Chapter - VI

A SUBALTERN
INTERPRETATION OF

THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS
The "subaltern" is a broad category that attempts to characterize individuals whose voices and actions have been muted, drastically reinterpreted, lost, or consciously swept away. Implicit in the term are related questions of power, agency, and representation: does the subaltern have the ability to define or represent her/himself in the public arena in any sort of lasting way? In different historical contexts, the subaltern has been understood as synonymous with women, children, colonial subjects, the poor, the illiterate, the proletariat, or the religious or ethnic minority. Today’s subalternist scholars, however, do not intend for the term to be reduced to any single oppressed group or minority; Though the study of subalternity has been central for generations of Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial scholars, though they may not have used that terminology, it should not be assumed that Subaltern Studies is necessarily in cahoots with any of these intellectual schools.

*The God of Small Things* attempts to tells stories of characters whose lives have been rewritten by society’s, and history’s, higher powers. One notable exception, each of these narratives ends in disappearance and loss, due in part to unfortunate turns of events but due primarily to the marginalizing sweep of history. Embedded within the novel are stories of characters whose sexual desires are re-written as social deviancy, characters who have no choice but to internalize society’s rules and lessons emphasizing how people are not supposed to act, and characters who are taught to be complicit in their own silencing. To counteract the overwhelming presence of such narratives, though, Roy’s novel participates equally in the subalternist project of tracking resistance. This occurs by way of the narrator’s almost religious devotion to Small Things. Rather than participating in the academic tradition of seeking to “understand” its characters by creating a grand explanatory narrative that depersonalizes those very same characters, the novel speaks through the subjectivity of its children, treating minute sensual details as building blocks of experience and memory, and undermining the Platonic rigidity of the linguistic sign by stripping words down to their sounds and visual qualities.
In addition to enacting the tragic plight of the subaltern, *The God of Small Things* also mirrors the subalternist method of piecing together (hi)stories by examining the fragments and shards of a broken past that get lost in the process of historical explanation.

*The God of Small Things* is set in the small Indian village of Ayemenem, near the larger town of Cochin. The plot follows, though not chronologically, the story of one Syrian Christian family in Ayemenem and a pair of nearly simultaneous tragedies that disperse that family's members to all parts of the world and lead to the surviving characters' psychological struggles. "In a purely practical sense," the researcher claims that there are three narratives that form the most significant content of the novel. One, as foreshadowed by the narrator in the passage above, is a visit of Margaret and Sophie Mol Kochamma to India, tragically cut short by Sophie Mol's drowning in the Meenachal River; the second is an affair between Ammu and Velutha, which is punished severely by the family and by political authorities; the last is the separation and symbolic sexual reunion of Rahel and Estha. Emerging through the intertwining of these three narratives is the ever-present but never-answered question: "Can the subaltern speak," or is s/he doomed to a life and death of submission and irrelevancy? Further, the novel invites the reader to follow in Rahel's footsteps as she returns on a subalternist-like journey to Ayemenem to make sense of the past by sifting through the minor details, fragments, and silences.

Roy presents a cast of characters strategically designed to explore subalternity from a number of different angles. Perhaps most obvious to the novel's Western readers is the form of subalternity introduced by the postcolonial situation; British film, culture, and educational values seem to have an almost oppressively entrancing hold on many of the Indian characters, even half a century after India's national independence. Through this lens, the death and glorifying funeral ceremony of the British child Sophie Mol contrasts sharply against the irreverent, unceremonial deaths and burials of Velutha and Ammu. It becomes evident in comparing these exactly which deaths matter and which do not, and the difference seems to be accounted for by the British/Indian dichotomy.
Spivak, however, wrote that "her intention was "not to describe the way things really were' or to privilege the narrative of the history as imperialism as the best version of history.

It is, rather, to continue the account of how one explanation and narrative of reality was established as the normative one". (Spivak, p.2199) A strictly “postcolonial” subaltern reading of the text neglects to account for other significant forms of subalternity. Velutha, for example, becomes a victim of oppressive caste politics. Ammu’s identity as female divorcee, particularly after the discovery of her love affair (my term, not the narrator’s, only for the practical necessity of describing that silent relationship in words) with Velutha, renders her politically and socially worthless according the local gender rules and constructions.

All three of the children, Rahel, Estha, and even Sophie Mol, are forced, by virtue of their age, into roles in a Play over which they are to have little or no control. “The critique of the many oppressions and discriminations is all the more felt because it is performed in the language of children and their world is shown as one of love, communication, fierce loyalty, gentleness, resistance and survival”,(Sujala Singh,p.17) The novel even critiques Communism (“another religion turned against itself,”), a theoretical system designed to combat economic domination in a manner that supposedly looks past boundaries of nation and race, for its failure to give voice to the subaltern in its multiplicity of forms, one of those forms being the Paravan Velutha, a devoted party member whom the party in the end betrays.

While the question of why it is that the power structures in the novel exist in their current form, such that the main characters must shoulder the burden of subalternity, is outside the scope of this novel, The God of Small Things does comment on how such subalternity is enforced. In a certain sense, the novel is the narrator’s attempt to theorize about ways in which elements of language reflect and re-present systems of domination. It is through language that some people are represented as important and others not; that some people are represented as keepers of the peace and others as social deviants; that some people are remembered and others are forgotten. The result of the narrator’s theorizing is, in general terms, a threefold theory of how subalternity works.
First, common in the language of subaltern studies, relates to (hi)story-telling as a means of exclusion. The second, in the tradition of Michel Foucault, relates to the construction of rules, laws, and lessons as means of punishing transgressors of a dominant social code. The third, explored in greater depth by many postmodern theorists from Jacques Derrida to Edward Said to Judith Butler, is the binary structure of language, the construction of social boundaries and dichotomies which disallow, and label as "dangerous," hybrid entities.

Imagination plays an integral role in all artistic endeavours. Aesthetes and theorists down the ages have acknowledged its agentship in man's conscious responses to the world, visible and invisible. Doubtless to say, it is affixed the place of pride among other faculties that make a person an artist, an artist, a skilled craftsman, and a skilled craftsman, an authentic voice for times to come. Many things can be said in this line.

At this juncture, appropriate as it will be, let the researcher say a few things about the sociological imagination in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things. According to Prof. Mills, the sociological imagination is "a quality of mind that seems most dramatically to promise an understanding of the intimate realities of ourselves in connection with larger social realities. It is not merely one quality of mind among the contemporary range of cultural sensibilities, it is the quality whose wider and more adroit use offers the promise that all such sensibilities and in fact human reason itself will come to play a greater role in human affairs" (Mills, p.15). It is "the capacity to shift from one perspective to another - from the political to the psychological - from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world, from the theological school to the military establishment, from considerations of an oil industry to studies of contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self - and to see the relations between the two." (Mills, p.7)

For Roy like authors of present times, the importance of the sociological imagination may be well-estimated. The serious pursuers of literature don't need a fanciful entertainment only. Instead, they do require a big picture of themselves and the world, wherein they can believe and within which they can come to
understand themselves. If a work fails to disturb their complacency and orientate them to realize afresh cultural as social meaning. Along with its author is sure to suffer its doom.

