

## I. Introduction

*The God of Small Things* vividly brings out the conflict between the rich, the high and the mighty and the poor, the weak and the downtrodden. Ammu, the central character leads a poignant existence and her children Estha and Rahel full suffocated and isolated in Ayemenem. Their traumatic experiences haunt them throughout. In contrast, Baby Kochamma, Rahel's grandfather's younger sister, appears to be the vampire of the story. She is a sadist who revels in making everybody's life miserable. Her coldness and indifference to the twins bring out her sense of frustration and unfulfilled desires.

India is undergoing incredible cultural transformation and reshaping itself from a homogenous culture into a hybrid one. In this study of *The God of Small Things*, Indian caste system is the central concern. Reading from this trajectory, we find that caste system is always a static and modernity doesn't necessarily make the world becomes a single place.

In the novel, the conflict exists at individual and societal levels. The novel graphically shows that how people are helpless to resolve these levels of friction. Velutha, the outcast, can never co-exist peacefully with the 'touchable' communities for so long as the stigma of untouchability attached to him and countless others like him. Velutha is 'highly intelligent,' an excellent carpenter with an engineer's mind, but he is also "The God of loss". This injustice is committed by a group of the characters who are themselves the victims of injustice. Mammachi, Ammu's mother, who endured her husband's abusive attitude, ignores Chako's sexual exploration of the female workers, but she cannot tolerate her daughter's love affair with Velutha. Baby Kochamma, the defender of the system, would go to any limit to save the so-called family honor. The novel shows the process of creating and labeling Paravans within the high class families to the people who go beyond the unwritten laws of society in pursuit of happiness.

So, the present study of *The God of Small Things* re-examines the influence and outcome of caste system in modern Indian society and investigate the confrontations, interface and transgressional traits as traumas against modernity. At first, personal trauma such as the death of Sophie Mol, the sexual harassment of Estha and death of Velutha and Ammu put the characters in stagnation. Velutha, was a transgressor of the love laws, as he has touched the middle class touchable woman. Ammu is highly amused to see him playing with them –tossing them in the air and catching them on his muscular arms. It is significant that it was Velutha’s anxiety to mend the damaged boat and his instructions about how to use it upstream, that finally lead to the drowning and death of Sophie Mol. This incident is taken as a piece of evidence against Velutha. He is accused of causing Sophie Mol’s death and is killed by the police. However, he is conscious about the children; they are innocent, lovable and not conscious of the caste barriers that poison the minds of the grownups.

The famous Indian novelist, Arundhati Roy, portrays the suffering of lower class people in her novel. Her novel *The God of Small Things* and other political essays show that she has become tremendously successful in her writing career, and she is one of the world’s most celebrated novelists now. Known as a Third World woman writer, "Roy is also an outspoken political figure, social activist, polemicist, cultural critic and new age feminist" (Reddy 52). In her political essays, Roy conveys radical views on issues related to globalization, imperialism, neo-liberal capitalism, transnational politics, environmental movements and the current state of India.

In *The God of Small Things*, Roy has constantly shown us “failed attempts at reversing history” (Banerjee and Liles 32). If Roy can be compared to a historical novelist, then her role is not to “portray the past as past,” but to “include the present in the portrayal of the past” (Crane 8). On the one hand, Roy as a postcolonial female writer takes advantage of the imperial language to render views in constructing anti-colonial texts. On the other, Roy

seems to imply that "history can never be reversed; it can only be reworked" (Banerjee and Liles 34). In Bernard S. Cohn's words, "the cultural effects of colonialism have too often been ignored or displaced into the inevitable logic of modernization and world capitalism" (ix).

As Frederick Luis Aldama puts it, the novel is celebrated for its storytelling inventiveness and postcolonial revisionism. Since the narrative implicates British imperialism and Christianity as accomplices to the oppressive caste system, the novel could be seen as "an allegory of nation, a writing back against empire, a selling out to global capitalism" (64).

In Anil Nair's view, Roy's novel is "a deliberate debunking of the big questions: Revolution, Change, Politics, Religion, et al" (45). She suggests that "the sanctification of everything small can turn into the pursuit of something big" (46). If this is true, it means that Roy's novel has predicted some violation or transgression against God.

Tracey Schwarze, on the other hand, reveals that the novel is not "to mourn the loss of essential Indian-ness or to flog India's colonizers" (69). Rather, she thinks Indian history itself has a brutal heart, "an ancient, ordering caste system ... that separates Touchable from Untouchable" (72).

Susan Stanford Friedman explores a wide variety of issues such as gender, caste, violence, feminism, nationalism, transnationalism, in her analysis of *The God of Small Things*. Friedman suggests that Roy's integration of gender and caste into the story of the nation "demonstrates how feminist geopolitics engages locationally ... with power relations as they operate both on the nation and within the nation" (117).

Unlike Friedman, Brinda Bose tries to interpret *The God of Small Things* in terms of sexual desire and eroticism. She thinks that the characters in the novel have consciously chosen to break social laws and die for desire and love. She suggests that there is a "deliberate validation of erotic desire as an act of transgression" (59). Yet it is dubious to see

the pursuit of erotic desire as a capitalist preoccupation. To a certain extent, it may be possible that “female sexuality” is Roy’s saleable formula in entering the mainstream market. By doing so, we are likely to ignore the fact that bodies can be used as tropes for political meanings/implications. As Bose points out, there is a subversion of caste/class rules in the novel since Ammu is the initiator of the sexual act. Likewise, she implies that Velutha has the tendency to be dominated by women. However, the transgression committed by Ammu and Velutha is out of their free will and also out of desire and bodily need. Yet the emphasis here is that transgression is one way of producing new power/strength. Since the love laws and caste taboos cannot be altered, they choose their own ways to rebel/protest against the supreme power/authority.

Similarly, the incestuous love between Rahel and Estha is also a way of resisting against social regulations and reconstructing their lost identity. Overall, the whole Indian society is rife with cultural codes which pigeonhole and limit people in various ways. Yet the possibility of successfully constructing/reconstructing human subjectivity depends on each individual and free will.

Moreover, Nicholas B. Dirks, in his *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, points out that caste politics is “the most insistent resistance to social and cultural privilege” (254) in late colonial and postcolonial India.

Generally speaking, 'class' is referred to social and economic criteria while the term 'caste' is usually used by those noncaste or groups outside the pale of caste. According to Amartya Sen, “if different colors indicate different castes, then all castes are mixed castes” (11). Like class, caste is “an ever-present feature of communal and sectarian violence” (Sen 209) since it determines the social property and power of caste groups. Hence, it is “the moral right and the political duty of the poor and the deprived to use their caste identity in the struggle for their liberation” (Dirks 286).

Another critic, Anita Singh, more deliberately couples the novel to modern feminist frame. The novel powerfully moves to those who are otherwise kept at silent margins, such as women, children and untouchables. As Singh writes, "all those dispossessed of an identity or a speaking voice" (133). This novel reveals her compassion and sympathy for the oppressed communities untouchables and working class people in India. In this concern, M.K. Ray states that its narrative technique and voice expresses a resistant feminine psyche that is "the fractured sensibility and the broken and fragmented word of women" (106).

Moreover, A. N. Dwivedi clarifies the subject matters of the novel as "Arundhati raises her strong protest against age-old agonies and sufferings of the suppressed class of women"(135). This is not only true to Ammu, the female protagonist who has undergone severe domestic and the social- political paradoxes, but also true to other female characters Mammachi and Rahel. Commenting on the nature of novelist and her impact on her novel, he further opines:

Arundhati Roy created ripples on the surface of Indian English fictions with her novel *The God of Small Things* (1997). This novel was a forceful plea for the upliftment of the downtrodden and the have-nots in Indian society. The untouchables and the women are the focus points here, and they are the two sections of our society who has suffered worst through the ages. (147)

Taking the reference of violence and racism, Amitav Kumar comments, "*The God of Small Things*; is a world of the imagination free from patriarchal violence, misogyny, and the savagery of untouchability" (91). Another critic Rama Kundu talks about Indian social structure that marginalizes women and the lower-caste people. He writes, "In India the focus naturally falls on women and backward classes who represent the case of the underdog [...] among whom, again, the untouchable epitomizes the worst form of marginalization"(96).

Kundu further points out that novel *The God of Small Things* represents the animalistic behavior of the patriarchal male-dominated society towards women and the lower-caste. He argues, "Roy tries to sensitize this society to the cruelty of some of its traditions by artistically challenging certain common age-old complacently held but dehumanizing social taboos. She also shows how women and the untouchable are both treated as impersonal and subjugative objects ..." (96).

Roy has represented such social problems to raise her voice of protest against them. Mallikarjun Patil says that "Arundhati Roy's fresh perspectives on age-old tradition created waves as a rebellion against the social injustice meted out both to the downtrodden and to women"(58).

This novel has been studied from various perspectives, yet the researcher here has turned to investigate from the perspective of interface between tradition and modernity in Indian society. Though politically independent, the influences of the British are still prevalent in India. The bicultural situation has created 'tension' among the Indians. In the state of freedom, they are making transgression of their cultural values, and moving towards modernity. On the other hand, there is a strong urge to save their traditional culture. That is why; they prescribe the punishments to those who cross its rigid social boundaries.

Modernity helps to weaken the strict rules of the caste system and renders the assertion of independence, competitive jealousy and wonderment among the members in Indian society. Modern principles and ideals are used as mask to cover the worst kind of social injustices, where cruelty and barbaric behaviors are used as tools to perpetuate the age-old caste system. As a result, the influence of modernity which interfaces /confronts with the age-old conventional values and norms of casteism creates a problem in the life of central characters Velutha, an untouchable and Ammu, a middle class woman in Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Even more modernization implies Velutha and Ammu to choose unwilled and

undesirable transgressions against love laws and social taboos as protest which ultimately leads them to their victimization.

Given the above background information of the novel, what follows now is the framework of this study of *The God of Small Things*. Chapter one starts with a brief introduction of the author followed by the literature review. It then moves on to the short summary of the novel which is closely related to Velutha's narrative and the caste system in India. Chapter two starts with the general introduction about tradition and modernity and further examines the connection between them. Latter on origin/history of the caste system is given here to make readers understand why caste makes India different from other nations in the world. Chapter three focuses on traditional and gender effects in Indian society by taking instances of characters from the novel. It then moves on to the concepts of modern act of transgression where the readers can understand about Love laws, which regulate people's behavior and limit their choice of love, do not prove valid in confining Indian people. At the same time the issue of the transgression between Ammu and Velutha is raised which poses challenge to the traditional norms and social hierarchy of India. Moreover, Rahel and Estha's transgression brings out issues of hybridity, gender oppression, social taboo and incest. The hybrid essence of the twins reminds us of the hybrid cultures of India. The problem of gender oppression reinforces the effects of transgression and incest in the social context of India. The final chapter briefly traces back to the focuses of previous chapters and examines the results of this study. Like the hybrid elements of Indian multiculturalism, this study touches upon conflict between tradition and modernity as an issue which is represented in Roy's debut novel.

## II. Tradition and Modernity

The brief discussion in “Introduction” claims that these two concepts - modernity and tradition are mutually inclusive. There is no modernity without the legacy of tradition. However, the most defining trait of modern work of art is that it "consists in a revolt against the prevalent style ... and modernism does not establish a prevalent style of its own; or if it does, it denies itself, thereby ceasing to be modern" (Singh 13). Inferring from the above citation, it would be more appropriate to say that modernity and tradition are neither inclusive nor exclusive.

In course of defining modernity, all we can do is rely on its dictionary meaning that it is a state of being modern. Otherwise it is not obvious what we mean by the word modernity. Its meanings are elusive and changing: the modern is, by its nature, transitory; “contemporary” is a quality that vanishes as soon as we name it. There is as much modernity and traditions as there are epochs and societies: the Renaissance age was modern compared to the Medieval, as *Ulysses* now strikes us more as a hymn than a sexually charged novel. The modern age cannot help but be tomorrow’s tradition.

What does this word modernity mean? When did it begin? Some believe that it began with the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the discovery of the Americas; others claim that it began with the birth of the nation-states and the institution of banking, the rise of mercantile capitalism, and the creation of the bourgeoisie; others emphasize the scientific and philosophical revolutions of the seventeenth century, without which we would have neither our technology nor our industries. Each of these opinions is partially correct; taken together they form a coherent explanation. For that reason, perhaps, most cultural historians tend to favor the eighteenth century: not only did it inherit these changes and innovations; it also consciously recognized many of those characteristics that we now claim as ours.



Modernity began as a critique of religion, philosophy, morality, law, history, economics, and politics. The principal concepts and ideas of the modern age progress, evolution, revolution, freedom, democracy, science, and technology were born from that criticism. A criticism of the world, of the past and present; a criticism of certainties and traditional values; a criticism of institutions and beliefs, the throne and the altar; a criticism of mores, a reflection on passion, sensibility, and sexuality; the discovery of the “other”: Chinese, Persians, American Indians; the changes of perspective in astronomy, geography, physics, biology. In the end, a criticism that was incarnated in history: the American Revolution, the French Revolution.

The nineteenth century may be seen as the apogee of modernity. The ideas born from criticism, which had a polemical value in the eighteenth century democracy, the separation of church and state, the end of royal privileges, freedom of beliefs, opinions, and association became the principles shared by both sides of the Atlantic. The West grew, extended its boundaries, and held fast. However, at the end of the nineteenth century a deep unease spread through the centers of our civilization, one that affected the social, political, and economic systems as much as the systems of beliefs and values. The reactionary criticism rationalism, skepticism allied itself with nostalgia for pre-capitalist societies.

