CHAPTER – V
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CONCLUSION

The year 1997 was an eventful one in the history of Indo-English literature. A new novelist appeared with her first novel and won the Booker before the end of the year. The attention it received from the media in India as well as abroad brought in not only showers of praise, but also a lot of adverse criticism. A section of critics dismissed the novel simply with “nothing serious” while others discovered anti-Marxism, distortion of historical truth, obscenity and vulgarity in it. It was not easy under these circumstances to read it with an open mind and to judge it without fear or favour.

The novel *The God of Small Things* is a love story with a tragic denouement. In such stories love is always portrayed as the passionate longing of the soul for the beloved which culminates in the physical union. More often than not, it challenges the social order and guardians of its taboos; we tremble at the punishment fitting the crime, emasculation, or more generally a pervasive unsexing. In fact, there is no such thing as “love without fear”. Naturally, tales of love are bound to be tales of terror and torment, and therein lays the most elemental of love’s paradoxes- the core of love’s exhilaration and terror.

Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* is a different kind of novel centered more on memories, perceptions and feelings, and how these hurt the readers for a life time. It is clear from this study that since internal psychological reactions are at least as important as the external events (society and culture) that caused them. It is also clear that the story reveals itself though not in traditional
narrative order, but it jumps through time, wending its way through Rahel’s memories — both as a seven year old twin child as well as a thirty one year old adult — and attempts at understanding the hand of fate in dealing with her and her family. The book is certainly well written by Arundhati Roy and some comparison has been made with Salman Rushdie. However, unlike Rushdie's work, this is easy reading and very accessible. It is understood that like most first novels it is heavily autobiographical and the girl-twin child character Rahel is so clearly Roy herself that she is a completely plausible character with whom the reader can empathize.

In fact, the book is, in its comprehensive portrayal of the family, a story of love that is doomed to catastrophic end. But the ‘local story’ gets universalized through the children who not only are the pivotal points of the story, but also appropriately characterize the narrative itself to a great extent. The author’s style is both realistic and positively whimsical. The larger story contains many smaller ones that stand alone as small gems of observation and insight. The perspective of childhood, of imagination and inventiveness, of incomplete understanding of fear, of dependence, of assertion of independence, vulnerability, comradeship, completive jealousy, and wonderment — all these are beautifully rendered. The title itself is metaphorical and multi-layered, as Roy herself confesses Shulin Nishant "Introduction to Contemporary Indian Literature," Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur:

To me The God of Small Things is the inversion of God. God’s a big thing and God’s in control. The God of Small Things… whether it’s the way children see things or whether it’s the insect life in the
book, or the fish or the stars—there is not accepting of what we think of as adult boundaries. This small activity that goes on is the underlife of the book. All sorts of boundaries are transgressed upon. At the end of first chapter, I say little events and ordinary things are just smashed and reconstituted, imbued with new meaning to become the bleached bones of the story. It’s a story that examines things very closely but also from a very, very distant point, almost from geological time and you look at it and a pattern emerges there. A pattern of how in this small event and in this, because of people being unprotected... the world and the social machine intrudes into the smallest, deepest core of their being and changes their life.

The novel is rich with family relationships, social customs and mores, politics and the most universal of human emotions and behaviour. At one and the same time it is suspenseful and tragic, a love story and an exposition of the paradoxes that exist in an ancient land whose history was forever altered by British colonizers. Hence, the plurality of its focus includes society, culture, politics, history, colonialism and religion. Naturally the novel needed a multiple point of view to convincingly ‘relate’ the story. This also results in the palimpsest narrative, shifting from one to the other, of course, in a rather disorderly leap from one to the other. Roy twists and reshapes the narrative to create an arresting, startling sort of precision. The average reader of mainstream fiction may have a tough time working through Roy’s narration but readers with a more literary bent to their usual fiction inclinations should find the initial struggle through the dense
narrative a worthy price for this rather all-encompassing lushly tragic tale. Precisely, ‘it keeps all the promises it makes in the opening’ with its carefully constructed, multifaceted narrative. The book as a multiple recollections of many a ‘participant’ of the story, results in a rich range of fictional discursive registers of the characters concerned. Arundhati Roy skillfully manages this multi-faceted points of view and integrates the pieces together by attributing to the whole novel a voice distinct and her own. She excels her peers in this regard by showcasing a distinctive voice, a voice meticulous and expansive with emotional punch, and goes straight to the readers’ emotional jugular even while making her case rational with statistics, facts and scrupulous attention to detail.

Her focus on language as a site of oppressive authority recalls in particular deconstructive activism of Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, and of course the linguistic followers of Foucault, and finally her gesture towards a modest, but real politics of liberation and sensitivity draws on the identity politics that has animated the expansion of childhood studies in the fifteen years.