Arundhati Roy was probably pretty aware of the fact while writing the book, as she has revealed in an interview “For me the structure of my story. the way it reveals itself was so important... I really took a lot of care in designing the structure of the story. because for me the hook is not about what happened but how what happened affected people.” (The Week, p.46)

A close reading of the novel validates her statement. The post-sixties India is scanned on micro as well as macro-structural levels. Ayemenam becomes a transforming world - in miniature that is term in dissensions individual as well as collective emotional as wells instinctive. All this, let the readers dwell on a few issues of current relevance and see to what extent the novel captures the mood of the day. The novel is spun on the very fabric of social stratification the readers are having for several centuries. Despite constitutionalized watchwords Equality, Liberty and Justice to all citizens for years the Democratic India is still reigned over by four class system. Worse than ever the latest shift in politics unashamedly enchases caste and community card to reap maximum benefits. Even the most progressive of democrats, irrespective of their political party or ideology are unwittingly perpetuating social inequality, religious intolerance and racial discrimination. The Indian people at large are still moaning under the unshraggable burden of the Chaturvarna pyramid. Protective discrimination, in seemingly form of reservation is perennially there to worsen everything. Arundhati has shown a very fine sense in enlivening the whole scenario with discreet correctness.

Velutha, the prodigal Paravan, becomes her spectrometer for the purpose. He displays diverse colours of her experience in varied wavelengths of caste-feeling. The novel reveals that in all walks of life he suffers stock scorn and segregation of the upper caste people. The Touchable workers in Paradise Pickles sniff at him because “according to them. Paravans were not meant to be carpenters” (Roy, p.77). The guardian of law and justice. Inspector Thomas Matthew and the'crusader of the Oppressed'. Comrade K.N.M. Pillai willfully
shake hands with each other to favour the false FIR lodged against him by schemy Baby Kochamma, merely for the reason that all of them are touchables and Velutha is untouchable. Comrade Pillai doesn’t even mention that Velutha is a member of the Communist Party. At another place the Comrade is seen discussing with Paradise Pickles’ owner Chacko, the matter of Velutha’s dismissal from his Touchable like job “But see. Comrade, any benefits that you give him, naturally others are resenting it. They see it as a partiality. After all, whatever job he does, carpenter or electrician or whatever It is, for them he is just a Paravan. It is a conditioning they have from birth ...Better for him you send him off...”(Roy, p.279).

Caste consciousness is so pervasive in Indian society that the ‘pura’ and the high try all sorts of tactics to flaunt their superiority. The maid-servant Kochu Maria puts on Kunukku in her sewn-up earlobes just to impress on others her Touchableness “Kochu Maria couldn’t stop wearing her kunukku because if she did, how would people know that despite her lowly cook’s job (seventy-five rupees a month) she was a Syrian Christian, Mar Thomite? Not a Pelaya, or a Pulaya, or a Paravan. But a Touchable, uppercaste Christian (into whom Christianity had seeped like tea from a teabag). Split lobes stitched back were a better option by far” (Roy, p.170).

Baby Kochamma on homecoming of Margaret, talks to Sophie Mol of Shakespeare’s The Tempest “to announce her credentials to Margaret Kochamma. To set herself apart from the Sweeper Class” (Roy, p.144). Even religious conversion fails to lift the dispossessed lot up to an estimable status. Irrespective of religious affiliation the underdog remains as fallen as ever in the dog-eat-dog society “When the British came to Malabar, a number of Paravans, Pelayas and Pulayas (among them Velutha’s grandfather, Kelan) converted to Christianity and joined the Anglican Church to escape the scourge of Unsociability. As added incentive they were given a little food and money. They were known as the Rice Christians. It didn’t take them long to realize that they had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. They were made to have separate churches, with separate service, and separate priests. As a special favour they were even given their own separate Pariah Bishop. After Independence they found they were not entitled to any
Government benefits like job reservations or bank loans at low interest rates because officially, on paper, they were Christians and therefore casteless. It was a little like having to sweep away your footprints without a broom. Or worse, not being allowed to leave footprints at all” (Roy, p. 74).

Similarly the constitutional mandate of India provides particular attention to women under Article 14, 15 (1) and 15 (A)(C). It is maintained emphatically that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on ground of sex along with any other ground. All citizens are told to regard women and not to do anything derogatory to the dignity of women. Special provisions are made through Five Year Plans in order to strengthen and mobilize this long submissive section of society.

The reality, however, is rather scary. Women still remain objects to be appropriated, possessed and bargained in male domain. Contemporary consumer culture has further devalued the status of woman. One can see around their victimization and exploitation more than ever. Under various crowns of power, freedom and glamour she is, in fact, being machine tooled to play custom-designed roles. The God of Small Things very pointedly portrays women’s fate inside and outside Indian home and hearth. Mammachi, Ammu, Baby Kochamma, Margaret, Rahel are cases in point. Mammachi’s pickle-making job earns Pappachi’s jealous frowns instead of favour.

He greatly resents the attention she gets in the society for her skill in it. Far from assisting her in buying, weighing, salting and drying of limes and tender mangoes’ everynight he beat her with a brass flower vase” (Roy, p. 47). She is overtaken by his black moods and sudden bouts of temper. Ammu is also a victim of her Asst. Manager husband’s routine violence. The repelling man even feels no trace of shame or guilt or morality when his English boss Hollick makes an indecent deal with him. Hollick demands Ammu to sleep with him and the fellow agrees and goads Ammu to gratify the Boss. Ammu’s so natural declination draws his fury and she is thrashed black and blue. Her partnership in Paradise Pickles further illustrates the status of corporate woman in India.
Mough Ammu did as much work in the factory as Chacko, whenever he was dealing with food inspectors or sanitary engineers, he always referred to it as my factory, my pineapples, my pickles. Legally, this was the case because Ammu, as a daughter, had no claim to the property" (Roy, p.57). Chacko, the Oxford avatar of the old zamindar mentality, a self-proclaimed Marxist, misses no chance of exploiting his women employees "He would call pretty women who worked in the factory to his room, and on the pretext of lecturing them on labour rights and trade union law, flirt with them outrageously" (Roy, p.65). The fate of divorced women too is brought to the fore.

Comrade Pillai’s pronunciation of the word as “die-voiced” confers mortality to Rahel. Divorcee Margaret is no more than a whore in Mammachi’s eyes. Baby Kochamma’s attitude towards deserted Ammu is typically Indian “She subscribed wholeheartedly to the commonly held view that a married daughter had no position in her parents home. As for a divorced daughter according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all and as for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma’s outrage. As for a divorced daughter from a intercommunity love marriage, Baby Kochamma chose to remain quivering silent on the subject” (Roy, pp.45-6). Kochamma’s stance encompasses a wide world of apathy for such women. The novel also gives a thorough insight into children in the society. Children, being the most vulnerable group, require supreme priority on all levels civil, social, cultural, political etc. They need utmost support in bad times as well as in good times at familial, national and international fronts.

Article 39 in the constitution pledges to provide children opportunities to develop in healthy, free, and dignified way. It also asserts their protection against all sorts of exploitation. Even ogling the child in a sexual manner is a punishable offence in Indian Penal Code, along with various other forms of visual, oral and tactile sexual abuses. Psychologists overtly maintain that disorders like nightmares, depressions, anxiety, extreme inhibitions, low self-esteem, suicidal inclination etc. are but outcome of the traumatic childhood.

Such psychological deformities are easily escapable if a concentrated attention is paid on the matters related to child welfare. It is, thus, the responsibility of parents and society as well, to adhere to the principle of “First Call For
Children’. Through Rahel and Estha, Roy has drawn the readers attention on related affairs.

