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Disruption and Subversion of Patriarchal Normativity in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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By

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This thesis entitled, "Disruption and Subversion of Patriarchal Normativity in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things***",** submitted to the Central Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, M. Phil. Program, Kathmandu by **Devi Prasad Siwakoti** has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

This research work is an attempt to analyze the subversion and disruption of the patriarchal normativity in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Various critics have interpreted the novel in different ways. Most of them study it as a story of love laws. Some others study it as a story of children whose innocence is shattered by the hypocrisies of adults. But most of the critics have ignored the subversive and disruptive nature of the novel as well as its other major issues like gender, class and caste that are represented in it. In such a context, this researcher mainly deals with the question of how Arundhati Roy has tried to dismantle the oppressive patriarchal normativity by showing the love and relationship between two characters belonging to different social strata.Thus in spite of the multiple interpretations of the novel from different perspectives, it is quite surprising to note that the critics have failed to deal with the issue of the subversion and disruption of the patriarchal normativity which is quite dominant in the novel. That is why, the issue of patriarchal normativity and Roy's attempt to undermine it is the main contention of this research.

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Chapter - I: Introduction

Arundhati Roy and *The God of Small Things*

Born in India in 1961, Arundhati Roy became the first non-expatriate Indian author, and the first Indian woman to get the prestigious Booker Prize. *The God of Small Things* is her first novel. Her fame lies on the pictorial portrayal of Indian life and its cultural heritage. Various critics have interpreted the novel in different ways. Most of them study it as a story of love laws. Some others study it as a story of children whose innocence is shattered by the hypocrisies of adults. But most of the critics have ignored the subversive and disruptive nature of the novel as well as its other major issues like gender, class and caste that are represented in it. In such context, the main contention of this researcher is related to the question of how Arundhati Roy has tried to dismantle the oppressive patriarchal normativity by showing the love and relationship between two characters belonging to different social strata.

Arundhati Roy was born at a time when the writings of Indian woman were not cordially accepted while compared to that contemporary male counterparts. The woman writers had a difficult time and had to struggle a lot to make their voices audible. Besides, the influences of the imperial power were still prevalent though she was born in the politically independent India. It was the time when the Indians had the strong feelings towards their National movements. Though the overwhelming proliferation of writing had begun before the Independence of India from British Imperialism, the writing increased in numbers after the Independence as the situation was favourable for expression.

India got its freedom from the British Imperialism in 1947, and Roy begins her narration from 1969, it is evident that she is greatly moved by the contemporary situations. The time was suitable for the writers to raise their voices, and to make the Indian natives aware of their national identity. Two streams emerged at the same time in the history of Indian literature. On the one hand, there was a voice and support for the Indian native languages, and on the other, massive writings in English were merging. One stream of writing was reinforcing the status quo while the other trend was trying to dismantle the stereotypes.

The position of English language became stronger with the rise of literary and the widening of the middle class for which English was a status symbol, which is one of the major themes in *The God of Small Things*, as well as its integrating force. The steady rise of nationalism, on the other hand, made English language as a new symbol of patriotism and of identity. The relation was not always cordial, the hegemonic situations, real as well as apprehended, caused 'tension' among them affecting the literary environment of the time. Thus, from the very beginning of the Indian writing in English, two streams emerged together. Sisir Kumar Das in his book *A History of Indian Literature* describes:

> From the very beginnings of its history, Indian English writings exhibited two distinct strands: one emerging out of Indian literature written in Indian languages to communicate with fellow Indians; the other is a literature manufactured for the foreign audiences, in conformity with the Western perception of the Indian reality. Those who chose to write in English for whatever reason, naturally had certain advantages (as well as disadvantages) such

> as, of a large international audiences, and therefore stiff competition with large numbers of authors too. While some writers chose English because of the wider market, some were compelled by other reasons. (44)

As the above argument shows, whatever might be the reasons, the Indian writers were producing a great number of literatures in English medium. But, many Indian writers wanted to create distinctive worlds of their own which were personal and Indian. Besides this, a strong feeling to create English of their own is at the center of their writing style. English was felt as the strong medium to express their ideas because it could be the medium of communication to a large mass of international readers including their colonizers, who in this context could feel the Indians through the eyes of the Indian themselves. But the voices to support their own Indian languages could not be easily overlooked. The Indian writers writing in English have the possibility of achieving international recognition while the Indian writers writing in an Indian language, whoever he or she be, either he is Raja Rao or Mulk Raj Ananda, have hardly ever any chance of reaching beyond the Indian frontier. What made the tension between English and the Indian literature so significant was not the question of power-structure or the national identity alone, but the realization of the Indian writer about the factors determining the power of a language. English language achieved an international status not only on the merit of great literatures, but because of English Empire. The importance of languages has been always determined by the extent of power-political, economic, military or religious; each language welds with the political power of the time. For example: Arabic, Greek and Sanskrit languages are not in power these days.

The realization of the power of the language forced the Indian writers to express their ideas in English. Sisir Kumar Das further writes, "The most important role that English played is, undoubtedly, through translation. It is only through translated text, *Gitanjali* for example, that Indian literature received international attention"(59). It is English language through which the inter-literary communication within India became easy and quick. Indian writers also felt the necessity of translating their modern works into English not only to draw the Western attention but also to make them known in different parts of India, because in some region of India, English has been accepted as the mother tongue. The novels in Indian English grew in numbers in the twentieth century, mainly as a response to the contemporary political movements. Mulk Raj Ananda, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao were the most important novelists of the period. Ananda's Untouchable and Raja Rao's Kanthapura both recording the social and political turmoil, and translation are among the finest writings of the century. Both novels won the heart of the Indian people by highlighting deeply felt expression of them. The most important thing about Indian English of this period is the discovery of the importance of native narratorial devices, exploited effectively by Rao and Ananda in particular, to appreciate the contemporary historical reality that as an antithesis to the Indian images constructed by the Orientalists and elitist writers confirming it.

The patriotic writings have played a significant role in the history of Indian writing in English. Patriotic writings as spontaneous expression of the people against the foreign domination began to emerge in the nineteenth century, much before organized political movements towards the independence of the country. Sisir Kumar Das further explains:

> [...] various forms of Indian writings foregrounded two important features which gave the later national movements an ideological substance. The first feature is the recurrence of the theme of economic exploitations of the country by the foreigners [....]. The other features of the patriotic writing are the assertion of the Indian identity in terms of religions, language, myth and history. Patriotic writings grew almost spontaneously in different languages as the resistance of a community against the foreign rule. The idea of community of the Indian people surfaced independent of the construction of nation as a political category. (61)

The Indian writing in English emerged not to support English language; rather, it has been developed as a tool for resistance to the foreign rule. Because it is the medium through which the foreign rulers can peep into the heart of the Indians, and get knowledge on how the ruled feel towards the ruler.

The political movements in India have naturally their direct impact on Indian English literature. Mahatma Gandhi and his movements against the foreign rule are the most recurring themes of the writings of the time, Raja Rao, an important figure in Indian literature, in his novel Kanthapura, describes the image of Gandhi, and his power to create hundreds of 'Gandhis' through the country. Moorthy, the protagonist of the novel, gets a chance to listen to the speech of Gandhi on which he asks all Indians to discard foreign clothes as a resistance to foreign rule. When he (Moorthy) returns back to his home, he throws all his foreign cloths and book into bonfire, and then walks out as a 'Gandhi man'. In his novel *Untouchable,* Mulk Raj Anand, another important

figure in Indian fiction, has described the emotional frenzy that broke all barriers of caste and religion as Gandhi appears as an instrument of history. Untouchables were named "Harijans" (children of God) by Gandhi. He tried to raise their status by symbolic gestures such as befriending and eating with untouchables. Bakha, an untouchable boy, forgets his caste background when he gets a chance to meet Gandhiji. The Indian novels unlike other Indian genres were directly related with the Indi-British interactions and the people's response to the British rule.

The God of Small Things, by presenting the essence of Indian myths and its culture, has made various transgressions on the level of social, family relationship, religion and culture that are prevailing in the Indian society. By exploring the cultural wealth of India, the novel presents the "realities" of India as seen through the eyes of modern world.

Drawn from the experiences in her own life, the novel tells a tragic story of a Syrian Christian Indian family from Ayemenem in Kerala. Kerala is a state in Southern India where Roy herself grew up among its cultural, political and historical evolution. Kerala is the Marxist Indian state in which the novel is set. Roy has chosen the Indian theme, and makes a critique of the South Asian prudery that stands in the way of love. She touches on many taboos in Indian society. A divorced woman who returns home with her children is still frowned upon; she becomes not only a financial burden but also a social encumbrance. An affair with an "Untouchable" is inconceivable even today. Untouchables simply have no existence and a woman who has an affair with one could be expelled from her caste.

Indian writers writing for western audiences have an intransigent urge to impress their readers with local exotica. In the process, the narrative suffers, and so does its continuity. But Roy somehow manages to come out through all the maze of words with a credible story, movingly told. There are pathos, passion and genuine entertainment in the book. Throughout the book, the author looks through the eyes of Rahel, her alter-ego, with wide-eyed wonderment and appreciative of the small things of life. It is full of exotic smells, sights and experiences. Surely, there is not one but many more novels in her.

Historically, the story begins from 1969 - the postcolonial Indian history and it narrates the life of two small children - Estha and Rahel, the twins. The whole story is focused on the thoughts and feelings of these two children, and the complexity and hypocrisy of the adults in their world. It is also a poignant lesson on the destructive power of the caste-system.

Ammu with her two children has come to live in her parental home, to get rid of her alcoholic husband, after being divorced from him. Mammachi, the family matriarch, and mother of Ammu, runs a pickle farm - "Paradise Pickles". The story encircles round the visit of Sophie Mol, the cousin of the twins, from England to India. Sophie Mol is the daughter of Chacko from his English wife Margaret, from whom he is divorced.

The novel begins with Rahel returning to Ayemenem house, and her childhood home. The past events arrive and depart from her consciousness and this ultimately gives shape to the novel. Linking present with the past, the novel narrates the fateful incidents that took place in Ayemenem house twenty three years ago. It is the story of an increasingly dysfunctional family whose members all broke the rules in various ways, and crossed into forbidden territory.

Margaret, Sophie's mother, was married to her second husband after the divorce from Chako. When her second husband meets his death in an accident, Chacko invites Sophie and her mother to Ayemenem for Christmas. Sophie symbolically represents the relationship of India with her ex-mother, England.

Before receiving Sophie, all of the family goes to cinema, where Estha is assaulted by the Orangedrink and Lemondrink man. Estha is overcome with feelings of guilt and shame. When Ammu comments on the fellow as being "surprisingly good" to her son, Rahel asks why she does not marry him then. This infuriates Ammu, and she alarms her children that the careless words make one love the speaker of them a little less. This idea horrifies the twins who are especially devoted to their mother.

After the arrival of Sophie, when welcome proceedings is on 'the play', Rahel slips out of the scene and sees Velutha, an untouchable employee of the family farm, who has a very close friendship with the twins. At the very moment, Ammu comes to the veranda and meets the gaze of Velutha who is described as "The God of Loss The God of Small Things" (265). Both of them have a sudden desire for each other.

Grief-stricken, the twins plans to prepare their home at the long-abandoned house of Kari Saipu, "A yemenem own Kurtz" (52), to the other side of the river. When they find a boat, Velutha repairs it for them, and they use the same boat to cross the river to reach to the "History House". What they do not realize is that on the night of Sophie's arrival, Ammu and Velutha start a love affair, scandalously ignoring their caste-distinction. At night, Ammu uses the same boat of the twins, "to love by night the man her children loved by day" (202).

Two weeks later, Velutha's father reports Mammachi about the illicit love affair. Baby Kochamma, the aunt of Ammu, locks her inside her room. Blind with rage, when asked by the twins, she tells them just to go away. Already worried that she might love them less than she did, they decide to run away to the Veranda of the History House. Sophie insists that she also should be included, because the loss of all children will arise the grief of the adults; and after few days, they will return in triumphant, "Valued, Loved, and needed more than ever" (292). But unfortunately, Sophie meets her death by drowning while crossing the river. The twins save themselves by swimming ashore. The loss of Sophie heightens their grief. Distressed and panic-stricken, they eventually get to the veranda and go to sleep, not realizing that an exhausted Velutha has taken refuge there.

On the next morning, they are woken by the terrible beating of policeman to Velutha. Sophie's body has been found, and Baby Kochamma has charged Velutha of raping Ammu, kidnapping children and murdering Sophie. After beating, the police realize that they filed a wrong complaint. Baby Kochamma deceived the twins, who answer "yes" to the police, not knowing that they are deceiving their beloved Velutha, and their mother.

The twins are never able to forgive themselves for what they have done. Both of them return to the Ayemenem house after twenty-three years later, both defeated by life. Out of grief, and a sense of separation; they try to find some consolation with an incestuous encounter; that is the last of their transgression against "the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much" (328).

The novel is rich with Indian family relationship, social custom, cultural morals and the politics. It beautifully narrates a story of an ancient land whose history was forever altered by its British colonizers. The ideas of boundaries are explored in very post-modern narrative style. The narration jumps from present to past, revealing the tragic incidents. The narrative is focused on small things like Love, Madness, Hope, and Infinite Joy.