Unlike in the tradition of characterizing children to “represent a moral universe” for the children and by the children as if it were proposed by themselves but indeed is done by the adults in the guise of ‘children’s literature – or as it is found in Lord of the Flies and many of William Faulkner’s literary work. Arundhati Roy presents children as they are with all their whims and fancies, fears, longings, innocent anger and even foibles, sans all ‘idealization’ normally aimed at in representing children in literature. Another deviating and innovative aspect of Roy’s representation of children in her narrative is they are “non-masculine”.

Given the substantial impact of feminism on children’s literature culture during the last quarter century, it comes as no surprise that gender studies have focused predominantly on children in literary works. The question of how the patriarchal ideology structures representation of male bodies and behaviours through the portrayal of children in literature have been elucidated by feminist thinkers from The Lord of the Flies and many of Faulkner’s works wherein different versions of male identity are constructed and presented to young audience or only masculinity gets reflected in fiction and film for young adults. But Roy, as a natural feminist and a liberal visionary individual, has projected the girl twin’s point of view as well as her perceptions as the predominant one in the novel and has contributed to an authentic and effective non-masculine representation of children in narratives, especially to Indian writing in English. She has gendered, of course, Rahel’s body and behaviour when she is an adult, but has made her gender non-specific or non-masculinist as a child. The normative hegemonic masculinity attributed to children in fiction and film produced for young audiences against which fictive participants are being depicted as fashioning their own subjectivities has not only been disillusioned by Roy but also been subverted in The God of Small Things.

From descriptions, perceptions to verbalization of the sexuality of women so-far-unsaid, Roy has succeeded in rendering an appropriate women’s language in The God of Small Things. It records the infinitely different lived experience of women; it does away with the male modernist inscribing of “a proliferating, maternal feminity” for woman who is monolithic, and on the contrary, it presents a woman of realistic multiple dimensions and potential. Though eldest generation of
women in this novel are non-feminist and suffer willful slavery to the dictates of patriarchy, in the personae of Ammu and Rahel we see "women as women" as Toril Moi puts it in *Sexual \\ Texual Politics*: "It still remains politically essential for feminists to defend women as women in order to counteract the patriarchal oppression that precisely despises women as women" (13).

The novel also exemplifies what Luce Irigary advocates: "uncovering the female imaginary and bringing [it] into language" (199). This novel has gone "back through the masculine imaginary, to interpret the way it had reduced" women's voice "into silence, to muteness or mimicry and from that starting point at the same time, to (re)discover a possible space for the feminine imaginary. The feminine écriture must not be regarded as representing something which exists in the world, but as (re)productive, giving life to new possibilities for imagining and so living women's bodies and desires" (164). By creating such "feminine" in her work Roy seems to have hoped to provoke women to participate in rei-magining their lives and their world. Such a provocation has immense political and aesthetic possibilities that are untapped today, especially in Indian writing in English.

The post-modern age has witnessed so many socio-political upheavals that the question of raising social morality has become a sensitive and controversial issue. Time and social environment have become the decisive factors in demarcating the boundary line between moral and immoral issues in these days. People tacitly accept the falling standard of morality as a sign of a deep social malady of the age. But there are many who accept moral degradation as a normal way of life so much so that people who are morally degraded but materially well-
off are publicly venerated. No doubt the conscientious people inwardly suffer a great deal. It is both hazardous and sensitive to raise the question of social morality in Arundhati Roy’s novel The God of Small things. The novelist takes up the cudgels for the Indian family ethos and value systems. As the novelist deals with the sensitive issues of family and private life, readers may knit their brows pointedly for her liberal handling of the moral questions of our present society.

The novelist’s role as a creative writer certainly puts her in a critical situation. We should remember that by and large, as the writers are the products of their own times, they have inevitably some social commitments. For the sake of morality, the social problems Arundhati Roy focuses on in her book cannot simply be waved aside as these are rooted in our modern life. Our tradition and culture prohibit us to talk about immoral issues publicly because ours is an orthodox society.

The novelist reveals immorality in public life, too, which is rocked by party politics and selfish motives. Selfish interests and political maneuvering accelerate corrupt practices in government machinery. Corruption and liberalism go hand in hand and play an important role in corroding our public morality. Social immorality strongly linked with individual psychology can be traced back, in the novel, to the life of Pappachi, an entomologist employed in the Central Government service. Many things go wrong with him because of his eccentric behaviour and he loses control over family life. He becomes emotionally estranged from his family and thus, loses grip over the bond of relationship as they pay least attention to him. Defect in his personal life can be traced back to his urge for social
recognition in his official capacity for the new discovery of a species of moth which is nipped in the bud. The fruit of his findings is enjoyed by someone junior to his rank and position in service. Although the mistake is rectified later on, yet by that time, Pappachi has already retired from Government service without any laurel. His life’s greatest setback is not to get the moth named after him. Talented people and men of genius are being deprived of their social recognition and this has given rise to heavy brain-drain in our country. Non-recognition of his genius for scientific discovery gives Pappachi a psychological setback and creates irregular black moods in him. He becomes priggish, short tempered and starts ill-treating his wife. Every member of his family is vexed with him. Instead of sympathy and respect he receives everyone’s scorn. Abberations of mind take in him such a turn that he becomes jealous of his wife’s youth and bodily charm. His invectives and tirades against his wife are couched in the language of sexual jealousy. Wife-beating is a regular phenomenon in our society and Pappachi resorts to this evil practice.