They are a type not very uncommon to find in the readers immediate vicinities. The twins are living with Ammu and her family as their father is in separation with Ammu. Here, they undergo diverse pressures, taboos, condemnations. Nobody in the family shows serious concern for them. In a way they are growing upon the cold aloofness and eccentricities of the seniors in the family. The sad, Father Mulligan-less Kochamma resents them in their faces in the way that the unfortunate sometimes dislike the co-unfortunate. Baby Kochamma disliked the twins, for she considered them doomed, fatherless waifs. Worse still they were Half-Hindu Hybrids whom no self respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry. She was keen for them to realize that they (like herself) live on sufferance in the Ayemenam House, their maternal grandmother’s house, where they really had no right to be’ (Roy, p.45).

Their willingness to love and to be loved manifold whenever they come across glimpses of boundless affection like Chacko hugging and hugging, kissing and kissing his step-daughter Sophie Mol. Their state is “like a pair of small bewildered frogs engrossed in each other’s company, lolloping arm in arm down a highway full of hurtling traffic. Entirely oblivious of what trucks can do not frogs” (Roy, p.43). Ammu wants to educate them in a way so that they could face harsh realities of the world boldly. “She tells them the story of Julius Caesar to prove that you can’t trust anybody. Mother, father, brother, husband, best friend, Nobody” (Roy, p.83). It is only Velutha who provides them love, care and company they need so badly.

But his subsequent brutal Death in custody leaves one more everlasting scar on their memory, in turn leaving them unconnected, alone. alienated from all humdrum life. Arundhati has been sociologically very sensitive while recording even the slightest stirs in their life.

The novel, to summate, is a fine piece of the exactitude of Arundhati’s recording consciousness. Every thing is keenly observed, deeply felt and carefully constructed. Be it the breast-tapping policeman, electrocuted elephant. Doctor In
and Doctor Out plate, fathers playing sublimated sexual games with their nubile

Constant flashbacks and fast forwards lend a peculiar, cinematographic character to the novel. Nothing falls apart contextually. All qualities assorted together, the work evidences that Arundhati is not just the Princess of prose, but also of sociological imagination in the true sense of the term. The proof comes from her own words if you’re a writer, you tend to keep those aching eyes open. Every day your face is slammed up against the windowpane. Every day you bear witness to the obscenity. Every day you have to think of new ways of saying old and obvious things. Things about love and greed. About politics and governance. About power and powerlessness. About war and peace. About death and beauty. Things that must be said over and over again” (Front Line, p.65).

The God of Small Things, quite in line with her statements, acknowledges the condition of the world around the readers and that too without any distortions and aberrations. It may be hoped that in future too, Arundhati would keep alive this awareness and give us such brilliant pieces of writing.

In The God of Small Things, Roy unfolds an excruciatingly beautiful tale in cinematographical style, of the disintegration of a family set in postcolonial milieu focusing on Kottayam district where Syrian Christians were dominant in a community that naturally adapted to the English language and culture. The
atrocities and horrors that flash by in fragments - of crushed innocents, of conflicting marriages, of police custody deaths, of cruel casteism, of masculine hegemony-all victims of irrational societal norms project one face of postcolonial India “a picture of the uncivilized, brutal and almost a tribal society that India appears to the western world”. (Vimala Rao, p.41) Yet within that dark face of India, plural voices emerge from the margins, shouting to be heard; and in a sense, that is what the novel is all about.

The scope of this discussion therefore, is to identify those voices, especially the voice of the author raised in protest against rank oppressive forces. a critical voice that “eventually becomes the voice of your conscience”. “The voice of children,” avers Maria Calvis, “is very important because they come out with truths about themselves that sometimes adults overlook.” Significantly, the novel is recalling life as seen through the eyes of the seven-year-old twins, of the traumatic experiences that led to loss of childhood, of powerlessness in an oppressive adult world that reduce their lives to nothingness. The dominant theme of the novel is “the intrusion of the violent and ugly adult world into the innocence, purity, fragility and make believe of childhood.” The story centres around Estha and Rahel and their permanently scarred innocence and destroyed childhood with the arrival of their cousin Sophie Mol and her mother, Margaret, from England.

As a U.S. reader observes: “Roy captures the essence of growing up in the postcolonialist third world. It depicts the loss of identity that one feels trying to belong to a colonizer’s culture ... one sees how even tiny people know 'their place', How 'brown feet in Bata sandals' know where they stand in relation to white Sophie Mol." Estha and Rahel’s existence in the Ayemenem house is shaky right from the beginning: to their grand aunt, Baby Kochamma, they are half-Hindus without a father, therefore 'little monsters' and always suspect; even to the servant Kochu Maria, Sophie Mol is “sundarikutty, it little angel” and, the twins 'little demons' for their beautiful, blind grandmother, Mammachi, the blindness extends to the soul in her blatant partiality to her while-skinned, blue grey blue-eyed granddaughter. With Sophie Mol in the limelight, the sense of insecurity deepens for the twins.
Little snatches of information and events underscore the single identity of the twins. They are described as dizygotic two-egg twins, Estha older by eighteen minutes. Although there was no confusion identifying them as usually happens with identical twins, the author explains that “the confusion Jay in a deeper, more secret place” for “Esthappen and Rahel thought of themselves together as me, separately, individually, as we or us. As though they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities.” (Roy, p.2)

This is shown tangibly, as when Rahel feels the taste of the sandwich Estha cats in the train when he is ‘returned’ or when Rahel wakes up one night giggling at Estha’s funny dream. After twenty-three years of separation, when the twins meet again, memories are the only bridge that reunites them as they cross into forbidden territory in an amorphous relationship that defies definition, very much like Ammachi’s banana jam that was neither jam proper nor jelly. For the twins who are “Hansel and Gretel in a ghastly fairy tale” (Roy, p.293) there are precious few happy childhood memories. They share the childish habit of playfully reading words backwards ‘Pots’ for ‘Stop’, ‘Naidni Yub, Naidni Eb’ for Be Indian Buy Indian—being precocious with their reading, which game is read as perversity and interpreted by Miss Mittins as ‘Satan in their eyes’. On the way to Abilash Theatre in Cochin, they are surrounded by some party men in the communist procession. One of them opens the car door on Rahel’s side, speaks kindly to her asking if she is feeling hot, then jokingly adds, “Ask your daddy to buy you an Air Condition!” Rahel feels happy, pleased to have Chacko, her uncle, mistaken for her father, “Like a normal family.” (Roy, p.79)

The children enjoy playing with Velutha, greedy for love, even if it could come only from one, who to the adults is an ‘untouchable’. Above all, they cling tenaciously to the affection of their mother and fear rejection, however mild it may be. Rahel, therefore, punishes herself by not having supper in the Lodge to make amends for having hurt Ammu earlier at the Theatre. She does this to regain the lost love of her mother “A little less her Ammu loved her” (Roy, p.112). When Sophie Mol appears on the scene, Rahel watches
“hawk-eyed to try and gauge how much Ammu loved Sophie Mol. but couldn’t.” (Roy, p.143)

The culmination of the fear of loss of love occurs when Ammu shouts at the twins that they are two milestones and that she suffers because of them. Careless words spilled in desperation, but also the oppressive language of a mother to children powerless to oppose. The harsh words drive the children to undertake measures that cause the tragedy of Sophie Mol’s death inseparably affecting their own lives in the process. “Sophie Mol occupies centre stage of the play the family enacts, with Ammu and her children at the margins: Rahel looked around her and saw that she was in a play. But she had only a small part. She was just a landscape. A flower perhaps. Or a tree. A face in the crowd. A townspeople. Nobody said hello to Rahel. Not even the Blue Army, in the green heat”. (Roy, p.172-173)

Velutha makes up for the loss of love and recognition of the twins and becomes “The God of Small Things”. The term ‘untouchable’ is rendered a misnomer by Estha and Rahel for whom Velutha is eminently touchable as he tosses up Rahel effortlessly and she lands in his arms. He carries them on his back and treats there like a prince and princess. Velutha is privileged with the twins in a way Sophie Mol is not and they avoid her like poison. However, she manages to, persuade them to take her with them across the river, consequently letting loose terror. She herself ends up with death by water, a mere-child with red-brown hair floating down the Meenachal with fish-nibbled eyes.

