Church also makes distinction between the original Syrian, Christians and the untouchables converted to Christianity.

In 1957, under EMS, Namboodiripad, Kerala became the first Indian state to elect a communist government. Despite a damaging split in the party in 1964, there has been communist government in Kerala more often than not. Roy writes that communist party's success in Kerala was that it "never questioned the traditional community" (66)

In the novel comrade Pillai is shown as a representative of the Marxist leader but he uses Marxism for personal gains rather than the workers belonging to his party. Here Roy's disgust with the party politics is barely concealed in her portrayal of Pillai.

Comrade Pillai is a caricature of the local politician, an epitome of all the unpleasant, deceptive aspects of a degenerate political tradition which is nothing more than a means of self promotion, maintaining one's hold over the citadel of local power by playing one against another. The cruelest irony is that he belongs to a party that represents workers interests and exists on the pledge to protect them from all kinds of socio-economic exploitation. His leadership as that of many others rests on slogan raising and noisy marches challenging such a society as is based on all forms of inequality.

Comrade Pillai is a hypocrite, who pretended himself as a great politician looking after the interest and welfare of the workers. But he appeared as a great liar. He became friendly with Chacko for his personal benefits. HW designed and printed the labels for Chacko's products at his printing press. Naming his son as Lenin is another example that he pretended himself as a real Marxist. Marxist should denounce all the luxuries and affection for money and power but ironically comrade Pillai is happy for his son who has

earned the Bajaj scooter as well a refrigerator which shows his fondness of raising capital.

He handed Rahel a cellophane Sachet. There were mostly photographs of Lenin and his family, his wife, his child, his new Bajaj scooter. There was one of Lenin shaking hands with a very well dressed 'pink man German first secretary' comrade Pillai said. They looked cheerful in the photographs, Lenin and his wife. As though they had a new refrigerator in their drawing room, and down payment on a DDA flat. (131)

The double standard is emphasized when comrade Pillai incites the workers of paradise pickles and preserves to strike against their owner, Chacko, but refers to the later in theoretical terms. Comrade Pillai wins the battle against paradise pickles and preserves without any struggle; he wins it only through clever manipulation of Chacko and Velutha. He never referred to him by name, but always as the management. As though Chacko was many people. Apart from being tactically the right thing to do, the disjunction between the man and his job helped comrade Pillai as to keep his conscience clear about his own private business dealing with Chacko. His contract for printing the paradise pickles labels gave him the income that he badly needed. He told himself that Chacko the client and Chacko the management are two different people. Quite separate of course from Chacko the comrade" (115)

Pillai's double standards are also seen when despite his slogans of 'caste is class' he deliberately distances himself from Velutha, the card holding member of the party, in order to maintain the support of Chacko's other workers who dislike working with a paravan. He poisoned Chacko's air with his manipulation words.

He told Checko to send Velutha out of the factory. "Paravan is going to trouble for you: Take it from me get him a job some where else. Send him off" (276)

Comrade Pillai was successful to ruin the paradise pickles as well as the life of Velutha. It was Velutha who run the factory. The problem that Pillai was referring to about caste issues couldn't be solved even if all the paravans working in Chacko's factory were sent away. While arguing their respective as standpoints pillai and Chacko stand as "The Small Thin Man' and the 'Big Fat Man. Comic book adversaries in a still to come war". (208)

From the simple, lecherous, oil-smearing, pot-bellied man to the common family man whose devotion to Marxism stretches to the extent of naming his son Lenin, comrade Pillai pushed his devilish brain into plotting to trap poor VELutha and finally joining hands with the local police in smashing him, Velutha representing the class of downtrodden untouchable used by the politicians and the police as more pawns in the political chess game.

When Velutha arrived at comrade Pillai house after having been abused humiliated and shown the door at Ayemenem house, comrade Pillai had already decided on his course of action. But comrade, you should know that party was not constituted to support workers 'indiscipline in their private life" (287)

Velutha was disillusioned as comrade Pillai shut the door on his face. His words kept ringing in Vetutha's ear "It is not in the party's interests to take up such matters. Individual's interest is subordinate to the organizations interest violating party Discipline means violating party unity". (287)

When Velutha was caught by the police, comrade Pillai and Thomas Mathew willfully shake hands with each other to favor the false FIR lodged against him by Baby Kochamma. Pillai doesn't even mention the Velutha is a member of the communist party.

Comrade Pillai, who hides his own political ambitions under the grab of a messiah of the poor. Pillai is portrayed as an uncouth, unscrupulous and lecherous person. Naturally, then, red flag fluttering on his roof had become "Limp and old The red had blew away comrade Pillai comes across as essentially political man. A professional omelletter" (281)

Chako, since his undergraduate days at Delhi university, had been a communist supporter when the world's first ever democratically elected communist government under EMS. Namboodripad came to power in Kerala. Suddenly the communist found themselves in the extraordinary critics said absurd-position of having to govern a people and foment revolution. Simultaneously" (61) Chacko studied his treatise on The peaceful Transition to communism. Pappachi always called him as karl Marx when he comes at breakfast.