His retirement from Government service puts a sudden end to his daughter, Ammu’s hope for higher education. She has just passed the school stage. No effort is made for her college education whereas Chacko, the son, receives enough encouragement and financial support for higher education, and even to carry out research studies in a foreign country.

Pappachi is not prepared to pay a handsome dowry for Ammu’s marriage. Being bored with her life in the village, she escapes her parental control. This is a usual ruse grown up girls adopt when they find no other avenues to enjoy their life.
Ammu leaves for Calcutta with a plea to spend a few days with one of her distant aunts. In a wedding reception during her stay in Calcutta, she comes across a young handsome man and gradually falls in love with him. Here is a case of love at first sight. Even she goes to the extent of, without informing her parents, marrying him hurriedly in the Church. No doubt, her romantic adventure and the bold step land her in hot water. She discovers to her utter surprise that her uneducated husband works in a tea plantation and not in an executive post in Assam. Moreover, when she leads a smart life in the plantation colony with her husband and runs after pleasure, her fashionable dress and affected manners raise the worker’s eye brows.

Ammu’s dreams are shattered to pieces and soon she gets disillusioned when she knows her husband to be a full-blown alcoholic. His usual habit and pleasure is to swindle her. Increasing rift and use of falsehood widen the distance between the couple. Alcoholism is a social evil which disrupts Ammu’s family life. When she is about to deliver twins in a hospital, her husband is so callous that he is found fast asleep in the corridor of the hospital in an inebriated state. She finds in him lack of any concern for her and the children. So she becomes fed up with his alcoholic stupor and comes back to her parents house Ayemenem with her children and remains there as an unwelcome guest.

Not only Ammu suffers for her wrong choice of a partner, but Chacko, her brother, too is governed by personal whims and caprices as far a choosing a life partner. While carrying out research studies, he comes across a waitress named Margaret in a café and makes all sorts of ludicrous efforts to please her. They
gradually come closer to each other and subsequently decide to marry for strange reasons despite their divergent temperaments. Probably no marriage vows are made at the time of their marriage. Chacko dislikes Margaret for not wanting to look after him and she too hates to fulfill a man’s needs. A hasty and ill-sorted marriage as in Ammu’s life is doomed to failure. His negligence of research studies deprives him of the Rhodes scholarship in Oxford. Margaret’s loyalty to her husband weakens as he becomes financially dependent on her. She falls in love with a friend of her brother’s at a time while the first phase of pregnancy increases her bodily charm. It is not surprising in the case of a western lady. Eventually she marries the man of her second choice, Joe, and cruelly turns her face away from Chacko without any consideration for his love and attachment. She has her own reasons to reject Chacko and shift her love and loyalty to Joe.

Bearing, the brunt of betrayal and frustration Chacko comes back to India, his native place, where he leads a life of debauchery. He makes no attempt to remarry, on the other hand indulges in free sex with women labourers. His mother Mammachi takes a lopsided view of her son’s libertine relationships with women labourers of her factory. She has no pricks of conscience in going to the extent of justifying his libertine life as necessitated by man’s real need. Baby Kochamma too has a tacit consent for Mammachi’s view and makes no complaint whereas she does not spare Ammu for her illicit relationship with Velutha. To facilitate Chacko’s need of a man, his mother makes separate arrangement for the entry of women labourers through a private way into Chacko’s bedroom. No one in the family finds fault with Chacko’s Marxist mind and feudal libido. The only fear
which lurks in their mind is the forcible action of the Naxalites who compel men from good families to marry the sexually exploited maidservants or women labourers. Fortunately Chacko is never caught red-handed by the Naxalites in his sexual escapades. His mother is always on her guard to take care of Chacko’s victims. The victims are regularly and handsomely paid money for not opening up their lips.

In this novel, the mother, as the guardian of morality of her family members, does not make any attempt for Chacko’s second marriage or dissuade him from his rakish behaviours with the women labourers. To keep her family scandal at bay, Mammachi pays handsomely to Chacko’s victims who in turn accept money for their children and old parents out of family compulsion, economic necessity and not for gratification of carnal desire. Poverty and suffering force women labourers into flesh trade. Intellectuals and rich men lead a life of double standards and Chacko is a glaring example. There is a great gulf between his intellectual makeup, his professed political idealism of Leftist inclination and his sexual exploitation of poor women.

