"Pullyampallil House on which Roy has modelled Ayemenem House"
CHAPTER II

THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

The God of Small Things is remarkable for its quality of innocence and originality. Set in Kerala in the 1960, it paints a vivid picture of life in a small rural Indian town, the thoughts and feelings of the two small children, and the complexity and hypocrisy of the adults in their world, and casts light upon the destructive power of the caste system and moral and political bigotry in general.

In this novel the story is narrated through the simple but amazingly insightful eyes of Rahel and Estha. '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 see a pattern there. A pattern ... of how in these small events and in these small lives the world intrudes. And because of this, because of people living unprotected ... The world and the social machine intrudes into the smallest, deepest core of their being and changes their life.'

Along with this tale the novelist brings to the fore Indian family relationships, social customs, mores, politics etc. The emphasis is on the portrayal of human emotions and behaviours.
Though a fateful tale, the book exposes the paradoxes that exist in an ancient land whose history was altered by its colonizers, particularly the British. 'Beneath the drama of a family tragedy lies a background of local politics, social taboos and the tide of history all of which come together in a slip of fate, after which a family is irreparably shattered. Roy captures the children's candid observations but clouded understanding of adults' complex emotional lives.'

The novelist unfolds the tale slowly and with perseverance. It provides eager details in a way that the characters, words, and hints of a plot all press into something at once revealing and deceptive. There is a commingling of past and present, memories and desires, events and eventualities. There is a sense of uncertainty, and this sense permeates the whole narrative. Everything is so mysterious that it becomes difficult to know who did what – committed some crime or caused some concrete occurrence, who these people are and what horrible event has finally exposed their middle class souls as cold and deliberately cruel. Regardless, the characters are agonizingly real at every moment, and they quickly involve us with them. The novel begins and ends with Rahel's comeback to her home in Ayemenem and to her brother, Estha. Her return brings her hope that their love for each other will heal their deep wounds.
One of the dominant themes is the insult and abuse to women in Indian society and discrimination done to them in all walks of life. The society presented in the novel is patriarchal. Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Kochu Maria are the women characters that perpetuate the patriarchal divisions of caste, race and gender. In the words of Dr. K.K. Gaur, 'This novel symbolises the dark forces operating in human life, and most of them are the creation of the social structure identified with various social institutions such as parenthood, marriage, man-woman relationship, traditions, and unjust inhuman discriminations built upon misconceived prejudices under religious and political dictates.'

In the words of Dr. Prasanna Sree, 'In The God of Small Things the novelist implicitly advocates greater social reform in the rigid positioning of the women. The world of Arundhati Roy's novel is captured in a state of flux where the values of the patriarchal society are under attack from a new world in which self-interest and self-aggrandizement and social equality are forcing their entry seen from a feminist (perspective) point of view. The novel speaks of the violence perpetrated upon women and paternal tyranny; engulfing the luckless children. It ruthlessly unmasksthe dual standards of morality in society in respect of men and women, the passive submissive role of a wife in man-woman
relationship, and the vindictive attitude of a woman in prolonging the suffering and ignoring of another woman by a male. Ammu’s life as presented by the writer, Arundhati Roy, is a slice of lives of those women who live in a society and so helplessly suffer and get marginal place or no place at all in the history and culture of which they are the essential part of human beings.

Through the unenviable helplessness and fate of women in the novel, Roy intends to show that in spite of all hollow claims of equality, women still remain objects to be appropriated, possessed and bargained in male domain. Contemporary consumer culture has further devaluated the status of women. One can see around their victimization and exploitation more than ever. Under various crowns of power, freedom and glamour they are, in fact, being machine-tooled to play custom designed roles.

Ammu is the central character of the novel. She is the daughter of Pappachi and Mammachi and the sister of Chacko. Since her childhood days she has suffered severely the dictates of the patriarchs in the family. She has survived, like her mother, the cruelty of Pappachi who habitually used to thrash both of them. Though a decent person, quite like a number of Indian males, he employed these tactics to boost and inflate his ego. He is conservative in all respects pertaining to women. Even his only daughter, Ammu, is kept bereft of proper education because of his
crudely archaic traditional outlook. Though a noted entomologist he is not liberal enough to send her to college, insisting that college education is an unnecessary expense for a girl, so Ammu has no choice but to leave Delhi and move with him to Ayemenem:

There was very little for a young girl to do in Ayemenem other than to wait for marriage proposals while she helped her mother with the housework. Since her father did not have enough money to raise a suitable dowry, no proposals came Ammu’s way. Two years went by. Her eighteenth birthday came and went. Unnoticed, or at least unremarked upon by her parents. Ammu grew desperate. All day she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother. She hatched several wretched little plans. Eventually one worked, Pappachi agreed to let her spend the summer with a distant aunt who lived in Calcutta. (38-39)

Ammu is aware of her eventlessness at home, and also senses that her future prospects in Ayemenem are not promising, and therefore into a hasty marriage with a Bengali young man. It was a chance meet at a wedding ceremony, which culminates into marriage. The man was an assistant manager with a tea company in Assam. Ironically her dreams of happiness smash down in the earliest days as the husband proves to be a vain and fickle-minded fellow:

She was twenty-seven that year, and in the pit of her stomach she carried the cold knowledge that for her, life had
been lived. She had had one chance. She made a mistake. She married the wrong man. (38)

The irony of her life is that instead of receiving love and care from her Asst. Manager husband, she falls prey to routine violence. The repelling man even feels no trace of shame when his English Boss, Hollick, makes an indecent deal with him. Hollick wants Ammu to sleep with him and the fellow agrees and goads Ammu to gratify the boss. Ammu’s natural declination draws his fury and she is thrashed black and blue. The routine bouts of torturous violence force Ammu to leave her husband for good. Thus, the marriage which took place without the knowledge and conventional sanctioning of relatives and friends, comes to a bleak end. With her two children, Estha and Rahel, Ammu deserts him and returns to her parental home in Ayemenem.