So, is the modernity at the end of the nineteenth century different from modernity of the earlier time? To this only, we could answer an affirmative “yes.” It may be applied both to the content and to the form of a work, or to either in isolation. It reflects a sense of cultural crisis which was both exciting and disquieting, in that it opened up a whole new vista of human possibilities at the same time as putting into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating new ideas. Modernism is marked by

experimentation, imagination and inventiveness, incomplete understanding, assertion of independence, comradeship, competitive jealousy and wonderment. Marx, Freud, and Darwin had unsettled the human subject from its previously secure place at the centre of at least the human universe, and had revealed its unwitting dependence on laws and structures outside its control and sometimes beyond its knowledge. Historical and material determinism, psychoanalytic theories which reveal the self as a pawn in a process dominated by an inaccessible unconscious play of forces, and a conception of evolution and heredity which situates humanity as no more than the latest product of natural selection—these theories conspired to threaten humanist self-confidence and to provoke a feeling of ideological uncertainty.

Modernism was built on a sense of lost community and civilization. It embodied a series of contradictions and paradoxes. Since it had no stable centre it could embrace a multiplicity of features of the modern sensibility which might have appeared, in a logical sense, mutually exclusive. The loss of a sense of tradition, for example, was a theme common to Modernist writers, but it was lamented by some in an extreme form of reactionary conservatism, and celebrated by others as a means of liberation from the stranglehold of past practices. Revolution and conservatism coexisted, not necessarily peaceably, under the Modernist umbrella. The increasing dominance of technology was another prevalent Modernist preoccupation, but it was condemned by some as vehemently as it was embraced by others who saw it as the flagship of 20th-century progress.

### **Tradition and Modernity in non-Western Society**

Tradition is a descriptive term covering practices observed from generation to generation. It refers to the ways of people over the years. In the present context, 'tradition' is opposed to 'modernity'. It is internal criterion of validation for the society. It is conventional

in the sense that it has been followed over many years as established norms and value in the society. As opposed to it, 'modernity' is state of being modern. It is quality of being modern that we find in the people or things which are not traditional in the sense they are different from traditional in some ways. It is something current or up-to-date. Tradition is age-old ways of doing the things while modernity is improved way of doing the same. To validate a particular action, practice or institution as 'traditional' one makes reference to the actions and assumed values or people much like oneself. To validate something as 'modern' one is forced to compare oneself (and one's whole society) to an external standard. In traditional societies the concept of 'tradition' serves as a way of legitimating practices and social arrangements. It is established norm that is already on the conventional track.

When a second term, 'modernity', is introduced into this system, 'tradition' becomes radically revalued. To say that something is right because it is 'modern' (or helps in 'development') has very different implications than legitimating it as 'traditional' would have. 'Tradition' legitimates things in terms of their fit with the internal history and identity of a society whereas 'modernity' legitimates by reference to other societies. Yogendra Singh discusses the difference between the tradition and modernity, "The distinction between modern values and traditional values may be maintained on the ground that modern values, like science, being evolutionary universal, might not be typical to any one particular cultural tradition, whereas traditional cultural values may be particularistic and typical" (51). What Yogendra Singh argues is that modernity is a universal-cultural phenomenon, whereas tradition is local and is observed by the immediate society only. The challenge of modernity with its universal features and characteristics is the same in all societies.

Modernity functions as an economic and social tool to achieve some wealth, flexibility, and innovation for individuals and groups. Tradition functions, partly and at times largely, as a mythological state which produces the sensation of larger connectedness and

stability in the face of shockingly massive social change over the last half-century. One might also say that modernity is an economic force with social, cultural, and political correlatives while tradition is a cultural force with social, economic, and political correlatives.

Under these changed circumstances 'tradition' becomes less a global way of legitimating things than of defining them as good and right because they are one's own. In other words, they are not right to court (law), though in practice, and even more, right in helping us remains us. Things that are right for everyone and thus right in the most general sense are things that are 'modern'.

Modernity is that distinct and unique form of social life, which characterizes modern societies. In the 19th century, modernity got identified with industrialism and sweeping social, economic and cultural changes associated with it. Today, modernity has become a progressively global phenomenon. Yogendra Singh argues:

Modernization in India started with the western contact, especially through establishment of the British rule. This contact had a special historicity which brought about many far-reaching changes in culture and social structure of the Indian society. The basic direction of this contact was towards modernization, but in the process a variety of traditional also got reinforcement. This demonstrates the weakness of assuming a neat contrariety between tradition and modernity. (56)

Modernity, thus, is identified with industrialization and globalization. Second, it is also clubbed with capitalism. The north of the world is industrialized, that is, it is wealthy; and the south is lesser modernized and therefore it is developing, that is, lesser wealthier. There is yet another mark of modernity. It is political power. The thesis runs like this: industrializations

results in development, development proceeds to capitalism and capitalism leads to superiority in power.

To make this point clear, we can take the reference of Giddens, who tries to characterize the nations on the basis of development. To him, development is modernity and modernity is development. He argues:

The societies which are not fully developed are referred as developing world. Such societies include China, India, most of the African countries (such as Nigeria, Ghana and Algeria) and countries in South America (for example, Brazil, Peru and Venezuela). Since many of these societies are situated south of the United States and Europe, they are sometimes referred to collectively as the south and contrasted to the wealthier, industrialized north. (72)

The intensification of the globalization of the Indian economy has dramatically influenced Indian social life, both economically and culturally. The expansion of the middle class is said to have occurred as consequence of this process. It has been greater opportunities to challenge preexisting patriarchal norms through the role models available in the globalized media. It has created opportunities for greater independence.

The British author Stuart Hall considers globalization as a complex process which extends the scope of modernization:

Modernization is a process which reaches back to the earliest stages of modernity and continues to shape and reshape politics, economics and culture at an accelerated pace and scale. The extension of globalizing processes operating through a variety of institutional dimensions (technological, organizational, administrative, cultural and legal), and their increased intensifications, within these spheres, creates new forms and limits within modernity as distinctive for of life. (43)

According to him, globalization helps to extend the effects of modernization in its earlier form so that it reshapes the overall conditions like politics, economic, culture etc. to increase and intensify the new forms in life.

Similarly, Malcolm Waters has done quite a helpful work on globalization in his book *Globalization* (1995). The book has come out after a serious ‘grinding’ by the author. In this work, he has defined globalization as "a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding”(123). He associates globalization with the wider social processes such as industrialization, modernization, capitalization and their higher levels.

Giddens, in his book *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990), defines globalization as below:

Globalization can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations, which links distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shared by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. This is a dialectical process because such local happenings may move in an obverse direction from the very distanced relations that shape them. Local transformation is as much a part of globalization as the lateral extension of social connections across time and space. (123)

What is particular about Giddens’ definition of globalization is that he links it to modernization. For him, modernization means capitalist system, which is concerned with the commodity production, where there are social relations between the owners of private capital and non-owners who sell their labour for wages. The second feature of modernity is industrialism, third is the nation-state, and finally, nation-state’s power to keep surveillance. All these features of modernity are involved in the process of globalization.

The society is inclined towards modernity thus on the process of modernization. However the older generation due to lack of adjustability and knowledge cannot follow modern culture and ways. On the other hand, young generation is conscious about ever growing competitive world. They fear about their career and future life which is gone to be very expensive. Thus, young generation wants to shoulder changes according to current time and future as it would come to them which are unconventional to their earlier generation. The idea and ways of two generation never come same way. New generation is adaptive to current trends because they have to keep changing themselves according to changes around them. Old generation do not like to change them so fast and readily. So there is always tension between old generation and young generation in our society. It can thus be seen to a small family to bigger social institutions. This is evident even in a small family. However tradition works at its top to dominate the modern thus creating tension. We can quote Yogendra Singh who observes tension between them in Indian society.

These basic premises of structural-functional studies of social stratification in India have implied a systemic teleology based on the Brahmanic or hierarchical model of caste society, assumption of harmony as the system state from which status mobility, differentiating role of power structure and factional ties, and processes of fusion and fission in the caste structure were studied, and the emphasis on a micro-structural or communitarian scale or reality. All expressions or conflict in the caste structure were treated as adaptive tensions resulting from the structures outside of it, such as polity, economy and technology. Such tensions, the theory assumed, would be eventually absorbed in the system with adaptive changes, without, however, change of the system.

The Indian functionalists have been such blind adherents to the foundational tradition of sociology that Yogendra Singh further analyses, “they have treated class relations with the caste framework as a deviant though manageable” (46). Thus any departure from the

traditional summation of attributes such as status, wealth and power in the caste system was equated with emergence of class relationships or its sub-structures.

Non-western countries have been suffering great tension between tradition and modernity. However the nation keeps on changing traditional laws to reform towards better society at international standard, its people keep on practicing the same order of tradition. This is problem to nation. There are many educational institutions and many NGOs and INGOs working to reform the social values and ways. It is not sufficient. To support this, nation has to expand great network of legal institutions and security forces to combat this. It's expensive. The budget that could be spent on the constructional works is spent on it. This is hindering the development of these nations. In addition, the state has to update its state-laws and policy according the global changes. Most of all, non-western society suffers from this situation. I discuss about the different types of undergoing changes in our (non-western) society against established tradition. The same change is taken as positive effort by young generation while negative by older generation. This generation gap in concept, understanding and ways of people in our society is window to evaluate the tension between tradition and modernity in non-western society.

The western countries are developed than non-western. Thus, it is natural to observe the influence of this in eastern world. The western advancement in technology has helped much in the development of non-western countries. We can understand the western advancement in technology and its influence in the life of people as globalization. Europe is the home of globalization and commercialization. Its speed is so high that every non-western country has challenge to undertake this. The rapid expansion of mass media network and technology has turned the world into a global village. This truth does not work to the people of backward countries which are referred as non-western countries so much since they cannot equip themselves to benefit from this. Many of them seem opposing globalization at their



failure. So we can see tension between western civilization and eastern globally. This effect can be seen up to micro level of social institution such as a small family to a country or region i.e. Asia, non-western countries.

### **Modernity in India**

Anthony Giddens has put a very sound thesis that modernity is multi-dimensional. It is neither monolith, nor liberal only. Nor it is democratic only. It has several dimensions. Indian sociologist, Dipankar Gupta, in his book *Mistaken Modernity* (2000), has made yet another statement which applies to different nation-states. He opines, "The other widely expressed way of coming to grips with our lack of true modernity is to say that there are "multiple modernities", and that the India variety is just another expression of modernity"(79).

If modernity is multiple, it means that India should have its own variant of modernity. And, further, there are several or plural ethnicities in this country and therefore modernity in this country has to define in terms of the social historical and cultural conditions of different regions or social segments of the nation. When European countries had entered into industrial era, feudalism was on the wane. The series of revolutions which took place in Europe, gave emergence to democracy and nation-states. And, interestingly, Europe had already experienced renaissance and enlightenment. Such a kind of social condition in Europe created modernity. And, with the increasing force of modernity, there came into existence the form of modernity which is now called late modernity.

Yogendra Singh spells out the issues of social relevance and says that pioneers of sociology in India wanted to focus on social change. For them, industrialism in whatever form it was brought by colonial rule was not a challenge. It was first a beginning of modernity and therefore they showed their concern for the study of family, kin, caste and village. Then what is important is that the social background of most of the sociologists of

this period was that they came from renaissance middle class, urban gentry; most were educated in European, particularly British universities; and had inherited in their consciousness both a substantial package of western philosophy of science, liberalism and humanism and deeper concern for issues of national identity, freedom from colonial rule and establishment of a culturally, economically and politically independent Indian society.

Our objective in the present section of the chapter is to examine social change in India with and several other sectors of service. Change in Indian society is the ideological perspective of modernization. India has witnessed massive changes in the caste system but there has also emerged class system which cuts across caste, religion and region. In the wake of modernization and globalization, the processes of social mobility, the nature of demographic changes and increase in urbanization and industrialization have brought significant changes in Indian society. We have substantial material on changes in rural and urban communities. There have come vast changes in the fields of new professions; banking, management, media and information are massive indeed. But what is the direction of this massive change. On the strength of material generated by sociologist and anthropologist it could be stated that much has been said about caste, family, kin and village and changes occurring in these fields of social life. The stress is on social aspect of our nation's life. What has been tried by sociologists is to evaluate social change from the vantage point of tradition. If the traditions witness change, it is social change. Sometimes breakdown of or deviation from traditions is analyzed as disintegration. And, therefore, sociologists have much talked about the breakdown of caste system or joint family. The stress, therefore, is on the breaking up of traditions. Interestingly enough, no serious effort has been made to identify the direction of India's social change.

## Caste System

As Allison Elliott points out, the origin of caste could be dated back to 1200 BCE. Caste comes from the Spanish and Portuguese word “casta” with the meaning of “race,” “breed,” or “lineage.” Yet nowadays many Indians use the term “jati” instead of the ancient ones. So far, there are 3,000 castes and 25,000 sub castes in India and each is related to a specific occupation. These different castes are categorized into four varnas: Brahmins--priests; Kshatryas--warriors; Vaishyas--traders; Shudras--laborers Outside the caste system are the Untouchables. They are considered polluted and not to be touched.

Since upward mobility is hardly seen in the caste system, most people remain in the same caste for their whole life and marry within that caste. In late 19th century, there were three different views on caste: (1) The incubus view: caste as a divisive and pernicious force, and a negation of nationhood; (2) the “golden chain” views: caste as Varna--to be seen as an ideology of spiritual orders and moral affinities, and a potential basis for national regeneration; (3) The idealized corporation view: caste as jati--to be seen as a concrete ethnographic fact of Indian life, a source of historic national strengths and organized self-improvement or “uplift” (Bayly 154). In the words of Indira Gandhi, the original idea of caste is incorporative of the whole Hindu community, about interdependence rather than exclusion or domination (Dirks 235). Also, Rushdie points out that “the new element in Indian communalism is the emergence of a collective Hindu consciousness that transcends caste and believes Hinduism to be under threat from other Indian minorities” (31).

However, caste is sometimes used to decry the backwardness of Indian society. Besides, it is seen as a force impeding social equality and the better treatment of women in Indian society. The debates never seem to end over the issues about tradition, modernity, civil society, religion, politics and nationalist ideology. Since caste arouses many debates

and controversies, the main questions here are: Is caste good or bad for India's development? Can caste be seen as a scheme of social and material "disabilities"? How can India become a truly free and independent nation if it remains a "caste society"? Bayly's question, "To whom do concepts of caste matter, and in what areas of social interaction?" (125), is stimulating and the value of caste between past and present becomes suspect.