The character of Baby Kochamma represents the numerous old spinsters in our society. She is Pappachi’s sister whose behaviour draws into controversy Christian sectarian attitude in India. Failure in love affair in her youth makes her a hard boiled cynic. Her desperate efforts to consummate love with a clergy man ends in dismal failure. So she can hardly tolerate Ammu’s sexual relationship with Velutha. She tries her best in her hey-day to lure the mind of an Irish monk, Father Mulligan, who stays in Kerala only for a year. Father Mulligan’s regular visits to
Ayemenem to carry on theological discussions with Reverend John Ipe, Kochamma’s father, develops into a love relationship between them. At times the Bible becomes a medium for gratification of her carnal desire. Religion becomes a mere garb for gratification of one’s sensual desire and infernal motives. People occupying high position in religion tend to misuse it for personal enjoyment.

Baby Kochamma’s exhibition of forced charity draws the intrepid Jesuit’s sympathy for her, but the latter is in no way to be blamed for her clandestine love affair. It is entirely her devious mind which concocts several plans, but all her efforts fall miserably flat without the desired result. She unconsciously endeavours to pollute the mind of the devout Christian and attracts him towards a life of carnal desires. After a year or so the Jesuit returns to Madras from Kerala putting an abrupt end to their love. Even in such a situation baby Kochamma does not lose her heart nor does she show any sign of weakness as women do when they lose their lover. She too follows him to Madras and makes an entry into the Convent as a nun.

The novelist makes a dig at the corrupt practices and immoral life in the Convent while narrating Baby Kochamma’s efforts to renew her contact with Father Mulligan. The novelist focuses on the seamy side of life of the nuns and monks who renounce the worldly life so as to lead an ascetic life. It is hard to lead an ascetic life when the mind languishes for human love. While preparing for a life of complete continence and devotion, nuns and monks in Churches at times go astray from the path of a disciplined life which tarnishes the sacred image of the Church and Christianity. In the run for winning over the heart of the monks, the
senior sisters are ahead in the race. Thus they monopolise access to the higher church officials. As a junior nun, Baby Kochamma fails in her unchristian mission to capture the heart of Father Mulligan. In a desperate bid she tries all tricks and at last leaves the Convent.

Her frustrated love affair has repercussions in moulding her personality; she becomes a disgruntled aunt to Ammu’s children. She often has recourse to the use of diatribe against Ammu’s children. She also bears grudges against Ammu’s physical relationship with Velutha. Eventually she becomes a cantankerous woman who would, left to herself, throw Ammu’s family on to the street.

The Convent School education is brought under the novelist’s scythe. Ethics and psychology remain poles apart in the life of the teenage students in the Covent Schools. The delicate mind of the teenagers are rudely handled paying hardly any attention to their psychological and emotional needs. Discussion among the girl students about breast is prohibited under the theological trauma of the Convent Schools as if it is an act of sin as experienced by Baby Kochamma.

The relationship of an untouchable with the members of Pappachi’s family, a sensitive issue, is delicately handed. In the post-independence era the heinous practice of untouchability is dwindling gradually, thanks to the efforts of the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi. Shades of feeling for untouchability still linger in the minds of the villagers. Untouchability is still practiced in various forms in our social life. In the Hindu community certain traditional beliefs and practices go against the untouchable and social life is governed by these practices to a great extent. Arundhati Roy focuses on this burning social problem in a realistic and
poignant way. In the novel Pappachi and Mammachi in their village come across Velutha, a young untouchable boy, a talented worker who can handle intricate mechanical tools. By the time he finishes his school education, Velutha becomes apprenticed to a carpenter, Klein, a Christian missionary.

Young Velutha possesses a gifted mind which can repair radio, wall-clock, water-pump and other electrical equipments. He is very useful for Chacko’s Bharat Bottle Sealing Machine, Canning Machine and an automatic pineapple slicer. His presence becomes indispensable in the factory. Velutha’s father is an orthodox pariah who does not like the manners of his son as it is not in keeping with the normal behaviour of the paravans. Differences brew between them and day by day the father and the son fall out. Bitterness between them increases to such an extent that Velutha at times avoids coming home much to his mother’s chagrin. But he is a familiar servant in Mammachi’s house and is very much liked by all. Once being cross with his father, Velutha disappears from his village for some days; and soon rumours in the village spread of his becoming an active Naxalite in the city. After a year or so he returns to his village. When Mammachi puts him in charge of general maintenance, caste-feeling is aroused among the upper class workers of the factory as they can hardly tolerate a paravan in such a position in the factory dictating terms to them.

In the opinion of Mahatma Gandhi “untouchability is a social evil which ought to be extirpated from our country” (217). People still hold the belief that the paravans give out a bad smell from their body. Vellya Pappen, Velutha’s father being a humble orthodox Paravan, hesitates to out-step his caste limits; moreover,
he does not approve of his son’s new fangled ideas. He tries to crush his son’s intemperance in the bud so as to guard the honour (?) of his family and forefathers. He finds Velutha putting his hands on everything in Mammachi’s household articles and even rowing boat in the river. He promises in the presence of Mammachi to kill his son and expresses high regrets for rearing up a monster-son.