Things change in a day for them. They wake up near the History House and bear silent witness to Velutha being crushed to death under the heels of policemen. More terror follows in the police station. Baby Kochamma heaps guilt upon guilt on the children. She glibly calls them “murderers” and tells them “what matters is whether you want to go to jail and make Ammu go to jail because of you”. (Roy, p.318)

She tricks them into complying with her suggestion that Estha should just say ‘Yes’ to identify Velutha in the lockup: “The Inspector asked his question. Estha’s mouth said ‘yes’. Childhood tiptoed out. Silence slid like a bolt. Estha
returns to Rahel and whispers in her car: You were right. It wasn’t him. It was Urumban. Thang god. Rahel whispered back Where d’you think he is? Escaped to Africa.” (Roy, p. 320)

Twenty-three years later, when the twins meet again, they are “A pair of actors trapped in a recondite play with no hint of plot or narrative. Stumbling, through their parts, nursing someone else’s sorrow. Grieving someone else’s grief.” (Roy, p.191). Estha had “terrible pictures in his head”( Roy, p.32) that got lodged deeply within him, like “mango hair between molars Rahel drifted through childhood, drifted in and out of marriages, with empty eyes reflecting the quietness in Estha’s soul. The lessons learnt from History too early in life had driven one insane and the other insecure for life. Destroyed childhood is a global crisis. As Leela Menon observes, “the reports of gun-toting school children in the U.S. killing and injuring of classmates testify to increasing psychological trauma and social alienation. In contrast, Indian children are more victims than offenders.” Roy takes the smallest of the small, and shows how the sweet rose of innocence fades when they become victims of adult aggressiveness and cruelty.

Domestic violence begins with Pappachi’s disappointment in not having been named after the moth he had discovered. “Pappachi’s Moth was held responsible for his black moods and sudden bouts of temper. Its pernicious ghost ... tormented him and his children and his children's children”(Roy, p.49) though Roy would have us believe that in reality he had been ill-tempered long before he discovered the moth. The disappointment becomes an excuse to legitimate his violence on wife and daughter. Double standards becomes the norm of this family. Pappachi is used to very gentle and decent behaviour with outsiders but terrorizes his own family: “He donated money to orphanages and leprosy clinics. He worked hard on his public profile as a sophisticated, generous, moral man. But alone with his wife and children he turned into a monstrous. suspicious bully. with a streak of vicious cunning. They were beaten, humiliated and then made to suffer the envy of friends and relations for having such a wonderful husband and father.” (Roy, p.180)
Marginalized thus, by both society and family (Chacko’s my factory, my house, my wife etc, whereas Ammu and children have no “Locus Stand i”) she flouts at society and its rigid ethical codes in rebellion, breaking Love Laws and destroying the twins she had tried so hard to protect. Ammu is a tragic victim, struggling against terribly tyrannical forces. In Indira Bhatt’s view, “It is the helplessness of the powerless against the powerful ones.” (Roy, p.47). Manmachi concedes- “with Touchable logic” that if Velutha had not been a Paravan, he would have become an engineer. Like a magician he could make intricate toys with wood-tiny boats, rattles, windmills-that earns him the title.

He is ambitious, strives to overcome social hurdles through politics by becoming a communist card-holder. Velutha strives against forces that are too strong for him, fortresses that are centuries old and cannot be pulled down in a day. However, like Ammu, he defies a hypocritically snug society, in his case, a caste-ridden society that treats people like him as lesser than mortals.

Manmachi recalls the time when Paravans were outcasts, and “were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints.”(Roy, p.73) Conversion to Christianity during the British rule could not help them escape from the scourge of casteism. They suffered marginalization spiritually, being segregated in separate churches, and economically, being denied government benefits since officially they had become casteless, or non-existent. In Roy’s words, they were not “allowed to leave footprints at all”. Velutha’s life is summed up in the definition given to the word ‘dalit’. ‘Dalit’ means “burst, split, scattered, dispersed, broken, torn asunder, destroyed or crushed.”(Selvaraj, p.10) Velutha becomes a victim of the atrocity of police custody deaths. In life, he fares no better. Exploited by his employers, he is paid less than touchable workers: exploited by his party, Le is betrayed for personal gain; exploited by Ammu in a fragile spider web relationship they know cannot survive; and finally exploited by Baby Kochamma who transfers her hatred for the communists on to Velutha. The twins alone love him for what he is and miss him, so that when he dies.

_The God of Small Things_ is in itself significant because it celebrates the life that is filled with “small things”, “small lives”, “small people” and “small events”.

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In themselves “small” but leading to great consequences. Roy has written literature “that dares to dare,” touching on a variety of ideas and ideologies, and in her own words, tries to “explain complicated things in simple language,” (Frontline, p.14).

One of the themes which rings the note of The God of Small Things is the truthful portrayal of the plight of the women in society and their marathon struggle for seeking the sense of ‘identity’ in a male dominated conservative framework. The social structure of an Indian woman is full of many ups and downs, ifs and buts. Life offers little choice for a forsaken woman like Ammu, the central character, who yearns for pleasure and happiness and a life far from shackles or constrains.

The narrator portrays a detail picture of the lady’s childhood to adolescence, to the experience of marriage to a sympathetic and affectionate mother, to a rebel wife who challenges the age long hypocrirical moral stand of a patriarchal family. As a little girl, Ammu had to face a lot of cares and anxieties fret and fever of life. She had seen the cruelty of her father, Pappachi, who used to beat her and her mother, Mammachi with a brass vase. Once it so happened that her father tore apart of the shoes she had brought for herself. She was also deprived of the higher education because, according to Pappachi, college education is not at all useful for a girl. This shows that Pappachi is a man of schizophrenia. He behaves like a decent man but demonstrates his male ego and bourgeois mentality when he tyrannize his wife and child “not content with having beaten his wife and daughter, he tore down curtains, kicked furniture and smashed a table lamp.” (Roy, p.181). Marriage for him is the male’s domination over woman and women are nothing but the flowers in the hands of man. Ammu paid a visit to one of her relatives in Calcutta where at some one’s wedding reception she met her future husband who was on vocation from his job. He was an assistant manager of a tea estate in Assam.

Ammu was in a hurry to marry him because she knew that in Ayemenem, people were quite dead against her wishes and so something was better than nothing. The author observes “Ammu didn’t pretend to be in love with him. She just weighed the odds and accepted. She thought that anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem. She wrote to her parents informing
them of her decision. They didn’t reply.” (Roy, p.39). But soon after the marriage Ammu discovered that she had jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire. Her husband whom she loved so much, proved to be an alcoholic.

He even went to the extent of asking his wife to satisfy the sexual desire of Mr. Hollick, his boss, so that his job could be saved. This extreme humiliation created a sense of great hatred in the heart of Ammu for her husband. In a scuffle, she hit her husband with a heavy book and left the place with the twins - Estha and Rahel. Ammu returned to Ayemenem with her pulled out cheeks and there too she found her parents cool and indifferent to her and her children. Her eyes welled up when she saw the miserable condition of two children. She imagined her twins “like a pair of small bewildered frogs engrossed in each other’s company, lolloping arm in arm down a highway full of hurtling traffic.” (Roy, p.43).