However, we can't deny the fact that caste was and still is inscribed by relations of power through and through. In caste society, power is inevitably encompassed by status. On the one hand, caste is converted by colonial history into a special kind of colonial civil society. On the other, "caste could be seen as India's special religious form of social self-regulation and the reason for India's unsuitability for modern political institutions" (Dirks 276). Given the fact that caste is intricately interwoven with colonial history, we shall not ignore that colonialism not only happened in the past but continues to haunt the postcolonial nation in the present. For example, the British colonizers may take advantage of caste to control and assimilate those colonized. Nowadays in postcolonial India, it is still possible that the dominant authority see caste as its potent tool to demarcate the social properties and benefits between rich/poor, powerful/powerless. If caste is a sign of the past, it is also a vehicle for the construction of a different future. As Bayly puts it, caste should not be seen as "an orientalist fiction" or "a shameful crime to be disguised or ignored in discussing India's history" (7). Rather, caste is a fit subject for historical exploration. Indeed, caste may be a colonial hangover in modern India. Yet the challenge of the postcolonial predicament is to find possible ways to transform history and at the same time acknowledge the barbaric hold caste has on us all. Put simply, one of the purposes behind a postcolonial historiography of colonialism is "to come to terms with the weight of the colonial past without turning our backs on that past" (Dirks302). Interesting

enough, however, Dirks suggests that postcolonial history is “the epic story of seduction and betrayal,” which is doomed to repeat itself again and again (315). Here, Dirks seems to imply that there is no going back or time for nostalgia for a time when tradition, identity, or civilization might be recuperated whole.

### **Caste System in India**

The institution of caste pivoted on notions of hierarchy and purity legitimized caste discriminations in pre-colonial and colonial India. Having lost its traditional connotations, does caste inequality exist in India? When the political leveling of castes is a distinct reality, Caste hierarchy cannot be legitimately defended in public. Scholars like Chris Fuller, M.N.Srinivas and Andre Bataille point out that the elimination of hierarchical values from legitimate public discourse does not negate the existence of caste. Caste, they argue, is an empirical fact of social change and its meaning has been altered and transformed over the years.

Louis Dumont’s *Homo Heirarchicus*, which establishes purity and hierarchy as vital principles of caste in traditional Hindu society, also contains important observations about changing nature of caste in modern India. Dumont asserts that the overall framework of the society has not changed and there has "been change in the society and not of the society" (218). He observes that the hierarchical ranking of castes has been dismantled because each caste has become like a collective individual with its own distinctive and cultural ‘way of life. The traditional ‘interdependence’ of caste has been replaced by ‘competition’ between castes. Terming this ‘transition from structure to substance’ as ‘substantialisation’, Dumont argues that this change is confined to the politico- economic domain and cannot amount to fundamental transformation of the caste system.

Fuller points out that, Dumont's thesis on substantialisation of castes is evident at the ideological level but contradictory at the empirical level. Substantialisation is a self-contradictory process because as it develops castes actually become internally heterogeneous. Drawing on Mayer's observations on changes in caste practices in Ramkheri after forty years of independence, Fuller argues, "Since each caste is emerging stronger, there is an increasing differentiation of status, power and wealth developing within each caste. This contributes to the decline of caste ranking, but paradoxically it leads to a normative emphasis on difference 'between' castes" (Fuller 13).

Mayer makes a study of the changing nature of caste values in Ramkheri, a village in north India, and its significance in the wider social organization. The period under review spans 38 years from 1954 to 1992. Mayer observes that in 1954, caste was a pivotal aspect of an individual's social position and identity. It provided norms for inter-caste relationships and to some extent regulated occupations of individuals. Commensality was a deciding factor for deciding differences in rank and position. Commensal relations were expressed through the taking of *kacca* (food cooked in water), drawing water from common wells and smoking together of cigarettes and pipes. Conversely, a prohibition of commensal values implies that a caste considered itself superior or simply separate. Mayer points out that anti-caste legislation and political equality provided opportunities for social mobility and this had influenced caste values in Ramkheri. In 1992, during his second visit to the village, Mayer observes that commensal norms had changed. He found that there were no longer separate eating lines for different castes and the mushrooming of restaurants and hotels had lessened caste discriminations while eating. However, such changes had taken place only at the 'overt' level. At the 'covert' level, people continued to follow *kacca* food restrictions, which are based on notions on purity and hierarchy. Caste endogamy continues to prevail, while caste-based occupations were not followed. The

purity-based hierarchy of the past is replaced with distinctive cultural difference of castes.

Difference in terms of relative status has become the marker of separation of castes.

"Caste in Ramkheri, had moved from a system of interdependence to one in which castes are independently in competition with one another" (Mayer 64).

Andre Beteille while discussing caste identities observes that the meaning and legitimacy of caste has changed significantly in urban spaces. The nature of caste is highly ambivalent and cannot be coherently defined by the urban intelligentsia. Caste hierarchy has lost its legitimacy and modern India is a more a status conscious world. Differences in status are based more on education, occupation or income and less on caste. The social world created by education, occupation and income cuts across the social world of caste.

Andre Beteille draws our attention to the fact that in modern India, the social world of a Brahmin judge, diplomat, engineer, civil servant or manager is not the same as that of a Brahmin clerk, schoolteacher or cook. Instead of a single unified hierarchy, different strategies of exclusion co-exist in an urban society. Beteille points out that although caste seems to become weaker and imperceptible, it has been strengthened in the political domain. After independence, in particular, there has been an extensive use of caste affiliations for the mobilization of political support during elections. However, it was the implementation of Mandal commission report in the 1990's that "... gave a fresh lease to caste identities" (165).

The changing nature of caste has been explained by M.N.Srinivasan in terms of 'Sanskritisation'. The emulation and appropriation of caste Hindu practices by subordinated castes is referred to as Sanskritisation. Subordinated castes in their endeavor to upward mobility imitate the practices of the Caste Hindus to claim an equal status in society. Srinivasan points that the concept of Sanskritisation is evident more in the social rather than the political domain. In recent years however, while some sections of lower

castes adopt a 'Sanskritization' model for change, "there are sections especially within the Dalit community which assert a strong Dalit identity and adopt a confrontationist attitude towards the practices and beliefs of the upper castes" (Srinivasan xiv-xv).

S.A. Barnett describes caste differences in terms of 'ethnicisation'. Drawing on Weber's model of status stratification, Barnett argues that different ethnic groups are formed because of cultural differences. If these ethnic groups are based on common descent and practice endogamy, they are transformed to caste groups. In the traditional society the caste structure had transformed the different ethnic groups to a vertical social system based on hierarchy. Barnett argues that in the modern society there is a reversal from vertical to horizontal system where disconnected ethnic groups consider its culture as the highest. "In the process of 'ethnicisation', difference rather than hierarchy is the marker of separation"(22).

Fuller observes that, despite a consistent denial of caste in the public domain, evaluations of caste differences continue to prevail in the private sphere. Inequalities based on cultural distinctiveness are widely recognized and approved in the private domain, though such discriminations cannot be endorsed in public. The desire of the urban elite to project him/her as a secular citizen has resulted the occlusion of caste in the public sphere. Vivek Dharashwar points out that English has acted as a 'meta language' and those who appropriate English are free from caste and religious markings. He observes that modern subjectivity framed in English has allowed caste to be restricted to the private domain suffused with the vernacular. Caste is something that does not surface in the public discourse of the caste Hindus. Rather, "caste is practiced by the lower castes since they articulate issues relating to it. Casteism, observes Dhareshwar, is invariably associated with the lower castes and never with the secular caste Hindu" (26).



In the light of above discussions on the changing nature of caste, this thesis explores the response to Dalit literature. For Dalits, Literature has become a site for resistance and affirming a distinct Dalit consciousness and sensibility. When political equality of castes is the order of the day, what is the status of Dalit literature, which underlines caste inequality? In particular, how does the academia respond to the growing popularity of Dalit literature? Are there any noticeable differences between students who read Dalit literature in the original and those who read its English translations? Does one's caste influence response to Dalit literature?

Although *The God of Small Things* takes place in 1969, the caste system is still present in India, especially in rural areas. Today there are about 250 million Untouchables. Caste discrimination has been against the law since 1950, but prejudice continues. The United Nations estimates that there are 115 millions child laborers and 300 million starving people in India, most of which are Untouchables. Government programs and quotas have tried to raise the living standards of Untouchables by reserving places in the legislature, government jobs, and schools. These government actions often result in an increase of violence by caste members. Urbanization, economic development, and industrialization benefit Untouchables by breaking down caste barriers. In the cities of India members of different castes are constantly in close contact and forced to interact with one another which help to weaken the strict rules of the caste system.

Caste not only dictates one's occupation, but dietary habits and interaction with members of other castes as well. Members of a high caste enjoy more wealth and opportunities while members of a low caste perform menial jobs. Outside of the caste system are untouchables. They are considered to be in a permanent state of impurity. Gandhi tried to raise their status with symbolic gestures such as befriending and eating with them and naming them "Harijans".

Untouchables have also become a strong and organized political force who refers to themselves as Dalits. While in an interview with Emily Guntheinz, Arundhati, Roy was asked to comment on the caste system. Her reply follows:

It's a defining consideration in all Indian politics, in all Indian marriages ... The lines are blurring India exists in several centuries simultaneously. So there are those of us like me, or people that I know for instance, to whom it means nothing ... It's a very strange situation where there's sort of a gap between ... sometimes it's urban and rural, but it's really a time warp. (68)

The modernity influenced identity in Baby Kochamma can be seen by her foreign education in America to separate herself from 'ordinary Indians'. With the arrival of the English woman Margaret Kochamma at the airport, she tries to bring forth all the British or 'non-Indian' behavior she can find within herself. In addition, wanting to boast her knowledge for Margaret Kochamma, she asks Sophie: "'D'you know who Ariel was ... Ariel in The Tempest?' ... 'Shakespeare's The Tempest?' Baby Kochamma persisted" (144). A shared personality trait in Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, which signifies their values recruited from the modern days, is their almost toady attitude towards the English woman Margaret Kochamma and her daughter Sophie.

Likewise, in Mammachi it is the fact that she starts a pickle factory of her own, which is nevertheless overtaken by her son. In Baby Kochamma there is the defying of her father and converting to another religion. She too however, eventually gives in to the traditional Hindu values. Their unhappiness in love also affects their behaviour towards the rest of their female relations, most importantly Ammu and Rahel. One of the most evident features of modernity in the first generation is the passion of Baby Kochamma with the Irish monk. However, Baby Kochamma learned that a relationship with him was not accepted in her contemporary society.

Modernity in terms of Mammachi's perfume or Baby Kochamma's citation of Shakespeare is not completely applicable to Ammu. However, in her days as a married woman she "wore backless blouses with her saris and carried a silver lamé purse on a chain. She smoked long cigarettes in a long silver cigarette holder and learned to blow perfect smoke rings" (40). Ammu's backless blouses and her long silver cigarette holder are the indicators of her liking this luxurious life. Unlike Mammachi who locked away her Dior perfume and Baby Kochamma who locked away the T-shirts she won from English TV-shows, Ammu's desire of leading a 'British-inspired' lifestyle never prevented her from letting it go. When Ammu divorced her Bengali husband, she also divorced a life with "silver lame purses". With the character of Ammu we learn more about the effects of breaking the communal laws of India rather than seeing the pure consequence of the British occupation of India.

It can be argued that the kinds of conflicts stated above are the major kinds of disputes that Roy has represented in her novel. Now the third chapter presents the causes and consequences of the interface between tradition and modernity in terms of gender, religion, caste and transgression that are represented in the *The God of Small Things*.

### III. Interface between Tradition and Modernity in Roy's Novel

#### Tradition, Gender and *The God of Small Things*

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is a captivating novel about innumerable layers of understanding of human lives and human minds. It can be seen as one of the most powerful novels on an infinite social problems that of the oppression of the downtrodden. It problematizes the oppressive machinery based on caste discrimination, gender discrimination and political conspiracy on these downtrodden.

This story is positioned in a Hindu setting in the early 1960s, only some 20 years after the independence of India. From beginning to end, this book is constructed through the interlacing of 'flash-backs', since it begins 23 years after the actual events of the book has taken place, which contribute to the story dissolving more or less at the end of it. The centre of this narrative is a Brahman family living in the small rural town of Kerala situated in southern India. The core of this Indian family is however the two-egg twins Esthappen and Rahel, who through their juvenile eyes experience the hypocritical world of the adults around them. This novel is not only an eye-opener in the vicious influence of the caste system, but also an insight into the bigotry of politics and traditional principles.

The strong power of both caste systems or traditional principles and politics as mentioned above is the starting-point of this essay. As there are different 'sorts' of characters presented in this book, my approach will be to study the relationship between the modern identity of the characters in *The God of Small Things* and their Hindu identity 'formed' by Hinduism. I will show that the identities of these characters are shaped of their respective societies.

The women in *The God of Small Things*, very fascinating not only for the reason that they are strongly influenced by their life stories, but even more for the influence of their

actions and identities have on their children. Of course, none of them can be judged for the shape of their identity, as they all are a merger of culture, religion and politics.

Furthermore, in discussing and understanding Hindu identities, I will employ the religion of Hinduism and its representation of women. In the analysis, I will consider two identity traits, modern and Hindu, for each of the Hindu women, and also discuss the characters of the English women (the first is used in generation two, and the second in generation one).

As mentioned by now, the focus of dissertation will rest upon tradition and modernity, since the idea of casteism and breaking the social taboos are clearly emphasized in *The God of Small Things*. In addition, my study linked gender study which deals with the female sex and the “matters” that go along with it, matters such as the difference of the sexes and the woman in culture and society. Feminist theory is a premise through the eyes of women claiming that the gender differences carry a fundamental distinction between men and women in society, and additionally that this distinction has meant that women have been placed in a subordinate position in culture. *The God of Small Things* can be analyzed from various theories. The present study aspires to analyze it in terms of the interface between tradition and modernity, i.e., the interface between Hindu tradition involving casteism and the effects of modernity.