Her come-back brings her another misfortune. She is received in her home like an unwelcome agony. Neither of her parents nor her brother and other inmates in the house show any bit of sympathy to her and her twin kids:

With the first few months of her return to her parents’ home, Ammu quickly learned to recognize and despise the ugly face of sympathy. (43)

Ammu is fated to live a life devoid of love, honour, care and convenience. Though by law she possesses all rightful shares in her
parental property, it is Chacko who snatches even this right away from her:

Up to the time Chacko arrived, the factory had been a small but profitable enterprise. Mammachi just ran it like a large kitchen. Chacko had it registered as a partnership and informed Mammachi that she was the sleeping partner. He invested in equipment (canning machines, cauldrons, cookers) and expanded the labour force. Almost immediately, the financial slide began, but was artificially buoyed by extravagant bank loans that Chacko raised by mortgaging the family's rice-fields around the Ayemenem house. Though Ammu did as much work in the factory as Chacko, whenever he was dealing with food inspectors or sanitary Engineers; he always referred to it as my factory, my pineapples, and my pickles. Legally, this was the case because Ammu, as a daughter had no claim to the property. (57)

Chacko keeps Ammu at subjugating distance in all matters. Though he treats his divorced wife Margaret in dignified terms, his treatment for Ammu lacks all marks of decency. He prefers to see her marginalized and on the periphery of everything:

On the way back from the airport, Margaret Kochamma would sit in front with Chacko because she used to be his wife. Sophie Mol would sit between them. Ammu would move to the back. (46)

Ammu has observed this torture and male hegemony from her early childhood. Her mother, Mammachi, occupied fringe-female status in all schemes of family. Pappachi never provided
requisite space to Mammachi where she could cultivate her interests and dreams. When in Vienna, she was taking violin lessons with keen interest:

The lessons were abruptly discontinued when Mammachi’s teacher, Launsky-Tieffenthal, made the mistake of telling Pappachi that his wife was exceptionally talented and in his opinion, potentially concert class. (50)

Commenting on the situation Amarnath Prasad writes, ‘when his wife Mammachi took violin lessons her tutor told Pappachi that she was concert material immediately he stopped her violin classes. She was seventeen years younger than Pappachi and when retired, he found that his wife was still young and energetic. He could not tolerate the fact that she was popular as the owner of Paradise Pickles and Preserves. The more she became popular the more frequent were his beatings of her with a vase. He was a psychologically twisted man whose frustrations are borne in equal measure by Ammu and Mammachi."

Ammu, has been through the ordeals of expulsion on cold winter nights by the despotic Pappachi. The little Ammu was beaten by his ivory handled riding crop. This terror was so heavy that Ammu didn’t even cry. Such and like frequent outbursts of wrath and discrimination have a deep psychological impact upon Ammu:
As she grew older, Ammu learned to live with this cold, calculating cruelty. She developed a lofty sense of injustice and the mulish, reckless streak that develops in Someone Small who has been bullied all their lives by Someone Big. She did exactly nothing to avoid quarrels and confrontations. In fact, it could be argued that she sought them out, perhaps even enjoyed them. (182)

The outstanding merit in her is that during all vicissitudes and crises in her life she remains sympathetic and affectionate towards the people around her, specially her children. Arundhati Roy has cast her into the model of an affectionate mother and a rebel wife who challenges the centuries old double standards of male chauvinistic society.

Ammu is not a vehemently aggressive woman but she is an exceptional person who flouts and defies phallocentric codes of her day and displays no- accommodationist stance ever. She is born with an innate love for freedom and self-assertion. There is something unpredictable and wild about her. She is a woman with torrential impulses, which remain unfazed even after the callous social forces storm around her. She is not vengeful or violent but adamant enough to demolish tyrannous taboos which restrict her from living like a free individual. She violates the inviolable laws of her family and society:

Occasionally, when Ammu listened to songs that she loved on the radio, something stirred inside her. A liquid ache
spread under her skin, and she walked out of the world like a witch, to a better, happier place. On days like this, there was something restless and untamed about her. As though she had temporarily set aside the morality of motherhood and divorcehood. Even her walk changed from a safe mother walk to another wilder sort of walk. She wore flowers in her hair and carried magic secrets in her eyes. She spoke to no one. She spent hours on the riverbank with her little plastic transistor shaped like a tangerine. She smoked cigarettes and had midnight swims. What was it that gave Ammu this unsafe edge? This air of unpredictability? It was what she had battling inside her. An unmixable mix. The infinite tenderness of motherhood and the reckless rage of a suicide bomber. It was this that grew inside her, and eventually led her to love by night the man her children loved by day. (44)

Ammu is full of deep affection for Rahel and Estha. Her sole mission is to keep them free from the trials and turmoil of an impoverished heart and home. She is devoted to their normal upbringing so that they grow up without any psychological deformities. She is aware of their miserable state in her parental home. Nobody in the family shows serious concern for them. In a way they grow upon the cold aloofness and eccentricities of the seniors in the family. Baby Kochamma resents them openly:

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
Ayemenen house, their maternal grandmother’s house, where they really had no right to be. (45)

Even the maidservant, Kochu Maria, jilts and bursts out on them:

‘Tell your mother to take you to your father’s house’, she said. ‘There you can break as many beds as you like. These aren’t your beds. This isn’t your house.’ (83)

Their willingness to love and to be loved grows manifold whenever they come across glimpses of boundless affection like Chacko hugging, kissing and kissing his step daughter Sophie Mol. On such occasions they look:

like a pair of small bewildered frogs engrossed in each others’ company, lolloping arm in arm down a highway full of hurtling traffic. Entirely oblivious of what trucks can do to frogs. (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 (83).