Baby Kochamma derives secret pleasure at Vellya Pappen’s promise to kill his son as she does not like Velutha’s behaviour. Incidentally there is a total reversal of situation. The death of Sophie Mol in a capsized boat provides Baby Kochamma the ruse to lodge an FIR at Kottayam Police Station against Velutha. Baby Kochamma bears a grudge against Velutha for his secret relationship with Ammu, a high caste divorcee with two children. She misrepresents the fact to the Inspector to salvage family reputation and at the same time to punish Velutha. The untouchables are looked down upon and bear the anger of the people in various ways as they cannot protect themselves sufficiently. Baby Kochamma relates to Inspector Thomas Matthews the many possible ways Velutha and his ancestors have been helped by her family till Velutha’s unceremonious dismissal from the factory. As soon as the Inspector hears the account, he loses his temper for the unnecessary favour shown to a paravan as a token of mercy by the upper caste people and sarcastically reproaches her. “You people, first you spoil these people, carry them about on your head like trophies, then when they misbehave you come running to us for help” (261). Of course, people in general are not in favour of giving kind treatment to the low caste people as they consider them to be unworthy
of such treatment. In return such people show invariably least sense of gratitude or obligation to their benefactors.

The problem of untouchability and the condition of the paravans reflect the Indian social reality in the novel. Even after half-a-century of our independence the problems still come in various disguised forms. Inter-caste marriages have not yet been widely, socially practiced by the upper caste people. The entry into the houses of upper caste people for the Paravans is through the back door only. So Velutha comes to Pappachi’s house through the back door. The Paravans are not allowed to touch the household articles used by the touchables. Mammachi gives an account to Estha the way Paravans were ill-treated in the society in the past;

Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan’s footprint. In Mammachi’s time Paravans, like other Untouchables, were not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke... (73-74)

After the tragic incidence when Velutha comes straight to Mammachi’s house, she is so furious that she spews her blind venom on his face and hurls insults at him. As she spits at Velutha’s face it spatters across his skin, his mouth and eyes, yet he does not retaliate and silently leaves the house without any protest. Both Velutha and his father are humble servants very much servile to
Pappachi's family. The novelist throws enough light on the life of the untouchables in Kerala. The situations presented in the novel about the pitiable condition of these people are more or less the same in other states of the country even in these modern times.

In addition to the moral degeneration in Pappachi's family, the novelist brings a host of other issues that rock the Indian society in these days. The hair-raising atrocities perpetuated by the police in judicial custody are a slur on our civilized life. The Police Raj is at times referred to as goondaraj because of the way they terrorise and inflict torture on the accused persons on the plea of maintaining law and order. It reminds us of the colonial misrule and tyranny of the past. An under trial prisoner's life in police custody is full of suffering. Velutha's wretched life in police custody after a false case is lodged against him indicates social injustice, cruelty and human rights violations. Before Velutha's arrest the behaviour of Inspector Thomas Matthews exposes the nexus between the police and the local politician. Police and politicians corrupt most of our society. The police act under the direction of politicians, particularly of the ruling party in power.

Soon after Baby Kochamma registers an FIR against Velutha, Inspector Thomas Matthews takes sufficient precaution to verify from Camrade K.N.M. Pillai if the accused can garner any political support. Even though Inspector Matthews is a Congress man, he does not want to take any risk with the Marxist Government. So he rushes to Comrade Pillai for a confidential talk. Comrade Pilai straight away refuses to give patronage to Velutha. The Inspector gets a green
signal from the political party to deal with Velutha squarely so that under coercion he will confess his crime.

Inside the lock-up Velutha is beaten black and blue. When Estha accompanies the Inspector to the lock-up, he sees Velutha in a miserable dying condition and the amount of torture inflicted on him can be guessed. Velutha appeared almost dead on the scrummy slippery floor: a mangled genie invoked by a modern lamp. He was naked, his soiled mundu had come undone. Blood spilled from his skull like a secret. His face was swollen and his head looked like a pumpkin too large and heavy. Half an hour later at midnight Velutha breathes his last. An innocent, untouchable man dies in police custody because he has none to protect him.

The premature death of Velutha further signifies that instead of providing protection to a guiltless low caste man as the official protectors and custodians of public welfare, the police inflict severe punishment because he is not supported by any one. The novelist criticizes severely the way the authority responsible for enforcing law and order in the society is governed by the interest of party men in power. Thus crime in some states of India is politicised and politicians too become criminals as they promote, instead of controlling, crimes. Moreover police is just an instrument in the hands of the members of the ruling party to subserve their interest. Velutha is cruelly punished on the basis of a wrong FIR lodged by Baby Kochamma in order to avenge humiliation she has received at the hands of Velutha and the men participating in the strike. Modalali Mariakutty taunts the forced flag-bearers. She misrepresents the relationship of Velutha with Ammu to salvage her
family reputation before Inspector Thomas Matthews so as to teach Velutha a lesson.