Love, Family Relationship, and Death are most significant themes on the novel. But above all, it is a rebellion against love laws, "the laws that lay down who should be loved, and how much. And how much." Everyone in the family crosses the love laws. Mammachi, who has deep one-sided Oedipal connection with her son, supplies him with young girls from the back door for his "men's need". Baby Kochamma is tortured by her unsatisfied love, and satisfies herself by punishing Ammu.

The novelist is praised for her writing on Indian theme. Told from children's perspective, the story explores the hypocrisy and prejudices played in the worlds of the adults. Michiko Kakutani in New York writes, " ... as subtle as it is powerful, a novel that is Faulknerian in its ambitious tackling of family, race and class, Dickensian in its sharp-eyed observation of society and character."

The beauty of the novel comes out of its title "small things." The novel tells us how life depends on small happenings in life. Pointing the importance of small things in life, Jason Cowley in India Today writes, "It is considerable never to forget about the small things in life: the insects and flowers, wind and water, the outcast and the despised" (28). Roy often denies in her interview that she has been influenced by Salman Rushdie, but various influences of Rushdie as capitalizing the significant words and running together words can be easily

found. Pankaj Mishra, an editor with Harper Collins in India, commented on the novel as "the biggest book since *Midnight's Children"*.

A lot of autobiographical elements can be found in the novel. It is set on Ayemenem, Kerala, where Roy herself grew up. Ayemenem is no longer the old-fashioned village of the sixties as it is portrayed in the novel, but "Paradise Pickles" still exists, Rahel, the central consciousness of the novel, resembles Roy's life. Rahel learns architecture as Roy herself was trained as an architect. Rahel is just seven years old when fateful incidents took place in the Ayemenem country in 1969, and Roy was born in 1961. It seems Roy is narrating her own story. Roy's mother, Mary Roy to whom the book is dedicated, is also a divorcee and who suffered for the sake of her children's life, also like Rahel. Roy is living with her second husband after she was divorced from her first husband. It is interesting to notice that Rahel returns to Ayemenem house after obtaining divorce from her husband. Thus, the novel narrates the feelings and experiences of Roy herself. Foregrounding her story on the situation of post-independent India, and giving emphasis to the Indian culture that was ignored in the literature created by First World War elites, Roy creates an outstanding novel depicting the patriarchal domination.

Various critics have interpreted Aundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* in different ways. *Harper and Queen Magazine* called it "a masterpiece, utterly exceptional in every way". Similarly, *Newsweek* described it as a "banquet for all the senses we bring to reading", while the pioneer found it "a sad story, told very hilariously, very tenderly and very craftily" (qtd. in Batra 7). According to *Daily Telegraph*, "it is rare to find a book that so effectively cuts

through the clothes of nationality, caste and religion to reveal the bare bones of humanity" (Ibid 7).

William Dalrymple in *Harpers and Queen* writes that "The Joy of *The God of Small Things* is that it appeals equally to the head and to the heart. It is clever and complex, yet it makes one laugh, and finally, moves one to tears. A masterpiece, utterly exceptional". Similarly, Christian Patterson in *Observer* writes that "From its mesmerizing opening sequence, it is clear that we are in the grip of a delicious new voice [...] a voice of breathtaking beauty. *The God of Small Things* achieves genuine, tragic resonance. It is, indeed, a masterpiece" (qtd. in Batra 8). Body Tonkin writes in *Independent:*

> *The God of Small Things* is an ancient drama played out against an unmistakably modern backdrop. It turns the clash of tongues and histories in Kerala into the motor of its comedy, its lyricism and its fine intelligence. And in doing so, it makes the remarkable Arundhati Roy a fitting standard-bearer for the immensely rich literature of Indian today. (qtd. in Batra 8)

Commenting upon the novel, *Asian Age* writes that Roy handles the shifting surfaces of past and present with "extraordinary fineness and delicacy, producing a controlled, intricate narrative structure through which the themes of love, spite, betrayal, hatred, and guilt run like a spider's web. A remarkable achievement" (Ibid 9). In spite of the multiple interpretations of the novel from different perspectives, it is quite surprising to note that the critics have failed to deal with the issue of the subversion and disruption of the patriarchal normativity which is quite dominant in the novel. That is why, the issue of

patriarchal normativity and Roy's attempt to subvert and disrupt that is the main contention of this research.

The research is divided into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the main contention of the research and the main argument of the researcher. It also presents a brief introduction of the author and the subject matter of the novel. The second chapter deals with theoretical methodology of the research which is feminism. It talks about the main insights of feminism which is mobilized to read the novel and develops the theoretical sketch for the research. The third chapter is an attempt to interpret and analyze the novel from the perspective of feminism. So, textual analysis is its main contention. Finally the fourth chapter concludes the entire thesis especially mentioning its findings.

Chapter - II: Theoretical Modality

Feminism: An Overview

Though it took about two centuries of struggle for recognition of women's cultural roles and achievements for women's social and political rights, feminism emerged as a dominant movement in the 1960s concerned with an awareness of women about male-dominated socio-cultural tendency to rule over women unanimously. After the feminist movement of the 1960s the issues of women's rights and their recognition spread widely in intellectual domain. On the one hand, feminist theories and critical practices, unfolded the marginal socio-economic status of women, and on the other, they extended enormous consciousness in women to launch collective activities for the equality and freedom of women in the society. Since feminism focuses on manifold areas and issues regarding the situation of women, it has feature of multiple dimension. By exposing women's marginalization, subordination and deprivation in the diverse domains like political, educational and literary, feminism discloses the long-established hierarchy between men and women in the patriarchal social milieu. Since the beginning of human civilization, the fundamental rights of women have been denied culturally, politically and economically due to the patriarchal ideologies and strategy of the society. Patriarchal ideology, norms and values of the society always restricted women physically and psychologically to perpetuate men's rule over women. Patriarchal formula of the society statistically determined the value of the women in the periphery and margins of all areas of human life.

Throughout the history, women have been devalued as inferior, passive, kind, beautiful and emotional, whereas men have been regarded with the

prestigious positioning of superiority, rationality and arrogance. Men always enjoyed the position of center, but women were sidelined and marginalized in the peripheral section of the society. Though there is not any natural rule and characteristics to prove hierarchy between men and women, culturally fabricated "norms" of the society- from ancient to the present time- viewed woman as the "other" of man's "self". Men with their culturally designed mindset presupposed that they possessed fundamental rights to subjugate women and to make women as the subordinate or appendage. They established a unanimous ruling authority to control women in all aspects of humanity - politics, religion, economy and education. Male supremacist ideology taught and directed women to internalize gender-based assumption that they are of less value and they are genuinely inferior and unequal to men. The patriarchal ideology denied the women rights as human beings. The definition of women by men didn't value women as human beings rather they defined them as objects and commodities to fulfil masculine desires.

Feminist critics argued and analyzed how women have been misrepresented, misinterpreted and undervalued by the whole human history. In other words, the entire so-called "civilized" human history is the male history. From the ancient Holy books to modernist and postmodernist writings of the twentieth century, the role of women has been denied, controlled and negatively manipulated. They have been blamed for lacking responsibility and intelligence, and for causing all the troubles in the world. Feminists, so, term such philosophy as Phallogocentric philosophy. The Holy Bible explicitly conveys that Eve insisted Adam to eat the apple from the forbidden fruit, and thereby causing the downfall of human beings. Pandora's opening of the box led to the spreading of

the troubles in the human world. God's creation of Eve out of the ribs of Adam also supports to the idea that women were given subordinate role in the masculine supremacist world. For this reason feminists have charged that Christianity and Judaism are the sexist religions that valorized and legitimized men by denigrating and degrading women.

In the male centered ideology, discourse and social reality, the women were supposed as body and men were esteemed as 'soul'. In Platonic term 'soul' transcends everything, whereas body is immanent, temporary and sensual and hence valueless. So Elizabeth V. Spelman regrets:

> What philosophers have had to say about women typically has been nasty, brutish and short. [...] Because philosophers have not said much about women, and when they have, it has usually been in short essays or chatty addenda which have not been considered to be part of the central body of their work, it is tempting to regard their expressed views about women as systematic: their remarks on women are unofficial asides which are unrelated to the heart of their philosophical doctrines. (367)

Women have been excluded from the public arenas. The philosophers have marginalized women from their philosophical discourse by remaining silent about them or by making derogatory statements about them.

In the classical times, Aristotle, the Greek philosopher asserted antifeminist ideas. Aristotle held that men are superior to women. Jostein Gaarder refers Aristotle who claimed, "A women is 'an unfinished man'. In reproduction woman is passive and receptive whilst man is active and productive; for the child inherits only the male characteristics, [...]" (116). The

stereotypical representation that Aristotle and others did, established the hierarchy between man and woman. Such long-standing hierarchy showed men as the leaders, who imposed authority over female. The history of humans has functioned mainly for the sake of males helping them to establish patriarchal norms, values and systems.

St Thomas Aquinas, in the middle Ages, stated that men were superior and godlike, and their intellectual ability easily impressed women. Gaarder explains Aquinas's views on women, "He also thought that children only inherit the father's characteristics, since a woman was passive and receptive while the man was active and creative" (135). Aquinas' words also echo the Biblical myth of creation of Eve. The feminists revise all such views since the beginning of western civilization to the crucial historical periods as pervasively patriarchal.

Feminist literary criticism redraws the earlier boundaries that patriarchy created to valorize and privilege men over women. The process of denigration and degradation of women didn't start from a particular historical period. The mythical description also reinforces the idea that the subordination of women was always there. For example, Apollo is worshipped as the symbol of knowledge and supremacy; Eros is considered to be symbol of jealousy and sensuality; and Venus is the symbol of beauty. The position of women remained flexible and subordinated, and is reflected as stereotypical, faithful and devoted wife.

Hence from time to time in the history of so-called western civilization, men are made superior and grandeur whereas the women as stereotyped and undervalued. Such patriarchal bias could also be found from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory to some of the selected passages by D.H. Lawrence, Henry

Miller, Norman Mailer and Jean Janet, who "in their fictional fantasies, aggrandize their aggressive phallic selves and degrade women as submissive sexual objects" (Abrams 88). Such anti-feminist authors and their views are attacked due to the growing consciousness in the women in the twentieth century.

Since feminism was a product of the women's liberation movement of the 1960s, its original nature was political. For Toril Moi, feminist criticism "is a kind of political discourse: a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism" (204). Out of the women's movement, feminist theory emerged and was extended to diverse disciplines including anthropology, sociology, economics, women's studies, psychoanalysis, philosophy, literary criticism and so on. As the inequalities between men and women for long hurt women emotionally and intellectually, the study of gender inequality and discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, oppression, patriarchy got significant scope. It studied women's stereotyping and misrepresentations in the great books of literature. Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory* analyzes, "The movement was, in important ways, literary from the start in the sense that it realized the significance of the images of women promulgated by literature, and saw it as vital to combat them and question their authority and their coherence" (121).

Hence feminism and feminist literary criticism focus upon the issues of who are placed at the margin in a patriarchal culture in which males play the role of authority by limiting females in diverse fields of human life. They study sexual, social, economic, political issues of women which were once thought to be outside the study of literature. Wilfred L. Guerin and others hold:

> Indeed feminism and feminist literary criticism are often defined as a matter of what is absent rather than what is present. [...] feminist literary criticism is often an attack upon other modes of criticism and theory, and its social orientation moves beyond traditional literary criticism. In its diversity feminism is concerned with the marginalization of all women: that is, with their being relegated to a secondary position. (196)

After all, feminism attacks the cultural discrimination created by patriarchal prominence which only organized and analyzed the things as per the male interests. But feminist criticism analyzes the things that are not represented, rather than what are done. Hence the inequalities existing in the socio-cultural scenario are the butts reflected and defied by such feminist theorists. Since feminists examine the experiences of women in all races, classes and cultures, multiple forms have been introduced.

The feminist critics seek a way out by challenging such cultural framework dominated by patriarchy. Toril Moi scrutinizes further that all female tradition in literature or criticism can't be a feminist. For her, it is the "political commitment to struggle against all forms of patriarchy and sexism" (206). Hence all the books written by women and on women writers can't always be anti-patriarchal commitment and for women.

Feminists have argued variously. Some of the feminists during 1980s sought to form a distinctly feminist theory of knowledge. Such kind of thinking has been questioned for its validity, too. In feminist epistemology, as Thomas Mautner defines "some hold that the traditional concepts and ideals of truth, objectivity and value-neutrality are to be rejected on the ground that they are

used for the male domination" (148). For such writers and critics, whatever males held as truth was circulated as truth for all. And against such circulation of truth as power, the mass rejection from females is necessary which can only secure their lives.

Speaking on feminist criticism, Rosemarie Tong comes to the conclusion that there can't be single theory or perspective. Instead, there are multiple dimensions within the field. In her own words:

> [...] feminist theory is not one, but many, theories or perspective and that each feminist theory or perspective attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences, and to prescribe strategies for women's liberation. The more skilfully a feminist theory can combine description, explanation, and prescription, the better that theory is. (1)

Tong's own analysis explains that feminism is a theory that unfolds the age long oppression and exploitation of women by patriarchal socio-cultural framework. Apart from explaining the plights, suffering and other physical and psychological plights the women have been facing, feminism goes on explain the ways of obtaining liberation from such states of social being.