She instructs them saying: ‘Promise me you will always love each other.’ (225) At all costs she wants to save them from the ways of the world.

Ammu is embittered to find that Chacko too, who should have been sensible towards them, is insensitive to their support and
need. She chides him for this lack of sensibility. Through his own
grief Chacko could very well understand what a broken marriage
occasions. He knows what his lonely sister is going through, but
his male ego and self-centred manner keep him aloof. Rahel and
Estha, as they are living away from their father do urgently need a
man to complete their family. But Chacko fails to provide them the
requisite equilibrium. To a certain extent he is considerate but deep
within he feels that they are a burden on his bohemian life. He
keeps himself insulated from them to his best extent. Whenever
there are delicate moments like his over expression of affection for
his daughter, Sophie Mol, he sinks into oblivion of them. To him
Sophie is like a prized tennis trophy whereas Rahel and Estha are
like non-human creatures on the street. In Sophie Mol’s celebrated
presence Rahel feels awkward and avoided:

Rahel looked around her and saw that she was in a play. But
she had only a small part. She was just the landscape. A
flower perhaps. Or a tree. A face in the crowd. Townspeople.
(173)

The most obvious point of discrimination is Ammu’s affair
with Velutha, the untouchable. In essence, ‘Ammu’s love for
Velutha forms the core of the novel and makes the novelist’s
preference crystal clear. The traditional society was not only
conservative but authoritarian for it laid down who should love
whom. It happened long ago and it is against this concept that the
novelist protests vehemently. The right to love a man of her choice, is a woman’s birth right and it should not be scuttled in the name of religion, caste, colour and class. It is in this sense that the novel could be read as a feminist novel or a post-colonial novel for both feminism and post-colonialism aim at destroying the old power structure.\textsuperscript{16}

Indian society is prominently caste-ridden. In such a society Ammu displays exceptional fortitude to smother the Ancestry Carved Love Laws. ‘The character of Ammu is like Shakespeare’s Cleopatra who can flirt with Antony with her infinite variety and goes to any extent for the fulfillment of love even in the war. Their love crosses the boundary of time and space but Ammu and Velutha’s love relationship crosses the boundary of caste and creed as to express their harmony and warmth in love keeping aside the anxiety of the modern society. Shakespeare’s Cleopatra is naughty, fickle in flirting with Antony but Roy’s Ammu is simple, sober and faithful in establishing love affairs with Velutha. As a tragedy of love, the characters of Ammu and Cleopatra bear resemblance in the sense that their love is altogether sincere and irresistible.\textsuperscript{17} The forbidden relation between the upper caste Ammu and the low caste Velutha is unconventional in Indian psychescapex:

The laws that lay down who should be loved and how and how much. (33)
The way Ammu indulges with Velutha reveals her protesting nature and offbeat emotional build. She is quite impulsive in a world where she fails to find any shoulder to lean on. She relies more on her instincts than anything else. She instinctively realises that Velutha alone is a suitable person who could bestow on her kids the much longed for care, concern and love. Mrs. Lakshmi Sistla rightly comments, ‘Velutha is the most sensitive among all the men in the novel. He is sensitive to Ammu’s needs and the children’s needs. He is in all ways a surrogate father for them. He tries his best to help them at all times. He grew up gifting small things he made to Ammu and a bond developed between them. He knows that Ammu and the children need nothing but a little sympathy and kindness and provides it in full measure.” Ammu is superbly glad to notice the unbounded joy of her kids in his company:

She was surprised at the extent of her daughter’s physical ease with him. Surprised that her child seemed to have a sub world that excluded her entirely. A tactile world of smiles and laughter that she, her mother, had no part in. (176)

Besides seeking psychological reliance for Rahel and Estha, Ammu is drawn to Velutha for her biological reasons also. In Indian Society, a single woman, a divorcée, and a widow are supposed to live like celebrities. Such a woman has no right to happiness. She must spend a static life while waiting for death.
Ammu’s crime is twofold — a marriage outside her community, and a divorce too. She is ostracized by her society and family. Everybody tries to make her conscious of the seriousness of her crime of living away from her husband. But when Ammu gets estranged from her husband she is full of youth and vivacity:

She had a delicate, chiseled face, black eyebrows angled like a soaring seagull’s wings, a small straight nose and luminous nut brown skin. (45)

She is insistent on her bodily needs. The constant care of her kids and alienation from a virile man inflames in her an un-extinguished desire to satiate it. She often scrutinizes herself narcissistically and feels that she has every right to enjoy her body:

Ammu grew tired of their proprietary handling of her. She wanted her body back. It was hers. She shrugged her children off the way a bitch shrugs off her pups when she’s had enough of them... Ammu undressed and put a red toothbrush under a breast to see if it would stay. It didn’t. Where she touched herself her flesh was taut and smooth. Under her hands her nipples wrinkled and hardened like dark nuts, pulling at the soft skin on her breasts. The thin line of down from her belly bottom lead over the gentle curve of the base of her belly, to her dark triangle. Like an arrow directing a lost traveller. An inexperienced lover. (222)

Each time Ammu observes herself she realises that she is a sexually alive woman. Dr. Sushil Kumar Das observes, ‘Ammu, the pickle factory owner’s daughter, a member of a high caste, a
“touchable” cannot suppress her biological needs named sexual appetite. Though she is a widow, she cannot go without someone for satisfying her sexual requirement. She is bound to submit to the natural urge for sex, and stealthily meets sexual satisfaction by Velutha, a member of “the untouchable” community. Through this mainstream development Ms. Roy has demonstrated the universal fact of human biology that there are no taboos in the question of sex. Social or religious segregation of society does not work in the world of sex.  