Analyzed from the above angles, it emerges that the novel has an undercurrent of political satire, the way the novelist focuses on the rise of the communist party in the state politics of religiously bigoted Syrian Catholic dominated Kerala. A large number of Christian population provides a favourable climate for the success of Communist Party of India to capture power in the state. Twenty percent of the population are Syrian Christians, the direct descendants of one hundred Brahmins whom Saint Thomas, the Apostle, had converted to Christianity when he had traveled east after the Resurrection. The large scale success of Communism in Kerala besides West Bengal is reasoned out by the novelist in a unique way:

Marxism was a simple substitute for Christianity. Replace God with Marx, Satan with the bourgeoisie, Heaven with a classless society, the Church with the Party and the form and the purpose of the journey remained similar. An obstacle race, with a prize at the end.
Whereas the Hindu mind had to make more complex adjustments.

(66)

But this theory doesn’t hold good, says the novelist, because the Syrian Christians were, by and large, wealthy estate–owning ‘feudal lords for whom Communism represented a fate worse than death’ (66). The real secret is that Communism entered Kerala insidiously as a reformist movement. It never overtly questioned the traditional values of a caste-ridden community. In the opinion of
the novelist, Marxism and orthodox Hinduism spiked with a sort of democracy. When Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the high priest of Marxism in Kerala, became the Chief Minister, the Communists seized a grand opportunity to enter into the rank and file of Government machinery so as to govern a people and foment revolution simultaneously. Chacko traces the real intention of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad directed to achieve a total revolution while analyzing the content of the book, *The Peaceful Transition to Communism*. This book underlines the Communist leader’s desire to enforce land reforms, neutralize police, subvert judiciary and thus “Restrain the Hand of the Reactionary Anti People Congress Government at the Centre” (67).

As a mouthpiece of the novelist, every morning at breakfast, Pappachi derides his sons open support to Marxism in Kerala by reading out “newspaper reports of the riots, strikes and incidents of police brutality that convulsed Kerala. The Congress Party and the Communist Party used all sorts of strategies to spread their tentacles in Kerala and to grab power. The ongoing political events in Kerala as described in the novel stress Namboodiripad’s political acumen. In around 1967, Kerala reeled in the aftermath of a famine due to a failed monsoon. During the second term as Chief Minister in office, Comrade Namboodiripad proceeded soberly implementing his so-called Peaceful Transition for which he incurred the wrath of the Chinese Marxist leaders as the path chosen by him is a clear deviation from communist idealism. They denounced him for his “parliamentary criticism and accused him of providing relief to the people and thereby blunting the people’s consciousness and diverting them from the Revolution” (68).
A section of the Communist group resorted to violence for achieving their professed goal of real socialism – the distribution of property among the poor mass by snatching it from the rich. Members of this group came to be known as the Naxalites who adopted and still adopt violence and terror tactics in order to snatch the property of the feudal lords and then distribute the booty among the poor, downtrodden and landless people. The poor neglected so far shifted their patronage to newly formed militant communist party- CPI (M).

These naxalites organize peasants into fighting cadres who seize land, expel the owners and establish people’s courts to try the cases of enemies, to usher in an era of violence and terror. They are the most dreaded people for the feudal lords in India. They instill fear in the bourgeois heart. Politicians have stooped to a lower moral standard. Double-dealing nature of the local politician is a regular feature in these days which is shown in the life of comrade K.N.M. Pillai. He becomes a turncoat at the time of the arrest of Velutha. Comrade Pillai gives a nod to the Inspector to arrest Velutha. Comrade Pillai when approached by Velutha refuses to provide help and closes his door on him on a rainy night.

Velutha’s death in police custody is flashed in the newspaper by the press in a distorted form. The newspaper reports the incident as an “encounter” of the police with a paravan charged with kidnapping and murdering a minor girl. Even though Chacko is in friendly terms with Comrade Pillai, the local communist workers seize Chacko’s pickle factory under the leadership of the same Comrade Pillai who now becomes an opportunist. Life of Comrade Pillai symbolizes the life
of the innumerable petty politicians in our country who are guided solely by selfish-motives.

Atrocities on women particularly by police is increasing day by day. At times it becomes very difficult to provide evidence and proof of atrocity on women perpetrated by police personnel. Soon after Sophie Mol’s funeral, Ammu is summoned to the police station with her children for detailed investigation and further action. While interrogating her in this case, Inspector Matthews taps Ammu’s breast repeatedly with a baton. The dignity of a female accused in police custody is outraged. Her shocked silence is construed as complicity.