Chacko was self-proclaimed Marxist. He would call Pretty women who worked in the factory to his room and on the pretext of lecturing them on labor rights and trade union law, flirt with them outrageously. He would call them comrades. And insist that they call him comrade back. Much to their embarrassment and Mammchis dismay, he forced them to sit at the table with him and drink tea. 'once he often took a group of them to attend trade union classes that were held in Alleppey. They went by bus and returned by boat. They came back happy, with glass bangles and flowers in their head" (65).

Chacko's Marxism was all "hog wash" (65) to Ammu. Chacko had rational explanation why the communist were popular in Kerala. Chacko become friend with the local communist leader, comrade Pillai, whose printing press designed all labels and publicity materials for paradise pickles and preserves. Both turned out to be shrewd and played their own games in ushering trade union practices in the factory, but ultimately Chacko was outwitted by Pillai who laid a seize to the factory and ruined Chacko who emigrated to Canada because he had no stakes in Ayemenem house or the factory. Although Chacko considers himself as a proponent of workers rights, he is nevertheless a factory owner and employer.

The bitterest attack is carried in the novel against the sham lives lived out by the politicians whose double standards of behavior and talk are exposed by the author. Kerala has always been considered a socially aware state. This is the only place, where religious coincide, there is Christianity, Hinduism, Marxism and Islam and they all live together and rub each other down.

In a larger scale, *The God of small Things* is about politics which through its various agencies exercises decisive influence over the lives of the people of Ayemenem. The author presents politics as a very complex force, operative at different levels, beginning with home, and manipulated by different people for different ends. There is a power structure in the novel. There is gender oppression, oppression of the lower caste, subjugation of children, police extremities and the hypocrite Marxist leader Mr. K.N.M Pillai who too doesn't leave the opportunity to oppress any one for personal gains. He doesn't allow Velutha to enter his house because he is an untouchable. While talking with Chacko he confesses, "He may be very well okay as a person. But other workers are not

happy with him. Already they are coming to me with complaints..... you see, Comrade, from local standpoint these caste issues are very deep-rooted” (278). The cruelest irony is that he (Mr. Pillai) belongs to a party that represents worker’s interest and exists on the strength of its pledge to protect them from all kinds of socio-economic exploitation. Velutha fault was that he lived in a society here a man’s death could be more profitable than his life had ever been. Although he is a dedicated member of the Most party, his untouchable status makes other party members dislike him, and so, local party leader Mr. Pillai would be more politically successful without him. It is also ironical that the church makes distinction between lower caste and upper caste.

In the novel, Velutha is sacrificed at the hands of both communist party, of which he is a loyal member and various members of the Kochamma family, with whom his family has had close ties for generations. Communism was intended to be a liberating movement on behalf of society’s lower classes, but in this novel even Communism is unable to reconcile its own liberatory mission with the more deep-seated social boundaries of the caste system.

The God of Small Things reproduces Guha’s alignment of dominant history with the life of the state and his idea about history as the means through which the state acquires its hegemonic hold. The novel presents history as a dominating, oppressive force that absorbs virtually all forms of social cultural spaces, including familial, friendly and other various relationships. Policemen representing the state beat Velutha, a subaltern and untouchable lover of Ammu for no any obvious reason:

They woke Velutha with their boots. Esthappen and Rahel woke to the shout of sleep surprised by shuttered kneecaps. Screams died in them and

floated belly up, like dead on the floor, rocking between dread and disbelief, they realized that the man being beaten was Velutha. Where had he come from? What had he done? Why had the policemen brought him here? (308).

It clearly shows how Velutha, simply because he is a so called untouchable, is persecuted.

Gender as Subaltern in *The God of Small Things*.

Subaltern is a term used to describe the marginalized or exploited groups in the society. Subaltern people are erased in the society because they cannot revolt and uplift their status. If they try to protest against ruling class, they would be victimized in the hands of ruling class. They are the subject to the ruling class. They are deprived from human rights. Their voices are under shadow. Ranajit Guha in the essay “The Prose fo Counter-Insurgency” says:

When a peasant rose in revolt at any time or place under the Raj, he did so necessarily and explicitly in violation of a series of codes which defined his very existence as a member of the colonial and still largely semi-feudal society. For his subalternity was materialized by the structure of property, institutionalized by law, sanctified by religion and made tolerable-and even desirable- by tradition. To rebel was indeed to destroy many of those familiar signs which he had learned to read and manipulate in order to extract a meaning out of the harsh world around him and live with it. The risk in ‘turning things upside down’ under these conditions was indeed so

great that he could hardly afford to engage in such a project in a state of absent-mindedness. (1)

By nature, the mentality of subaltern people is submissiveness towards the power network which is constructed to suppress them. They cannot go against the power.