Hazard Adams introduces feminism as the most successful of the political movements. For him feminism digs out that women endured double exclusion. On the one hand, many women writings were excluded from the so-called literary canon. On the other hand, the writings of males also excluded and neglected women perspective in their works. In his own words:

> Feminism has recovered and revered the writings of many women excluded from the so-called literary canon and raised many voices against the canon's sexual (and racial) exclusiveness. It has shown how male writing has excluded female perspective and even actively opposed or disdained women and so-called female values. (7)

Feminism hence opposes the earlier treatment done to women by patriarchy. The various theoretical positions that feminists hold in diverse fields, commonly work out to raise voice against the so-called canonical perspective. They have campaigned to reveal the actual causes and the processes that disdained women.

Feminism flourished with the women's struggle for the political enfranchisement in the USA. So, originally the nature of the feminist movement was political. Such women's movement appeared in different waves in different historical periods. As the first wave feminism that flourished in the 1920s had the goal of attaining the women's rights to vote, the goal of the second wave feminism in the 1960s was to gain sexual equality. The second wave of feminism involved issues of reproductive rights like abortion and birth control. So it was referred to as women's liberation. The third wave that tentatively starts from 1990s aims and continues for the similar rights in the second wave.

However, the feminist movement of the twentieth century was backed and heavily influenced by the works of Mary Wollstonecraft, the British feminist writer, whose "*A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) well deserved its rank as the first feminist work" (Adams 394). It was the first women's text with feminine spirit. With the introduction of this book, the women writers started

exploring their experiences through books but they have been frequently marginalized by male literary canon.

Wollstonecraft advocated educational and social equalities for women. She finds that women have been limited within the domesticity and are considered to be docile and emotional by patriarchy. She regrets and attacks the sentimental novels of her time, "Another instance of that feminine weakness of character often produced by a confined education, is a romantic thrust of the mind, which has been very popularly termed sentimental" (398). Women were imprisoned by denying any opportunities to study the proper books that would appeal to their reason: rather they were given the sentimental novels to appeal to their emotion. Hence she attacks those sentimental novels of her time for their harmful effects on women's intellectual development.

After *A Vindication of Rights of Women* (1792), Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) revolutionized the women's consciousness in the twentieth century. This led to other significant books that expose the female voices. Such books are Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), Mary Ellman's *Thinking About Women* (1968), Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwomen in the Attic* (1979) and so on, which represented a new era not only in the women's consciousness, but in the whole intellectual circle, too.

In this way feminism can be broadly defined as a politics directed at changing existing power relations between men and women. The growing consciousness in women, after the 1960s, sought to break men's hold over women by giving vent to "feminisms", distinct feminist positions.

There are various categorizations within feminism. For instance, British feminist criticism has always been Marxist in its emphasis on class and politics. American feminist criticism typically has strong political implications because it has focused on the distinctive experience of women echoing that the personal is political. Similarly, French feminist criticism has greater inclination toward psychoanalysis. In other words, apart from categorization of feminism according to national boundaries, one can locate diverse dimensions like liberal, radical, Marxist, socialist, psychoanalytic, black, postcolonial, lesbian feminisms and other within the overall rhetoric of feminism.

Liberal feminism is concerned with increasing women's equality without radically changing social and political systems. So, the job of a liberal feminist is to stress women's choice and challenge the social division of labor. Liberal feminism that was popular in the 1950s and 1960s, along with the civil rights movement, viewed that all people, both men and women are created equal by God and deserve equal rights. Liberal feminists believe that oppression in society exists because of the socialization of men and women in patriarchy. Patriarchy denies equality to women, as men are in power position. But, as liberal feminists claim, women are as equally capable as the men are. Neither they argue that the women should be given superior roles and positions nor the vice versa. The thought influenced by J.S. Mill's *Subjection of Women* (1869) focuses on welfare liberalism. It appeals for the collective responsibility for the reformation and advancement in a liberal society with the help of both men and women. Unlike radical, liberal feminists focus on the reformation of society rather than revolutionary changes.

Radical feminists such as Adrienne Rich are concerned with creating a new social order, separate from that of men. So a radical feminist considers sex and motherhood as forced slavery. In opposition to liberal, radical feminism holds the view that society must be restructured in order to dissolve the patriarchy. Rather than limiting themselves with the issues of equal opportunities and the liberal society, they demand the revolution by overthrowing the male-centered norms, values and the systems. For them oppression against women had been practiced throughout the "civilized" human history by patriarchal structure. And the way to free women of different races, ethnicities, culture and classes is to subvert and disrupt such patriarchal establishment. The radical feminists demand all women to wage a war against men, patriarchy and the gender system. For them, the rigid social roles are to be rejected and the women should appear different from the men. Their individual feelings, experiences and relationships are to be highlighted by excluding males. It encourages some degree of separatism from men because it recommends putting women first making them a primary concern.

Marxist feminism is a sub-species of feminism which challenges both capitalism and ideology of patriarchy. Marxist feminist combine the study of the feminist issues with the political, economical and social. In other words, they observe the oppression of women and quest for the solution from the point of view of Marxism. For that they attack male based capitalist social structure that caused economic inequality, dependency, political confusion and so on. They realized that the root cause of oppression and exploitation of women is the capitalist social structure which is to be dismantled. As the Marxist feminists go to the point of defining the position of women in terms of socio-economic basis,

they see women as proletariat and men as bourgeois. Such situation instigated the feminists to wage a war against that unequal distribution of capitalism. They try to debunk the existing socio-economic structure for the sake of equal opportunity to both the sexes and thereby dismantling economic hierarchy.

Socialist feminism emerged as a combination of Marxist and radical feminisms with a social analysis of patriarchy and capitalism. In other words, socialist feminism connects the oppression of women with the ideas like exploitation, oppression and labor. Socialist feminists see women as being held down as a result of their unequal standing in both the workplace and the domestic sphere. They focus their energies on broad change that affects society as a whole, and not just on an individual basis.

Black feminism demands the end of sexism, classism and racism. It emerged after the early feminist movements which were led by white middle class women. As Black feminists hold, the white-middle class women sought and advocated social changes such as women's enfranchisement, but they were never for the racial class oppression. Black feminists argue that even if there is no discrimination between the sexes and the classes, it still causes discrimination against many people until there is racial discrimination. Hence for such feminists, liberation of black women necessitates freedom for all. That's why sexism, classism and racism, at once, are to be rejected and ended.

Psychoanalytic feminism attacks the notions of psychoanalytic theories propounded by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. For Freud, there are fundamental differences in the dream images seen by men and women. Freud finds men's dreams as egoist and ambitious content whereas erotic dreams are related to women. Furthermore, Freud claims that woman's such destiny is an

outcome of biology. But the feminists pour a sharp reaction against such belief while analyzing the formation of gendered identities and stress the prior importance of women. Raman Seldon says, "Feminists have reacted bitterly to a view of woman as passive, narcissistic, masochistic and penis-envying" (146). Feminists call Freud's analysis as expressive of phallocentrism and phallogocentrism.

Postcolonial feminism is concerned particularly with the oppression and the marginalization of women because of race, class and ethnicity in the postcolonial societies. Hence they question the notion that gender oppression is the primary force of patriarchy. Post colonial feminism finds loopholes in the portrayals of women in the western and non-western societies, for whereas women in western societies are described as modern, educated and empowered, the women in non-western societies are represented as passive and voiceless. So, postcolonial feminists basically react against universalization of female experience as put forwarded by liberal and radical feminisms.

Feminist Subversion against Patriarchy

The emergence of feminist theories as expressive of female voice in the 1960s -as counter discourse to the existing patriarchal discourse- create an environment of feminist subversion against patriarchy. Feminism introduced the marginal or unequal status of women in the patriarchal design of the society and it also made women conscious of their degraded and subjugated position in all spheres of life. In fact, feminist critics and scholars vigorously questioned the dominating conventions, myths and values of the society the restricted women's freedom and blocked their individual development. The tradition, norms and ethos of the western society were men-centered, and worked to perpetuate men's

rule over the women. Intellectual practices of feminist critics began subverting the hierarchy between male and female which was immeasurably rooted in the human world since the beginning of human civilization. Broadly speaking, feminism refers to the tendency of asserting women's rights, independence and authority. More explicitly, it is a conscious movement of women who unite themselves to reject the long-standing passivity and oppression. The aim of feminism is to reject the cultural "othering" of women by men and to empower women for their participation in all spheres for the establishment of their equality as men. Patriarchal framework of the society long denied the rights of women which was challenged and subverted after the breakthrough of feminist theories and academic practices.

The deeply rooted patriarchal cultural foundations of the society were systematically questioned with the birth of female voices. Feminist theories and critics subverted the existing discrepancy between the sexes-male as privileged and female as unprivileged - to maintain co-existence of women with men in the society. Female voice emerged as alternative to male voice for upbringing of the women, who were long silenced in the patriarchy. The presupposed men-centered ethos of the society was challenged after the feminist subversion against patriarchy. The unfathomably grounded men-centered patterns got deconstructed by the feminist movement of the 1960s. Conventionally omnipresent male values of the society, which restricted women within certain limitations, were challenged to establish the recognition of women as human beings. Similarly feminism played pivotal role to redraw the boundary between men and women, boundaries which were drawn unanimously by men to oppress the women in diverse aspects of human life. Hence, such redrawing the boundary of male-

dominated social patterning resulted into feminist subversion against patriarchy to provide an equal position to women as men.

Valerie Bryson's words echo that feminist thinking "seeks to understand society in order to challenge and change it" (1). Such female awakening as Bryson and others opine got impetus from the ideas of feminist critics like Mary Wollstonecraft, Kate Millet, Elaine Showalter, Virginia Woolf, Simon de Beauvoir, Sandra M. Gillbert and Susan Gubar, and so on. It further suggests the women's conscious coming out from the earlier boundaries created by male domination. Identifying their exploited situation within male culture and values, such feminists have attempted to break such traditions to reshape and reconstruct them. They have challenged earlier male-dominated psyche and practice of society by upbringing the marginalized women into center. Hence M.H. Abrams analyzes:

The often-asserted goal of feminist critics has been to enlarge and reorder, or in radical instances entirely to displace, the literary cannon-that is, the set of works which, by a cumulative consensus, have come to be considered "Major" and to serve as the chief subjects of literary history, criticism, scholarship and teaching (91-92).

Such rebellious nature of the feminist practices against the dominant culture, social norms and institutions aims to replace the earlier canons with the marginalized women. Rather than giving same space to the mainstream considered history, criticism, scholarship, the feminist critics center their study on what were absent about women in such practices.

Feminism believes that while men and women are inherently equal, discrimination against the latter always existed in the cultural, political,

economic practices. And so a band of feminists appeared to question the conventionally supposed beliefs for the harmonious environment in the society. Chris Beasley argues, "the point of view of feminist writers is that the western thought is 'male stream' and thus its authority needs to be questioned"(3). For Beasley, feminism aims to eliminate the subordination of and oppression upon women forever. It raises voices to exterminate all kinds of wrong social treatments directed at women.

However, the contribution to revision the male-centered system was initially made by *A Vindication of Rights of Women* (1972), the work by Mary Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft opposed the system of education of her time, for the system provided women to study sentimental novels. She argues for sexual equality and "put special emphasis on education protecting against a system that kept women in a state of ignorance" (qtd. in Mautner 456-57). Wollstonecraft particularly refuted the ideas of the philosopher Rousseau who differentiated between the natures and abilities of men and women, and as such, defined roles placed men as citizens and women as the wives and mothers. Bryson in *Feminist Political Theory* shows how Wollstonecraft opposes Rousseau's male-dominated ideology in four ways. For Bryson, "she refused to accept that women were less capable of reason than men" (22). Secondly she demands a woman to be "an independent being who is both capable of and entitled to a rational educaiton". Hence a woman is not made for men's delight. In her third disagreement, she asserts that as men and women are given equal and shared possession by God, "virtue must be the same for both sexes" (23). By challenging the older patriarchal ideas, Wollstonecraft, in her fourth disagreement with Rousseau, advocated for women's suffrage, legal rights, and equal participation with men in

the worlds of politics and paid employment. Such ideas, which were considered rebellious in her taught the values of identifying, rejecting, questioning, protesting the patriarchal ideology to the feminists and feminist literary critics in the twentieth century. So she can be taken as the first feminist with subversive nature.

Rosemarie Tong also finds Wollstonecraft as a pioneering female heroine challenging male birth right, advocating women's equality and rationality. For Tong, she became able to liberate women from male violence and oppression by arguing against. Tong says:

> [...] Wollstonecraft did present a vision of a woman strong in mind and body who is not slave to her passions, her husbands or children. For Wollstonecraft, the ideal woman is interested in fulfilling herself it by self-fulfilment is meant any sort of pondering to duty distracting desires than in exercising self-control. (16)

Wollstonecraft never believed that women possess emotional, fragile and submissive nature only. For her, they can equally perform the reason. As patriarchy doesn't show sincerity in thinking, rather it degrades and subjugates women.

After Wollstonecraft in the nineteenth century, female voices spread abundantly for the rights and equality of the women in public sphere. The women began forming their organizations to demand of same amount of payment as their male counterparts in the job of public importance. Such step also improved situation in the time of industrial revolution. Similarly some of the novelists of the time, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Bronte Sisters extended

awareness through their novels regarding the coexistence of women with that of men in the society.