It is to be noted that woman has been the subject of great mystery and controversy in the history and traditions, myths and legends. She is allegedly charged with so many drawbacks mostly imaginary. It is said that she is temptation symbolised; more a Fury than a Fairy. Her charms are irresistible but they invariably spell ruin and disaster. She is wily like a serpent, domineering like a tiger and fickle like a weathercock. Moreover, her passion is unquenchable and she gets pleasures in casting her net on her victims. Like a queen Bee she draws her lover into her web only to crush him in the end. She is always conscious of her dress, jewels and frippery. A woman is also generally termed as one who loves ease and pleasure, wants attention and slavish devotion. She is empty headed, narrow-minded, obstinate and vain. She flings a harsh irony on the man’s domination over woman. Chacko failed in almost every other respect including his marriage with Margaret, an English girl who deserted him. He is incharge of the lpe-household and so he asserts his position whenever he can.

He cynically tells his sister Ammu “What’s yours is mine and what’s mine is also mine.” Why? Because ‘Aminu’ as a daughter had no claim to the property and she had no locusts stand I” (Roy, p.57). It is a great irony that a daughter estranged from the husband is tortured and tyrannized in the parent’s house. But on the other hand, an estranged son, Chacko, not only receives warm welcome but also remains the rightful inheritor of the family’s wealth and fortune. When he
flirts with low women, he is encouraged by Pappachi in the name of "Man's Needs" (Roy, p.268) whereas, the same behaviour of Ammu is termed as illicit, untraditional and sinful. She is being locked in a room and is beaten black and blue.

It is to be noted here that The God of Small Things presents a confrontation between 'The Big Man the Laltain and Small Man the Mombatti.' In other words, the book shows maladjustment between The God of Big Things (Pappachi, Baby Kochamma, Mammachi, Chacko, Comrade Pillai and Inspector Thomas Mathew) and The God of Small Things (Ammu, Velutha, Rahel, Estha, Sophie Mol). By the term 'Laltain, Roy means to suggest the big guns of society. Both Laltain, and Mambatti' give us light and burns another lamp. The Laltain is well fed and well protected. It can bravely face the blowing wind. But on the other hand, the mombatti has no glass, no protection, no support. It can easily be blown out by the surge of wind.

But the advent of the Mombatti is somewhat stubborn to burn other's light through this fine connotations, the author has successfully tried her best to arouse the readers sense of pity and catharsis for the Mombatties - the down trodden and havenots, the dalit and the deserted, the marginalized and the defenseless. In the last of the novel, we see that the two Mombatties, Ammu and Velutha have to forsake the big things and indulge in the small things. "Even later, on the thirteen nights that followed this one instinctively they stuck to the small things. The big things ever lurked inside. They knew that there was nowhere for them to go. They had nothing. No future. So they stuck to the Small Things."

The other dalit of the novel who bears the brunt of social persecution is Velutha, an untouchable. Though he is a paravan, an outcast he is gifted with so many virtues. He symbolically stands for The God of Small Things. He is an expert mechanic and craftsman.

Perhaps this is why Mammachi employs him in her factory to do a carpenter's work. But the workers employed in the factory are not happy to see Velutha as a carpenter. Velutha is also seen taking part in political activity and
fighting for the cause of Marxism. The twins are very fond of him and are highly impressed by his craftsman’s skilled hand. He converts himself into the Christian religion only to immune from the victimization of a casteist society. But his conversion and his technical expertise, apart from many other good things, never bring any fruitful result in this cruel and callous society. Velutha, along with his father, always goes to the Ayemenem House to deliver coconut plucked from the trees. But they are never allowed to enter the room. They were not permitted to touch a thing that a ‘Touchable’ touched. Mammachi, Estha’s grandmother remembers a day.

“When paravans were expected to crawl backward with a broom, sweeping away their foot-prints so that Brahmin and Christians wouldn’t defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a paravan’s foot print. In Mammachi 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. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed.” (Roy, p. 73-74)

It is to be noted that untouchability is one of the greatest evils the country has been facing from the time immemorial. Arundhati Roy, a great champion of the cause of the dalit and the deserted points out those unnoticed shades of a social problem which generally escape the eyes of social scientists. Velutha’s grandfather Kelan, along with a number of other untouchables embraced Christianity to escape the scourge of untouchability. But they, later on, found that they had done a blunder. Though they were given separate churches and separate priests and in a special favour they were even given their own separate Pariah Bishop, but after 1947, they found they were not entitled to any government’s benefits like job reservation nor bank loans at low interest. Why? Because they were Christians and so castless. Roy says “It was little like having to sweep away your foot-prints without a broom Or worse, not being allowed to leave foot-prints at all.” (Roy, p. 74)

In Spite of all these great virtues in Velutha, he doesn’t command respect and proper treatment in society. Vellya Paapen the father of Velutha is strongly
dead against any type of education or advance knowledge in a paravan. He thinks that in a paravan they could (and Would and indeed should) be construed as insolence.’ He always grudges the craftsmanship and natural skills of Velutha. Further, Vellya quickly degenerates into nagging and bickering and consequently there is a sense of unpleasantness between father and son. In course of time, Velutha begins to avoid going home. He works late, catches fish in the river and cooks it in an open fire. He also spends the night outdoors. All of a sudden, he disappears for at least five months. He doesn’t say anybody about his exile. When he comes to Ayemenem, Mammachi again rehires him as the factory carpenter and the general maintenance of the whole factory is given charge to him. But this act of help causes a great stir in the factory workers.

The tragedy begins to take its toll in the life of Velutha when he comes in contact with Ammu or rather say, when Ammu’s troubled eyes and dimpled checks turns Velutha a transgressor as well as a victim into the secret heart of a touchable woman and a miserable victim of its punishment in the police custody. Velutha develops his weakness for Ammu or vice-versa. As a result they spend their vulgar nights on the bank of the river “Clouded eyes held clouded eyes in a steady gaze and a luminous women opened herself to a luminous man. She was as wide and deep as a river in spate. He sailed on her waters.” (Roy, p.337).

Why? Because the touchable workers of the factory are so wild with casteism that they think that paravans are not meant to be carpenter. So, in order to keep the workers happy, Mammachi pays Velutha less than she would give to Touchable worker.

Thus, one can see that Velutha the untouchable, doesn’t sweep off his footprints as his forefathers used to do. In this independent democratic country, his footprints are erased by the Establishments-the police, state and tradition. On the other hand, patriarchy punishes both-the woman who has defiled generation of breeding and the paravan who has challenged the tradition. Both these mop-batties got punishment or unacknowledged fear “civilization’s fear of nature, men’s fear of women, power’s fear of powerlessness.” (Roy, p.258)

It is to be noted that the taboo relation between Ammu and Velutha, doesn’t sound shocking to a westernized urban sensibility. But a conventional caste-mentility particularly in India is apt to be shocked by such transgressions.
Before Freud, sex was supposed to be a taboo subject. But when he propounded a highly revolutionary theory about sex and called sex the root of all one’s energy, literature began to come abundantly saturated with the elements of sex and illicit relations. D. H. Lawrence even went to the extent of making sex a religion.

In a propos of “Lady Chatterley’s Lover” he holds the view “The blood of man and the blood of woman are two externally different streams, they can never be mingled. Even scientifically we know it. But therefore, they are the two river that encircle the whole of life and in marriage the circle is complete and in sex the two rivers touch and renew one another without ever commingling or confusing. We know it. It is the deepest of all communion as well as the religions in practice we know.” (D. H. Lawrence, p. 349)

Judged on the above observation, Roy’s erotic description cannot be termed pornographic. To Arundhati Roy, sex is not a private matter but a universal thing which appeals to a vast number of people. It is a part and parcel of both the life of men and women, Without sex, femininity is not complete, it is meaningless. One sees that Ammu in her prime of youth was forsaken by her husband and family members.