An old spinster’s dislike for married women and children at times creates family rift and differences. In an old spinster motherly instinct dries up. Baby Kochamma’s constant opposition to Ammu’s children can be marked at various stages in the novel. She snubs them wherever possible and never shows any sign of sympathy. To her, the twins are the unwanted members in Pappachi’s family and thus unwelcome guests. They are blasphemous children in the family because they are ‘fatherless waifs’.

Moreover, they are Half-Hindu Hybrids whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry. She expects from them some token unhappiness and decent behaviour at every stage of life. Social morality is violated by adults in their shameless behaviours. There are various ways in which grown up people delude the mind of the teenagers. The behaviour of the Orange drink, Lemon drink Man in Abhilash Talkies is an example of moral depravity. The man offers a free cold drink to Estha but in turn forces him to hold his private organ for an act of
masturbation. It is one of the worst ways in which grown up people pollute the mind of the young ones with strange ideas about sex.

Maybe, the novelist's vivid account of the sexual union between Velutha and Ammu on the river bed reduces the academic worth of this novel. But it is very much in place for the novelist to highlight the sexual starvation of a divorcee woman in a society which practices double standards and false social mores. Ammu, the mother of the dizygotic twin, feels no prick of conscience in keeping physical relationship with an untouchable one, the servant in her house. Perhaps she is helpless in meeting the demand of her flesh. Velutha is severely penalized for his sexual relationship with Ammu due to the maneuvering of Baby Kochamma. Strangely enough, Ammu escapes all sorts of punishment. The incident has a bad repercussion on the delicate mind of the children. As time passes on, her children are separated from her because she has openly violated public morality. Thereafter, the picture of family life as presented in the novel is very gloomy and miserable. In Indian society extra-marital relationship is looked down upon as a criminal activity, an unholy affair and a direct violation of social morality. By focusing on many such issues the novelist makes a dig at the falling standard of social morality in modern Indian society. This society tries to emulate all the manners of the West even in matters pertaining to social immorality. The book proves to be a piece of social satire which is realistic and insightful at the same time.

In Indian English novels, from the very beginning, there is a tendency to observe social life and to reflect upon it. The elite became aware of certain
weaknesses of Indian society like superstitions, early marriage, polygamy, the miserable condition of the women in general and widows in particular and the excesses of caste system. So, the early novels are not entirely devoid of social criticism and protest. Ramesh Chandra Dutt’s *The Lake of Palms* (1902) is the most daring of these novels. It is based on the social life in Bengal toward the end of the nineteenth century and its action culminates in the marriage of the young widow Sudha to Sarat. S.K. Ghosh’s *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* (1909) seeks to synthesize the best in the East and the West to invigorate the society. Sir Jogendra Sing’s *Nasrin* exposes the self-indulgence of the Nawabs and Talukdars, the relics of the feudal society. While the social awareness of such novels cannot be denied, Indian English witnessed an unprecedented growth of socially committed writing by the authors like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao.

Every committed writer seeks to change the world around oneself. That requires an ideal vision of a better society or a better world. Most of these committed writers subscribe to one or other of the prevalent political or philosophical trends like Gandhism and Marxism. Arundhati Roy as a committed writer is no exception to that rule.

Our study aims to indicate that she does not subscribe to the conventional views. She is a non-conformist who can not be identified with one or other trend without certain reservations. She has a world-view of her own. She wants a saner world based on reason, instincts and sans violence. Not ruthless pursuits of money and power, but persuasion will be the means to achieve the goal. Arundhati Roy is
a woman of vision and imagination speaking forcibly about certain convictions. Arundhati Roy believes in the equality of the sexes. She resents discrimination against women in respect of education, job and property. Though she is close to Gandhians in her faith in non-violence, her views on sex seem not much different from the Bolsheviks. Writing in 1923, Grigorii Batkis, Director of the Moscow Institute of Sexual Hygiene, explained in his book, *The Sexual Revolution in Russia*:

Soviet Legislation bases itself on the following principle: it declares absolute noninterference of the state and society into sexual matters so long as nobody is injured and no one’s interests are encroached upon.... All forms of sexual intercourse are private matters. (145)

Roy believes that society or state has no business to interfere when the sexual relations are based on equality and consent. That is what she seems to hint at when she describes Rahel breaking the greatest taboo imposed by society, namely, incest. In social relations, Roy has no regard for barriers like religion, language, ethnic group, caste or class. It is not without some significance that Roy’s women ignore such barriers. Margaret marries an Indian, while Rahel marries an American Larry McCaslin. Ammu marries a Bengali Hindu and later loves a working class Paravan. Nobody ought to be deprived of opportunity, education, job or property on such considerations. Abilities must be rewarded, remunerated and appreciated with least regard to such differences. Every reader of the novel feels that it is resentful to note the fact that the abilities of Velutha, even though recognized are not duly appreciated by his employers and even his party
pays no attention to them. Equality cannot be achieved by practicing and perpetuating inequality or by resorting to all the means possible for preserving one’s supremacy and privileges.