Through Ammu and Velutha Arundhati Roy has emphasized the need of sexual outspokenness between a man and a woman. Through Ammu, she wants to illustrate that a woman must not remain impersonated within the man-defined sexual norms. Even though a sexual forthright woman is labeled as a slut, and is blamed of animality, Ammu transcends such fears and dallies secretly with the man of her choice, Velutha. She refuses to be a harmless dumb animal and gets inimical of all socio-moral restraints. Most of her meetings are programmed in and around the river Meenachal, and the History House where:

the rooms themselves were recessed, buried in shadow. The tiled roof swept down like the sides of an immense, upside down boat. Rotting beams supported on once-white pillars had buckled at the centre, leaving a yawning, gaping hole. A History hole. A History shaped hole in the Universe through
which, at twilight, dense clouds of silent bats billowed like factory smoke and drifted into the night. (307).

In a sense History House symbolizes the sinister lastingness of evil forces, which lend little room for the secret longings of, especially, the romantic ones. The House in the novel casts its malevolent curse on Ammu, Velutha, on the kids and other members of the family. ‘It is the place where the characters, particularly Ammu and Velutha defy the long established codes of history. It is the place where Estha takes shelter when the cold drinks man comes to Ayemenem. Previously Estha was sexually abused by him in the Abhilash Talkies. Rahel and Estha take refuge in this very verandah after being repulsed by Ammu and also after the tragedy of Sophie Mol’s death. Whenever Velutha gets tyranny and injustice and insult sometimes by society and sometimes by Marxism, he finds solace in this house. He, in the night, comes to sleep here after his humiliation by Mammachi. The nightly rendezvous of Velutha with Ammu are spent in the verandah of this house. The police arrests Velutha here.’

The History House has one more dimension of historical past. It is the remnant of the Imperial rule in India, and a sign of the capitalist take-over of the colonial property. The area where the History House is situated has been termed as the Heart of
Darkness. Roy has passed a scathing indictment of capitalism and politics through it. It is an emblem of the Imperialist's brutality.

Where could have Ammu found a better place to challenge the brutal order of the day? By making love to Velutha within its crumpled walls Ammu dismantles the rough and rotten standard imposed upon the weak and the helpless in the society. It is this place, which sneaks off sadness from Ammu's life. Ammu has lost so much in life that she leaves all regards for future. She has no future. She intends to squeeze the best out of her present. She has no tomorrows only todays. This, here and now approach, makes her an unpredictable person:

It wasn't what lay at the end of her road that frightened Ammu as much as the nature of the road itself. No milestones marked its progress. No trees grew along it. No dappled shadows shaded it. No mists rolled over it. (224)

Thus the History House illustrates all the aspects of human history, biology, transgression, brutality, intimacy and deep love.

For thirteen days Ammu visits Velutha, her lover, unmindful of the inclement weather and the stringent laws of society. The novelist has unraveled their physical relation in a very sensuous manner in the following lines:

She went to him and laid the length of her body against his. He just stood there. He did not touch her. He was shivering.
Partly with cold. Partly with terror. Partly with aching desire. Despite his fear his body was prepared to take the bait. It wanted her urgently. His wetness wet her. She put her arms around him… she unbuttoned her shirt. They stood there. Skin to skin. Her brownness against his blackness. Her softness against his hardness. Her nut-brown breasts (that wouldn’t support a toothbrush) against his smooth ebony chest. (334-35)

Ammua and Velutha cross all forbidden territories and their love making destroys all socially prescribed love laws laid down thousands of years ago. They unsettle established tradition not in the family alone but in politics and administration as well. It is due to this multi-dimensional unsettlement that all these forces conjoin to seek revenge on them and shatter their lives.

The happy moments of their love-making fail to last long. One day Velutha’s father, Vellya Pappen finds them together in a boat. Their intimacy flabbergasts him and in this heady state he breaks the news to Mammachi. He is split between Loyalty and Love. Aghast, he tells Mammachi what he had seen:

The story of the little boat that crossed the river night after night, and who was in it. The story of a man and woman standing together in the moonlight skin to skin. (255)

The information inflames and enrages Mammachi. She loses her temper and self-control. Mammachi’s disgust, shock and psychology are revealed in the following lines:
Mammachi’s rage at the old one-eyed Paravan standing in the rain, drunk, dribbling and covered in mud was redirected into a cold contempt for her daughter and what she had done. She thought of her naked, coupling in the mud with a man who was nothing but a filthy coolie. She imagined it in vivid detail: A Paravan’s coarse black hand on her daughter’s breast. His mouth on hers. His black hips jerking between her parted legs. The sound of their breathing. His particular Paravan smell. Like animals, Mammachi thought and nearly vomited. Like a dog with a bitch on heat. Her tolerance of ‘Men’s Needs’ as far as her son was concerned, became the fuel for her unmanageable fury at her daughter. She had defiled generations of breeding (The Little Blessed One, blessed personally by the Partriarch of Antioch, an Imperial Entomologist, a Rhodes Scholar from Oxford) and brought the family to its knees. For generations to come, for ever now, people would point at them at weddings and funerals. At baptisms and birthday parties. They’d nudge and whisper. (258)

She realizes her mistake of having been liberal to her son, Chacko, in his sexual indulgences and having been stiff to Ammu all the while. Now it is her turn to put an end to all this. Kochu Maria overhears Vellya Paapen unfolding the dark secret to Mammachi, and she pours it into baby Kochamma’s ears. Henceforward Kochamma acts as the chief conspirator and schemer. She acts like a self-serving reformer of tradition and customs. Her revulsion for Velutha, the Paravan communist and Ammu, a rebel, finds vent in her cruel plotting against them. Incidentally Sophie Mol gets drowned in Meenachal on this same pathetic day when Velutha is
arrested unawares in The History House. The History House becomes a mute spectator of one more tragic event. Velutha is caught while he is taking shelter from the world which is against him and is quite unmindful of anyone’s presence in and around the house. Baby Kochamma falsely fabricates Velutha for kidnapping Rahel and Estha, and drowning Sophie Mol, and reports the matter to police. She even accuses him of being a naxalite.