Mainly the twentieth century remained landmark phase to deal the manifold concerns of the positions of women in all spheres of life-social, political, cultural, and economic. To raise the status of women by rescuing them from their long remaining peripheral location determined by patriarchy, twentieth century feminist critics and scholars contributed greatly. By exposing the age-old binary between male and female in all aspects of humanity and by subverting these binaries considering them as not natural, but mere construction of the society and civilization, the feminist critics like Virginia Woolf, Simon de Beauvoir, Elaine Showalter, Mary Ellman, Kate Millet, and others played crucial role.

Virginia Woolf, in her critical work *A Room of One's Own* (1929), advocates for the equality of the women with men in the society asserting the existing socio-cultural values as sexually discriminatory. Questioning the dominant male literary traditions since ancient to the present, Woolf puts forward alternative literary conventions in which men and women get equal space to develop their literary creativity and potentiality. By challenging the prevalent norms and showing the alternative ways for the women's possibility of creativity, Woolf argues:

> [...] when they come to set their thoughts on paper-that is that they had no tradition behind them, or one so short and partial that it was of little help. For we think back through our mothers if we are women. It is useless to go to the great men writers for help, however much one may go to them for pleasure. Lamb, Browne,

> Thackeray, Newman, Sterne, Dickens, De Quincy--whoever it may be --never helped a women yet [...]. (824)

With her radical feminist thought, Woolf inspires the female writers to be self-reliant and self-dependent. She is clear in her remark that if women writers knock the doors of male writers for help, male writers in stead of helping them, limit them within male ideology for the perpetuation of male normativity in literary activities. Debunking such tradition in literature, Woolf makes an announcement for the women writers to create their own literary space, and to liberate themselves as independent beings in the arena of literary endeavors. Hence Woolf wants to reconfigure the systems and values that were unanimously drawn and free from the perspectives of male.

Simon de Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex* (1949), has emphatically subverted the existing hierarchy between men and women. She defined the male conviction of othering women as not a natural fact but as a cultural construction. The definition of women as "other" and "the second sex" are mere fabrications of dominant patriarchal socio-cultural viewpoint. She rewrites, "One is not born, but rather becomes man" (7). Through such a line of argument she tends to dismantle the long-standing dichotomy prevalent between men and women. The degraded or the "othered" woman is not what she is in real sense, but what she is at present as ideologically modulated. Beauvoir intents to say the predicament of present woman as "other" is due to the omni-present patriarchal biases of the civilization which the conscious women should discard to exist themselves as independent human beings.

Similarly, Beauvoir, in her most quoted work *The Second Sex* (1949), heavily challenges the socially constructed myths. Myths always valorize

patriarchy which subjugates women. They create verticality between men and women. Man is primarily one and the woman is other. Man is subject, active practical agent having agency whereas woman is passive, impractical and an object of male gaze. She attacks the patriarchal myths concerning women, myths that presume the existence of universal female essence. In her own words, "the myth must not be confused with recognition of significance" (997). Beauvoir makes a staunch appeal to falsify the male dominated myths. They are false; they hinder the way to transcendence to women and validate that they should remain silent and serve men. That's why, such culturally patterned myths should be deconstructed to rescue women from their male-designed peripheral location.

Elaine Showalter through her often quoted work *A Literature of their Own* (1977) encourages women to create their own independent ideology so that women can free themselves from patriarchal oppression. Showalter's revision of women writers of the Victorian period contributes to defy the existing male monopoly in literature. Her categorization of women writers into three phases assets to dissect the position of women in the contemporary time. The first phase is the feminine phase (1840-1880) in which female writers imitate and internalize the existing male literary conventions. To Showalter, these female writers - George Eliot and Bronte Sisters saw the possibility of women welfare in the existing male canon. The second phase, she termed, is feminist phase (1880-1920) in which the feminists of the time are called radical who protested against the male values, cultures, literatures and other standards that oppressed the women in multiple ways. Actually, this phase determined the efforts for political and social equality and the women's literature was able to advocate minority rights and protested against unjust treatment of women. Elizabeth Gaskell and

Francis Trollope exemplified the feminist literature. The third phase (1920 onwards) is female phase, which rejected both limitation and protest, and turned to female experience as the source of women's autonomous art. The writers of this phase envisioned separate female aesthetics, contemplated the possibility of distinct female language, and celebrated the internal experience and consciousness of women. In this way, Showalter's proposition of the women's independent position subverts the traditional binary between men and women.

Mary Ellman, in her work *Thinking about Women* raised the feminist issues of oppression in patriarchal framework. Her work, a text of modern American criticism, brings out the derogatory stereotypes of women in male created literature. With her subversive point of view, she opposes such stereotypical representation of women considering them as mere constructions.

Kate Millet boldly questions the power holding role of patriarchy in her *Sexual Politics* (1977). She opposed the direct or indirect oppression of women by the male power. For her, 'sex' is a biological phenomenon, but gender is a concept which is culturally acquired sexual identity. She regrets all such cultural constructs. Raman Seldon analyzes, "Millet and other feminists have attacked social scientists who treat the culturally learned 'female' characteristics (passivity, etc) as natural, [...]. Sex 'roles' as perpetuated in society are in her view repressive" (138). For her, one can't create hierarchy between men and women in the lines of society that the culture has drawn. Rather the imposed epithets are to be exposed as spurious. Wilfred L. Guerin and others overview, "[...] her reading of D.H. Lawrence, Norman Mailer, Henry Miller, and Jean Janet offered a powerful challenge to traditional social values of capitalism, violence against women, crude sexuality, and male power in general, while it

also assaulted the reigning formalism in literary criticism of her day" (199). As the writers argue, women endured more severe treatment than other kinds of discrimination. Her identification of degrading representation of women marked the repudiation of the patriarchy, its ideology and culture.

Feminism, as a political movement, awakened women to bring a change in the society for women's right of liberty, equality, property, education and so on. This female awareness movement helped to change the condition of women. In a patriarchy, women were constrained by society and culture. But female awareness movement encouraged women to challenge what it means to be female in a male governed society. It tried to dismantle the conventional pattern to establish non-sexist ones. The issues like identity, self individuality and freedom became the common features for feminists to awaken women.

Third World Feminism

Third-world feminism has been described as a group of feminist theories developed by feminists who acquired their views and took part in feminist politics in so-called third-world countries (38). Although women from the third world have been engaged in the feminist movement, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Sarojini Sahoo criticize Western feminism on the grounds that it is ethnocentric and does not take into account the unique experiences of women from third-world countries or the existence of feminisms indigenous to third-world countries. According to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, women in the third world feel that Western feminism bases its understanding of women on "internal racism, classism and homophobia" (31). Both Gyatri Spivak and Chandra Mohanty have taken issue with European and American feminism for assuming that the oppressions faced by women might be identical to those faced by 'First World' feminists. In other words, by claiming to speak for

women in India, 'First World' feminism has betrayed an inbuilt ethnocentrism, which some Indian feminists see as a form of ideological colonialism.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explains that the term "Third World" was initially coined in 1955 by those emerging from the "old" world order: "the initial attempt in the Bandung Conference (1955) to establish a third way -- neither with the Eastern nor within the Western bloc -- in the world system, in response to the seemingly new world order established after the Second World War, was not accompanied by a commensurate intellectual effort. The only idioms deployed for the nurturing of this nascent Third World in the cultural field belonged then to positions emerging from resistance within the supposedly 'old' world order -- anti-imperialism, and/or nationalism" (270).

KumKum Sangari argues that the term "Third World" not only designates specific geographical areas, but imaginary spaces. According to Sangari, "Third World" is "a term that both signifies and blurs the functioning of an economic, political, and imaginary geography able to unite vast and vastly differentiated areas of the world into a single 'underdeveloped' terrain" (217). Sangari is critical of the way "Third World" is used by the West to indiscriminately lump together vastly different places.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty defines the Third World geographically: "the nation-states of Latin America, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and South-east Asia, China, South Africa, and Oceania constitute the parameters of the non-European third world. In addition, black, Latino, Asian, and indigenous peoples in the U.S., Europe, Australia, some of whom have historic links with the geographically defined third worlds, also define themselves as third world peoples" (5).

Cheryl Johnson-Odim explains that "the term Third World is frequently applied in two ways: to refer to 'underdeveloped'/overexploited geopolitical entities, i.e. countries, regions, even continents; and to refer to oppressed nationalities from these world areas who are now resident in 'developed' First World countries." Johnson-Odim further identifies problems some Third World women have with First World feminism: "While it may be legitimately argued that there is no one school of thought on feminism among First World feminists -- who are not, after all, monolithic -- there is still, among Third World women, a widely accepted perception that the feminism emerging from white, middle-class Western women narrowly confines itself to a struggle against gender discrimination" (314, 315).

The use of the term "Third World Women" by Western feminists has been widely critiqued. Mohanty uses the term interchangeably with "women of color" (7). She argues that "what seems to constitute 'women of color' or 'third world women' as a viable oppositional alliance is a common context of struggle rather than color or racial identifications. Similarly, it is third world women's oppositional political relation to sexist, racist, and imperialistic structures that constitutes our political commonality"(7). Although she uses the term "third world women," Mohanty argues that western feminisms appropriate the production of the "third world woman as a singular monolithic subject," for a "discursive colonization" (51). Furthermore, western feminisms articulate a discursive colonization through the production of "third world difference": "that stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all of the women in [third world] countries" (53-54). Western feminisms' use of the category of third world woman and third world difference ties into a larger, latent cultural and economic colonialism: "in the context of the hegemony of the Western scholarly establishment in the production and dissemination of texts, and the

context of the legitimating imperative of humanistic and scientific discourse, the definition of the 'third world woman' as a monolith might well tie into the larger cultural and economic praxis of 'disinterested' scientific inquiry and pluralism which are the surface manifestations of a latent economic and cultural colonization of the 'non-Western' world" (74).

Trinh T. Minh-ha argues that "'difference' is essentially 'division' in the understanding of many. It is no more than a tool of self-defense and conquest" (14). Trinh's concern is with the use of the third world woman as the "native" Other in Western anthropology and feminisms. Answering the question "why do we have to be concerned with the question of Third World women? After all, it is only one issue among many others," Trinh replies: "delete the phrase Third World and the sentence immediately unveils its value-loaded cliches. Generally speaking, a similar result is obtained through the substitution of words like racist for sexist, or vice-versa, and the established image of the Third World Woman in the context of (pseudo)-feminism readily merges with that of the Native in the context of (neo-colonialist) anthropology" (17).

Self-defined Third World women who inhabit a place within First World feminist academia are also the subject of critique. Diane Brydon writes, "now that the marginal is being revalued as the new voice of authority in discourse, it is tempting to accept the imperial definition of the colonized as marginal" (4). In a direct attack on Mohanty and Trinh as well as Bell Hooks, Sara Suleri argues that "rather than extending an inquiry into the discursive possibilities represented by the intersection of gender and race, feminist intellectuals like Hooks misuse their status as minority voices by enacting strategies of belligerence that at this time are more divisive than informative. Such claims to radical revisionism take refuge in the political

untouchability that is accorded the category of Third World Woman, and in the process sully the crucial knowledge that such a category has still to offer to the dialogue of feminism today" (765). Suleri claims that Mohanty's "claim to authenticity--only a black can speak for a black; only a postcolonial sub continental feminist can adequately represent the lived experience of that culture -- points to the great difficulty posited by the 'authenticity' of female racial voices in the great game which claims to be the first narrative of what the ethnically constructed woman is deemed to want" (760). Similarly, Suleri attacks Hooks and Trinh for claiming that "personal narrative is the only salve to the rude abrasions that Western feminist theory has inflicted on the body of ethnicity" (764). Suleri advocates examining how "realism locates its language within the postcolonial condition," and suggests that "lived experience does not achieve its articulation through autobiography, but through that other third-person narrative known as the law" (766).

As the above arguments indicate, the terms "Third World" and "Third World Women" are by no means stable categories. Rather, these terms are a locus of contention not only between First World feminisms and Third World women, but also between Third World women themselves within the complex field of postcolonial studies.

Postcolonial feminists argue that oppression relating to the colonial experience, particularly racial, class, and ethnic oppression, has marginalized women in postcolonial societies. They challenge the assumption that gender oppression is the primary force of patriarchy. Postcolonial feminists object to portrayals of women of non-Western societies as passive and voiceless victims and the portrayal of Western women as modern, educated and empowered.

Postcolonial feminism emerged from the gendered history of colonialism: colonial powers often imposed Western norms on colonized regions. In the 1940s and 1950s, after the formation of the United Nations, former colonies were monitored by the West for what was considered "social progress". The status of women in the developing world has been monitored by organizations such as the United Nations and as a result traditional practices and roles taken up by women—sometimes seen as distasteful by Western standards—could be considered a form of rebellion against colonial oppression. Postcolonial feminists today struggle to fight gender oppression within their own cultural models of society rather than through those imposed by the Western colonizers.

Postcolonial feminism is critical of Western forms of feminism, notably radical feminism and liberal feminism and their universalization of female experience. Postcolonial feminists argue that cultures impacted by colonialism are often vastly different and should be treated as such. Colonial oppression may result in the glorification of pre-colonial culture, which, in cultures with traditions of power stratification along gender lines, could mean the acceptance of, or refusal to deal with, inherent issues of gender inequality. Postcolonial feminists can be described as feminists who have reacted against both universalizing tendencies in Western feminist thought and a lack of attention to gender issues in mainstream postcolonial thought.