Today India is a product of the meeting of Hindu and Muslim traditions and social theories from West. Still the problem of castes and religions exist in Indian society, generating prejudices and hatred among the people of India whatever their origins. Among the prevailing discussions and definitions of identity, the focus of this study being on the identity of third world women. Third world women tend to be valued on incorrect basis, as they often are portrayed as victims, instead of being valued from their own locations. This information is clearly visible when studying *The God of Small Things* and the complexity of

its female characters. As stated previously the focus in this study is the consequence of culture (the Hindu tradition) on the women of interest in *The God of Small Things*. The following analysis will focus on the Hindu tradition in India and its effects on the identity of Indian women. Hinduism is the major religion of India and is one of the oldest remaining religions in the world as it dates back to 1500 BC. Hinduism has developed gradually over thousands of years and has been shaped by many different cultures and religions. The four existing castes are in order of rank: Brahmans (priests and scholars), Kshatriyars (rulers and warriors), Vaisyas (merchants and professionals) and finally the Sudras (laborers and servants). There has also been a fifth group, called the untouchables (the Panchama) who had occupations such as tanning leather, which the Indian laws forbid. Since the caste system is hereditary, people in the low castes have no chance of improving their situation and although the Indian constitution gave this group of untouchables "full citizenship" in the 1950s, as stated in World Book, the discrimination of them has not ended.

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

The community represented in *The God of Small Things* is Syrian Christian. The term "Syrian" refers to the West Asian origins of the group's ancestors and to their use of Syriac as a liturgical language. In the novel religious differences appear in the disagreements between Father Mulligan (who belongs to the Roman Catholic Church) and Reverend Ipe

(who belongs to the Mar Thoma Church) as well as in Baby Kochamma's conversion to Catholicism and her consequent lack of suitors. The socio-political changes brought about by colonial rule led to upper-caste Hindus shunning the Syrian Christians. However, as Roy points out, even though a number of Paravans and members of other low castes converted to Christianity, they were made to have separate churches and thus continued to be treated as "Untouchables." After Independence, they were denied government benefits created for "Untouchables" because officially, on paper, they were Christians and therefore casteless (71).

Roy writes that the reason behind the Communist Party's success in Kerala was that it "never overtly questioned the traditional values of a caste-ridden, extremely traditional community. The Marxists worked from within the communal divides, never challenging them, never appearing not to" (64). This double standard is emphasized when Comrade Pillai incites the workers of Paradise Pickles and Preserves to strike against their owner, Chacko. The inferiority complex is evident in the interactions between Untouchables and Touchables in Ayemenem. Vellya Paapen is an example of an Untouchable who is so grateful to the Touchable class. He is willing to kill his son when he knows that his son has broken the most important rule of class segregation because as he believes that there is no inter-class sexual relations.

All the relationships in the novel are almost colored by cultural and class tension, for instance the twins' relationship with Sophie Mol, Chacko's relationship with Margaret, Pappachi's relationship with his family, and Ammu's relationship with Velutha. For example characters such as Baby Kochamma and Pappachi are the most rigid and vicious in their attempts to uphold that social code, while Ammu and Velutha are the most unconventional and daring in unraveling it. Roy deals with the classical material of tragedy in the modern context. The members of this family are introverts. Baby Kochamma, Ammu, Chako and

Pappachi are unable to come to terms with their complexes. They struggle against the outer world, and the defeat renders them confused and frustrated. The sense of failure expresses itself in dehumanizing others around them. The Kochamma family has a history of poor relations between its male and female members. Ammu's mother, Mammachi, for instance, is severely beaten and abused by her Husband. She becomes the victim of her husband's anger and frustration whenever he faces a failure in the outside world. He leaves a little room for Ammu to the work as she is an independent and confident individual. So her goal and objective in life is to find a "reasonable husband", depending upon him for the rest of her life. Her attitude and behavior also correspond to the idea of a "good daughter" shared both by Hindus and Muslims.

In *The God of Small Things* the conflict exists at individual and societal levels. The novel graphically shows that how people are helpless to resolve these levels of friction. Velutha, the outcast, can never co exist peaceful with the "touchable" communities for so long as the stigma of untouchability attached to him and countless others like him. He is a paravan and suffers untold miseries at the hands of people whose attitudes are guided by age-old casteist prejudices. He always lives on the margin of the society and is deliberately obstructed from getting into the central place. Velutha is "highly intelligent," an excellent carpenter with an engineer's mind, but he is also "The God of loss", "The God of Small Things". "He left no footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no images in mirrors" (265). Roy writes as "Mammachi rehired velutha as the factory carpenter and put him in charge of general maintenance" (265). It caused great deal of resentment among the others. Touchable factory workers because, according to them paravans were not meant to be carpenters. Velutha belongs to the new generation youth with greater courage and defiance than his father vellya paappen even dared to dream. Vellya belongs to a time when the untouchables "were expected to crawl backward with a broom, sweeping away their foot prints so that



Brahmins and Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a paravan's footprints in mammachi's time, paravans, like other untouchables were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas"(73).

Velutha inherited this agonized awareness from the earlier time of his social status and had the deep sense of humiliation and hurt that rankled in his heart. He believes unquestionably to comrade K.N.M Pillai as the messiah of the poor and the downtrodden. He became the formal member of the party and participated in the marches, meeting and demonstrations as the party professes to champion the socially disadvantaged and fight for them. In fact Velutha is a naïve person. He fails to understand the duplicity of others. He does not read the cunning in comrade Pillai's mind. When he sees that he has been accused by Mammachi of having illicit relation with Ammu, he knows all doors are closed for him. He goes to comrade Pillai for help. At the moment he feels disillusioned for the communist party because Pillai instead of giving him the sympathies gives him a solid lecture of the principles and morals of political parties:

This is a little village', comrade pillai was saying. 'People talk. I listen to what they say: it's not as though I donot know what's been going on'. Once again velutha heard himself say something which made no deference to the man he spoke to his own voice coiled around him like a snake. "maybe,' comrade Pillai said, 'But comrade, you should know that party was not constituted to support worker's indiscipline in their private life. (287)

In contrast to Velutha, Chacko can get away with his debauchery -- or his "man's needs" as his mother terms it because he is a "touchable". Roy has justly put the issue when she says, "Change is one thing. Acceptance is another"(279). The society presented in the novel is patriarchal. On the one hand we have a group of characters, Mammachi, Baby Koachmma,

and Kochu Maria the cook, who perpetuate the division of caste, race, and gender. On the other hand, Ammu and the twins, Rahel and Estha, consciously and unconsciously resist these hierarchies. Ammu, the biggest victim of the system, is an archetypal image of a daughter marginalized in a patriarchal society. "Perhaps Ammu, Estha and Rahel were the worst transgressors. They all broke the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much"(31). Ammu, the central character of the novel, has only a marginal existence in the family structure. A traditional patriarchal society places little importance on women's education. Ammu's father Pappachi, does not like the idea of spending money on his daughter, and she is never encouraged to find her place in life. Marriage is the only justification of her survival.

Ammu finished her schooling the same year that her father retired from the job in Delhi and moved to Aymenem. Pappachi insisted that a college education was unnecessary expense for a girl so Ammu had no choice but to leave Delhi and move with him. There was little for a young girl to do in Aymenem other than to wait for marriage proposal. Ammu accepts the very first proposal after five days of courtship. In fact, Ammu had no choice other than accepting whatsoever life offers her. Unfortunately, her husband turns out to be a drunkard unable to support the family. He tries to force Ammu to "please the boss" but she refuses and the marriage ends in divorce. As a divorcee, she has to face ostracism by her society and family. Her female relatives sympathize with her in a way, making her conscious of the gravity of her crime she has committed in living separated from her husband.

Within first few months of her return to her parent's home; Ammu quickly learned to recognize and despise the ugly face of sympathy. Old female relations with their incipient beards and several wobbling chins made overnight trips to Aymenem to commiserate her about her divorce. She fought off the urge to slap them. A divorcee has no right to pursue for happiness in life. The only course open to her is to spend a static life, waiting for death. Any

attempt on her part to see life independently threatens the existing order. She is at loggerheads with the society at large because she married outside her community and a divorcee to. It is visible at Sophie Mols funeral: "Hough Ammu, Estha and Rahel were allowed to attend the funeral; they were made to stand separately, not with the rest of the family. Nobody would look at them"(5). Estha's conflict within himself turns him into a silent creature. But in his inside, "there is an uneasy octopus that lived and squirted its inky tranquilizer on his past" (12).

This injustice is perpetrated by a group of the characters who are themselves the victims of injustice. Mammachi, Ammu's mother, who endured her husband's abusive attitude, ignores Chako's sexual exploitation of the female workers, but she cannot tolerate her daughter's love affair with a Parvan. Baby Kochamma, the defender of the system, would go to any limit to save the so-called family honour. The novel shows the process of creating and labeling Parvans within the high class families -- the people who go beyond the unwritten laws of society in pursuit of happiness.

Velutha offers what is denied to Ammu, Estha and Rahel in society and family. In the daylight, he is the best companion of the children, who feel suffocated in Aymenm because of their divorced mother. The outer world is hostile, and only the few moments they spend with Velutha afford real happiness. Ammu meets him in darkness, along the river bank -- a symbol of division between the two classes. Baby Kochamma, spending a frozen life in her past, appears as the guardian of system. Velutha, "the Untouchable" is killed by the "Touchable Boots", of the state police. Ammu is banished and dies alone, only thirty one "a very viable diable age" (161).

The system also has a fatal influence on the twins, who cannot relate to anybody other than each other. Estha's marriage proves a failure, and she feels satisfied only with the twin brother Rahel, as it was coming back to the prenatal world of pure innocence. Velutha offers

a release from the deterministic world of Aymenm. For a short while he provides an opportunity to live in consonance with one's own self. But the release is illusory. The system regards every effort for the personal fulfillment as a direct threat to its established code of values. Shulan Nishant observes:

Rahel and Estha, caught in the entanglements of adult corruption are punished for the sins of a world out of their control. They are struggling to secure a safe environment the unconditional love of a parent and the promise of a livable future. Their struggles to safe guard themselves and the childhood ends one day, a day after which futures are abandoned and recovery is impossible. (78)

Roy presents a pessimistic picture of society. With the death of Velutha, the last ray of hope disappears. He is accused of kidnapping the twins and Estha falsely confirms it later. Estha is known as no more than a silent creature who's incomprehensible "Yes" helped to prove Velutha's guilty. Roy expresses her confusions with the social conditions of the modern world where the untouchables still face a hostile society that does not let them live as free and independent individuals. Velutha, the God of Loss, the outcast can never co-exist peacefully with the "touchable" communities because of the stigma of untouchability is attached to him and countless others like him. In another level, Ammu, an "untouchable" within the "touchable" cannot pursue happiness because her every work threatens the existing order of the society, and in turn the society takes every possible step to stop change.

In order to better demonstrate the 'place' in which Indian women (and later the women in *The God of Small Things*) are placed within the Hindu religion and tradition, as Wadley says that "Ideal Hindu Woman" is the one who allows her husband to control her and her power. Within the Hindu tradition there are specific guidelines for women as to how to behave properly. These guidelines are known as the Dharmasastras, which in English translates as "The Rules of Right Conduct" (117), but these rules also exist in the written and

oral Hindu mythology and folklore. The most frequently occurring rule or norm for women is that of her role as a wife. These roles are not conveyed as perhaps expected through ‘stories’ about women, but instead through picturing the male-female relationship in the written traditions. The male-female relationship consists of the behavior of women in relation to their father’s, son’s, husband’s and brother’s. Men and women are rather involved in a complex social system, which both sexes can benefit from. Men dominate the activities outside of the home, such as taking positions of leadership and making most of the purchases. Women on the other hand are “in charge” of the happenings inside the home, such as child care, food preparation and storing the resources men bring home, and are those who ‘rule’ within the walls of the home. This is what we could call traditional male and female activities.

The discussion on Hinduism provides a necessary, if not a crucial understanding and insight into the background to which the women in *The God of Small Things* have been raised. In appreciating the religiously influenced values that circulate in the Hindu society and in the novel, the actions and reactions of the [female] characters can be comprehended in a more profound manner. The essays provide an intelligible image of Hindu women, as their fellow countrymen perceive them; their existence, their sexuality and their status in society. Through realizing this, the analysis will hopefully be reasonable.

Let's first consider the Hindu identity,(except for Margaret Kochamma and Sophie, since these two characters are used for comparison to the other characters). Mammachi, is the mother of Ammu and Chacko and the grandmother of Rahel. Her real name being Soshamma, she is called Mammachi, which simply means grandmother. Her husband, called Pappachi (who dies early in the novel) is a respected entomologist, and the son of a well-known reverend. Discuss here is the male-female connection, in relation to both Mammachi and Baby Kochamma. As Mohanty writes in her essay, women’s identities are formed by their relations to kinship structures, society structures as well as taking part in the creation of

these relations. How, then have these women been shaped by their respective relations? In analyzing Mammachi and Baby Kochamma the division of their identities into modern and Hindu is quite complex, since they are so imbedded in their high Hindu caste from the very beginning.

Mammachi has two male figures ‘operating’ in ways that influence her life. Concerning with her husband, the first man in her life, we find that the Hindu laws of marriage control a great part of her relationship with him. Mammachi’s identity, the wife of a Seventeen-year-old Syrian Christian man has thus mainly been affected by her marriage. Her husband, who “...had always been a jealous man...” (47) Nearly controlled every step of Mammachi. In their younger years when Mammachi had been a promising violinist player “The lessons were abruptly discontinued when Mammachi’s teacher, Launsky-Tieffenthal, made the mistake of telling Pappachi that his wife was exceptionally talented and, in his opinion, potentially concert class” (50). Furthermore, we learn that “Every night he [Pappachi] beat her with a brass flower vase. The beatings weren’t new” (47).