For the elite class, the moneyed class and the powerful around Ayemenem Velutha is “not ... A man” because of his untouchability and his desire for acceptance in a Touchables’ world. The legitimate representatives of tradition namely the police, the Marxists and the family connive at killing Velutha, shattering Ammu for life and ruining the delicate lives of Estha and Rahel. They consider it their historical and social privilege to punish Velutha and show him his place. For them Velutha is an eradicable being, who has dared to share intimacy with an upper-class touchable woman. Even Comrade Pillai, the Marxist and reformer, does not extend any support to Velutha, though he knows that the charges leveled against him are ruthlessly calculated and he is a thoroughly honest and innocent man. Baby Kochamma, the prime tormenter, does not spare any of the two. In the name of protecting the honour of the family, she even threatens the seven year old Estha that if he did not blame Velutha of killing Sophie Mol their
beloved mother would go to jail. The stakes are heavy and ‘Estha, the practical’, saves Ammu. He identifies Velutha as the abductor and thus ‘loved a man to death.’

It is only the next morning that Ammu could get the facts out of the two kids. But by then Velutha has sacrificed his life. He has loved and wished for the unthinkable at the cost of his tortured life. Ammu is stunned to hear the unheard from her kids. She makes one last attempt to save Velutha and she immediately rushes to the police station to plead his innocence to secure him from their claws. Even after her love affair ends tragically, she has courage enough to face the brunt of everybody’s ire. Once more she crushes all the social barriers and taboos for Velutha’s sake.

Ammu is banished from the Ayemenem house, Rahel sent to a convent, and Estha returned to his Baba. Ammu is forced to work in dingy hotels as a receptionist. Her asthama renders her incapable of working without leave. The distraught Ammu harbours only one desire in her saddened heart – affording a small house and living together with her kids. But her dream remains a dream as she can never make ends meet. She is impoverished in every way. Eventually Ammu dies a slow sure death alone and grieving with no one by her side.
Thus, through the character of Ammu, the novelist has denounced the hypocritical code of society which discriminates women. It is not the men alone who are responsible for her doom but the women in her family too play wicked against her. All through her life Ammu endures sufferings with fortitude. She proves herself to be a woman of character who fights against her fate. Her painful suffering and end remind us of great tragic heroes like Hamlet, Othello and Lear. Throughout her trials and tribulations she remains unfazed and undeterred. She is not ready to bow down before fate. She could walk out of her marriage because of this noble virtue in her. Even after society and family conspire against her, she does not get bogged down, and still looks forward to uniting with her deserted children.

Ammu’s affair with Velutha unfolds many a dark and hidden facets of Indian Society. Though supposed to be the ancient most civilization, certain maladies still pervade in India. Sex is the biggest taboo, caste-factor is a retrogressive hurdle, and extramarital relations are adulterous crime. Loving Velutha, Ammu shatters all these intact codes. The touchable-untouchable caste system is as serious in the novel as is the biology of sex. Ayemenem house, despite sheltering Christians, is rigid like an average Hindu household where discrimination of women and low caste people is rampant. As Dr. Sushil Kumar Das points out, ‘The
novelist demonstrates that no social, moral, economic or cultural barrier or conventions can stand on the way of sex that operates as an omnipotent force in human universe. Sex dominates over everything in human world. Men and women are just its passive victims. That is why the "sandpaper" palms of Velutha that squeezed Ammu’s cream-soft breasts were the right complement. Without the squash of which she would go unfed and unsatisfied both biologically and spiritually. Just the same case has been illustrated through the thwarted marriage between Ammu and Baba. Baba married Ammu not really out of love, but out of biological needs that he contented by begetting Rahel and Estha. We see that they are the two "Small Things" in the universe created in the novel and Baba is the virtual "God of Small Things" who appears in the title of the novel as well as the chapter of the book.¹¹

It is evident from Das’ remark that Baba (Ammu’s husband and biological father of Rahel and Estha) occupies a virtual presence in their lives, whereas Velutha who restores to them the smallest pleasures of life, and fulfils their biggest need of love and care, is the real God of Small Things. Separated from each other though, they are, there is something inexpressively mysterious between them:
When he (Velutha) saw the children, something clenched inside him and he couldn’t understand it. He saw them every-day. He loved them without knowing it. (212)

But his subsequent brutal death in custody leaves one more everlasting scar on their memory, rendering them unconnected, alone, and alienated from all humdrum life. Arundhati Roy has been sociologically very sensitive while recording even the slightest stirs in their life. Through this Ammu-Velutha bond the novelist presents confrontation and maladjustment between the God of Big things – Pappachi, Baby Kochamma, Mammachi, Chacko Comrade Pillai, and inspector Mathew and the God of Small Things – Velutha, Ammu, Rahel and Estha. Though their tale is teeming with tragedy, it is the story, which decidedly doesn’t portray them defeated. The way Ammu and Velutha forsake the big things, and indulge in the small things, is illustrative of their victory.