Pre-colonial social structures and women’s role in them reveal that feminism was theorized differently in India than in the west. Colonial essentialization of "Indian culture" and reconstruction of Indian womanhood as the epitome of that culture through social reform movements resulted in political theorization in the form of nationalism rather than as feminism alone.

Historical circumstances and values in India make women's issues different from the western feminist rhetoric. The idea of women as "powerful" is accommodated into patriarchal culture through religion. This has retained visibility in all sections of society; by providing women with traditional "cultural spaces". Another consideration is that whereas in the West the notion of "self" rests in competitive individualism where people are described as "born free yet everywhere in chains", by contrast in India the individual is usually considered to be just one part of the larger social collective, dependent for its survival upon cooperation and self-denial for the greater good.

Indian feminist scholars and activists have to struggle to carve a separate identity for feminism in India. They define feminism in time and space in order to avoid the uncritically following Western ideas. Indian women negotiate survival through an array of oppressive patriarchal family structures: age, ordinal status, relationship to men through family of origin, marriage and procreation as well as patriarchal attributes - dowry, siring sons etc. - kinship, caste, community, village, market and the state. It should however be noted that several communities in India, such as the Nairs of Kerala, certain Maratha clans, and Bengali families exhibit matriarchal tendencies, with the head of the family being the oldest women rather than the oldest man. Sikh culture is also regarded as relatively gender-neutral.

The heterogeneity of Indian experience reveals that there are multiple patriarchies and so also are there multiple feminisms. Hence feminism in India is not a singular theoretical orientation; it has changed over time in relation to historical and cultural realities, levels of consciousness, perceptions and actions of individual women and women as a group. The widely used definition is "An awareness of women's oppression and exploitation in society, at work and within the family, and

conscious action by women and men to change this situation"(31). Acknowledging sexism in daily life and attempting to challenge and eliminate it through deconstructing mutually exclusive notions of femininity and masculinity as biologically determined categories opens the way towards an equitable society for both men and women.

The male and female dichotomy of polar opposites with the former oppressing the latter at all times is refuted in the Indian context because it was men who initiated social reform movements against various social evils. Patriarchy is just one of the hierarchies. Relational hierarchies between women within the same family are more adverse. Here women are pitted against one another. Not all women are powerless at all times. Caste-community identities intensify all other hierarchies. The polytheistic Hindu pantheon provides revered images of women as unique and yet complementary to those of male deities.

A distinguished Indian feminist writer, Sarojini Sahoo claims,in a conversation with Linda Lowen, that traditions restrict women's rights and discourage female sexuality. Many of Dr. Sahoo's writings deal candidly with female sexuality, the emotional lives of women, and the intricate fabric of human relationships as well as the exploration of why sexuality plays a major role in our understanding of Eastern feminism. Regarding the issue whether feminism in India is different from feminism in the West, she says that at one time in India - in the ancient Vedic period - there were equal rights between men and women and even feminist law makers like Gargi and Maitreyi . But the later Vedic period polarized the sexes. Males oppressed females and treated them as 'other' or similar to a lower caste. Today, patriarchy is just one of the hierarchies which keep females down, oppressed by the traditional system.

Regarding marriage system she says that in India, arranged marriages are always preferred. Love marriages are viewed as a social sin and are regarded with shame. Many Indians contend that arranged marriages are more successful than marriages in the West, where staggering divorce rates are the rule. They argue that romantic love does not necessarily lead to a good marriage, and often fails once the passion dissipates, whereas real love flows from a properly arranged union between two individuals.

Unwed mothers, separated, single or unfaithful women are considered outcasts. Living out of wedlock with a partner is still virtually unheard of. An unmarried daughter -- seen as a spinster even in her late twenties -- brings shame upon her parents, and is a burden. But once married, she is considered the property of her in-laws.

Talking about the concept of the dowry system in India, she says that Westerners seem fascinated by the idea of a dowry, along with the disturbing stories of what happens when a dowry is seen as inadequate. According to her, the marriage of the bride and groom requires the bride's father to pay dowries -- large amounts of money, furniture, jewelry, expensive household items and even homes and expensive foreign holidays to the bridegroom. And of course you are alluding to the term "bride burning," which was coined in India after several young brides had their saris lit on fire in front of a gas stove either by their husbands or in-laws because of their father's failure to meet demands for a bigger dowry. In India, as there is the custom and tradition of joint family, a bride has to face her tyrannical in-laws, and traditional Hindu society still rejects divorcees.

In regard to the rights and roles of women in Indian society, she says that in religious rituals and customs, females are barred from taking part in all worship. In

Kerala, females are not allowed to enter in the Ayeppa temples. They are also barred from worshiping the God Hanuman and in some regions they are barred from even touching the 'linga' idol of Lord Shiva.

In politics, recently all political parties have promised to reserve 33% of legislative seats for women in their manifesto, but this has not been passed into law as the male-dominated parties oppose the bill.

In financial matters, although women are permitted to work outside of the home, their rights on any household matters have always been denied. A woman has to take charge of the kitchen, even if she is a wage- earning member of the household and holds down a job outside of the home. The husband will not take charge of kitchen even if he is unemployed and at home all day , as a man who cooks for his family violates the laws of manhood.

Legally, although the court recognizes that sons and daughters have equal rights regarding patriarchal property, those rights are never exercised; today as in generations past, ownership changes hands from father to husband to son and the rights of a daughter or a daughter- in-law are denied.

Focusing on women and sexuality, she tells about Eastern women that to understand Eastern feminism, one must understand the important role sexuality plays in our culture. Let's consider a girl's situation during adolescence. If she becomes pregnant, the male partner is not blamed for his role. It is the girl who has to suffer. If she accepts the child, she suffers a great deal socially and if she has an abortion, she suffers emotionally for the rest of her life.

In the case of a married woman, she encounters many restrictions with respect to sexuality whereas her male partner is free from these restrictions. Women are denied the right to express themselves as sexual beings. They are discouraged from

taking an active role or even allowing themselves to experience the act as pleasurable. Women are taught that they should not be open to their sexual desires.

Even today in Eastern countries, we will find many married women who have never experienced an orgasm. If a female admits to feeling sexual pleasure, her own husband may misunderstand her and regard her as a bad woman, believing she has engaged in premarital sex.

When a woman reaches menopause, the changes brought about by this biological phenomenon often cause a woman to suffer self-doubt. Mentally, she sees herself as disabled because she cannot meet the sexual needs of her husband.

Sahoo thinks that until now in many Asian and African countries, the patriarchal society has held control over sexuality. So for us to realize feminism, Eastern women need two types of liberation. One is from financial slavery and the other is from the restrictions imposed on female sexuality. Women are always victims; men are oppressors.

She believes in the theory that "a woman's body is a woman's right." By that she means women should control their own bodies and men should take them seriously.

In her various stories she has discussed lesbian sex, rape, abortion, infertility, failed marriage and menopause. These are not topics that have been discussed in Indian literature by women, but she focuses on them to begin a dialogue about female sexuality and to help bring about change. She says that it is risky for a woman writer to deal with these themes in an Eastern country, and for that she faces much criticism. But still she believes someone has to bear this risk to accurately portray women's feelings - the intricate mental agony and complexity which a man can never feel - and these must be discussed through the fiction.

Of course, there also appeared on the horizon many scholars who chose to explore the novel's anti-colonial (and anti-patriarchal) representational features. Given the author's gender and the novel's focus on (mostly) female characters, much of the South Asian postcolonial scholarship used Western feminist approaches (poststructuralist and otherwise) to tease out the novel's resistant texture and its against-the-grain narrative sensibility. For example, M.K. Ray turns to a Luce Irigirayean "gynocriticism" in an exploration of how narrative technique (stream of consciousness, for example) and voice (syntax and rhythm, for instance) express a resistant feminine psyche that is, Ray states, "so different from that of men" (105). The time leaps, syntactic re-configurations, and narrative tempo reflect, Ray continues, "the fractured sensibility and the broken and fragmented world of women" (106). Other scholars such as Anita Singh more deliberately couple the novel to a postcolonial feminist frame, reading how the novel powerfully moves those who are otherwise kept at silent margins, such as women, children and Untouchables--or, as Singh writes, "all those dispossessed of an identity or a speaking voice" (133)--to authoritative narrative centers. For Singh, Roy's retrieval of subaltern voices becomes a postcolonial "act of liberation" (133). Many of the other postcolonial feminist critics that appeared during the period of this novel's canonization discuss its use of Western identified novelistic conventions to write against neo-Orientalist representations, and examine the way it gives texture to localized epistemologies--small histories and small everyday struggles--which are seen as resisting the homogenizing flow of a patriarchal identified global capitalism.

Added to the views of the feminist and/or postcolonial readings of *The God of Small Things* are the analyses focused on the novel's use of the storytelling strategies

associated with postmodernism. Here, rather than dealing with the novel's play with temporality or with its focus on dispossessed peoples posited as anti-colonial rather than more generally anti-capitalist, such analyses concluded that the novel participated in and extended the line of the traditionally Western identified postmodern approach: anachronistic narrative collage, fragmentation of self, multiplication of centers of truths of history, to name a few of its conspicuous characteristics. Thus, for Akshaya Kumar the "video-graphed montage of the splintered self", the narrative's "pastiche of the petty" (69), its "perversity and irresponsibility" (69), and its refusal of the "grandeur of sublimity" (69), locate *The God of Small Things* within the cosmopolitanism of postmodernism--not, as some Western criticism would have it, within a quaint Indian parochialism. For Yogesh Sinha and Sandhya Tripathi, the novel's blurring of fact and fiction, its play with language, and its sense of truth as a "hall of mirrors" (154), both convey a postmodernist sensibility and express the "experimental type of knowledge" (152), which typify the postcolonial narrative that "outwits" an "imposed Western colonial impression" (156).

In the academic canonization of *The God of Small Things* few interpretive angles were left untapped. Quite expectedly in view of the origins and gender of its author, the themes it develops, and the particular actions and reactions of its characters, it was the postcolonial critical frame that glued strongest to the novel: not only how the narrative "writes back" against neo-Orientalist representations, for example, but also how it constitutes an allegory of nation, how it should be seen as an act of symbolic resistance to metropolitan nation-state and neo-imperial discourses, and so on and so forth. So while seemingly nothing was left out in the canonization process, little attention was paid to the novel's literary ground.

The identification of *The God of Small Things* as postcolonial and/or feminist hinges on the psychoanalytical, socio-historical and political concepts or themes chosen to read the novel as a whole, to interpret its characters, their behavior, attitudes and actions, and to attach a certain meaning to its descriptions and narrative comments. Such a focus is fundamentally a politically informed choice to see this and all other literary works of art as social-science specimens: produced of course by individuals addressing themselves to other individuals, but knowingly or unknowingly, consciously or unconsciously, in ways that are determined by nationality or postcolonial status, class, membership within a caste system, ethnicity, and gender. Both writers and readers (subaltern or otherwise) are identified in all cases as subjects--as being under the control of the social forces that shape and determine them. Now, Roy's novel not only bears other readings: it requires them if one wishes to be able to account for its accomplishments as a literary work of art and to perceive accurately the elements that complicate its relationship to certain approaches to criticism (postcolonial, feminist, or otherwise). The novel as a genre--and Roy's novel in particular--are generously roomy, capable of fitting in anything and everything from the external world and from the subjective world of feelings and thoughts, while using all the narrative techniques humankind has invented, including free indirect speech, stream of consciousness, dramatic narrative, lyrical narrative, prose poem, to name a few. As Roy states:

> Rule One for a writer, as far as I'm concerned, is There Are No Rules. And Rule Two (since Rule One was made to be broken) is There Are No Excuses for Bad Art. Painters, writers, singers, actors, dancers, filmmakers, musicians are meant to fly, to push at the frontiers, to worry the edges of the human imagination, to conjure beauty from the

> most unexpected things, to find magic in places where others never thought to look. If you limit the trajectory of their flight, if you weigh their wings with society's existing notions of morality and responsibility, if you truss them up with preconceived values, you subvert their endeavour. ("Power Politics" 5)

So Roy chose to tell her story in the form of the novel, not the autobiography, or the short story, or the epic poem, or the essay or the journalistic article. And the storytelling mode she used is the one we identify broadly as realism. Informing the realism of her novel are not just verifiable facts of history--the Naxalite revolt and Indira Ghandi's State of Emergency--as well as those culled from her life: the character, Rahel, who grows up in Ayemenem (near Roy's hometown, Kerala) shares many of Roy's experiences (she studies architecture) and attributes (she refuses to conform and marches to a different beat). As such, Meena Sodhi identifies the novel as a "personal book" (41) that chronicles Roy's "life reconstructed out of the memories of the past" (42). Now, to continue with the obvious, neither historical facts nor autobiographical traits appearing in the narrative transform the novel into an historical document or a "disguised" autobiography. Both the critic and the general reader are to engage with *The God of Small Things* first and foremost as a fictional narrative.