Her sexual thirst, the natural instinct of a youth, was not properly slaked and so she is always seen haunted by the sexual passion. Her sexual urge can well be seen in the bathroom where she sees her naked body in the mirror and gets stimulated. The author portrays her mental state in this way “Ammo grew tired of their proprietary handling of her, She wanted her body back. It was her. She shrugged her children off the way a bitch shrugs of her pups when she had enough of them. She sat up and twisted her hair into a knot at the nape of her neck. Then she swung her legs off the bed, walked to the window and drew back the curtains.” (Roy, p.222)

Rahel Estha and sophie Mol are the next Mombatties who develop a sense of taciturnity and isolation in a conservative framework. In Other words, the brutality and persecution Ammu and Velutha underwent, is also operative against Estha and Rahel. They are treated by the family as outsiders. The first traumatic experience which the sensitive mind of Estha encounters is the misbehavior of the
'Orange drink Lemon drink' man in the Abhilash Talkies. The second powerful trauma felt by the innocent twins is the emotional blackmail collectively webbed by the family, state and administration to betray the person Velutha they loved dearly and that too in the most pitiable condition. Velutha was under the police custody and was bitterly beaten by the police. Baby Kochamma, the vicious and scheming great aunt, a cantankerous spinster, persuades the twins to betray Velutha in the police station "The inspector asked his question. Estha’s mouth said yes. Childhood tiptoed out. Silence slid like a bolt.” (Roy, p.319-20)

Rahel is also subject to the same tyranny and injustice, abuse and insult as meted out to Esha. But the basic difference between the two is that Rahel is more aggressive and active than Estha. She is a girl of rebellion like her mother. The three notable reactions in her personality symbolize her silent protest against dogmatic and conservative outlook of the family. First she collides against other girls in the convent to see whether her breasts hurt or not. Secondly, she is seen decorating a knob of dung with flowers. This way she seems to subvert the healthy values of society by elevating what is considered low and detestable. Thirdly, she burns the hairbun of her Housemistress in order to protest against vanity and artificiality in society. Even Marxism which upholds the cause of the deserted and the have-nots is seen doing just the otherwise for what it is meant for. Inspector Mathew is going to arrest Velutha.

But before the arrest, he wants to be fully assured whether Velutha had any political support or whether he is operating alone. The callous Pillai not only disowns Velutha as a party worker but also doesn’t refute the false allegation of abduction and rape by Baby Kochamma. This gives a chance for the corrupt police to inflict torture and savagery to the innocent Velutha. Here by this beautiful episode, Arundhati Roy seems to satirize the bogey and artificiality which form the core of politics. Politics is just like the players of the stage, the Kathakali Men’ who act the role of virtuous soul on the stage but went home to beat their wives. Even Kunti, the soft one with breasts.

The readers see That The God of Small Things shows a patriarchal domination of a casteridden stature where men dominate over women, the possessed over the non-possessed the powerful over the weak and the touchable
over the untouchable. Ranga Roa, in his famous article, "The Book (er) of the Year" rightly observes " Roy’s book is the only one I can think of among Indian novels in English which can be comprehensively described as a protest novel. It is all about atrocities against minorities, Small Things children and youth, women and untouchable." (Ramarao, p.13). Arundhati Roy thinks that it is wrong on the part of the govenment to show sympathy to the tribal people in shifting their homeland to the safe places in the cities, for the site is vulnerable to the anticipated flood.

But the concerned authority should bear in their mind that, however, poor and miserable a man’s house may be, he is so much emotionally tagged to it that all through his life the memory of his birth place haunts him and compels him to come back his home. Moreover in the villages, they feel a sense of affinity, congeniality and stability. But in the town, they are bound to suffer from a sense of claustrophobia. Andrew marvell, a great Metaphysical poet rightly praises the solitude of the village ,Your sacred plants, if here below, Only among the plants will grow , Society is all but rude, To this delicious solitude." (Andrew Marvell, p.92)

To sum up Arundhati Roy has heralded a revolutionary attitude against the mal-treatment of the untouchable, the vulnerable and the down-trodden. Though these’Mombatties’ have no glass, no protection, no support to face the surge of the fast wind, yet in comparison with ‘Laltain’, they are not rigid and stubborn but ever ready to burn another lamp’. The mombatties of Roy’s world which she calls them’the God of Loss’.

*The God of Small Things*, are bound to suffer much insult and abuse, hurdles and obstacles, tyranny and injustice sometimes with cause and sometimes without any cause. The ‘Laltain’, on the other hand, is well-fed and well-protected. To quote, Roy, “ They were both men terrifying adult. They looked out at the world and never wondered how it worked, because they knew. They worked it. They were mechanics who serviced different parts of the same machine” (Roy, p.262)
The East – West encounter is one of the different themes treated by Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things*. The novel is set in Ayemenem, Kerala of the post-independent India but one can see the remnants of the British Raj and different responses to the ideology of colonialism in the behaviour, attitude and personality of the major characters. Also characters from the East whose horizon begins and ends in Kerala coexist and interact with Westernized Indians. Likewise, Westernized Indians coexist and interact with characters from the west. And more significant than all these is the author's sensibility, "The story is about an Indian village, authentic India; but, the sensibility is urban, westernized, modern." (Ranga Rao, p.VIII)

One of the striking instances of the grandfather's unshakable faith in the superiority of the British race is seen in the way in which he responds to Ammu's return. Ammu returned to her father's house as living with her husband at Assam had become impossible. The alcoholic husband's English boss at the tea plantation, one Mr. Hollick, had suggested that Ammu stay with him at the bungalow and 'be looked after' while the husband goes for treatment. What was worse, the husband badgered Ammu to accept the offer.

Now Ammu's father, Ipe does not believe this 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." (Roy, p.2). Mr. Ipe's opinion contrasts so much with the truth because Mr. Hollick had in fact forced himself on many women of the labouring class at the tea plantations though this was the first intrusion into the management circle. Chacko who belonged to the next generation, the Rhodes scholar from Oxford. The marriage of Chacko with Margaret can be studied in the light of the East-West encounter. The anglophile Chacko meets Margaret in a restaurant where she is a waitress and wins her over first with a joke on the optimist and pessimist.

As their relationship develops the reader sees that Margaret's fascination for Chacko is a fascination for the oriental scholar, "She had never before met a man who spoke of the world—of what it was and how it came to be, or what he thought would become of it—in the way other men she knew discussed their jobs, their friends or their weekends at the beach. Being with Chacko made Margaret
Kochamma fell as though her soul had escaped from the narrow confines of her island country into the vast extravagant spaces of his..." (Roy, p.245)

But, a year into marriage, the charm of Chacko’s ‘studently sloth’ wore off for Margaret Kochamma. Strangely enough she disliked him later for the very reasons which won her admiration earlier and she asks Chacko for a divorce. Despite her rejection Chacko is immensely pleased to receive her and introduce her as his wife thanks to his colonial mindset. Chacko said “Now let me introduce everybody. Then, more for the benefit of onlookers and eavesdroppers, because Margaret Kochamma needed no introduction really. My wife, Margaret.” Margaret Kochamma smiled and wagged her rose at him. Ex-wife, Chacko! Her lips formed the words, though her voice never spoke them. “Anybody could see that Chacko was a proud and happy man to have had a wife like Margaret White.” (Roy, pp.142-143)

The same pride is seen in the manner in which he leads his ex-wife and daughter up the nine red steps to his mother ‘like a pair of tennis trophies’, he has just won! But there is something paradoxical about Chacko’s colonial mindset. Though he is proud of his white ex-wife and daughter, he understands the debilitating effects of colonialism on a race. He tells Rahel and Estha that he hates to admit the fact that they are anglophiles pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history.