The novel graphically portrays how Velutha is helpless to resolve his tragic situation. He is an outcast and would never be able to live peacefully with the “touchable” communities because of the blot of untouchability attached to it. He excels in various fields like carpentry and even machine repairs but he is also “The God of Loss”, “The God of Small Things”. ‘What interests the author is not communism or its philosophy, but those people or organizations that profess to follow it and in reality everything that
contradicts its tenets. Comrade K.N.M. Pillai is the local leader, a trade unionist who can organize workers for increase in wages without much difficulty and who enjoys seeing himself worshipped by the poor as their messiah. However, he has been portrayed as a very uncouth common person like any other person in the locality – victim of all those ordinary temptations, greed, lust and deficiencies that normally goad an ordinary man to commit errors in life.  

Velutha’s extinction however leaves certain questions unanswered. In Indian society the upper caste people are supposed to be the upholders of virtue, honesty, lawfulness and truth while the down-trodden, low caste and untouchables are thought to be highly immoral, indecent and parasites who sustain on immorality of all sorts. In the novel it is observed that the sincere and honest Velutha, despite his tragic fall, is a pinnacle of virtue and far more superior to the touchables.

Thomas Mathew, the monster-Inspector, quite comfortable in inhuman dealings with the prisoners, knows how to collect the dues from those who break the laws. He calls Ammu a ‘vesya’ and Estha and Rahel her ‘illegitimate children’:

‘if I were you’, he said, ‘I’d go home quietly.’ Then he tapped her breasts with his baton. Gently. Tap, tap. As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket. (8)
Mathew’s insensate dealing with Ammu is one more case in point, how women in India are ill-treated whenever they approach the concerned authorities for seeking rightful dues and justice. It is shameful on Mathew’s part when he calls Ammu a ‘Vesya.’ He crosses all limits of decency when he taps her breasts. His discriminating attitude illustrates women’s commodity status. The whole episode is elaborated by Dr. S. Prasanna Sree, ‘Baby Kochamma presents innocent Estha as the eyewitness who knowingly stamps the veracity of Baby Kochamma’s version of police report. When Ammu visits the police station, the police inspector misbehaves with her. Finally Velutha is beaten blue and black, which leads to his death. Thus, life of a Paravan, the untouchable Velutha, who is guilty of loving or accepting the love of Ammu, comes to an end. Ammu, shattered both physically and psychologically becomes a victim of patriarchal domination, and the twins are separated and Ammu leaves to the city to earn her livelihood. In a fit of desperation she commits suicide in the lodge at the age of thirty one.\(^\text{13}\)

Baby Kochamma is shrewdly eager to see that Ammu is severely punished for this effrontery. She does not want to be exposed as she has colluded with the inspector in bringing forth Velutha’s death. She presumes that Ammu would never ever bare her relation with Velutha publicly.
Ammu’s mother, Mammachi, is another victim of sex discrimination. Her husband, Pappachi is stubborn and malevolent in every matter related to Mammachi. Nirmala C. Prakash rightly remarks, ‘In Anuradhati Roy’s fictional world man and woman remain only islands and fail to shape up as continents because their relationship lacks mutual love, understanding and adjustment. Pappachi-Mammachi relationship is ridden with jealousy, violence and hatred. Neither the external appearance of Mammachi nor her talent as a successful business woman succeed in ensnaring Pappachi. On the contrary, her flourishing business and growing popularity intensity his jealousy and desire for vengeance. The edifice of their marriage survives but its spirit crumbles totally when Pappachi, warned against beating, withdraws all communication with his wife.’

The character of Mammachi demonstrates the traditional family order wherein male dominance puts heavy hurdles against women and keeps them haunted and tormented for no obvious reasons. Though Mammachi is subject to suppressing patriarchal sinisterhood, she emerges as a successful mother. Arundhati Roy has instilled into her person remarkable strength, and resoluteness. It is Mammachi who has transformed the less honoured art of cooking into a flourishing business. But Pappachi 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 every-night he beat her with a brass flower vase.

(47)

Her economic independence becomes an eyesore for her husband. Yet Mammachi manages the business with unerring enthusiasm. In Ayemenem house Mammachi is the first woman to trample down the shackles of male chauvinism. It is observed from her every slight response and gesture that Pappachi stands inferior in her comparison, be it professional skills, family ethics, or moral uprightness. She has not received any business education, but, the praiseworthy aspect of her personality is that by applying her common sense, demeanour and fastidiousness, she earns honour and that too without coming in friction with the phallocentric constrictions. Mammachi redeems her womanhood and grace and never disputes the conventional position of Pappachi as the family head. She bears his choleric attitude mutely. It is only Chacko who puts an end to her nightly ordeal of being thrashed by Pappachi. ‘Chacko puts an end to Pappachi’s beating Mammachi when he comes home for holidays. He had grown up and was strong. Pappachi brought out his favourite rocking chair and smashed it to pieces to vent out his frustration. He was jealous of his wife and the attention she was getting with her pickle factory and would not
help her though she was almost blind. His jealousy of her comparative youthfulness adds to his insecurity.