The term subaltern is not a homogeneous term, it is a heterogeneous term. It covers the wide scope in the society. In a male dominated society, female are subaltern at home as well as outside, in caste practices society lower caste people are subaltern, mainly in the hands of upper class people, in advanced or highly sophisticated society weaker class people are subaltern because the weaker class people cannot afford the modern things, in political system the politically inferior groups who are deprived from political rights are subaltern. So, it is a term which is not used in a particular field.

Ammu, the main character of *The God of Small Things*, is subalternized in two ways. Firstly, she was discriminated by Macho because she had an unsuccessful married life with her husband. Secondly she was socially isolated because of the relationship with an untouchable carpenter, Velutha. Both Velutha and Ammu have been relegated to the margin of society and have to pay a heavy price for being born either an untouchable or a woman.

Ammu is the daughter of Benaan John Ipe, the entomologist and represents the new generation. Which is exposed to new ideas against the former one. Her father is a male chauvinist who makes a lot of distinction between son and daughter. He sends his son Chacko to Oxford but deems college education “an unnecessary expense for a girl. So she has no choice but to move from Ayemenem to Delhi as her father retired” (38).

All she can do is waiting for marriage according to her father. Thus denied higher education, she remains handicapped in future.

In her childhood, Ammu experienced a lot of violence from her father. He used to beat her. She suffered severe beatings from her father when she was still child. The narrator exposes his hypocrisy, “He was charming and Unbane with visitors, and stopped just short of fawning on them if they happened to be white. He denoted money to the orphanages” (180). Then the narrator further reveals his folly in ridiculous tone: ‘But alone with his wife and children he turned into a monstrous suspicious bully. They were beaten, humiliated and then to made suffer’ (180)

At Ayemenen, she helps her mother with whose work and waits for marriage proposals. As her father “can’t afford a suitable dowry, marriage proposals do not come. Two years went by her eighteenth birthday came and went [...] she grew desperate” (38). At the same time, she finds living with her parents simply unbearable because her father is an ill-tempered bully who pretends to be an ideal husband before outsiders but makes the life of his family miserable. So Ammu seeks escape from “the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long suffering mother” (39) that is why she went to Calcutta to spend the summer with a distant aunt and ends marrying a Bengali Hindu there who worked in Assam, “As an assistant manager of a tea state (39).

Her marriage is not based on love, even though Baba was her own choice. The marriage shows her courage as well as the orthodoxy of her parents. Her parents dislike such intercommunity marriage and when she informs about her decision, they do not reply. But unfortunately “Her husband turned out to be not just a heavy drinker but a full blown alcoholic” (40). Ammu had no other way, but to bear the beating of her alcoholic

husband. She bore two children Estha and Rahel, and the narrator says “By the time twins were two years old their father’s drinking, aggravated by the loneliness of the tea estate, had driven him into an alcoholic stupor” (41). He became more violent to his wife and children and more careless to his duty, He is threatened with dismissal by his manager Mr. Hollick and acquiesces in to his proposal to go away for a while and send his wife “to his bungalow to be looked after” (42). This is where the manager has expressed his sexual desire towards Ammu. The senseless husband agreed to the plan but she never.

When Ammu learns about it, she is stunned at first. But when the unworthy fellow resorts to violence, she doesn’t take it meekly like her mother. She takes the heaviest book and hits him on his head and legs. “Ultimately, she left her husband and returned, unwelcome to her parents in Ayemenem” (42).

In this way Ammu had been compelled by the circumstance to leave her husband and return to her parents’ home with her seven years old twins. Her status within her higher-caste Christian parents in Kerala had become less significant because of her inter-caste marital status.

It seemed that Ammu was born as a human being to suffer, and for the rest of her life she suffered in Ayemenam. She was not given proper education, but she was not dependent on others. She did much work in her mother pickle factory, but she had no right over her parents property. The narrator says.

“Though Ammu did as much work in the factory as Chacko, whenever he was dealing with food inspectors or sanitary engineers, he always referred to it as my factory, my pineapples, my pickles. Legally this was the case because Ammu, as a daughter, had no claim to the property” (57).

Further on the narrator states Ammu's reaction to this situation, "thanks to our wonderful male chauvinist society' Ammu said (57). This shows the pitiable condition of women in India. C. Gopinath Pillai agrees that Ammu represents the Christian women of Kerala as a whole. He comments, "the degenerate social system in Kerala that denied property and right to women and prevented them from enjoying equal rights with men undone Ammu (90).