Ammu, Chacko’s sister, has not had the kind of formal western education that Chacko has had. But being a part of the Anglophile family she has imbied an admiration for English manners and a taste for Western Classics. However, she does not share Chacko’s blind and ridiculous pride in having white relatives. She never tires of passing sarcastic remarks on him and her capacity for repartee is terrific. When Chacko refers to colonialism as the worst sort of war which makes us ‘adore our conquerers’, Ammu retorts, “Marry our conquerors is more like it” (Roy, p.53). Later in the novel Ammu gives a sarcastic reply to a question from Margaret and Chacko demands an apology from Ammu. Not only does Ammu refuse to apologise but snaps with an effrontery that is breathtaking.
She says, “Must we behave like some damn godforsaken tribe that’s just been discovered?” (Roy, p.180). The western streak in Ammu is a result of her feminist attitude and independent mind.

Estha and Rahel who belong to the youngest generation are brought up in an atmosphere where they are perfectly at home with western music, cartoons, classics, films. They like Elvis Presley, enjoy The Sound of Music and Pop Eye the Sailor, quote and enact from The Tale of Two Cities, The Jungle Book, The Tempest and Julius Caesar. With his Elvis Presley puff Estha strums a badminton racquet, curls up his lips like Elvis and croons lines from The Party. Estha can also sing all the songs from The Sound of Music. When Chacko talks of “millstones around the neck” Rahel and Estha understand the expression for they had read about it in Mutiny on the Bounty where people who died at sea were thrown overboard with millstones. Estha says “Et tu? Brute? Then fall Caesar” with a sheet wrapped around him (he is a Roman) and crashes on the bed like a corpse. When Kochu Maria objects to the possible damage it may cause to the bed and reminds him that it is not his house, “Estha would rise from the dead, stand on the bed and say ‘Et tu? Kochu Maria? Then fall Estha’ and die again.” (Roy, p.83) No wonder Rahel and Estha feel deeply offended when Kochamma’s Australian missionary friend Miss Mitten presents them with a baby book entitled The Adventures of Susie Squirrel. It is too elementary for them and to the disappointment and anger of Miss Mitten they read the book backwards.

In the personality of the grand-aunt Kochama, one can see a character who has a thorough admiration for things English because they are English. As a young girl she had a sexual infatuation for the European priest Father Mulligan. To get closer to Father Mulligan, she even converts herself into a Roman Catholic and joins a convent in Madras. Since the whole effort becomes an exercise in futility, she returns home. Her father feels that since she is not likely to find a husband she can have an education. He sends her to the University of Rochester to take a diploma in ornamental Gardening. Baby Kochamma settles down at the Ayemenem House, an elderly, scheming, obese, spinster aunt. Roy lampoons westernized Indians who try to be more English than the English themselves and it is Baby Kochamma who emerges more than a life and blood character in these
scenes. The manner in which she prepares Rahel and Estha for the grand arrival of Sophie Mol from England gives the reader an understanding of her admiration for the West and contempt for the East.

For the children it had been a ‘what will Sophie Mol think’ week. That whole week baby Kochamma had eavesdropped relentlessly on the private conversation of the twins and whenever she caught them speaking in Malayalam she levied a small fine which she managed to deduct from source namely their pocket money. She also made them write impositions, ‘I will always speak in English. I will always speak in English’. When she had seen a hundred lines of this she scored them with a red pen to ensure that old lines were not recycled for new punishments. She also made them practice an English song to sing when they would come back with Sophie. The song began, ‘Rej-Oice in the LoOrd’ and the twins had to be very careful with their ‘Pre NUN sea ayshun’.

Once the flight carrying the celebrated English guests land, more English behaviour is in store. Baby Kochamma suddenly acquires a ‘strange new British accent’ when introduced to Margaret and Sophie. Ammu’s expectations of proper English behaviour is no less. Ammu tells Estha, ‘When someone says how do you do? You are not supposed to say ‘fine thank you’ but ‘how do YOU do’? But somehow Estha becomes too self-conscious and cannot bring himself to say it. Ammu gets very angry, for such behaviour was not what she had expected of Estha. “She had wanted a smooth performance. A prize for her children in the Indo-British behaviour competition.” (Roy, p.145) Roy teases this imitation of English world her characters inhabit. She herself belongs to such a western pocket in urban India but she is able to stand back and caricature them.

The tendency to admire the British and belittle the Indian is another feature of the colonial mindset. Sophie is ‘hatted, bell-bottomed, loved from the beginning’. Chacko is bursting to shower his love on her ignoring Rahel and Estha who are hungry for his affection. But Sophie does not love Chacko like she loves her British step father Joe. Sophie is received ceremoniously at Ayemenem house but Rahel and Estha are made to feel unwanted. When the family returns from the
airport with Margaret and Sophie Rahel rushes to her grandmother bursting with the news that Estha vomited. But a touch from Ammu brings the realization that Sophie is the point of focus. Rahel herself had only a small part to play. She is a landscape or a tree. Perhaps she is part of the townspeople.

Mammachi asks for Sophie in a very endearing manner, “Where is my Sophie Mol? Mammachi said, Come here and let your grandmother look at you....The Townspeople (in her fairy frock) saw Mammachi draw Sophie Mol close to her eyes to look at her. To read her like a cheque. Mammachi... saw red brown hair,... bluegrey blue eyes.”(Roy,p.143)

As the special cake made by Kochu Maria to celebrate the grand arrival is being distributed to all including the team of workers from Paradise Pickle factory participating in the reception, Mammachi plays on the violin a ‘Welcome Home Our Sophie Mol melody, Baby Kochamma admires Sophie’s height taking special care to remark how she is taller than Esther Kochu Maria calls her‘Sundarikutty’. ‘She’s little angel’. As for Estha and Rahel they are little demons. However, there are scenes which are delightfully free from East - west consciousness. They are scenes where the children Rahel, Estha atid Sophie get together. As soon as Sophie arrives, even before they reach the car park, the trio is already discussing their parents, on whether they have to love each other being first cousins, on whether Rahel is going to be a dwarf or a midget when she grows up! Estha begins, “We in India....” only because he had been tutored that his role is as grave as that of an ambassador. But in no time they forget it all and play in harmony.

One of the major western influences on the East is seen in the many instances of divorce in the novel. A study of the three generations, once again, reveals the changing scenario. The grandparents Pappachi and Mammachi are far from being compatible, but the idea of divorce is alien to their lives. Pappachi regularly beats Mammachi, who suffers silently. When Mammachi cries at Pappachi’s funeral, Ammu says that Mammachi cried not because she loved her husband but because she had got used him. Coming to the next generation, Chacko and Ammu , both are divorcees and in both cases it is the woman’s decision. Ammu’s reasons for leaving her husband appear thoroughly justified, but Margaret’s reasons for divorcing Chacko seem to be unpalatable to the Indian
mind. Margaret, Chacko’s English wife asks him for a divorce when she is pregnant with his child. The reason is that she had found a better man in Joe. “Joe was everything that Chacko wasn’t. Steady, Solvent, thin.”(Roy, p.248) Despite the rejection Chacko speaks of Margaret with a pride as though he admired her for having divorced him.