Roy's sources are varied, both individual and universal. She draws from the treasure trove of personal experience, history, and stories read and heard to invent her plots, settings, and characterizations. As the novel unfolds, we see the influence of Dickens (playfully precise imagery and metaphor), Faulkner (layered voices and multiply filtered events), Fitzgerald (tragic romance mode and theme of industrial waste), Thomas Hardy (rural realism and sense of character Fate), Jamaica Kincaid

(anti-colonial coming of age story), Gabriel García Márquez (play with temporality), to name a few. We also witness the narrator's explicit references to classic Indian epics such as The Mahabaratha and Ramayana. And, as Julie Mullaney identifies at one point in her reader's guide to the novel, the narrative unfolds like the stylized dance-dramas known as "kathakali"--a storytelling tradition that originated in Kerala in the 17th century. *The God of Small Things* situates itself quite overtly within world literary traditions--often, the narrative directs its reader to signposts that indicate a wealth of affiliations, and one of the paratextual blurbs even seeks to pave the way for the reader to identify the novel's allegiance: "Faulknerian in its ambitious tackling of family and race and class, Dickensian in its sharp-eyed observation of society and character"--but none of this entitles critics to affirm pejoratively that Roy's novel has "gone international". To restate the obvious: Roy and all contemporary novelists of value resist the ghettoizing of their work, no matter where it is accomplished or where the author lives or is born. While texturing a South Asian subjectivity and using postcolonial aesthetic sensibilities, Roy is the opposite of a parochial writer and her sophisticated novel both engages and dis-engages with world literary canons.

One of the dominant plots in the novel is that of the romance. This rather age-old, universal and somewhat conventional plot line, however, becomes interesting and vital once again thanks to Roy's narrative skills and to the focus on two lovers not just from across those proverbial tracks that divide families and class, but from across caste lines. Also, as the novel spirals into its center and goes on to reveal the mystery of Velutha's murder, the romance plot is made to intersect with a mystery suspense plot; this puts an interesting and engaging new spin on the classic love story as it gravitates around the tragic consequences of loving within a caste-structured society. (Indeed, the final scene of caste-transgressive sensual love making not only suggests

that the lovers will be metaphorically reunited after death, but aligns the story with that of a similar suggestion at the end of the Ramayana.

Romance, suspense, mystery and intrigue are the dominant containers and motivators of *The God of Small Things*, a story that unfolds along two temporal planes. The most chronologically present narrative takes place over twenty-four hours: adult Rahel's return from the U.S. to Kerala (vaguely identified as the early 1990s) and her reunion with her twin brother, Estha. The most chronologically distant and past narrative takes place during the two weeks that lead up to the drowning of Sophie Mol, their cousin, and the murder of Velutha, in 1969, when Rahel and Estha are aged seven. Both chronological lines intercalate as the novel unfolds. This happens less as a series of flashbacks (which occur very occasionally), but as a seamless narrative mostly identified with (filtered through) the point of view of Rahel (who occasionally is also the narrator). As the narrator moves back and forth between these two temporal zones, the narrative gives more and more detail to scenes, events, and character interactions that make up the 1969 moment. In contrast, since the narrative present does not contain any plot shifting events, the reader senses that whatever happened in 1969 must have put a choke-hold of sorts on Rahel's and Estha's lives. Most of the novel deals with the past and hinges on it, and as the details accumulate, the reader slowly and strategically is made privy to the who and the why: not just of Velutha and his murder, but also of Sophie's death, of Estha's sexual abuse, and so on.

Along the way, the narrator breaths life into several major characters: The independent thinking Ammu, who defies law and has an affair with Velutha, the Harijan Untouchable, a skilled carpenter trained by a European builder to sculpt Bauhaus furniture and the son of a glass-eyed father; Ammu's brother, Chacko, a

conflicted pickle factory owner, his ex-wife, Margaret, and his British raised, Anglo-Indian daughter, Sophie Mol; Mammachi, the grandmother whose skull exhibits permanent scars from her husband's beatings; Bennan John Ipe, the grandfather whose dashed dreams of becoming an important entomologist for the British government (pre-Independence) lead to his death; Baby Kochamma, who lusts for Father Mulligan and embraces Christianity; Kochu Maris, the superstitious house servant; Comrade Pillai, a local politician who in the name of Marxism actually brings more suffering than good to those disenfranchised like Velutha. As the narrator reveals the nuances of each character, the reader begins to see how ideology and social status (Anglophilia, heterosexism, caste, class, for example) conform different expressions of alienation, shame, self-loathing, violence, sexual abuse, and death.

For the most part, by the end of the first chapter the reader already has a good sketch of the plot (romance and mystery/suspense) as well as an overview of the themes and characters. What continues fueling his/her interest is the way the narrative fills in details in a non-linear and splintered way to answer questions such as those summed up by critic Michiko Kakutani: "What caused the boy named Estha to stop talking? What sent his twin sister, Rahel, into exile in the United States? Why did their beautiful mother, Ammu, end up dying alone in a grimy hotel room? What killed their English cousin, Sophie Mol? And why has a "whiff of scandal" involving sex and death come to surround their bourgeois family?" (15). Roy's narrator self-reflexively refers to this process, announcing how "Little events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted, become imbued with new meaning" (32). The tension between what the narrator knows and is willing to reveal builds on and spurs the reader to find out more. Reaching the end one can look back and delight in all the details that were pieced together in a non-linear fashion to offer the completed puzzle.

The architecture of the story is as essential to its narration as its style. There is a clear "will to style" in Roy's phrasing, in her patient syntax that continually and strategically slows down our hasty reading so that we may enjoy the imagery, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations evoked. (By "will to style" I refer to the literary ideal of the "perfectly sculpted prose page" famously enacted by Flaubert and found animating all seriously committed writers. It designates the rigorous attention paid by the author to both thematic and formal elements, to the exploration of language and its possibilities, to the search for a personal voice, and to the shaping of a personal worldview and of a distinctive way of expressing it. Notwithstanding its Nietzschean ring, this concept has nothing to do with Nietzsche's "will to power", a metaphysical notion that for him meant the world as such or, in the language of Heidegger, the being of Being.) Roy's will to style is also evident in the way she plays with the tone or the lexical level of words, switching the register not only for variety's sake but also to signal changes in the narration. And it is also patent in the way she creates metaphors and symbols, such as the recurring image of the moth or the identification of all significant moments as taking place at "ten to two", for they too confer to the novel a quite distinct "atmosphere". It is the strength of her will to style and her uncommon capacity to bring it to fruition that has allowed Roy to write such an accomplished novel as *The God of Small Things*.

Since the publication of *The God of Small Things* and its worldwide success, doors have opened to many other young South Asian women writers (among them, Kiran Desai, Manju Kapur, Ameena Meer, Shauna Sing Baldwin, to name a few.) Often, these new authors allude to Roy's novel, extend and complicate her narrative line and enrich the South Asian literary genealogy in new and exciting ways. When, in the context of an interview, Roy explains that her novel is not "specifically about

'our culture'--it's a book about human nature" (Abraham, 91), she is inviting the reader and the critic to take a more careful look into the contents, the underlying themes running through the multiple labyrinths in *The God of Small Things*. Because the novel as a literary genre has an unlimited capacity for worldmaking, it can show us and make us feel everything and anything existing in the universe, including our personal imaginings and fantasies. And thanks to the fact that it can do this with no concern for veracity, for scientific probability or plausibility, or even for everyday commonsense realism, the novel opens unlimited opportunities to realize "thought experiments" of every sort, to test emotions and thoughts and instincts of all kinds against wholly imagined worlds or quite real life circumstances. This is what makes the novel such a formidable laboratory of human sciences and psychology and such a delightful depository of suppositions, hypotheses, and knowledge concerning all aspects of what we are, what and how we feel, and what we do or capable of doing. Such are the properties, the function and the origin of the "realism" and the "antirealism" peculiar to fiction and above all to the fiction shaped by a strong will to style.

If Roy's *The God of Small Things* has been a powerful catalyst for many writers it is certainly because it has been efficient in the sense previously mentioned. Through the careful architecture of her novel, the expansion of contact zones between postcolonial/ethnic and the Western Anglo-American and European canon, the inventive use of narrative procedures (viewpoint, voice, stance, genre, and so on) and style (rhythm, atmosphere, tone, lexical register and innovation, and so on), Roy has furnished tools for others to use and improve, and she has incorporated in the literary laboratory areas of the human psyche for others to continue to explore. This is why her novel has rapidly become a "classic" and will probably remain so for a long time

to come, not because it is deemed an allegory of nation, a writing back against empire, or a selling out to global capitalism.

As Stephen Alter remarks, fiction in general has had no "measurable social or political impact. Their readership, in most cases, is limited to the middle class and seldom reaches the poor and oppressed population, most of whom are illiterate" (24). Indeed, it is rather naively utopian to believe that novels--and their interpretation--are as such agents of social change. Moreover, this illusion can work very much against the literary writer in the first place. That's why Salman Rushdie warns of the author who "sets himself or herself up as the voice of nation" (60). Such reductively predetermined stand will ultimately lead, he concludes, "to the murder of thought" (60). And that's why Roy, too, considers that being identified as a "writer-activist" diminishes "the scope, the range, the sweep of what a writer is and can be" (Power Politics, 23).

We leave the last word to Roy herself, who states in War Talk, "when writers, painters, musicians, film makers suspend their judgment and blindly yoke their art to the service of the nation, it's time for all of us to sit up and worry" (47).

Chapter-III: Textual Analysis

Disruption and Subversion of Patriarchal Normativity in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* subverts and disrupts the patriarchal norms based on caste, class and gender. Set in a small town Ayemenem near Kottayam in Kerala, the novel is a story of caste exploitation at the centre of which is the sub-text of forbidden love between Amu and the untouchable Velutha. Velutha who is categorized as an untouchable or paravan by the patriarchal normalcy has physical relationship with Amu who falls onto the category of "touchable" in the society. So, Velutha and Ammu are the protesters who defy the restrictions and limitations imposed upon them by the norms of the society. They break the social taboo and incur the wrath of Ammu's family and the Kerala police. They rupture the rigid social rules of the caste system despite the inhuman and mindless punishment meted out to them leading to their destruction and death.

Ammu, a subaltern woman character, tries to break the hierarchy prevalent in society in terms of caste and gender. In the society which is heavily guided by the patriarchal normativity, inter-caste marriage is not allowed. To make love with the person from different caste is supposed to be an extreme crime and a great sin. A woman who has an affair with the lower caste male would be an outcaste in such a society. Brought up in such a conservative family where her Mammachi was the victim of Pappachi's repeated beatings, Ammu is aware of this gruesome reality. But Ammu transgresses the imaginary boundary line set by the oppressive patriarchy and relishes in the warm lap of Valutha. Even though she is mercilessly oppressed, she tries to emerge as an individual in

her own right. The daughter of the sour-tempered Imperial Entomologist Pappachi and his much-battered wife Mammachi, Ammu is the product of the disturbed household. She finished her schooling the same years as Pappachi retired from his job at Delhi and moved to Ayemenem. She was denied college education as "Pappachi insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl". In Ayemenem "there was very little for a young girl to do other than to wait for marriage proposals while she helped her mother with the housework". Since her father did not have enough money to raise a suitable dowry, no proposals came Ammu's way. She had crossed eighteen. All day, she dreamt of escaping from Ayemenem "and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter long-suffering mother". One of her plans to leave Ayemenem worked when Pappachi agreed to let her spend the summer with a distant aunt who lived in Calcutta.

Similarly, Velutha, a subaltern male character is an untouchable ; an *Achut* who also breaks the social rules and crosses the forbidden territory. Velutha, the skilled Paraban, embodies the plight of the untouchables in Independent India, much like Mulk Raj Anand's Bakha in *Untouchable.* In spite of his inborn qualities and physique, he holds his own in the Touchable world of Ayemenem, which greatly disturbs his father, Vellya Pappen, who is eternally grateful to Mammachi for gifting him his glass eye and who hasn't forgotten "the sweeping back with a broom" days.

Velutha and Velly Papen, his father, underwent the most inhuman treatment, one can imagine a human being receiving at the hands of another human beings. To quote Roy again:

> Pappachi would not allow Pravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched. During Mammachi's girlhood Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidently sweeping into a Paravan's footprint. (169)

In Mammachi's time the Untouchable were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed. For Veluth however, things were a little better. Unlike his elders, Velutha went to a school, albeit to a school for 'Untouchables' which Mammachi's father-in-law has founded. Every afternoon after School Velutha worked with Johann Klein, a carpenter from a Carpenter's Guild in Bavaria and learnt carpentry at which he became adept. Apart from carpentry skills, Velutha had a way with machines. If only he had not been a Paravan, he would have become an Engineer. He was indispensable both in the House and in the "Paradise Pickles and Preserves" factory. All this gave Velutha, so his father felt, "an unwarranted assurance." "In the way he walked. The way he held his head. The quiet way in which he offered suggestions without being asked. Or the quiet way in which he disregarded suggestions without appearing to rebel". In an Untouchable these qualities would be construed "as insolence" by the Touchables. Velutha was hired as the factory carpenter and allowed to enter the factory premises and tough things that Touchable touched a big step for a Paravan.