That is the traditional gender role to relegate women in the margin in *The God of Small Things*. Ammu emerges as a sad and much wronged character in the novel who wants to have her own way in life but is mercilessly suppressed. As a child, she was much exposed to the family violence and had seen brutalizing masculine power from her early days. As the speaker says, "Pappachi insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for girl, so, Ammu had no choice but leave Delhi and move with them. There was very little for a young girl to do at Ayemenem at her than to wait for marriage proposals while she helped her mother with the housework"(38). The intention here is quite clear as a patriarch like Pappachi overlooked the importance for girls, and therefore women. A girl was just a doll who would wait for someone to play with. Women are highly discriminated in Indian society. They are not given equal opportunity of education, social participation and property right. Even in this twentieth century the male dominated society thinks that the higher education is unnecessary expense for them. The patriarchal society thinks that women should remain at home and must do the household work. They must be submissive towards husband. They can't take any decisions by themselves. If they try to take any decision it is against of society. So, the women are suppressed from both sides. They are dominated by their husband inside and

by the society outside. If the woman tires to rise above the drawn lines and rebels against social oppressions, then she has to leave the family and she is alienated from the society. Ammu grew desperate, her woman's heart yearning for freedom: "All day she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter long suffering mother" (39). Ammu had seen brutalizing masculine power from the early years of life. So she had decided to leave her home against the wishes of the entire household. Ammu, the main character of the novel, dominated in different fields. She was a married woman but living in her maternal house after having divorce with her alcoholic husband. She gave birth to twins. A divorcee woman has no place or respect in traditional Indian family. She is isolated from the family as well as from the society. She was not allowed to take in her niece's funeral ceremony with her other family members. "Though Ammu, Estha and Rahel were allowed to attend the funeral, they were made to stand separately, not with the rest of the family. Nobody would look at them" (5).

Subaltern women are generally effaced in the literary texts. In the text of subaltern studies they are incidental to the events of history rather than contributors to the struggle. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak presents the woman a speechless, unpicturable, superfluity outside the labor relations and revolving instead in a discursive orbit in which "the figure of woman disappear...into a violent shuttling which the displaced figure of 'the third world women' caught between tradition and modernization" (306). And finally, she concludes that "the subaltern cannot speak" (104).

The author tries to show the social mechanism evolved over centuries in traditional Indian society to suppress women and her independence as a human being. Their unequal position creates great misery, suffering and hardships in their lives forcing

them to accept the oppressive system in a spirit of religious submissiveness and personal renunciation. Subaltern voices especially women and their works both are ignored and the patriarchal society despite their contribution and active participation in the anti-imperialist insurgencies.

Ammu, the main character of the novel suffers in her own family when she returns to her own family. When she returns to her parent's home, she is not welcomed happily. Mammachi and Baby Kochamma became her active oppressors in the family. Even though, they too were the sufferer of patriarchal society, they didn't hesitate to seek her to the corner and then drive her to the miserable death.

Ammu presents the most pathetic picture of a woman who seeks happiness and love in a world that turns its back on her. She is utterly lonely; having abandoned her husband for his debauched tendencies and having returned to her family, loses all normal status. When she had relation with Velutha, she is thrown into a dark corner. Ammu is considered as a real subaltern woman, dominated in different fields. Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" while talking about subalternity of woman opines that women are denied the position from which they can speak on their own, they are always turned into the object of the male's desire. Spivak says, "There is no space from which the sexed Subaltern subject can speak" (105). She comes up with an interesting conclusion that "both as an object of colonialist historiography and as a subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of power, in Spivak's opinions created because "in the context of colonial production, the Subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the Subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (83).

Every woman suffers in her own way. As Rajpal observes, “It can be called the story of sufferings of Baby Kochamma, Mammachi, Ammu and Rahel. They all suffer in different ways. In a country like India where patriarchal system is very strong, women suffer mentally, physically and sexually” (66). The patriarchal society is biased and prejudiced which never accepts the female empowerment wholeheartedly. Pappachi used to beat Mammachi everyday but Mammachi forgets all the beatings. Every night he beat her with a brass flower vase (47). Mammachi had to suppress her voice. Due to the bias nature towards women, men used to suppress their talent too. Mammachi had exceptional talent for music, especially violin. When Pappachi knew about this her felt jealous as the author writes, “Every night he beat with a brass flower vase. The beatings weren’t new. What was new was only the frequency with which they took place. One night Pappachi broke the bow of Mammachi’s violin and threw it in the river” (47-48). This shows the attitude of a patriarch.