The matter of these beatings will be discussed in a moment. In addition, Mammachi’s husband insulted her, as she was never permitted to sit in his Plymouth, until after his death. Mammachi’s acceptance of these behaviours indicates how she incorporated the patriarchal values of her husband. Mohit Kumar Ray writes in his essay that “...she [Mammachi] accepted the female role model imposed to her by the society—docile, submissive, ungrudging, unprotesting” (Ray 56) This is not to say that Mammachi lead a miserable life, which she rather would not have lived at all. Remembering Mohanty’s discussion, we cannot judge the situation of a Hindu woman (or any third world woman) through a Westernized viewpoint.

Progressing with the analysis, and the occasion of Mammachi’s approval of her received treatment (beatings etc.), we find a large foundation in the Hindu tradition regarding

marriage. As mentioned earlier, a good Hindu wife is that who is 'mastered' by her husband. This is evidently what we find in Mammachi, when she accepts the beatings and being forbidden from a career as a violinist. Although she never expresses that she desires such a career, the very decision made by her husband is wrong. Furthermore, and in the case of Mammachi, Doranne Jacobson writes: "Most Hindu girls are married before puberty, and virtually all are married before the age of 16. ...Divorce and the remarriage of widows and divorcees are strongly disapproved of only within the high-ranking...Brahman..." (185) In this respect, Mammachi, being a Brahman had not the benefit of divorcing an insufferable husband. Instead, she endured a marriage on her husband's conditions, until his death. "At Pappachi's funeral, Mammachi cried and her contact lenses slid around in her eyes" (50). And "With her eyes she looked in the direction that her husband looked. With her heart she looked away" (30). Mammachi's sorrow mostly indicated the loss of someone she was used to, not someone she loved. Perhaps she was used to being beaten from time to time.

Mammachi did not only accept the authorial treatment from her husband, but also that from her son, the second man in her life. Chacko, the privileged and Oxford educated son, who came home for a summer vacation, discovered the regular beatings. Using his physical strength, he becomes the saviour of his mother: "Chacko strode into the room, caught Pappachi's vase-hand and twisted it around his back. 'I never want this to happen again', he told his father. 'Ever' " (48). Despite this defying action towards his father, Chacko slowly takes over Mammachi's pickle factory, making Mammachi the "...sleeping partner." (57) and referring to the factory as "...my factory, my pineapples, my pickles" ( 57). Mammachi's cause for accepting this is the traditional Hindu view of "...the son as security..." (Wadley 122). On the other hand, for Mammachi, this means the loss of her husband, when she "...packed her wifely luggage and committed it to Chacko's care. From then on he became the repository of all her womanly feelings. Her Man. Her only Love" (168). As Mammachi's

husband never speaks to her after Chacko's interference; she places all her security and trust in her son.

All of this demonstrates her nearly total assimilation and approval of the Hindu laws for women. It is also 'revealed' in the dissimilar behaviour she employs towards her children. Concerning her daughter Ammu, Mohit Kumar Ray writes that although the relationship of Mammachi and Ammu is that of mother and daughter "their relationship, as the incidents after Ammu's return to Ayemenem as a divorcee clearly reveal, is a function of the dominantly patriarchal society" (Ray 56). These incidents are demonstrated not so much through the direct treatment of Ammu, but in the excessive concern of Chacko's well being. In Ammu case, she is not a respectable woman, since she is a divorcee with two young children.

Chacko, on the other hand, also a divorcee with a child (whom he does not support), is warmly welcomed back home. Mammachi even builds a separate entrance to Chacko's room, in order to maintain his 'social relations' with a range of women, intact. Mammachi explains this as "Men's Needs" (168). Ammu is expected not to have any bodily desires whatsoever.

Moving on to the modern/ changing influence in Mammachi's identity offers not as much information as the earlier discussions. However, living a great part of her life in a modern country, she has acquired a small number of personality traits influenced by the new/ modern situation. The most evident feature in Mammachi is the fact that she is married to a Syrian Christian man, which she of course would not have been if her parents (who probably arranged the marriage) and she would not have been under the colonial influence of the time. In addition, as many in Hindu families her son is sent abroad to study in the 'mother-country', which is considered as a rather intelligent move to make. Furthermore, Mammachi's locked away Dior perfume signifies her attitude towards the British or Western



products since she kept it locked away: "... (She herself had a bottle of Dior in its soft green leather pouch locked away in her safe)" (173) evidently the perfume, not Indian, was too valuable to make use of daily, or yet keep out in the open.

Baby Kochamma, who is Mammachi's sister-in-law, is a rather bitter woman leading a bitter life. The Hindu personality traits in Baby Kochamma are not as obvious as they are in Mammachi. Being the daughter of a Syrian-Christian reverend, she inevitably was under the influence of a separate religion than that of the Hindu. Nevertheless, growing up and living in India, the influence of the Hindu society was just as unavoidable. First and foremost, Baby Kochamma shares the 'common' caste view on the lower castes and especially the Untouchables. After the news of Ammu and her Untouchable lover Velutha is revealed, one of Baby Kochamma's first reactions is: "How could she [Ammu] stand the smell? Haven't you noticed? They have a particular smell these Paravans.'" (257). Naturally, Baby Kochamma would rather see to it that the Untouchables lived in separate cities of their own. Nevertheless, this arrogant attitude from Baby Kochamma was not only aimed at the Untouchables. At the sight of a group of pilgrims she states: "I tell you, these Hindus'... they have no sense of privacy" (86). These statements show that this is a haughty upper caste woman, with little emphatic understanding for the less fortunate.

Furthermore, Baby Kochamma is in contrast to Mammachi, much less affected by the Hindu laws of conduct for women and marriage. As a young woman, Baby Kochamma fell in love with a young handsome Irish monk, Father Mulligan. Her love for him was so strong that she was content "To love him just by looking at him." (24). Still, as Father Mulligan was in Kerala only for a year studying the Hindu scriptures, the inevitable day of departure separated Baby Kochamma from the man she secretly had come to love. Her defying spirit led her to a different fate as she "...defied her father's wishes and became a Roman Catholic" (24). As she took her vows and entered the convent in Madras, she hoped for a reunion with

Father Mulligan. Eventually, as the situation unveiled itself she learned the opposite. Baby Kochamma left the convent without having met the only man she considered loveable.

As this 'love-story' is revealed for Baby Kochamma's father, it is decided that she goes abroad for an education. "Reverend Ipe realised that his daughter had by now developed a 'reputation' and was unlikely to find a husband. He decided that since she couldn't have a husband there was no harm in her having an education." (Roy 26). Clearly, the Hindu traditions effect Baby Kochamma's life, since no husband indicates education.. Two years later, Baby Kochamma returns from the University of Rochester in America, with a diploma in Ornamental Gardening. Still, after a very long time Baby Kochamma loves Father Mulligan, and with his death many years later she can make him correspond to her desire, "His rejection of her in life...was neutralised by death. In her memory of him, he embraced her. Just her. In the way a man embraces a woman" (298). For this very fate, Baby Kochamma cannot comprehend Ammu's desires:

Baby Kochamma resented Ammu, because she saw her quarrelling with a fate that she, Baby Kochamma herself, felt she had graciously accepted. The fate of a wretched Man-less woman. They sad, Father Mulligan-less Baby Kochamma. She had managed to persuade herself over the years that her unconsummated love for Father Mulligan had been entirely due to her restraint and her determination to do the right thing. (45)

The modernity influenced identity in Baby Kochamma is shown by various factors. Her foreign education in America has a great part in making Baby Kochamma separate herself from 'ordinary Indians'. With the arrival of the English woman Margaret Kochamma, the former wife of Chacko, Baby Kochamma tries to bring forth all the British or 'non-Indian' behaviour she can find within herself. At the airport, meeting Margaret Kochamma for the first time, the children are quite shy which Baby Kochamma, not wanting to let go of

the attention she has, uses to say: “‘He’s [Estha] doing it deliberately...in a new strange British accent” (144, my italics) In addition, wanting to boast her knowledge for Margaret Kochamma, she asks Sophie: “ ‘D’you know who Ariel was...Ariel in The Tempest?’ ... ‘Shakespeare’s The Tempest?’ Baby Kochamma persisted” (144). A shared personality trait in Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, which signifies their values recruited from the modern days, is their almost toady attitude towards the English woman Margaret Kochamma and her daughter Sophie. Madhumalati Adhikari writes:

The colonial psychology is also perceptible in the treatment of two women—the dark skinned Ammu and the white skinned Margaret. Ammu, a divorcee, is repeatedly humiliated. Margaret, a divorcee and a widow, is placed on an altar. All eyes are focused on fair Sophie Mol. Rahel and Estha, the natives, are constantly side-tracked and overlooked. The colonial forces, active through the colonized, create a pattern of master-slave relationship that realigns the entire power structure. (46)

The respective identities of these women are on the one hand for the most part colored by the Hindu traditional thinking than by the modern one. (which still is there). Despite their restricted roles and rights as women, they have a defiant spirit. In Mammachi it is the fact that she starts a pickle factory of her own, which is nevertheless overtaken by her son. In Baby Kochamma there is the defying of her father and converting to another religion. She too however, eventually gives in to the traditional Hindu values. Their unhappiness in love also affects their behaviour towards the rest of their female relations, most importantly Ammu and Rahel. One of the most evident features of modernity in the first generation is the passion of Baby Kochamma with the Irish monk. However, Baby Kochamma learned that a relationship with him was not accepted in her contemporary society. In conclusion, they are the voices of

the past, linking and passing on a mixture of traditional Hindu turn of mind and the consequences of modernity.

Ammu, the young mother of the twins Esthappen and Rahel, is perhaps the one who is mostly restricted by her situation. Her mother Mammachi and aunt Baby Kochamma, both hold traditional values which directly restrain Ammu's happiness. Being the single mother of two children, her position in society does not bring about happiness or a fresh relationship for her. After being denied an education, Ammu had no other choice but live in her parent's house and wait for marriage proposals.

Since Ammu did not receive any suitable marriage proposals and began to grow distressed, she 'arranged' her escape: "She hatched several wretched little plans. Eventually, one worked. Pappachi agreed to let her spend the summer with a distant aunt who lived in Calcutta" (39). It is during this summer, at a wedding reception that Ammu meets her future husband. After a short acquaintance, more exactly five days, she accepted a marriage proposal from the young man, not because she was in love but because "She thought that anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem" (39) Unfortunately, Ammu soon realized that her husband was not a man of quality. Her growing frustration tipped over when her alcoholic, unemployed husband required sending Ammu to his manager, Mr Hollick " ... to be 'looked after' " (42). Alongside her divorce came the agonies caused by society.

Ammu's defying spirit is made clear early in the book with the story of her marriage. Ammu does not submit to the patriarchal male values as she chooses a life as a single mother and divorcee, and challenges both her husband and father. Her return to her parental home is the end of her marriage and the beginning of unhappiness. Adhikari writes: "In Indian culture, it is expected of a woman to remain totally faithful to a man—dead or alive" (47).

Furthermore, Nirmala C. Prakash says: “Life offers little choice for a woman who yearns for happiness” (80). Ammu, wanting nothing but happiness for herself and her children is thus faced with a hard reality. At this point the Hindu influenced part of Ammu begins its story.

The Hindu factors in Ammu are not as strong as those in the first generation. Yet, being the kind of those two women, she is inevitably influenced by them. It is Mammachi and Baby Kochamma; women themselves, who have decided that Ammu is ‘used property’. Roy writes: “Old female relations with incipient beards and several wobbling chins made overnight trips to Ayemenem to commiserate with her about her divorce. They squeezed her knee and gloated” (43). As discussed earlier by Jacobson and Wadley, we have learnt that a divorced woman of high caste is forbidden to remarry. Ammu’s mother, Mammachi, enlightens Rahel and Estha that they what they “suffered from was far worse than Inbreeding. She meant having parents who were divorced. As though these were the only choices available to people: Inbreeding or Divorce” (61). Eventually, Ammu succumbs to these values, as “For herself she knew that there would be no more chances” (43). She has partly prepared to accept the truth--that she is a disappointment in the eyes of society.

In contrast, Margaret Kochamma, the ex-wife of Chacko, is never despised for being the exact same thing as Ammu: a divorcee with a child. A year into their marriage Margaret Kochamma realized that Chacko was not the man she thought she had married. Instead she found herself with an unemployed man who never made an effort to look after himself. Margaret had “just discovered that she was pregnant when she met Joe. He was an old school friend of her brother’s” (247). And she “found herself drawn towards him like a plant in a dark room towards a wedge of light” (248). Finally, with her new insights Margaret Kochamma asked Chacko for a divorce. But in comparison with Ammu she had the possibility to re-marry and continue with her life. Ammu is however, as Doranne Jacobson writes, despised for her sexuality (59).

Moreover, there is the difference of educational opportunities for these dissimilar women. Ammu's father decided her fate by prohibiting her formal education while after having her child "Margaret Kochamma enrolled herself in a teacher training course, and then got a job as a junior school teacher in Clapham" (Roy 250). Also, seemingly being a white English woman brings about various privileges as is shown by this passage: "On the way back from the airport, Margaret Kochamma would sit in front [of the car] with Chacko because she used to be his wife. Sophie Mol would sit between them. Ammu would move to the back" (Roy 46) Thus it is not complicated to see how Margaret Kochamma could have a normal relationship with Joe whereas in the case of Ammu it was called 'a forbidden relationship'.