Rahel who belongs to the third generation is divorced from her husband Larry for no ostensible reason. Nor is she in the least embarrassed talking about it. Her attitude to divorce is revealed in her conversation with Mr. Pillai. She is passing Mr. Pillai’s house when he drags her into a conversation.

He is naturally curious about her family life. She crisply answers Mr. Pillai’s questions about whether her husband has come, what his name is, whether they have children, whether she is expecting. When Pillai advocates, ‘one is must, boy, girl, anyone. Two is of course your choice’. Rahel replies “We’re divorced”. She hopes to shock him and she is successful. Mr. Pillai says, Divorced?” his voice cracking on the question mark. He pronounces the word divorce as if it were a form of death! Thus in depicting divorce Roy presents a society in transition, a society which steadily accepts western values. So the West is in India, in Kerala, in the very Ayemenam House. ‘India’, observes Roy, exists in several centuries, simultaneously’. Naturally one century is more westernized than the other. Kochu Maria lives in one century, Rahel in another. So when they converse there is an East-West encounter.

There is not an institution Roy spares, be it Eastern or Western. There have been a few, says Roy, who have complained that she is not presenting India in a positive light (Roy calls them proper light brigade). But her criticism of India, as she rightly puts it, “comes from an affection, not from standing outside and sneering and laughing.” (Wordsworth, p.2) One can see this love for things Indian in many parts of the book, but it is most evident in the scenes where she describes the Kathakali dance. The Kathakali artist can accomplish extraordinary feats with his art. “He can fly you across the whole world in minutes, he can stop for hours to examine a wilting leaf “ (Roy, p.230). How do the western audience respond to this unearthly Eastern art? Well, they give the artist “imported attention spans”. The art having become unviable, the artist is forced to turn to tourism for survival. It is not only the tourist who cannot appreciate this art. Even within the country the art does not get enough patronage. Roy highlights this painful fact through the description of the artist’s costumes like the darned skirt and the balding
velvet blouse. Roy not only highlights what is beautiful in the East but what is abominable as well. The bane of the Indian caste system, that ought to be discarded is being perpetuated. In the novel the caste prejudice eventually leads not only to the victimization of Velutha but the destruction of the family unit.

Roy questions love laws that have been established by the society, laws that lay down who should be loved and how and how much. The questions pervade the entire story seeping into all relationships, but is most striking in the treatment of Ammu and Velutha. Ammu is a high caste Syrian Christian woman, a ‘Touchable’ in Roy’s coinage while Velutha is an untouchable. This deep rooted caste system is defied by Ammu and Velutha. Though love is the prime force, the Marxist ideology imbibed by Velutha and the western ideas imbibed by Ammu enable them to defy the system. The East severely punishes them for it.

The three non-Indian characters presented by Roy in The God of Small Things are the Irish monk Father Mulligan, the American Larry Mccaslin, and the British Margaret. Father Mulligan was on a deputation to Kerala for a year where he was studying Hindu scriptures only to denounce them intelligently. He used to visit the home of John Ipe every Thursday and as a young girl Baby Kochamma passionately fell in love with him. the love of Kochamma remains unfilled. Father Mulligan goes back to Madras. In the character of Father Mulligan the readers find the influence of the East on the West for eventually, he gets converted into a Vaishnava and joins an ashram north of Rishikesh.

Larry Mccaslin meets Rahel in the school of Architecture, falls in love and marries her. To Rahel it was no love leading to marriage. Not having anyone to arrange a marriage for her, she accepts Larry and her acceptance is described as a sitting down feeling in an airport lounge when a person has stood for too long. In Boston Larry discovers that while he considers Rahel something unbearably precious, Rahel is totally devoid of any emotion towards him. “When they made love he was offended by her eyes. She behaved as though they belonged to someone else. Someone watching. Looking out of the window at the sea. At a boat in the river ...” (Roy, p.19). They separate and their separation too means nothing to Rahel. Never does she recall her Boston days with any nostalgia. Margaret
features in the novel much more than Father Mulligan or Larry. She arrives at Ayemenen house for Christmas and from the point of plot her presence is necessary for the development of the crisis. Though there is nothing much admirable about her, there is nothing despicable either as she carries herself as any decent guest would. Her behaviour towards Estha after the death of Sophie is shocking. She slaps Estha a few times but though one feels outraged, it can be understood in the light of her suffering and bereavement. She tenders an apology for her behaviour after she is back in England.

However, none of these Western characters come out of the pen with the same life and breath with which the Indian characters emerge. One doesn’t see them from within at all. Not only the point of view is not theirs, the author never peeps into their consciousness though as an omniscient narrator she tells us a lot. One doesn’t see what Father Mulligan thinks or feels but only what is happening to Kochamma’s heart, how it is kept racing when she sees him, how the passion rises like a tidal wave with her, what excuses and moves she makes to get closer to him. Likewise one doesn’t see Larry from within. One only know he is mistaken in imagining that Rahel loves him and feel sorry he should think she is precious when her feelings are absolutely dead when she is with him. Even in the Margaret Chacko relationship, Chacko’s personality, behaviour and attitude emerges with such bold strokes, but the same can never be said of Margaret. One doesn’t know what her emotions are when she meets her ex-husband. At best something can be said of her social behaviour. Again one cannot say that it is because she is a minor character. For the Indian minor characters like Vellya Paapen or Pillai’s wife Kalyani come out with more life than the western ones do.

The novel also puts to question judgment regarding western education. Oxford education, for instance, is acclaimed as the best and a scholar from Oxford is set on a pedestal. Mammachi thinks Chako is the cleverest man, even Prime Ministerial material. However, he cannot even run a pickle factory successfully. Roy’s linguistic innovativeness is universally acclaimed as terrific and it calls for a full length study by itself. But confining the researcher’s study of her language to the East West theme, one can see how she has fused the East and the West and
how she has decolonized the English language. One finds in the novel a liberal use of Malayalam words and phrases which remain unglossed.

Roy herself says that she has no intention of glossing her novel for western consumption. “American publishers said I should explain more, that I was introducing people of an alien territory. I said, ‘alien for whom’? I wouldn’t open an Updike and want him to explain some American gizmo.” (The Irish Times, p.4) However Roy has provided translations for Malayalam songs and certain significant words. For instance ‘Naaley’ is translated as ‘tomorrow’ because though the word is simple in itself, it expresses the lovers’ hope for tomorrow and hopelessness for a distant future.

If Velutha and Vellya Paapen speak Malayalam, comrade K.N.M. Pillai speaks English in a Malayalam fashion. He pronounces ‘ameyrika’ for America’. He introduces Rahel as “Hie (Ipe’s) daughter’s daughter is this”. Talking about his young son, Pillai says, “He is a genius. In front of visitors only he is quiet. He is standing first in the class”. (Roy, p.274) These are sentences thought of in Malayalam but spoken in English. After the Malayalam English one come to the British English of Chacko, Ammu and Baby Kochamma and they are ‘living proof of the success of Macaulay’s civilizing mission”. (India Today, p.26)

Coming to the author herself, her mastery of the English language is such that she does with it what she says a Kathakali artist does with the stories he communicates through his art. Arundhati Roy is rightly described as a sorceress who “mixes fair means with foul to concoct the heady magical brew” (Lakshmi Padmabhan, p.12) and the heady brew is her own brand of English that can knock anyone down. The phonology, morphology, vocabulary, punctuation, grammar, syntax of Queen’s English is dismantled and reconstructed creatively and that is how this Eastern wonder writer has decolonized the Western language.