Roy raises a question how untouchability could be abolished de facto if intellectuals like Chacko and communist leaders like Pillai continue to practise it. Similarly Roy questions the use of separate schools for the untouchables. Children deserve a better treatment in society. Adults must try to understand them and their needs—physical, material, emotional— and impart them good education. Society has to provide them suitable, favourable conditions for their growth and development. The gap between the adults and children ought to be bridged by understanding, sympathy and attention. Problems like child abuse and child labour deserve more attention of our society and laws enacted to defend their interest must be enforced seriously. Child abuse is mainly because of the insensitivity of Indian adults to the psychology of the children. The necessity to be attentive to the problems of environment cannot be taken lightly any more. The basic fault of social behaviour has been so far to pursue the immediate gain and paying no heed to dangers lying ahead. Whether it is the question of building dams and canals or growing cash crops, people think about the money they will get soon. Even the governments that prepare and stock weapons are guided by the consideration that the popular sentiment will prolong their days in office. Sanity, however, demands a nuclear-free world that does not permit pollution of any kind. Nothing that threatens our wildlife and vegetation and contaminates our soil, water and air can be permitted to continue. True, it is difficult to achieve this but that is what can ensure health,
happiness and prosperity to mankind and bring peace to the world. That is the vision of a sane world Roy’s book enshrines.

Socially aware intellectuals cannot disregard the environment in the modern world. Arundhati Roy is deeply concerned about it. Roy joined a seminar held on the Hiroshima Day and the paper she presented there appeared as a ten page article in an English weekly *The Outlook* dated Aug. 3, 1998 (62-71). Later it appeared as a booklet published by D.C. Books, Kottayam in October 1998 and was reprinted in November the same year. Her activist stance is also seen in her solidarity with the Chaliyar Human Rights Samathi fighting against pollution caused by Grasim industry at Mavoor in Kojhikode, Kerala. She received Dalit Sahitya Academy Award at Calicut on January 15, 1999 and the public address she made on the occasion underlines the same spirit. Her approach is not confined only to writing for the environment, but she is deeply involved with the agitations concerned with environmental issues like Narmada Bachao Andolan and The Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons in India. Arundhati Roy opposes the projects to build big dams in the Narmada Valley both on the considerations of the adverse effect it will have on the environment as well as the misery it will definitely bring to many. The Narmada Valley development project, she informs us, in an Interview “will alter the ecology of the entire river basin of one of India’s biggest rivers. For better or for worse, it will affect the lives of twenty-five million people who live in the valley. It will submerge and destroy 4000 square kilometers of natural deciduous forest” (135).
Eco-conscious as the novelist is, her concern for the environment finds an adequate expression in *The God of Small Things*. It begins with the river Meenachal. Estha and Rahel dreamt of the river in their childhood. As an object of beauty it seemed a joy for ever. When Rahel returned Twenty-Three years later, the river “greeted her with a ghastly skull’s smile, with holes where teeth had been, and a limp hand raised from a hospital bed” (124). Though it was June and raining, “the river was no more than a swollen drain now. A thin ribbon of thick water that lapped wearily at the mud banks on either side, sequined with the occasional silver slant of a dead fish” (124). The River is not only the sufferer in the novel. The village Ayemenem once known for freshness, matchless greenery and rural quietness has also changed for the worse when Rahel returns to it. Its population has swelled to the size of a little town and industrialized. Thus Ayemenem village in general and Ayemenem House in particular present a dismal scene of pollution and decay. The reasons are the same in every case: callousness toward other living beings and inanimate things and senseless pursuit of immediate gain. People want money and more money, and that too right now. They seek comfort and pleasure for the present and do not care for the future.

Both the novel and Arundhati Roy’s campaigns against pollution and other social evils clearly prove her to be a ‘Social Activist’ even before she became a famous novelist. Roy as a social activist is proved through her thesis titled “Urban India”, which is a part of her degree (B.Arch) programme. It was published by the National Institute of Urban Affairs. The winning of the prestigious Booker Prize for *The God of Small Things* proves herself to be a ‘Creative Artist’. This
devastatingly beautiful-beautifully written novel *The God of Small Things* is a forerunner of all her later activities, and nonpareil.

Given the global concern over inequitable distribution of opportunities for livelihood, racial and communal discriminations, gender oppressions, child abuse, denial of human rights, climate change and a plethora of ills that afflict the contemporary humanity, the researcher fervently hopes that the present study is very much relevant. Literary studies like these can bring about a renaissance in the outlook and attitude of not only academics and students of literature, but also can help in reshaping the political ideologies and power-sharing dynamics. Future researchers may study Roy's literary as well as social and political columns. Her non-fictional writings are also worthy of a claim to literary merits and as such they can be researched for gender, economic, eco, tribal, climate issues.