The 'forbidden' relationship between Ammu and Velutha, a low caste Paravan (Untouchable) triggers a number of reactions from their surroundings. Ammu's family is familiar with Velutha, a poor carpenter. As a child, he usually helped his father working for the Brahman family. As an adult, Velutha himself, being a highly skilled carpenter, worked for Mammachi. Due to the existing values of society, Ammu had under no circumstances viewed him as a possible partner, although her children were madly fond of him. One day though, Ammu discovers Velutha as a man: "She saw the ridges of muscle on Velutha's stomach grow taught and rise under his skin...A Swimmers body. A swimmer-carpenter's body ... Ammu saw that he saw. She looked away. He did too" (176). Velutha on his side "saw that Rahel's mother was a woman" (176). Little did they know that their secret relationship would be revealed and gradually escort them to death. As this short (13 days) relationship is revealed, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma are the first to act and are the reasons to the shattered lives as a result. Nirmala C. Prakash writes:

Arundhati Roy subtly suggests that even though Christianity survived in India on the strength of low caste converts, these converts could never be

assimilated into the mainstream Christianity. And hence, a relationship between a Christian and a “paravan” (outcaste) is bound to be doomed. It is for this particular reason that the Ayemenem House acts swiftly. (82)

This passage illustrates the actions taken by Baby Kochamma and Mammachi and their strong aggression towards both Velutha and Ammu. Despite this, there is a second reason to the old women’s plotting against the young lovers. Doranne Jacobson writes in her essay “The Women of North and Central India”: “A woman can bring devastating shame to her family by engaging in sexual activity with a man of lower caste” (59). Baby Kochamma and Mammachi were not only disturbed with Ammu’s relation to a man of lower caste, but they were also vexed about their own names as a high caste respected family. For Ammu however, this relationship was the result of the unwarranted situation imposed upon her by society and her desires to love and be loved as a woman.

Regarding modern features in Ammu, the distinction is not as easily visible as in Baby Kochamma and Mammachi. Ammu is a mixture of Hindu and post-colonial influences. This mixture is mainly shown in her defying spirit against the male dominated Hindu family and society. Mohit Kumar Ray writes: “She took a definite step in trying to flee her tyrant father...she refused to comprise with her spineless husband and hit him back when she was physically assaulted by him and showed admirable sense of self-respect ...” (57). Ammu was never prepared to let her life be completely ruled by the men in her life. With her tyrant father, harassing her as a child, while he was a well-known Imperialist Entomologist, she learnt how to resist unjustness forced upon her.

Modernity in terms of Mammachi’s perfume or Baby Kochamma’s citation of Shakespeare is not completely applicable to Ammu. However, in her days as a married woman she “wore backless blouses with her saris and carried a silver lamé purse on a chain. She smoked long cigarettes in a long silver cigarette holder and learned to blow perfect

smoke rings” (40). Ammu’s backless blouses and her long silver cigarette holder are the indicators of her liking this luxurious life. Unlike Mammachi who locked away her Dior perfume and Baby Kochamma who locked away the T-shirts she won from English TV-shows, Ammu’s desire of leading a ‘British-inspired’ lifestyle never prevented her from letting it go. When Ammu divorced her Bengali husband, she also divorced a life with “silver lamé purses”. Seema Bhaduri notes in her essay “History, Social Dynamics and the Individual” the rebellious character of Ammu against her family and society and does not find it strange that she was driven into the arms of Velutha, the only person who respected Ammu's identity.

Continuing with Ammu’s post-colonial traits, her behaviour towards her children is an indicator of her considering the British as somewhat affirmative. Again Bhaduri writes:

Self-depreciation and a corresponding idealisation of all things English constitutes Anglophilia and accounts for a large part of the tragedy in this novel. The much anticipated visit by the family to the airport becomes a sad affair because Estha and Rahel refuse ... to greet their English ex-aunt ... in the way they had been taught and trained to for quite some time. (197)

We see the part in Ammu that wishes to present herself and her children as something other than a “damn godforsaken tribe” (180) as she expresses it in anger. Ammu “had wanted a smooth performance. A prize for her children in the Indo-British Behaviour Competition” (145). In the way Baby Kochamma quoted Shakespeare in front of Margaret Kochamma, Ammu tries indirectly (through her children) show that she to is civilised (read British).

Ammu is one of the most complex women in *The God of Small Things* since her, representing the second generation, is the first woman in her family who dares to defy the old traditional Hindu values, and patriarchy in Indian society. The notion of gender difference discussed by feminist theorists, is seemingly unaccepted by Ammu. Rather, she views herself



as the equal of any man. Ammu cannot remain silent and adopt the male discourse as her mother and aunt did before her. Due to this fact it is nearly impossible for her to integrate in society. As she longs for happiness and approval of her identity she finds herself in situations that force her further and further away from her desire. Also, as written in the essay “Arundhati Roy’s and Salman Rushdie’s Postmodern India”, to approach Ammu merely in terms of post-coloniality is to ignore “her awareness as a Post-Independence Indian” (157). With the character of Ammu we learn more about the effects of breaking the communal laws of India rather than seeing the pure consequence of the British occupation of India.

The situation and life of Ammu inevitably affects the life of Rahel, just as Ammu is affected by her own mother and aunt. Rahel is the daughter of Ammu, and the younger twin-sister of Esthappen. She is very young when her parents divorce, which leaves her with no complete knowledge of the man she should call father. Living in her grandparent’s house does not enable a normal childhood since she constantly witnessed the injustice her mother suffered and the loveless environment she was forced to accept as home. Rahel differs from the earlier generations of women in that she does not experience the Hindu tradition directly as did her mother and grandmother. The Hindu identity or perhaps consciousness in Rahel is mainly the result of witnessing the life of her mother. Consequently, as Victor J. Ramray writes, Rahel becomes aware of deeper aspects of Indian life (159). She thus learns what a Hindu woman can or cannot do, and especially she learns to experience the latter through her mother. Roy explains, "While other children of their age learned other things, Estha and Rahel learned how history negotiates its terms and collects its dues from those who break its laws. They heard its thickening thud. They smelled its and never forgot it" (55). This excerpt relates to a number of situations that affects Rahel’s life and therefore her identity. These are that Ammu is a single mother, the fact that she takes a lover from a low caste and also the consequences of this love affair as it is revealed.

Being the child of a high caste woman, who has divorced from a love marriage, Rahel was not seen as a gift to the family. Rather she (and her brother of course) was seen as an illegitimate child with no place in the family. Not even their grand aunt, can come to terms with the idea of two “illegitimate” children finding happiness in each other. M.L Pandit writes in the essay “Childhood Feelings” that “... Baby Kochamma, grudges them their moments of happiness, but most of all she grudges them the comfort they draw from each other as a little child Rahel cannot understand the reason she is treated as a burden for the family” (244). However, as she grows older, she learns to recognize the way in which some people are favoured and others are not.

While observing, Sophie, it is noted: “The arrival of an English girl really begins to affect the life of the twins. Due to the fuss made about her, they desist her from the outset” (181) Sophie Mol as she is called, being the child of a divorced single mother, is treated as a precious gift that might break at any point. In contrast to Rahel, she is quite confident with herself, which is evident in this quote, “‘Tell me, are you a pretty girl?’ she [Mammachi] asked Sophie Mol. ‘Yes,’ Sophie Mol said” (174). What is more is the scheming nature of this fair-skinned little girl. As Estha and Rahel plan their escape, Sophie Mol points out that “the absence of children, all children, would heighten the adults’ remorse” (292).

Unfortunately; Sophie pays with her life for her desire to attract the attention of the adults. In contrast to Rahel, who constantly is punished for her childish games and behaviour, Sophie knew that avoiding punishment meant hiding ‘unwanted’ behaviour: At supper silly, the children sat at a separate smaller table. Sophie Mol, with her back against the grownups, made gruesome faces at the food. Every mouthful she ate was displayed to her admiring younger cousins, half-chewed, mulched, lying on her tongue like fresh vomit.

When Rahel did the same, Ammu saw her and took her to bed.

When the ‘news’ of Ammu’s love affair with Velutha is revealed, Rahel becomes a witness of the patriarchy in the Hindu society. Velutha who is thought to have raped Ammu, and kidnapped Estha, Rahel and their English cousin Sophie is brutally murdered by the local police. In fact, the children, who had escaped, happened by coincidence to be at the same place as Velutha, at the time of his murder. Moreover, their English cousin who unwontedly had joined them had accidentally drowned. With Velutha’s death Ammu herself is banned from the village, due to the shame she has brought upon the family. Simultaneously, Estha is blamed for the death of Sophie, and is sent to live with his alcoholic father and his new wife. This leaves Rahel to live alone with her insensitive relatives.

As Rahel is left to grow up unwanted, she never experiences the ‘real’ Hindu traditions that are meant for women:

Oddly, neglect seemed to have resulted in an accidental release of the spirit.

Rahel grew up without a brief. Without anybody to arrange a marriage for her.

Without anybody who would pay her a dowry and therefore without an obligatory husband looming at her horizon. So long as she wasn’t noisy about it, she remained to do her own enquiries: ...Into life and how it ought to be lived. (17)

Fortunately, Rahel grows into a free woman. A woman who unlike her own mother is not restricted by the mental restrictions of the Hindu tradition, regarding caste systems and the restricted life of women. This is why, at her return to Ayemenem, she answers an old man asking about her marital status: “We’re divorced.’ Rahel hoped to shock him into silence” (130). The only Hindu effected restrictions in Rahel are the memories she holds of the direct treatment and the aftermath her mother had to live.

Moreover, whether naming Rahel’s modern traits Rahel is educated at a college of Architecture in Delhi, without taking her degree. She too, as her mother, marries a man

outside her own society. Barat notes: “However, this time her choice is socially acceptable because it conforms to the rules of patriarchy: Larry is an American, and Americans rule the world” (93) Nevertheless, “Because Worse Things had happened” (9). Rahel was indifferent in her marriage, without having any love to give. Her indifference stems from the hard life she had to live as a child, but also because she does not view the Hindu tradition or the British as merely good or bad. So in the case of Rahel, the effort of her family trying to be both or either has ruined her life and left her with no sense of belonging. It must also be noted that Rahel is the most developed woman in relation to her female kin. She does not succumb to patriarchal values, and lives by her own rules. Being aware of the role she is supposed to adapt as a woman that Rahel purposely defies them.

### **Modernity, Transgression and the *The God of Small Things***

The novel takes place in modern India, in the state of Kerala, during a time of social change and upheaval and as television is just beginning to broadcast “television-enforced democracy” into an insular world. The characters in Roy’s novel exist in a culture of strict rules.

There is a caste system and a class system that exert much force upon the characters. Conflict is created for the individuals who can’t adhere to these systems of social organization and control. Indeed, the greatest conflict in the story, a love affair between Ammu and Velutha, is the result of individuals rebelling against the historical and cultural structures of caste and class; this is an affair between a Touchable and an Untouchable. In the beginning of the novel, the tragedy is foreshadowed and explained when the narrative states, “They all broke the rules .... They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how.” As an entire culture strains against ancient laws and customs, Roy’s novel brings this struggle down to the level of individuals, in a “time when the unthinkable became

thinkable.” That is, individuals have begun to question and act against the laws that had rigidly remained for so long.

The British influence of the Indian culture insidiously lurks at the heart of the novel. Baby Kochamma appears at the beginning of the novel to Rahel to be a caricature of her former self, defined by her dyed jet-black hair along with its by-product, a pale gray stain imprinted on her forehead. She has also begun to wear makeup, that when applied in the dark confines of her home, appears to be slightly off, “her lipstick mouth having shifted slightly off her real mouth” (173). The silence between Baby Kochamma and Rahel when they are reunited, both now as adults, mirrors this strangeness, described as sitting “between grandniece and baby grandaunt like a third person. A stranger. Swollen. Noxious” (174). Conversation is stilted, and the two struggle to find words. But the reader soon learns that circumstances were once different. The narrative recalls a past featuring a different Baby Kochamma, one who had previously spent her afternoons in a sari and gumboots, where she tended to an ornamental garden fantastic enough to attract attention from neighboring towns.

Arundhati Roy reveals a complex and longstanding class conflict in the state of Kerala, India, and she comments on its various competing forces. For example, Roy’s novel attacks the brutal, entrenched, and systematic oppression at work in Kerala, exemplified by figures of power such as Inspector Thomas Mathew. Roy is also highly critical of the hypocrisy and ruthlessness of the conventional, traditional moral code of Pappachi and Mammachi. On the opposite side of the political fence, the Kerala Communist Party, at least the faction represented by Comrade Pillai, is revealed to be much more concerned with personal ambition than with any notions of social justice.

The social malaise framing the events of the novel is aptly described by Chacko, an India-born, Oxford educated man who sees, yet cannot transcend, the hypocrisies of his westernized culture. It is Chacko who is quick to point out that the family’s desire to see ‘The

Sound of Music' is "an extended exercise in Anglophilia." He tells the twins that they are all Anglophiles, "pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away." He explains to them that history is "like an old house at night. With all the lamps lit. And ancestors whispering inside." To understand one's history is to enter this house, to understand and hear the whispers, to see the books, pictures and smell the smells that linger within its walls. Yet in the next breath, he is apt to express himself in what is characterized as his "reading aloud voice," an affectation developed during his studies at Oxford. His fondness for his Oxford days culminates not only in his affinity for literature, but for the reverence he holds for both his American-born ex-wife and their daughter.

No one character seems to escape the tentacles of Western culture. An element of violence punctures the novel, first, in Baby Kochamma's husband, Pappachi, who beat her regularly yet fancied himself to be a proper English gentleman within the context of his own arrogance and exceedingly destructive nature. Then there is Ammu, his daughter, mother of Rahel and Estha, who returns home after surviving a violent attack from her drunken husband. The cause for the assault is her denial to sleep with the boss of her husband as a way to preserve his position with the company. Ammu's refusal to comply spurns the attack from her spouse. When she decides to leave her husband, her family's response is surprisingly negative, according to the narrator. In the Kochamma family, Ammu's integrity takes a backseat to preconceived notions of British values. "Pappachi would not believe her story—not because he thought well of her husband, but simply because he didn't believe that an Englishman, any Englishman, would covet another man's wife." It is this Western influence that further polarizes the family. As a result of this influence, Ammu is ostracized by her own people, as are her innocent children, predicated or based on a sort of high-flying, false perception of English decorum as having transcended Indian culture.