Mammachi is a silent sufferer in so various ways, yet she is the heralder of female autonomy in the household. The work she excels in is supposedly a man’s work. Her success in it is a proof of her professional integrity and domestic equipoise. What is painful in her case is that even after performing so heroically she remains a person who receives no due reward and honour. Mammachi is destined to live like a mute spectator whose hard earned industry is ruined by her own son whom she thought to be:

One of the cleverest man in India and made of Prime Ministerial material. (55)

What is disappointing in Mammachi’s person is the feature that though she is quite liberal for Chacko, she does little to uplift dismayed Ammu’s sagging spirits. Like a typical Indian mother she is fond of every whim and hiccup of her son. Even in his routine exploitation of female factory workers, she assists him like an experienced escort. His flirting with women is accepted by her without grudge and reproach. ‘To facilitate the secret entry of the factory women into Chacko’s room, she gets a separate entrance to it built. She even goes to the extent of bribing Chacko’s Paravan (low caste) women. Conversely the outspoken, recalcitrant Ammu’s clandestine satisfaction of her women’s needs with the
Paravan Velutha throws the same Mammachi into a frenzy. As her worked up imagination pictures Ammu in the act of sex with Velutha, her mounting revulsion reaches the flashpoint. Her casteism combined with her family pride, her animosity against Ammu combined with her double standard reduce the transgressors to a pair of animals ... The irony is that a mother in love with her son and jealous of his wife expects her divorced daughter in her late twenties to be a sexless angel ... Mammachi’s deification of the malleable Chacko and her destruction of the intractable Ammu go far towards universalizing the novel’s overall theme.16

Though Chacko is a Rhodes Scholar, he possesses none of the refinements and scholarly attributes. He himself is a divorcee like Ammu but being a man he is privileged to live life on his own terms. Mammachi favours him more after he prevented Pappachi from beating her. As for him, he is quite uncouth towards her, and occasionally misbehaves with her in presence of others. At times, it seems as if he has inherited the cruelty and rudeness of his father.

Basically a housewife, Mammachi possesses an inborn instinct for sensing the latent talent in persons. She is the first to notice and appreciate Velutha’s skill:

Velutha was eleven then, about three years younger than Ammu. He was like a little magician. He could make intricate toys – tiny windmills, rattles, minute jewel boxes
out of dried palm reeds; he could carve perfect boats out of tapioca stems and figurines on cashew nuts. He would bring them for Ammu, holding them out of his palm (as he had been taught) so she wouldn’t have to touch him to take them. Though he was younger than she was, he called her Ammukutty – Little Ammu. Mammachi persuaded Vellya Paapen to send him to the Untouchables’ School that her father-in-law, Puniyan Kunju, had founded (75).

It is because of Mammachi’s humane feelings for him that Velutha enjoys touchable privileges in the house.

Mammachi is an emboldened woman in many a sense. Though Chacko, sole heir and self-claimed proprietor of Paradise Pickles, takes command of everything, it is she who settles complicated situations related to him and the factory. This tact and practical wisdom of Mammachi tinges her character with a sure feminist hue. She is certainly an unsettler and a crusader for the oppressed and discriminated women in the dictatorial familial set-up. She is a believable character. The endurance with which she earns an identity for herself in the convention coded family is praiseworthy. It is the egoistic, dictatorial and abrasive family head, Pappachi, and then the feudal and libidinous Chacko, who confer no respect on her. This neglect, however, doesn’t deter her from achieving her higher ends as a mother, as a wife, and as a business woman. Whenever it is essential, she transgresses the shackles of authoritarian males and shows her mettle. Even after
Pappachi's death she retains her moral uprightness and enacts her
time honoured role of the woman in the house surviving all odds
and sustaining all glories.

Like Mammachi and Ammu, Rahel too suffers
discrimination variously. She is the twin sister of Estha. From early
childhood she has grown up with a sense of isolation, suffocation
and suppression in a highly conservative framework. There are
moments when it becomes evident that she is sustaining on
sufferance and pity, contempt and humiliation. It is on her that the
tragic pitfall of Ammu and Velutha engraves its far-reaching
impact. She has been witness to a number of heart wrenching
realities like the pangs of her mother, the hostile cold attitude of
Baba and the Ayemenem indwellers – Mammachi, Baby
Kochamma, Chacko and Kochu Maria. It is such many
unbecoming impressions on her psyche that transform her into a
rebel in her own way.

Rahel has always been a delicate person. From the day Baba
deserted them she has been vulnerable to a number of untoward
impressions. She has a constant craving in her heart to love and be
loved. It seems as if she searches for some father figure in persons
and fails to meet an apt substitute. There is a writhing chaos inside
her, always. Ammu and Velutha do their best to meet the demands
of Rahel and Estha but their love fails to drench the vacuousness within them:

Ammu loved her children (of course) but their wide-eyed vulnerability, and their willingness to love people who did not really love them, exasperated her and sometimes made her want to hurt them – just as an education, a protection.

It was as though the window through which their father disappeared had been kept open for anyone to walk in and be welcomed. (43)

Moreover, the surroundings which are available to Rahel fill her with a revolt against her subject position. She can’t adjust herself to live like others on smooth terms with the things destiny has stored for her. In S.C. Hajela’s opinion: ‘Rahel revolts against her subalternness of being. The term, subaltern denotes the people who are subordinate in terms of caste, class, age, gender etc. Subalternity is synonymous with the subject position. It is psychological as well as physical. Deprivation, alienation, subjugation, neglect etc. mark the life of a subaltern. It is against this kind of lack and depravity, suppression and oppression that such a person registers protest and rebellion.’ Hajela postulates: ‘Rahel and Estha are the Subalterns in terms of age. They have been assigned subject positions by those social forces who deny them, the love and care of their childhood … Both Rahel and Estha remain fearful of losing their mother’s love that is the only thing in
their lives. When Sophie Mol is drowned, Estha is thought to be responsible, Margaret Kochamma seeks Estha out and slaps him three or four times, for which she later apologized in a letter to Ammu. When a decision is taken to return him to his father, much prompted by Baby Kochamma, he accepts it silently. Perhaps they are the best representatives of Subalterns of Age.¹⁷