Depiction of prevailing racism and classism within the community of women is one of many issues posed by Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things*. For Example, women’s responses to patriarchal oppression are not homogeneous. In Ammu, “Pappachi’s cold, calculating cruelty” (172) provokes an acute consciousness of injustice and rebellion: “She developed a lofty sense of injustice and the mulish, reckless streak that develops in Someone Small who has been bullied all their lives by Someone Big. She did exactly nothing to avoid quarrels and confrontations. In fact, it could be argued that “she sought them out, even enjoyed them” (172-173). Unlike Ammu, Pappahi’s cold, calculating cruelty make Mammachi even more suffering and submissive, an attitude she reinforces when she hands over her small but profitable factory to him. There is a

reciprocal relationship between her submissiveness and her willing embrace of patriarchal arrangements so that” Chacko’s relationship with the factory women are condoned as “Man’s Needs” (160). Whereas Ammu’s with Velutha provokes an unmanageable fury: “She thought of her [daughter] naked, coupling with a man who wash nothing but a filthy coolie....His particular Paravan smell....Like animals....like a dog with a bitch on heat....had defiled generations of breeding” (224). Here, Mammachi’s embrace of patriarchal family structure and caste-defined identity controls women’s sexuality, because women are viewed as parts of same patriarchal package. One of the most glaring instances of the novel is the ambiguous stand adopted by Mammachi and Baby Kochamma with regard to Ammu’s relation with Velutha. They express little sympathy for Ammu’s loneliness, her tragic marital circumstances and her anxiety about her children. Kamala Visweswaran in her essay *Gender and Subalternity*, *Gendered Subalternity* opines that it is not only the domination of male in the society that makes women subaltern but it is in relation to the other woman. She writes:

For women become women not only in relation to men, but also in opposition to other women. Thus the subject position of the middle-class or elite nationalist ‘woman’ must be counterposed to that of subaltern women. The gendered relation of subalternity means that with regard to the nominal male subject of nationalist ideology, the figure of woman is subaltern; with regard to subaltern women, the recuperated middle class woman as nationalist subject certainly is not. (87).

Talking about subaltern woman, she further writes; “The question of subaltern woman must be formed first by the recovery of a non-originary or ‘dependent’ subject in the understanding of subaltern autonomy as relational” (88).

Elizabeth V. Spelman, in her essay “Theorizing a Politics of the Female Body, mostly engages with the decolonization of women from patriarchal domination. Regarding it, Spelman points out “the reality of decolonizing female bodies occupied by colonial education and local tradition that perpetuate women’s subordinate status while ensuring male privilege” (384). Due to the biasness upon female by male, women are not supposed to get proper education and opportunity. Talking about female education the narrator writes, “Pappachi insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl, so Ammu had no choice but to leave Delhi and move with them” (38). Early marriage is common to be free from the burden of education for girls; “there was very little for a young girl to do in Ayemenem other than to wait for marriage proposals while she helped her mother with the housework” (38).

Marriage is considered as an institution which provides love and affection. But here marriage neither provides love nor affection. It provides only pain and suffering. On the other hand, their casteist hostility finds double force in Ammu-Velutha liaison and broke out into expressions of moral outrage, while Chacko’s sexual indulgences with low caste men is overlooked as ‘Men’s Needs’. Ammu’s affairs with Velutha become an unpardonable offence against family’s reputation and status. These all incidents are because of hierarchy. In the novel, women are subordinated in different fields.

Ammu, being a divorcee, is not welcomed happily. She is taken as a victim who has done a great crime. She is supposed to be lowered down by taking divorce and having the sexual relation with an untouchable.

Caste as Subaltern in *The God of Small Things*

The caste system in India is an important part of ancient Hindu tradition. Caste system is the recurring theme in the postcolonial literature. The postcolonial attempt is to subvert such dominating hierarchies. Many Indians use the term “Jati” to refer to the caste. There are many castes and sub-castes in India, each related to specific occupation. These different castes fall under four basic Varnas: Brahmins as priest, Kshatriyas as warriors, Vaishyas as traders and Shudras as laborers.

Caste not only dictates one’s occupation, but dietary habits and with members of other castes as well. Members of a high caste enjoy more wealth and opportunities while members of a low caste perform menial jobs. Brahmins are prohibited to drink alcohol. Untouchables are those who are outside of the caste system. Their job is to clean the toilet, collect the garbage removal, and require them to be in contact with bodily fluids. They are therefore considered polluted and not to be touched. They are not allowed to enter into the house of touchable, and they are supposed to drink from separate wells. Upward mobility is very rare in the caste system. Inter caste marriages and sexual relations is not allowed, and it is supposed to be crime against the god. Most people remain in one caste for an entire life and marry within their caste.

The idea of untouchability is explored at two levels in the novel. Firstly, we have socially untouchables, or Paravan, who are never allowed basic human rights. Secondly,

we have metaphoric untouchables in high casters. Here discrimination expresses itself in marginalizing the women in their personal and public life.

In Arundhati Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things*, the laws of India's caste system are broken by the characters of Ammu and Velutha, an Untouchable or Paravan. Velutha works at the Paradise Pickles and Preserves Factory owned by Ammu's family. Yet, because he is an untouchable, the other workers resent him and he is paid less money for his work. Velutha's presence is unsettling to many who believe he acts above his station. His own father notes this problem: "Perhaps it was just a lack of hesitation. An unwarranted assurance. In the way he walked. The way he held his head. The quiet way he offered suggestions without being asked. Or the quiet way in which he dieseregarded suggestions without appearing to rebel"(76).