By closely connecting Rahel and Estha's sexual relationship to Ammu and Velutha's, The two instances of breaking of the Love Laws form a key to understanding the rest of the book; they are both the result and the cause of the novel's action. This is why the narrator writes that the story "really began in the days when the Love Laws were made," back through the colonial and pre-colonial history of Kerala. The Love Laws represent the strict confines on human behavior—the caste systems, social pressures, and political restrictions that horrify people beyond expression when they are broken. The central action of the novel is about breaking them, and the tragedy that results from breaking them.

For one thing, therefore, the forbidden love affairs at the end of the novel are crucial because they reveal the disgust and horror with the lovers that are at the root of the violence and tragedy directed against them. Present-day Western readers probably do not consider inter-caste romance repulsive, but they are quite likely to be shocked and offended by incest. Incest is as taboo in twenty-first-century Western society as an inter-caste sexual affair would have been in the 1960s, and probably still is, in Kerala. The reader's reaction to such violations of the Love Laws allows him/her to understand how and why such drastic social and political consequences could have resulted from the transgressions at the end of *The God of Small Things*.

Roy allows the reader an insight into the emotional basis behind the careful, planned brutality of those dedicated to Kerala's social code, such as the Touchable Policemen who believe that in beating Velutha to death they are enforcing the Love Laws and inoculating a community against an outbreak.

However, the love affairs also allow the reader to identify with the transgressor, and they inspire a sympathetic reaction for four people who are abused, tortured, and betrayed by their society's most fundamental rules. The reasons for Ammu's turn to Velutha are sharply drawn and inspire a great deal of sympathy when she studies her body, the body of an

“inexperienced lover,” in the mirror and peers “down the road to Age and Death through its parted strands.” Ammu’s love affair is, in a sense, the cause of the novel’s tragedy because it shatters her family, condemns Velutha to a brutal death, traumatizes Rahel and Estha for the rest of their lives, and results in her own decay and death. It is also, however, the result of an entire lifetime of abuse, confinement, and imprisonment in a stinging social code. This code not only fails to protect Ammu against her father beating her with a brass vase, but also she is imprisoned by her father in the house even when she is an adult and is beaten by her husband. When she recognizes that Kerala’s social code is in the process of forcing her down, Baby Kochamma’s path of bitter, joyless confinement to the house until death, she acts in perfectly understandable desperation and attempts to find some brief joy with Velutha.

Similarly, Rahel’s affair with Estha can be interpreted as the result of a social code, both in Kerala and in the United States that has traumatized her and deprived her of her childhood. The “Quietness and Emptiness” that characterize Estha and Rahel stems from Velutha’s death and their parents’ difficulties in raising them, but also stems from a society that is cruel, harassing, and violent towards a single mother and her children. From Baby Kochamma to Chacko to the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, people are prejudiced towards Ammu and her children, and take advantage of them. Rahel and Estha’s incestuous contact is their attempt to find comfort in each other, although, unlike Ammu and Velutha, they are not even able to reach a joyful release from their problems, and what they shared that night was not happiness but hideous grief.

In addition to what they reveal about the cultural and political content of Roy’s novel, the two affairs communicate a great deal about the novel’s psychological subtext. In the course of the book, both Ammu and Rahel experience identity crises whose primary goals are, in a sense, discovering who and what they are in relation to their culture and family.



Rahel travels back to Ayemenem to see her brother, but her journey is perhaps better described as a quest, through her memories, to discover herself and the roots of her history.

The third-person narrator of *The God of Small Things* is omniscient, and not strictly confined to any particular perspective, but the narrative voice is grounded in Rahel's memories. Events and remembrances weave into the story as they might appear in Rahel's mind, and the novel is structured around her search to understand herself and her past. Rahel's incestuous contact with Estha is so crucial and definitive in this identity search because, as the narrator stresses insistently, her brother is herself. In opening passages of the novel, the narrator relates that, during their childhood, "Estha and Rahel thought of themselves together as me, and separately, individually, as we or us. As they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate but with joint identities". The twins' love-making is a metaphor for their search for this fractured and traumatized joint identity in their adulthood, and it is a real, physical and emotional expression of their grief and longing.

Ammu's affair with Velutha is also, in a sense, a search for herself; this is clear from the lengthy passages in which the narrator describes the desperation in Ammu's strictly confined life and her need to live and experience joy. When Ammu studies herself in the mirror and tests whether a toothbrush will stay on her breast, she reveals that she understands herself through her body and her sexual identity, and she seeks out Velutha in order to discover the beautiful part of herself.

The forbidden love affairs in the novel work as the metaphor for the key struggles and meanings of the novel. The twins' incestuous contact and Ammu's affair with Velutha are metaphors for, and physical enactments of, the psychological identity struggles of the novel's protagonists. These struggles extend, by implication and because they are so closely connected to the political subtext of the novel, to the wider political and psychological

identity struggles of all those afflicted by the oppressive social code of southern Indian culture.

The relationship between Velutha and Ammu is symbolic of the conflicts in the culture. Velutha is from the Untouchable caste, but his many positive qualities cause Ammu to fall in love with him, while the twins Rahel and Estha adore him and play with him often. Velutha's excellence as a person illuminates the unfairness of the caste laws. When Velutha is seen marching in a Communist parade, it illustrates the changing structure of political power in the culture. Velutha's grandfather had converted to Christianity, but even the new religion could not overcome the entrenched caste laws of the society, and the churches became segregated for the Untouchables.

Velutha is hardly an obsequious slave. He is described as a handsome, kind, intelligent, and clever man. He has an "unwarranted assurance" about him and he bothers people because of the "way in which he disregarded suggestions without appearing to rebel." Velutha's qualities, the narrative states, might be desirable in Touchables, but in an Untouchable they could be "construed as insolence." With Velutha, the cultural laws are seen as restricting excellence. There is something about Velutha that represents escape for Ammu, who is from a higher caste. When she sees him, he represents something other than the smug, ordered world that she so raged against.

The individual freedom represented by the love between Velutha and Ammu is short-lived, and other characters in the story act their parts in continuing the cultural constraint of such displays of rule-breaking. Baby Kochamma lies and betrays Velutha, as does the Communist Pillai, which leads to the murder, by official forces, of Velutha. Indeed, it is betrayal by individuals that sends Velutha on his "blind date with history," in which he is murdered unjustly for breaking the Love Laws. Estha gets caught up in the situation as well,

when he is manipulated by Baby Kochamma into lying against Velutha. For Estha, this event has long-reaching effects in his life, as he loses his voice and lives numbly thereafter.

In the end, the novel shifts and the cultural forces begin to exert their power over the individuals. Baby Kochamma performs her machinations “not for Ammu,” but to “contain the scandal” that has occurred when the Love Laws were broken. When the narrative notes that the characters are living in “an era imprinting itself on those who lived in it,” it shows that the God of Big Things is again residing over the God of Small Things. When the cultural powers decide that Velutha must be held responsible for breaking the rules, the story provides a glimpse of the men in power, Comrade Pillai and Inspector Mathew. These men are “without curiosity” and are “terrifyingly adult” in the way they operate. So controlled are they by the rules of their culture, they have become “mechanics who serviced different parts of the same machine.” When the police beat Velutha to death, it is an impersonal event, as the caste laws had severed “any connection between themselves and him ... long ago.” Later, many years after the incident, the culture protects the men who uphold its prejudices and injustices. When Rahel meets Comrade Pillai, she notices that he “didn’t hold himself in any way personally responsible for what had happened. He dismissed the whole business as the Inevitable Consequence of Necessary Politics.”

### **The Interface between Tradition and Modernity**

Modernization originally referred to the contrast and transition between a ‘traditional’ agrarian society and the kind of ‘modern’ society that is based on trade and industry. For example, traditional and modern would describe the difference between medieval England and late-Victorian Britain. A traditional society is ‘vertically’ organized by hierarchical division by class or caste as a specialization of prestige. But a modern society is ‘horizontally’ organized by function, such that the major functions are performed by modular social systems. These major social systems include the political system, the public

administration (civil service), the armed forces, the legal system, the economy, religion, education, the health service and the mass media. So, while a traditional society is like a pyramid of top-down authority, a modern society is more like a mosaic held together by the cement of mutual inter-dependence. A further contrast is that traditional societies consist of a single, unified system with a single centre of power; while a modern society is composed of a plurality of autonomous systems which interact with each other, influence each other, but do not absorb each other.

Modern societies are fundamentally heterogeneous with multiple centers of power; and this is no accident but intrinsic to their nature. Indeed, the continued process of modernization tends to break down any remaining vestiges of hierarchy and centralized domination of social functions. Modern and traditional societies differ according to their complexity of organization and their rate of growth in complexity.

Modern societies are much more complex than traditional societies and are growing ever-more complex. Traditional societies are simpler and have a static structure (or one that increases its complexity so slowly or erratically that they perceive themselves as static). Complexity is favored by selection processes, which are more powerful in modernizing societies, because specialization of function enables greater efficiency (for instance when division of labour, or increased trade and communications enables greater efficiency). Increasing efficiency then frees resources and drives further growth. Modern societies are based upon growth and the expectation of growth. Indeed the cohesion of modernizing societies requires more or less continuous growth. This is why it is impossible to stop modernization at a particular favored point if growth stops then the nature of society reverts towards a traditional form. Growth in modern societies includes economic growth (increasing output and productivity), but also entails 'cognitive growth' which means an increase in

knowledge and capability across a wide range of activities such as science, technology and political administration.

Traditional societies exhibit division of labor and cognitive specialization, but their complexity is constrained by the hierarchical structure into three main categories of peasants, warriors and priests (Gellner's 'plough, sword and book'). Warriors and priests constitute the ruling class who are concerned mainly with maintaining social cohesion by means of physical coercion and ideological propaganda. Peasants — whose role is agricultural production — constitute the vast majority of the population of traditional societies. Beyond the division into warriors, priests and peasants there is only a small 'middle class' of technical specialists (for example the different types of craftsmen). But in modern societies the 'middle class' is dominant: the vast majority of the population is cognitively specialized, and there are many thousands of distinctively different occupations. A deeper understanding of modernization reveals that one vital qualitative difference between traditional and modern is the difference between a unified social system in which all activity is (in principle) subordinated to politics ('politics' being variably combined from different proportions of military force and theological legitimation); and a modern society in which politics does not dominate all activities, but in which there is instead a fundamental and continually-increasing functional specialization such as ever more division of labour into more different types of job. The categorization of societies into traditional and modern is crude, and of limited usefulness.

At present almost all societies are at least partially modernized. On the other hand, no society is 'completely' modernized and the rate of modernization is variable between societies, and between systems in a society. Pre-modern forms are obvious in all societies. There has always (so far) been scope for further increase in adaptive complexity, in a positive feedback cycle where increased productivity fuels increased complexity, which in turn fuels

increased productivity. Since modernization is dynamic, it is more useful to consider modernization as a process than as a state. A 'modern' society based on the process of modernization: this is 'modernity'. Modernization can be seen as the general mechanism by which the social transformation from agricultural dominance to domination by trade and industry takes place, and the permanent continuation of this process. The difference between modernizing and traditional societies is profound being the difference between simple static structure and complex dynamic process.

Generally modernity is taken as a new connotation as it will lead to better conditions for all people. It stands for transition from old to new and brings choices and alternatives. However, there are some traditional attitudes and values remain, despite some forces of modernity. In the process of modernization, members of different castes are constantly in close contact and forced to interact with one another which help to weaken the strict rules of the caste system. Then, Untouchables have also become the strong and organized political force who refers to themselves as Dalits.

Roy presents politics as a very complex force operative at different levels beginning with home and manipulated by different people for different ends. It is also ironical to see Mr. Pillai using Marxism for personal gains rather than for poor labors or the lower caste. It stands how the caste system and hierarchy prevalent in India, operates as a powerful component of Indian society.

The protagonist of the novel, Velutha, an untouchable man, suffers untold miseries at the hands of people whose attitudes are guided by age-old casteist prejudices. He always lives on the margin of society and he is deliberately obstructed from getting into the central place. As Mammachi observes, he would have been a fine engineer rather than a Paravan. It is from his family that the painful and unjust discriminatory actions follow. When, Mammachi hired him as the factory carpenter and put him on charge of general maintenance

then his co-workers have strong resentments against him, as Paravan were not meant to be carpenters that made him know that his essential identity is his caste. To keep the others happy, Mammachi paid Velutha less than the touchable carpenter but more than Paravan. She did not encourage him to enter the house (except when she needed something mended or installed).

Velutha belongs to the new generation youth with greater courage and defiance than his father Vallya Paapen. He inherited earlier times of agonies which gives him the awareness of the social status. He inherited the deep sense of humiliation and hurt in his heart. He is determined to remove all and yearned to be treated as equal to all other men and women. That may be the reason why he was drawn to the communist party as a formal member and participated actively in its marches, meetings and demonstrations.

Velutha is a simple person and failed to understand the cunning mind of comrade Pillai. When he was accused by Mammachi having of illicit relationship with Ammu, he got to know his all doors are closed for him. Then "he went to Pillai for help but feels disillusioned in the communist party because Pillai gives solid lectures of the principles instead of giving sympathies" (287).

Velutha becomes deeply frustrated. Then he meets Ammu, the woman he had known as a girl years ago, but becomes a mother of twins now. Ammu emerges as a sad and much wringed character in the novel that wants to have her own way in life but is mercilessly suppressed. Ammu was a small girl when Mammachi received beating, "Every night he beat her with a brass flower vase" (47). Ammu had been brutalizing masculine power from the early years of her life. This must be contributed to the hardening of her will and introducing an element of stubbornness. We see an example of this when she grows eighteen and decides to leave her home against the wishes of the entire household. It is interesting to note that Ammu was deprived of the higher education as, "Pappachi insisted that a college education

was an unnecessary expense for a girl, so Ammu had no choice but to leave Delhi and move with them. There was little for a young girl to do in Aymenem other than to wait for marriage proposals, while she helped her mother with the housework” (38).