Roy weaves a complex web of the collusion of forces in such a masterly way that it is difficult to single out the most crucial one that leads to the brutal killing of Velutha. Baby Kochamma wants him to be destroyed, though she never mentions this explicitly, because of her niece's sexual liaison with Velutha which has corrupted her family's reputation. And yet this was not the sole reason. For since the day Baby Kochamma was publicly humiliated by some of the marchers in Cochin, she has focussed all her fury on Velutha. In her mind Velutha had grown to represent the march, as also the man who had compressed her wave the Marxist Party flag. Since that day she had begun to hate him. She succeeds in convincing Inspector Thomas Matthew that Velutha's attempted rape of Ammu, the children's disappearance from the house and Sophie Mol's death could not be unconnected. On his part Inspector Matthew becomes alert on being told by Baby Kochamma that Velutha had Nazalite links. He in turn checks with Pillai if Velutha had any political support. The callous Pillai not only disowns Velutha as a party worker but also does not refute the allegation of attempted rape in Baby Kochamma's FIR. The police now have all the evidence to act swiftly and brutally. The impact of the savagery with which Velutha is destroyed leaves the reader stunned with anger and pain.

The novel is spun on the very fabric of social stratification prevalent in the Indian society for several centuries. Despite institutionalised watchwords: Equality, liberty and justice to all citizens for years; the Democratic India is still reigned over by four-class system. Worse than ever the latest shift in politics unashamedly encases caste and community care to reap maximum benefits. Even the most progressive of democrats, irrespective of their political part or ideology, are unwittingly perpetuating social inequality, religious intolerance and racial

discrimination. The Indian people at large are still moaning under the unshruggable burden of the Chaturvarna pyramid. Protective discrimination, in seemly form or reservation, is perennially there to worsen everything. Arundhati has shown a very fine sense in enlivening the whole scenario with discreet correctness. Velutha, the prodigal Paravan, becomes her spectrometer for the purpose. He displays diverse colours of her experience in varied wavelengths of caste-feelings. The novel reveals that in all walks of life he suffers stock scorn and segregation of the upper caste people. The 'touchable' workers in Paradise Pickles sniff at him because "according to them, Paravans were not meant to be carpenters". The guardian of law and justice, Inspector Thomas Matthew and the 'crusader of the Oppressed,' Comrade K.N.M. Pillai wilfully shake hands with each other to favour the false FIR lodged against him by schemy Baby Kochamma, merely for the reason that all of them are touchables and Velutha is Untouchable. Comrade Pillai doesn't even mention that Velutha is a member of the Community Party. At another place the Comrade is seen discussing with Paridise Pickles' owner Chacko, the mater of Velutha's dismissal from his Touchable-like job:

> But see, Comrade, any benefits that you give him, naturally others are resenting it. They see it as a partiality. After all, whatever job he does; carpenter or electrician or whatever it is, for them he is just a Paravan. It is a conditioning they have from birth [...] Better for him you send him off [...]. (175)

Ammu, a divorced woman, returns to her parents' home but is not welcomed wholeheartedly and warmly simply because she is a divorcee. The family is terrified by the risk that the presence of a divorced woman would affect

the possible marriage for other daughters within the household. The narrator of the novel, through the example of Baby Kochamma, an archetype of conservative Indian woman who has internalized the patriarchal norms, vividly describes the attitude of the family towards a divorced woman:

> As for a divorced daughter - according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for divorced daughter from a love marriage, well words couldn't 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. (Roy 45-46)

Ammu is a rebel. She revolts against the prescriptive rules and regulations regarding love, family relationship and rituals in the society. Ammu's love for so-called untouchable Velutha, a pravan, is an example of her rebellion. She is the main agent who is against love laws, "the laws that lay down who should be loved, and how much" (Roy 172). In a sense, everyone in the family crosses the love laws. Mammachi, who has a deep one-sided oedipal connection with her son supplies young girls for his "men's needs" from the backdoor. Baby Kochamma is tortured by her unblossomed love for Father Mulligan.

Ammu moves around without being heard. The male tyranny that is unleashed on her takes a cruel form in her parents' home. It is a battering that does not show but corrodes one from within. The arrival of Sophie Mol seems to ignite the so far suppressed conflicts. The preferential treatment shown towards Chacko's widowed ex-wife and their daughter is openly displayed in front of all and sundry, throwing Ammu and her twins in to complete isolation. This is too severe a blow for Ammu to bear. So, she looks away only to find that Rahel has

already escaped to the animated world of Velutha-a world of warmth, love and sincerity. She, while searching for an anchor catches the intent gaze of Velutha when he is tossing Rahel in the air, and both share a moment of intense desire for each other, the like of which they had never imagined or dreamt before. Velutha notices Ammu as a woman and feels that he had something to share with her and that she too has gifts to give him.

Not having any right on anything whatsoever and constantly being made to felt dejected and low, Ammu is lured by Velutha's meaningful gaze. Unable to hold her, she breaks free of all the constraints and barriers and walks across to the life - infusing company of the despised paravan. She does not stop to gauge the consequences, for nothing could be worse than what she had already faced. So, throwing all the cares to the wind, she allows herself to be drenched in the love of Velutha every night for two weeks. She is ultimately able to become a part of 'the sub-world' of her twins and Velutha from which she has earlier been excluded, 'a tactile warred of smiles and laughter ..... '(Roy 176).

Initially, she found her children's fondness for a man who was subservient to the household somewhat odd. But he filled their days with a life they craved and hungered for what their father or Chacko could not give. Velutha gave them in plenty. He played their games, satiated their thirst for stories, and above all gave them true love. Their trip across the river to set up their own independent unit in 'History House' is symbolic of their rejection of the hostile, materialistic, indifferent and shallow world of the well-to-do. Ammu also rejects a life of empty appearances and turns to Velutha for a fillip so desperately needed.

It all begins with Ammu, accompanying her parents to Ayemenem after her father's retirement. Being denied a college education, marriage for her also

became a difficult proposition as dowry could not be afforded. So, she had to wait at home and become domesticated. She begins to feel stifled by the restrictive atmosphere of the house. Worst of all were Pappachi's outbursts of physical violence inflicted on Mammachi from time to time. These irrational bouts were most unbecoming of a man who had been an Imperial Entomologist under the British and after independence, a Joint Director of Entomology. His achievement of having discovered a rare moth with unusually "dense dorsal tufts" brought only partial fulfilment, as moths were never named after him. He beat his wife, Mammachi, with a brass flower vase every night till Chacko intervened and put a permanent stop to such tyranny. He then smashed his favourite mahogany rocking chair with a "plumber's monkey wrench" because of deep-rooted frustrations emanating from an empty retired life. Because of Mammachi's success as a violinist and her popularity in the pickle - making business named later by Chacko as "Paradise Pickles and Preserves," his frustrations and inferiority complex further increased. He couldn't tolerate even the success of his own wife, Mammachi. So, he resorted to physical violence to vent his pent up anger.

The only escape for Ammu, from such oppressive atmosphere was through marriage. While taking a break at an Aunt's place in Calcutta, she came across a sober looking Hindu Bangali from the tea-estates in Assam, and without looking back steeped in to matrimony. Simone de Beauvoir remarks that "there is unanimous agreement that getting a husband - or in some cases a 'protector' is for her (woman) the most important of undertakings ..... She will free herself from the parent at home, from her mother's hold; she will open up her future not by active conquest but by delivering herself up passive and docile, into the hands

of a new master....." (Beauvoir 352). In no time the gloss wore off and she became a victim of her drunkard husband's rages. Mr. Hollick, the employer had also sounded a warning and later advised Ammu's husband to go away for a while, for treatment perhaps, and send his wife to his premises to be "looked after". Finding no viable solution to his drunken stupor, and fearing her own vulnerability, Ammu returned reluctantly to her parents' home. Here she was more of an intruder and less of a member of the house as she had been married, and according to Baby Kochamma, her Aunt "she had no position at all" (Roy 45), as she had been divorced. But Ammu does not give in. She proceeds ahead with unflagging determination and enthusiasm.

Thus, in *The God of Small Things,* Roy doesn't present subordination as a stable, unproblematic condition from which resistance, necessarily, proceeds. Instead, she maps varying degrees of rebellion and defiance against the dominant patriarchal normativity. In other word, Roy is more concerned with the difference and alternative possibilities of "small" versus "big" voices. Roy's deployment of "small" in *The God of Small Things* refers to the subordinated or subaltern subjects to critique the dominant existing social and political arrangement which is heavily directed by patriarchal normativity.[1]

In its opposition to 'Big' Vs. 'Small, Roy's novel reproduced the opposition between "elite" vs. subaltern histories, forms of consciousness and the terrain of their operation that structures subaltern studies in general and Ranjit Guha's work in particular. Roy's novel also reproduces Guha's treatment of dominant history as the means through which the state acquires its "hegemonic

[1] Patriarchal normativity refers to the norms, values, categories and principles partially set by patriarchy privileging men and oppressing women. If that category is transgressed, those who defy such rules and regulations are stigmatized like Ammu and Velutha in the novel.

hold". *The God of Small Things* presents history as a dominating, oppressive force that saturates virtually all social and cultural space including familiar, intimate and affective relationships. The novel's sense of history as an overwhelming, impersonal force whose imprint is most starkly visible through its effects, its obliteration of those who do not live in accordance with its values and dictates - receives its most sustained treatment in the chapter "The History House". Here "History" appears "in live performance" (Roy 293) with the policemen, who were "Only history's henchmen" as its instrumental players. These policeman "break and smash Velutha" (ibid 291-3) and her twins Estha and Rahel's (potentially) surrogate father. In soaring, polemical prose the novel asserts that these policemen were:

> Impelled by feelings that was primal yet paradoxically wholly impersonal. Feelings of contempt born of inchoate, unacknowledged fear - civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness in clinical demonstrations in controlled conditions of human nature's pursuit of ascendancy. Structure. Order. Compute monopoly [...] This was era imprinting itself on those who lived it [...] If they hurt Velutha more than they intended to, it was only because any kinship, any connections between them and him, any implication that of nothing etc, at last biologically he was a fellow creature - had been severed long ago... They were warily inoculating a community against an outbreak. (Roy 292-3)

However, the epigraph to *The God of Small Things* from John Berger ("never again will a single story be told as though it is the only one"), and the

novel's privileging of the "small drama and fine detail of social existence" lived "at its lower depths" (Guha 36) that discloses an alternative perspective. Quadri Ismail, in his contribution to a recent *Subaltern Studies* volume dedicated to 'Community, gender and violence', argues that 'inherent' in the 'logic' of dominant to 'Community, gender and violence', argues that 'inherent' in the 'logic' of dominant history's 'repressions' which manifest themselves 'through a process of incorporation, subordination, and expulsion of social group is the possibility of its own subversion'. For it is in 'such expulsions, or epidermal locals that and [dominant history] must produce in order to be, lies the possibilities of the other, more enabling or "operable" notions of community' (Ibid: 216). It is for this reason that Roy arguably fixes her attention to the story of Ammu, her twins, Velutha and the love they have for each other. Significantly, when Ammu and Velutha first set eyes on each other as adults, that moment is presented as one redolent with the possibility of change - a brief but sure falling way of history's oppressive hold. "History was wrong footed, caught off guard. Sloughed off like an old snake skin. It marks, its scars, its wound, from old wars and the walking - backwards days all fell away" (Roy 167-8).

The marginalization and subsequent 'expulsion' of Ammu and her twins from their family and ancestral property is effected through a variety of circumstances, only some of which are of their making. As a 'married daughter'; worse, as 'a divorced daughter', worse yet, as 'a divorced daughter form a love marriage'; and finally, most heinous of all, as 'a divorced daughter from an intercommunity love marriage', Ammu, according to her aunt, Baby Kochamma, 'has no position in her parents' home' (Roy 45). Neither does her twins as 'doomed, fatherless waifs. Worse still, half-Hindu hybrids whom no self -

respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry' (Ibid: 44). The twins also don't belong to the convention family unit headed by Chacko, Ammu's brother, Mammachi, her mother, and Baby Kochamma. The novel both displays this marginalization and asserts it. Thus, on the day of Sophie Mol, Chacko's half English daughter arrives, the twins, Ammu and Velutha are placed mostly on the peripheries of, sometimes even outside, the 'Play' in which Sophie Mol is given the starring role while the other members of the family hover around her within the "play" (ibid: 164-73).

Unlike Ammu and her twins, in *The God of Small Things* Velutha is perceived as someone situated resolutely outside even minimal modalities of incorporation. As a paravan, an untouchable, and his 'kinship' with touchable to which social group Ammu and her twins belong, any recognition that, he was a fellow human being 'had been severed long ago. Thus:

> As a young boy, Velutha would come with his father, Vellaya Paapen to the back entrance [...] Ammu's father Pappachi wouldn't allow paravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything touchable touches, [and] Mamachi could remember a time [...] when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away there footprints so that Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a paravan's footprint. (Roy 70-1)

What makes Velutha troublesome so far as the touchable and untouchables are concerned is his skill with machines, which translates in the form of labor without which Paradise Pickles and Preserves couldn't function: Velutha assembles and maintains the machines and builds the 'cutting surfaces'

and 'the ground level furnaces' that makes the task preparing the Preserves and Pickles easier (ibid: 72-3).

What makes Velutha dangerous so far as the touchable and untouchables are concerned is his refusal to be interpellated as a paravan: his 'lack of hesitation', for examples, 'an unwarranted assurance. In the way he held his head. The quite way he offered suggestion without being asked. Or the quiet way in which he disregarded suggestion without appearing to rebel'. These attributes, desirable in the so-called touchables, accoridng to his father, an 'old world paravan', 'could be construed as insolence' in a Paravan (ibid: 73).