The Hindus believe that being an untouchable is punishment for having been bad in a former life. By being good and obedient, an Untouchable can obtain a higher rebirth. Belutha's lack of complacency caused him many problems throughout the novel. Due to his untouchability other party members dislike him.

Roy presents both the miserable plight of untouchables and also the struggle of a woman trying to have fulfillment in life in a patriarchal society. Valutha, 'The God of Small Things,' transgresses the established norms of society by having an affair with a woman of high caste. The ultimate outcome of this love affair is the tragic death of an "Untouchable" by the "Touchable Boots" of the state police, an event that makes travesty of the idea of God. God is no more in control of "small things" rather the small things have an ultimate power over God, turning him to "The God of Loss" (265).

Since 1935 the Untouchable have been called “Scheduled Castes.” They are also called Mahatma Gandhi’s name for the “Harijan” (The Children of God). More recently these groups refer to themselves as Dalits (oppressed or downtrodden). A great many details become important parts of the novel such as the discrimination along caste lines, intra-familial disputes, conservative religious outlook of the then India and on top of all the hegemonic and paralyzing oppressiveness of patriarchy. Velutha, unlike Ammu, is perceived as someone situated resolutely outside even the minimal modalities of incorporation.

As a young boy, Velutha would come with his father Vellya Paapen to the back entrance [...]. Ammu’s father Pappachi would not allow Paravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything Touchables touched, [and] Mammachi could remember a time [...] when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan’s footprint. (73-74).

The governing logic is such that in order to recuperate the suppressed voice of subalterns such as Ammu (gendered subaltern) and Velutha (Paravan) Arundhati Roy employs the technique of marginalization so that they can live in an autonomous space. Ammu has a different but scathing story to tell about why she and her twins have to be ostracized from the family---as a divorced daughter from an intercommunity love marriage and having affair with an untouchable.

Ammu, according to her aunt, Baby Kochamma, “has no position in her parents’ home (48). It is precisely this out-of-placeness that makes Velutha a likely agent of the

possibility of social change, much as it is Ammu's out-of-placeness within her family and societal set up that will make her the instrument for revealing the emancipatory potentialities. Ammu defiantly breaks with her family and her caste and class matters when, after Sophie Mol's funeral, she goes to the police station to counter Baby Kochamma who accused Velutha of murdering Sophie Mol. Ammu, after the defiance of her family, starts having affair and commits to live with him. Most importantly, at this juncture, Roy strategically deems exigency of a female's agency to pave way for creating autonomous space for other subalterns.

When Velutha has an affair with Ammu, he breaks an ancient taboo and incurs the wrath of Ammu's family and the Kerala police. He breaks the rigid social rules of the caste system and therefore, the authorities must punish him. Roy describes the policemen's violent actions as being done out of fear, "[...] civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness" (308). The division between the Touchable and Untouchables is so ingrained in Kerala society that Velutha is seen as a nonhuman: If they hurt Velutha more than they intended to, it was only because any kinship, and connection between themselves and him, any implication that if nothing else, at least biologically he was a fellow creature – had been severed long ago (309). Although *The God of Small Things* takes place in 1969, the caste system is still present in India, especially in rural areas. Today, there are about 250 million untouchables. Caste discrimination has been against the law since 1950, but prejudice continues. Urbanization, economic development, and industrialization benefit untouchables by breaking down caste barriers. In the cities of Indian members of different castes are

constantly in close contact and forced to interact with one another which help to weaken the strick rules in caste systems.

The main character of the novel, Ammu, is hated in the society, because she had the sexual relationship with Velutha, an untouchable. Traditionally, a woman who had sex with a man from a lower caste would be expelled from the society. She is isolated from the family. At last, she had to die alone due to torture of the family as well as society. A divorcee has no right to pursue for happiness in life. Velutha the God of Small Things, the outcaste can never co-exist peacefully with the “touchable” communities for as long as the stigma of untouchability is attached to him and countless others like Ammu, another “Untouchable within the “Touchable” cannot pursue happiness because doing so threatens the existing order and the society takes every possible step to stop change.

Marriage, Divorce and Child’s Psychology

Marriage is a social institution uniting a man and a woman in special forms of mutual dependence of, for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family. But in the *The God of Small Things* almost all the characters are living unsuccessful married lives. None of the characters are happy. Ammu had divorced with her Bengali husband and returns to her maternal house. Chacko, too, had the unsuccessful married. Baby Kochamma is also living alone with enjoying marital life of her own. They all tried to seek happiness beyond marriage and they all crossed the boundary of love. There is lack of love, affection and mutual cooperation between the partners. Simone de Beavoir in her book *The Second sex*, thus expresses her view on marriage:

Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society. It is still true that most women are married or have been, or plan to be, or suffer from not being. The celibate woman is to be explained and defined with reference to marriage, whether she is frustrated, rebellious or even different in regard to that institution. (475)

She is of the view that, marriage is a social system established by male to suppress female. Women are identified with reference to marriage.