Ammu grows desperate, her woman’s heart yearning for freedom. “All days she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother”(39). Ammu’s intrinsic trait of bold initiative and immense confidence in herself can be observed when she goes to Calcutta and marries an Assistant Manager of Tea Estate. But at the end she came to know that her husband was an alcoholic and extremely self-centered. He was even willing to send her into the Arms of Mr. Hollick his boss. After revealing her husband’s characters, she decides to break the marriage and “left her husband and returned unwelcome to her parents” (42). A divorcee woman has no place or respect in the traditional Indian family. She was neglected, ignored and humiliated. To adjust with the emerged conditions, she starts wearing flowers in her hair, taking midnight swims, indulges smoking cigarettes and listening to film songs on her radio.

At the same time, Velutha and Ammu, meet each other after years. Velutha was an attractive male and Ammu an admiring woman. They felt drawn to each other. They do have sexual relation; both reached out to one each another as neglected and discarded by the orthodox society. Now, Ammu once again rises above the drawn lines and rebels against social oppression. Both could silently share each other’s hurt and humiliation. They tried to momentarily fill the void that each found in the other and determined to make the best of it.

Velutha, an untouchable, was a transgressor of the love laws, as he has touched the middle class touchable woman. Velutha’s love reaches out naturally to Ammu’s children, Rahel and Estha. Ammu is highly amused to see him playing with them –tossing them in the air and catching them on his muscular arms. It is significant that it was Velutha’s anxiety to mend the damaged boat and his instructions about how to use it upstream, that finally lead to



the drowning and death of Sophie Mol. This incident is made much of as a piece of evidence against Velutha. He is accused of causing Sophie Mol's death and on that plea killed by the police. However, he is innocent but aware about the children that they are innocent, lovable and not conscious of the caste barriers that poison the minds of the grownups.

Similarly, in case of twins, Rahel is the twin's sister of Estha. She has a natural bond with him that enables her to understand and feel what he thinks, feels and experiences. They share their mother's terrors and Rahel shares his sorrows and purple moods. Rahel and Estha develop a peculiar attraction for one another. The two seek salvation in illicit relation. Rahel takes a deviant path to seek answers to agonizing questions that rack her. As a child she was willful and rebellious. She was accused of 'hiding behind doors and deliberately colliding with her seniors ... to find out whether breast hurt'. It was a shocking admission for as Arundhati Roy sarcastically comments, "In that Christian institution, breasts were not acknowledged. They weren't supposed to exist, and if they didn't, could they hurt?"(16)

Roy used the way of sex to cow down the defenseless as an age-old device. As Thomas Mathew knows his power and addresses Ammu Veshya and gave a lecherous gaze. There could be nothing more humiliating than to be called Veshya for a respectable woman. By using his power Thomas Mathew is determined to make her feel it by stripping her of her dignity when he called her child illegitimate. The protagonist of the novel, Velutha, untouchable, in fact the "inversion of God" represents the taboos of all kinds. In Arundhati Roy's novel, *The God of small things*, the laws of India's caste system are broken by the characters of Ammu and Velutha an untouchable or Paravan.

Traditionally, a woman who has had sex with a man from a lower caste would be expelled from her caste. Hindus believe that being an Untouchable is punishment for having been in a former life. By being good and obedient, an Untouchable can obtain a higher rebirth. Velutha's lack of complacency causes him many problems throughout the novel. "It

was not entirely his fault that he lived in a society where a man's death could be more profitable than life had ever been" (267). Although he is a dedicated member of the Marxist Party, his Untouchable status makes other party members dislike him, and so party leader Comrade K.N.M. Pillai would be more politically successful without him.

When Velutha has an affair with Ammu, he breaks an ancient taboo and incurs the wrath of Ammu's family and the Kerala police. He breaks the rigid social rules of the caste system and therefore, the authorities must punish him. Roy describes the policemen's violent actions as being done out of fear, "... civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness" (292). The division between the Touchable and Untouchable is so ingrained in Kerala society that Velutha is seen as a nonhuman which ultimately causes the victimization of central characters.

To sum up, the respective identities of women are colored by the Hindu traditional thinking than by the modern one. There is a caste system and a class system that exert much force upon the characters. Despite their restricted roles and rights as women, they have a defiant spirit. In Mammachi's case, starting a pickle factory of her own, which is nevertheless overtaken by her son? In Baby Kochamma, there is the defiance of her father and converting to another religion. She too however, eventually gives in to the traditional Hindu values. Their unhappiness in love also affects their behavior towards the rest of their female relations, most importantly Ammu and Rahel. One of the most evident features of modernity in the first generation is the passion of Baby Kochamma with the Irish monk. However, Baby Kochamma learned that a relationship with him was not accepted in her contemporary society. In conclusion, they are the voices of the past, linking and passing on a mixture of traditional Hindu turn of mind and the consequences of modernity. The stigma of untouchability is so deeply ingrained in the minds of Indian people that it may become a dangerous juggernaut. Roy's portrait on the caste system poses a challenge to this centuries-

old shibboleth or slogan and she expresses her disillusionment toward the social conditions of postcolonial India where the Untouchables still face a hostile society. Centering on caste, gender effect and an act of transgression, Arundhati Roy reveals a complex and longstanding conflict with modernity in the state of Kerala.

#### IV. Conclusion

*The God of Small Things* represents an encounter between tradition and modernity and its consequences. Roy presents this interface as a problem in order to raise the voice of protest against agonies and sufferings of the suppressed class people. Roy has spoken on behalf of the suffering subjects of India as their representative, and opposed tradition generating customs, culture, religion, systems and practices. In the novel, the conflict exists at individual as well as societal levels. The novel graphically shows how people are helpless to resolve these levels of frictions. Despite all the modernization and westernization of the Indian society, there is the presence of the caste system.

Roy suggests that the traditional social structure of India based on the caste system plays a role of an antagonist to destroy the lives of the marginalized and innocent human beings. This can be understood implicitly and explicitly by means of her presentation of a situation, in which a higher-caste woman Ammu and a lower caste man Velutha have fallen in love. This is the breaking of the social taboos. It is against the narrow orthodoxy of the caste system of India that prohibits the higher caste people to have relation with the lower caste people.

The caste system has been prevailing in the Indian society for centuries and it is deep rooted into the Indian culture. It will not be a system that can be changed overnight just because of western influence or minor rebellions by the Dalits. Even the laws set by the British in the past have not proven effective. In the novel, Ammu challenges the conventional social structure by marrying a man of her choice and then breaking that marriage and getting entangled in a forbidden love with Velutha, an untouchable man. However, she has got pay its price.

Modern societies are fundamentally heterogeneous with multiple centers of power; and this is no accident but intrinsic to their nature. Indeed, the process of modernization tends

to break down any remaining vestiges of hierarchy and centralized domination of social functions. Modern and traditional societies differ according to their complexity of organization and their rate of growth in complexity.

Modern societies are much more complex than traditional societies and are growing ever-more complex. Traditional societies are simpler and have a static structure. Complexity is favored by selection processes, which are more powerful in modernizing societies, because specialization of function enables greater efficiency (for instance when division of labor, or increased trade and communications enables greater efficiency). Increasing efficiency then frees resources and drives further growth. Modern societies are based upon growth and the expectation of growth. Indeed the cohesion of modernizing societies requires more or less continuous growth. This is why it is impossible to stop modernization at a particular favored point if growth stops then the nature of society reverts towards a traditional form.

The forbidden love affairs in the novel work as the metaphor for the key struggles and meanings of the novel. The twins' incestuous contact and Ammu's affair with Velutha are metaphors for, and physical enactments of, the psychological identity struggles of the novel's protagonists. These struggles extend, by implication and because they are so closely connected to the political association of the novel, to the wider political and psychological identity struggles of all those afflicted by the oppressive social code of southern Indian culture.

The only factor that may be slowly changing this ancient system is the fact that the younger generations, who are more educated and more open in thinking, do not know or believe in the system. When Velutha has an affair with Ammu, he breaks an ancient taboo and incurs the wrath of Ammu's family and the Kerala police. He breaks the rigid social rules of the caste system and, therefore, the authorities must punish him. On the other hand,

Baby Kochamma, Rahel's grandfather's younger sister, appears to be the vamp of the story; she, an embodiment of the hypocritical tradition is a sadist who revels in making everybody's life miserable. Her coldness and indifference to the twins bring out her sense of frustration and unfulfilled desires. However, they dare to challenge her by committing incest.

In all, the present study of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* makes it conspicuous how the marginalized people get victimized because of the interface between modernity and tradition. Obviously, the process of modernization tends to break down the remaining vestiges of hierarchy and centralized domination of social functions. Modernity, among the Indian people, renders the assertion of independence, competitive jealousy and wonderment, which weaken the strict rules of the caste system. These very modern forces propel Ammu and Velutha transgress the age old caste system as well as patriarchy. However, the caste system is etched in the psyche of the Indian people in such a way that they, whenever their tradition is transgressed, push modernity aside and resort to cruel and barbaric norms and to perpetuate the age-old caste system. That's why it makes both Ammu and Velutha pay the price of the challenge they pose to the tradition. Velutha is beaten to death. Ammu is forced to lead a rather miserable life separated from her children.

Consequently, she dies the death of a dog. Of course, modernity has brought new amenities and ideas in the Indian society. Nevertheless it has not changed the mindset of the people. They are still traditional in certain ways. Modernity is all right as long as it does not pose any threat to tradition. The moment any modern force challenges tradition, the people resort even to violence in order to eliminate the transgressing modern force for perpetuating the age old tradition. Ammu and Velutha, as transgressors, fall prey to this very violence.

### Works Cited

- Adhikari, Madhumalati. "Power Politics in *The God of Small Things*." *Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary*. Ed. R.K Dhawan. London and New Dehli: Sangham Books Limited, 1999. 41-48.
- Aldama, Frederick Luis. "Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*: 'Real' Possibilities in Postcolonial Literature." *Humanities Retooled*. 5 March 2004.
- Banerjee, Purna and Sarah Liles. "Empire Writes Back: Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*." 10 November 2002.  
 <[http://www.cwru.edu/affil/sce/Texts\\_2002/Banerjee&Liles.htm](http://www.cwru.edu/affil/sce/Texts_2002/Banerjee&Liles.htm)>.
- Bayly, Susan. *The New Cambridge History of India: Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteen Century to the Modern Age*, Vol. 3. London: Cambridge, 1999.
- Beteille, Andre. "Caste in contemporary India." *Caste Today*. Ed. C.J. Fuller. New Delhi: OUP,1996. 150-177.
- Bose, Brinda. "In Desire and in Death: Eroticism as Politics in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*." *Ariel* 29.2 (1998): 59-72.
- Crane, Ralph J. *Inventing India: A History of India in English-Language Fiction*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
- Dirkes, Nicholas B. "Recasting Tamil Society: The Politics of Caste and Race in Contemporary Society." *CasteToday*. Ed. C.J. Fuller. New Delhi: OUP,1996. 263-295.
- . *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002.
- Dumont, Louis. *Homo Heirarchicus*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998.

- Dwivedi, A.N. "Setting the Scale Straight: Socio-political Concerns in Arundhati Roy's fiction". *Arundhati Roy's Fictional World: (A Collection of Critical Essays)*. Ed. A.N. Dwivedi. Delhi: B.R. Publishing, 2001. 131-142.
- Elliott, Allison. "Caste and The God of Small Things." Fall 1997  
<<http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/caste.html>>.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998.
- Fuller, C.J. "Introductions: Caste today." *CasteToday*. Ed. C.J.Fuller. New Delhi: OUP, 1996. 1-31.
- Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. "History, Imagination and the Politics of Belonging: Between the Death and the Fear of History." *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall*. Eds. Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg and Angela McRobbie. London : Verso, 2000. 148-64.
- Gupta, Dipankar. *Mistaken Modernity: India between Worlds*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000.
- Kanitkar, Vithal Pralhad. *Hinduism*. Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes Publishers Ltd, 1989.
- Kumar, Amitav. "Louder than the Bombs." No- 79 (1999): 80-101. <[http: Links.jstor.org/sic](http://Links.jstor.org/sic)>
- Kundu, Rama. *Indian writing in English*. Vol.2. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2003.
- Mayer, Adrian. "Caste in an Indian Village : Change and Continuity 1954-1992." *Caste Today*. Ed. C.J.Fuller. New Delhi: OUP,1996. 32-64.
- Nair, Anil. "The Idea of Apocalypse." *Rediff On The Net*. 19 August 1999.



- Prakash, Nirmala C. "Man-Woman Relationship in *The God of Small Things*." *Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary*. Ed. R.K Dhawan. London and New Dehli: Sangham Books Limited, 1999. 77-83.
- Ramraj, Victor. "Arunhati Roy's and Salman Rushdie's Postmodern India." *Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary*. Ed. R.K Dhawan. London and New Dehli: Sangham Books Limited, 1999. 151-160.
- Ray, Mohit Kumar. "'Loctus Stand I': Some Feminine Aspects of *The God of Small Things*." *Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary*. Ed. R.K Dhawan. London and New Dehli: Sangham Books Limited, 1999. 49-64.
- Reddy, K. Ganapathi. *The Hindu*. 9 April 2002.  
<<http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/op/2002/04/09/stories/2002040900050100.htm>>.
- Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. New Delhi: Random House, 1997.
- Roy, M.K. " *The God of Small Things: A Feminist Study*". In *The Fictional World of Arundhati Roy*. Ed. R.S. Pathak. New Delhi: Creative Books, 2001. 95-107.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta, 1991.
- Sen, Amartya. *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity*. London: Penguin, 2005.
- Singh, Anita. "Margin at the Center: Reading of *The God of Small Things*". In *the Fictional World of Arundhati Roy*. Ed. R.S. Pathak. New Delhi: Creative Books, 2001. 132-136.
- Singh, Yogendra. *Modernization of Indian Tradition*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1994.
- Srinivas, M.N. "Introduction." *Caste: Its Twentieth Century Avatar*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1996. ix-xxxviii.