Within the governing logic of Roy's novel, it is precisely this out - of - placeness (for which the touchables and untouchables resent him and will betray him) that makes Velutha a likely agent of the possibility of social change, much as it is Ammu's and twins' out of placeness within their family and social set up that will make them the instruments for revealing the emancipatory potentialities of their location. For example, in a highly romanticized, mystifiying prose, Ammu is someone who, on certain days,' live [s] in the penumbral shadows between two worlds, just beyond the grasp of her [family's] power] (ibid: 44). She defiantly and visibly breaks with her family and her class/caste belonging when after Sophie Mol's funeral, she goes to the police station to counter Baby Kochamma's implication of Velutha in Sophie Mol's 'murder', whereas Baby Kochamma 'had gambled on the fact that Ammu, whatever else she did, however angry she was, would never publicly admit to her relationship with Velutha' (ibid: 304). In locating the 'small voices' of the novel in Ammu, her twins, and Velutha, thereby making them potentially bearers of an alternative knowledge, way of being in the world, and form of community, Roy is involved in a project

similar to Guha's. However, because she situates her critique of patriarchy with that of gender and caste in their dialectical relationship with each other, she can also be distinguished from Guha.

For example, women's responses to patriarchal oppression are not homogenous. In Ammu pappachi's 'cold, calculating, cruelty' (Roy 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" (ibid: 172-3). Her 'lofty sense of injustice' against patriarchal domination and the rebelliousness that flows from it does indeed feed her desire to escape from her claustrophobic family situation, and defines her out-of-placeness, all of which in turn fuel her 'transgressive' love for Velutha. But all this does not altogether exempt her from the contractions that flow from her simultaneous investment in some class - marked values - her investment, for example, in cleanliness and obedience, for which Chacko will label her a 'fascist' (ibid: 142), and her insistence, when the twins 'blow spit bubbles', that 'only clerks behaved like that, not aristocrats' (ibid: 80).

Unlike Ammu, Pappachi's cold, calculating cruelty makes Mammachi even more long suffering and submissive, an attitude she is in forces when she 'commits herself to Chacko's care', and later, when she hands over her 'small' but profitable factory to him'. There is a reciprocal relationship between her submissiveness and her willing embraces of patriarchal arrangements so that, Chacko's 'libertine relationships with the factory women' are condoned as 'men's needs' (ibid: 160). Ammu's relationship with Velutha provokes an 'unmanageable

fury': She thought of her [daughter] naked, coupling with a man who was nothing but a filthy coolie --- his particular paravan smell. Like animals ... like a dog with a bitch an heat ... (Ammu) had defiled generations of breeding' (ibid: 244). Her Mammachi's embrace of patriarchal values, which includes their investment in a hetero-normative family structure and caste - defined identity that controls women's sexuality, not least because women are viewed as reproducers of a 'pure' bloodline within the family are all part of the same package.

But if with Ammu and Mammachi it seems as if the rebellion against or endorsement of patriarchal oppression fuels a concomitant refusal or endorsement of caste - based hatred of untouchability, with Velutha it is his refusal to be interpellated as a paravan that seems to enable his subversion of patriarchy's definition of hetero-normative masculinity and sexuality. When the policemen hunt him down in 'The History House', 'they noticed his painted nails'. At which point, 'one of them held them up and waved the fingers coquettish at the others. They laughed. What's this? In a high falsetto' (ibid: 294). Velutha's father, unlike his son but like Mammachi, willingly accepts, and even colludes in, his own oppression. He 'offers to kill his son with his own bare hands' when he informs Mammachi of his son's relationship with her daughter (ibid: 75). But Velutha is able to cross such boundary lines.

Thus at stake in Ranjit Guha's *The Small Voice of History* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is an argument for transformation. In other words, their critique is based on their perception of an alternative - radically different politics, a differently structured society. Guha is concerned with the transformation of the conventional apparatus of historiography; Roy's contention is with the subversion and disruption of the stultifying, discriminatory effects of

social and political arrangements authorized by patriarchal ideology. The two, of course, are not unrelated undertakings. For an argument of transform inherited paradigms of historiography that locates itself, as Guha's 'small vice' does, in an attempt to retrieve the agency of the insurgent subaltern assumes a transformation of existing social and political condition as both cause and product of this 'new' or alternative historiography. Concomitantly, as much as *The God of Small Things* mobilizes 'History' explicitly as the trope through which the existing repressive social and political arrangements are figured forth, re-envisioning and re-writing history is part and parcel of transforming these repressive conditions, and is arguably, what the novel's retrieval of "small things" enacts.

In a compressed but richly allusive ways, Roy sketches the lineaments of an idealized, desired form of sexuality and community via reconfigures familial relationship that exist in sharp contrast to the 'smug, ordered world' against which Ammu Vehemently revolts (Roy 167). The erotic and sexual dimension of Ammu's and Velutha's transgressive inter - caste relationship is the site of their individualized rebellion against the patriarchy. Ammu and Velutha's transgressive relationship is part of a discourse more about annihilating if less about overcoming caste distinction. Along with exemplifying Ammu's and Veluth'as individualized bid for freedom and fulfilment of their desires, Roy's *The God of Small Things* projects a larger project that seeks to transform the ideological grounds of a hetero-normative family structure.

Roy's *The God of Small Things* then situates Ammu and Velutha's relationship within a nexus of another set of relationship which could come to constitute an alternative form of community. It is significant that in re-

envisioning such a form of community which derives precisely from all that is wrong and oppressive in Ammu and Velutha's families, it is the roles of the father and husband / partner, *The God of Small Things* suggests, that need to be recast. Against Papachi's cold, calculating, cruelty', readers are invited to see Velutha as the twins' adored friend and mentor, who helps them repair the boat they travel in to the 'History House', who when visited by Estha, Rahel, and Sophie Mol, dressed in saris as Mrs. Pillai, Mrs. Eapen, and Mrs. Rajagopalan, 'entertains' them 'treating them like real ladies. As an adult, 'years later, Rahel 'recognizes the sweetness of that gestrue' (Roy, 181). Similarly, in pointed contrast to Pappachi's violence against Mamachi, Chacko's thoughtless exploitation of the women factory workers, and Ammu's husband's unprincipled behavior when he accedes to his English boss's desire to socially exploit Ammu, Velutha's relationship with Ammu is portrayed as a reciprocal one: 'he was not necessarily the only giver of gifts ... she had gifts to give too' (Roy 168). The sexual encounter described in the closing pages is represented as 'markedly non-phalocentric. Thus, the recasting of sexual morality, the liberation of sexuality from the patriarchal social conventions and constraints is Roy's major preoccupations in *The God of Small Things*.

Chapter- IV: Conclusion

After the analysis of Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things,* the researcher has reached the conclusion that the subversion and the disruption of patriarchal normativity is the main the motive of the novel. On the one hand, Roy presents the stereotypical society which is snared by the social vices such as the prevailing category of touchability and untouchability as well as the multiple discriminations based on gender, caste and class. The society is run by the patriarchal norms and values, rules and regulations which are bias and partial, and which privileges males as superior and degrades females as inferior. But on the other, Roy represents the relationship between Ammu and Velutha who belong to two different categories set up by the patriarchal society, as a rebellion against the patriarchal norms and values. On the one hand Roy shows the excesses of the patriarchal society, and on the other, she presents the rebellious characters like Ammu and Velutha who revolt against those excesses.

Roy has painted a stark portrait of the society in Kerala in *The God of Small Things.* She has eminently succeeded in her effort of exposing the machinery of caste discrimination, gender biasness, political manipulations and related problems through her setting and description of Ayemenem House near Kottayam in Kerala. Scenes and incidents have been described in photographic detail. These include the descriptions of the Meenal river, word- pictures of life in nature, the humming jungle, the Communist demonstration when Chacko is on his way to Cochin Airport with Baby Kochamma to receive Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol, the inside of Paradise Pickles factory,and the police atrocities. Such detailed description set the mood for the eerie narrative when Rahel returns

to Ayemenem after twenty- three years visit her twin and soul, Estha, who has been "re- Returned" by their father.

Valutha, the skilled Paravan, embodies the plight of the untouchables in Independent India, much like Mulk Raj Anand's Bakha in *Untouchable.* Due to his inborn qualities and physique, he holds his own in the touchable world of Ayemenem; a fact which greatly disturbs his father, Vellya Pappen, who is eternally grateful to Mammachi for gifting him his glass eye and who hasn't forgotten "the sweeping bask with a broom" days.

Velutha and his father Vellya Paapen undergo the most inhuman treatment; one can imagine a human being receiving at the hands of another human being. To quote Roy again "Pappachi would not allow Paravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that touchable touched. During Mammachi's girlhood, Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins of Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidently sweeping into a Paravan's footprints" (Roy 121). In Mammachi's time, the untouchables were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrella. They have to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed. Even in such a social situation, Ammu and Velutha are attracted to each other, love each other and have sexual relationship.

The novel is spun on the very fabric of social stratification the Indian people are having for several centuries. Despite institutionalized watchwords like Equality, Liberty and Justice are popularized among all citizens for years, the Democratic India is still reigned over by four-class system. Worse than ever the

latest shift in politics unashamedly encases caste and community card to reap maximum benefits. Even the most progressive of democrats, irrespective of their political party or ideology are unwittingly perpetuating social inequality, religious intolerance and racial discrimination. The Indian people at large are still moaning under the unshruggable burden of the Chaturvarna pyramid. Protective discrimination, in seemingly form of reservation, is perennially there to worsen everything. Arundhati has shown a very fine sense in enlivening the whole scenario with discrete correctness. Velutha, the prodigal Paravan, becomes her spectrometer for the purpose. He displays diverse colour of her experience in varied wavelengths of caste-feeling. The novel reveals that in all walks of life he suffers stark scorn and segregation of the upper caste people. The 'touchable' workers in Paradise Pickles sniff at him because "according to them, Paravans were not meant to be carpenters". The guardian of law and justice, Inspector Thomas Matthew and the 'crusader of the Oppressed', Comrade K.N.M. Pillai wilfully shake hands with each other to favour the false FIR lodged against him by schemy Baby Kochamma, merely for the reason that all of them are touchable and Velutha is Untouchable. Comrade Pillai does not even mention that Velutha is a member of the communist party.

Arundhati Roy examines the power structure in society and shows how the more powerful victimize the deprived and the suppressed. In addition to the oppression, there is a nexus between the local police and politicians like Comrade K.N.M. Pillai. It is also ironical that the church also makes the distinction between the 'original' Syrian Christains and the Untouchable who are later converted to Christianity.

Comrade Pillai uses Marxism for personal gains rather than the workers belonging to his party. Roy's disgust with party politics is barely concealed in her portrayal of Comrade Pillai, Chacko's deceptive stances and the freedom with whichthe police is allowed to unleash barbarism on the poor, hapless Velutha. Comrade Pillai is a caricature of the local politician, an epitome of all 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 the other. The cruellest irony is that he belongs to a party that represents workers' interest and exists on the pledge to protect them for all kinds of socio-economic exploitation. His leadership as that of many others rests on slogan-raising and noisy marches, rather than challenging such a society with its forms of inequality. Roy brings out the utter hypocrisy, cruelty, callousness and unscrupulousness of the guardians of the laws when Baby Kochamma goes to Kottayam Police Station with trumped-up charges of molestations and attempted rape against Velutha.

Satire and irony are the hallmarks of Arundhati Roy's technique in *The God of Small Things.* She has devised a language to describe places, persons and incidents that brings out her feelings of anger, dissatisfaction and frustration over the state of affairs, as in the description of her ancestral Ayemenem House that Rahel visits after twenty-three years when Baby Kochamma informs her that her "two-egg twin" Estha has been " re-Returned" by their father. The reader hardly misses the devastating sarcasm in the portrayal of Inspector Thomas Matthew and the goings-on in the Kottyam police station. Inspector Thomas Matthew shameless ogles the distraught Ammu when she visits the police station to records her statement about her relationship with Velutha. He tells her that the

police take no cognizance of the statement of a *veshya* (whore) and her illegitimate children. He taps her breasts with his baton as if picking up mangoes from a basket right under the red and blue board which proclaims what POLICE stands for:

Politeness

Obedience

Loyalty

Intelligence

Courtesy

Efficiency

It is obvious that all such things are missing in his behaviour. The police force is shown as immoral, debauched, callous and cruel as they handle Velutha's case fabricated by the high priest of morality in the novel, Baby Kochamma, in connivance with Thomas Matthew. He is careful and cautious enough to find out Velutha's Communist antecedents and leanings from the sly and scheming Comrade Pillai. Only when he is assured that Velutha has no party patronage and that he has been operating on his own, that Inspector Thomas Matthew, with moustaches bustling Air India's Maharaja, does initiate action against them.

In the end, Ammu and Velutha's tragic union is the finest example of the use of irony by Arundahti Roy . History's fiends returned to claim them. To rewrap them in its old, scarred pelt and drag them back to where the Love Laws lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much' (Roy 128). When they made love on the first night, they talked of Small Things while the Big Things lurked inside. "Even later, on the thirteen nights that followed this one, instinctively they stuck to Small Things. The Big Things ever lurked inside.

They knew that three was now where for them to go. They had nothing. No future. So they stuck to Small Things" (Ibid132).

Thus, Ammu and Velutha are rebels. They revolt against the patriarchal norms and values, rules and regulations by loving each other in spite of the risk of their lives. They die for change. They are not cowards. They are brave hero and heroine. After all they are human beings like all other so-called touchables.

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