The principal character of the novel is considered as a real subaltern woman. She is dominated in different fields. As a divorced lady she is not allowed to attend any ceremony and rituals. In the funeral of Sophie Mol, she was not allowed to attend and made her to stand separately. She had no position in her parents' home. The author writes:

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 Kochamma's outrage. As for a divorced daughter from an intercommunity love marriage – Baby Kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject. (45-46)

Divorce causes not only separation between husband and wife but it creates tension in children's life throughout. In today's world, relationships are hardly sustainable. Due to reminiscence of religion, cross-cultural thinking, conservative view towards women, wide age gap between spouses brings separation in them. Related with this separation W.Dnes in his book *The Law and Economics of Marriage and Divorce* presents "This separation termed as Divorce, or dissolution as it is increasingly becoming known,

process that legally terminates a marriage no longer considered viable by one or both of the spouses, and that permits both to remarry” (16). Though it is under law, it preoccupies a great position in children’s life.

The women and children are shown as subaltern. They have to depend upon other source of earning. Rahel and Estha live in the family infected by unhappy marriage. Due to this they do not get suitable homely environment. They are considered as burden for their family. They have no dwelling place of own, no good educational facilities, no stable identity. Only they receive is that the humiliation and ill behaviour from the adults. Even servant also insults them. Kochhu Maria, the Mammachi’s house maid grumbles on the children when they are playing in the room. ‘Tell your mother to take you to your father’s house’, she said, “There you can break as many beds as you like. These aren’t your beds. This isn’t your house”(83).

People who believe in patriarchal society and who know only to consume from others, also treat children as their property. Inter-community marriage and early divorce of their parents is the main cause of their suffering. Their dual identity was not accepted by new community where they were like marginalized facing communication gap. They have to face difficulties in different fields. They were not allowed to take part in any kind of ceremony.

Being a divorce lady, she is neglected in the society and sometimes she is called as “Veshya” by police man and her children are considered as ‘illegitimate’. Here one of the police behaves with her in a very rude way. In the narrator’s word: He (Police) stared at Ammu’s breast as he spoke. He said the police knew all they needed to know and that the Kottayam Police didn’t take statements from veshyas or their illegitimate children (8).

From these statements it shows that how divorced lady with her children look down upon by society. Even the polices who are meant for protection, treats them (Ammu and her children) lowly. Due to parent's separation, children have to face social dislocation. "It had been decided that one twin could stay in Ayemenem. Not both. Together they were trouble. They had to be separated"(302).

Chapter: IV: Conclusion

Subaltern Resistance

Arundhati Roy from the Third World country presents the picture of marginalized and mute people in her novel, *The God of Small Things*. Her childhood reflection has surfaced throughout the novel. Roy shows the real life condition of social system of the de-colonized countries. The writer shows the picture of cultural system of Kerala, which is situated on the Southernmost tip of India. In the novel, she presents how subaltern people are suppressed. The hierarchy between the lower and the upper caste is shown very clearly in the novel. How do the lower caste people have to suppress their voice? The lower class people don't enjoy the rights but the higher class people can do anything and that is considered as their right in the society. They can fulfill their wishes by any means, whereas the subaltern people can make no choices in life.

Subaltern people are suppressed and alienated in the society. Even they are even effaced. The elites think that the subalterns are not human beings and they don't have any role to uplift the social status. They are considered as down trodden and inferior in rank. So, their history too is fragmented and episodic. If they try to revolt against the elite groups, it is considered against the rules. So, their voices are always silenced. They are the subject to the ruling class. The subaltern people cannot break the boundary. And if they try to break, it is against social norms and they are alienated from the society. For this reason, the subaltern people can never uplift their status. This is due to ruling class or elite people. They never give the way or chance to subaltern people. This is the elite group who creates the truth and discourse to suppress the so-called inferior. Spivak says that the subalterns cannot revolt; they are speechless and unpicturable in the society. Not

only the lower class people are subalternized but also the female are doubly subalternized in the patriarchal society. On the one hand, she is subalternized at home and, on the other hand, in the society. Roy shows the picture of Indian society where women are considered in the lower rank. Therefore, the author in one way or the other depicts the resistance of the subaltern characters like Ammu and Velutha.

The resisting tool against the elite group is the sexual copulation between Ammu and Velutha. It is in the sexual relationship that subalternity has been exposed. Ammu, by keeping relation with Velutha or the so-called untouchable, challenges the biased and prejudiced patriarchal society. She discovers that it is the sexual relationship which is a means of satisfying the basic desires where all forms of distinctions are just nothing but only the man made norms. Women are silenced in different fields by the domination of male. They are not given equal rights. They cannot make any decision at home as well as in the society. It is all due to patriarchal system. The main character of the novel, Ammu, is exploited in different fields. The practices or norms created by male have to be followed by women without any resistance. These norms or values are the supportive subject to dominate women. As a divorcee, Ammu is not allowed to take any ceremonial part in the family. Though she lives with her family, she is seen as a victim living in a jail. When she starts sexual relationship with her family carpenter Velutha, She is considered an outcaste and finished.

The society does not accept the relationship between Ammu and Velutha. In the end of the novel, both of them have to lose their life. Velutha is beaten to death because he has crossed the social boundary. At last, Ammu too, has to commit suicide. She breaks the marriage system and love laws made by the society. So, they have to pay their lives

for it. The relationship between sexuality and subalternity has been dealt with proves that it is in sexual relationship that the subalternity has been exposed. It is the sexual copulation which does not see any hierarchy. There is no caste in sex. It has no boundary. It is the love, which crosses every boundary and does not see any hierarchy, all things dismissed, impossible become possible.

Therefore, Roy in her novel, *The God of Small Things*, successfully presents the subalternity through sexuality. Through sexuality, Roy tries to show the resistance to the discrimination and prejudices against subaltern group. So, it is the love laws which transgress every law and norms created by the elites.

Work Cited

- Ashcroft, Bill. Et al. eds. *The Post Colonial Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Bertrand, Christina. "Identity and Female Agency in Three Postcolonial Text." Diss. California State University, 2008.
- Bevoir, Simone de. "The Married Women." *The Second Sex*. Trans. H.M. Parsley. New York: Vintage Book, 1953. 475-510
- Bhadra, Gautam. "The Mentality of Subalternity: Kantanama or Rajdharmā" *Selected Subaltern Studies*. Ed. Ranajit Gha. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988. 63-94
- Chakraborty, Dipesh. "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History who Speak for India Past?." *A Subaltern Studies Reader*. Ed. Ranajit Guha Delhi: Oxford University Press 1995. 263-290
- Devi, Mahasweta. "Standayani." *Sublattern Studies V*. Ed. Ranajit Guha. Delhi: Onxord University Press, 1987. 91-133
- De Kock, Leon. "Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. "New Nation Writes Conference in South Africa. "A Review of International English Literature. (etc) 1992: 29-47.
- Guha, Ranajit. "Chandra's Death" *A Subaltern Studies Reader*. Ed. Ranajit Guha. Delhi: Oxford University Press. 1986. 36-60
- . *Elementary Aspect of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. Delhi9: Oxford University Press, 1983.

- . "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India." *Discourse in Subaltern Studies: Modernity, Travel and Translation*. M. Phil. Course Packet. Kathmandu: CDE, TU, 2008. 1-9.
- . "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency." *Discourse in Subaltern Studies*. 9-48.
- . "The Small Voice of History." *Subaltern Studies IX*. Ed. Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty. New Delhi: Oxford University press. 1996.
- Rogers, Anna Paige. "Shattering Identities: Agency and Desire in Winterson, Roy, and Woolf." Diss. Georgian State University, 2005.
- Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. India: Penguin Books, 2002.
- Sarkar, Sumit. "Conditions and Nature of Subaltern Militancy: Bengali from Swadeshi to Non-Cooperation." *Subaltern Studies III*. Ed. Ranajit Guha. Delhi: Onxord University Press, 1984.
- Singh, Rasmi R. *Femenist Movement of the Nineties with Special Reference to Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things*. Unpublished U.G.C. Project: 2002.
- Spelman, Elizabeth V. "Theorizing a politics of the Female Body." *Gender and Sexuality*. M. Phil. Course Packet (Unit I Vol. II). Kathmandu: CDE, TU, 2008. 377-432.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: Mahasweta Devi's Standayani." *Subaltern Studies V*. Ed. Ranajit Guha. Delhi: Onxord University Press, 1994. 91-133
- . "Can the Subaltern Speak? Colonial Discourse and Post Colonial Studies: A Reader." Ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrissmass. "New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. 66-111
- . "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography". *Subaltern Studies IV*. Ed.

Ranajit Guha. Onxord University Press, 1986. 330-363

Tiffin, Helen. et al. *Key Concepts in Post Colonial Studies*. Chennai: EOU, 2004.

Visweswaran, Kamala. "Gender and subalternity, Gender Subalternity." *Subaltern Studies IX*. Ed. Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty. New Delhi: Onxord University Press, 1996. (83-125)

W. Dnes, Anthony and Rowthorn, Robert. *The Law and Economics of Marriage and Divorce*. London: Cambridge, 2002.