Dr. Ruby Malhotra perceives, 'Rahel is a child of a broken home and a daughter of a divorcée-mother absolutely neglected by the Ayemenem house. She is devoid of love and affection that a child is supposed to get during her childhood. She is, therefore, seen hunted by all those unhaunted desires. Rahel was hardly eleven years old when her loving mother Ammu died. As a child she had seen almost all those things of the grown up people, which a child is not supposed to see e.g. the sufferings of her mother, the insult and abuse that were inflicted on her, her betrayal of Velutha in the police station. After the death of Ammu, Rahel had lost the last moorings and so she began to drift from school to school. She spent her holidays at home but she was ignored by her grandmother and her maternal uncle Chacko.'¹⁸

Rehel’s rebellion is evident right from her school days where she resents the norms of the school in an unpredictable manner. Her classmates repeatedly complain about her behaviour. She is accused of hiding behind doors and colliding deliberately with her
seniors. The principal canes her again and again for this oddity of manner. These minor and major aberrations on different fronts make her even more inquisitive and fill her person with careless abandon. She starts taking up everything casually and wants to enquire ‘into life and how it ought to be lived.’ (17) Prof. R. S. Sharma explains, ‘First of all, she subverts the value system of society by elevating what is considered low and detestable. She decorates a knob of dung with flowers. Her colliding against the other girls in the convent to see whether breasts hurt is an expression of rebellion against the suppression of sexuality in conventional Christian education. Thirdly, the burning of the false hair bun of her Housemistress is a protest against vanity and artificiality in human relation.’

After her expulsion from the Nazareth Convent Rahel faces much more troubles including neglect and segregation:

She spent eight years in college without finishing the five-year undergraduate course and taking her degree ... The other students, particularly the boys, were intimidated by Rahel’s waywardness and almost fierce lack of ambition. They left her alone. She was never invited to their nice homes or noisy parties. Even her professors were a little wary of her – her bizarre impractical building plans, presented on cheap brown paper, her indifference to their passionate critiques. (18)
It is mainly through Rahel’s eyes that the narrative unfolds dimensions of passions, dispossessions, possessions, traumas, hopes and despair of Ayemenem house. In Rahel’s memory the past and present swing forward and backward constantly. Psychologically she is hardly ever at rest. Like Ammu her personal life is shattered by her desertion of her husband, Larry McCaslin.

In Rahel’s case there is a little difference. Unlike Ammu who was drawn to Baba, it was Larry who felt fascinated for Rahel. She accepts his proposal without a second thought. However she fails to be on comfortable terms with him. This discomfort creeps into her due to her tidal past and unsettled present. Having been a traumatic child, she cannot respond to situations the way she is expected to. It is really surprising to see her responding awkwardly even during the moments of amour with her husband. Roy has very sensitively provided an analysis of haunted Rahel’s psyche as follows:

He held her as though she was a gift. Given to him in love. Something still and small. Unbearably precious.

But when they made love he was offended by her eyes. They behaved as though they belonged to someone else. Someone watching. Looking out of the window at the sea. At a boat in the river. Or a passer-by in the mist in a hat.
He was exasperated because he didn’t know what that look meant. He put it somewhere between indifference and despair. (19)

There is always an onrush of reminiscences which keep Rahel brooding over certain unsolved equations of existence. She often wonders why there is so much cruelty, deprivation and betrayal in the world in which she has grown up. It is not just Ayemenem, New York too has very little to offer to her. Here she feels more self-alienated than at home. New York seems to her like a deranged womb. She can’t herself decipher her reflexes sometimes:

‘There’s a nipple in the air’, Larry McCaslin said to Rahel, and laid his palm gently against the suggestion of protest from a chilly nipple through her cotton T-shirt. He wondered why she didn’t smile. She wondered why it was that when she thought of home, it was always in the colours of the dark, oiled wood of boats, and the empty cores of the tongues of flame that flickered in brass lamps. (73)

Till her return after twenty three years and repose in Estha’s arms she had never ever found settlement, peace and love in her life. The novelist has given a highly suggestive picture of solace and belongingness she finds in the arms of Estha. Being ‘Dizygotic’ twins, Rahel and Estha have shared a secret intimacy with each other since birth:
Estha and Rahel thought of themselves together as Me and separately, individually, as We or Us. As though they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities. (2)

It is quite impulsively that after her years long return from abroad she is drawn to him. She feels no guilt, remorse or shame in sexual unification with him. The natural impulse and the inseparably shared past of Rahel and Estha save this indulgence from the stigma of sin. It is purely an innocent act. In Dr. Amaranth Prasad’s view it is an outcome of trauma psychology: ‘The whole novel seems to revolve round two types of psychology that makes Ammu the breaker of the love laws. And it is trauma psychology that makes Rahel a girl of taciturnity, who always wants to lead a life far from the din and bustle of crowded city. It is this psychology that engraves a permanent imprint in the innocent mind of Rahel who, later on, develops an incestuous relation.’

Though socially they indulge in an unsanctioned incestuous affair, the novelist remains considerate enough to present them as eternal lovers:

She moves her mouth.
Their beautiful mother’s mouth.
Estha, sitting very straight, waiting to be arrested, takes his fingers to it. To touch the words it makes. To keep the whisper. Her fingers follow the shape of it. The touch of teeth. His hand is held and kissed.”
Pressed against the coldness of a cheek, wet with shattered
rain.
Then she sat up and put her arms around him. Drew him
down beside her.
They lay like that for a long time. Awake in the dark.
Quietness and Emptiness. (327)

We can fathom the tragedy of Baby Kochamma within a
social, political and religious context. She is Ammu’s unmarried
aunt who is the only one in the family who survives the onslaught
of scandals and tragedies and continues to reside in the Ayenenem
house. After Estha and Rahel are grown up adults and return to
Ayenenem Baby Kochamma is the only relative left behind. She
has grown old and weak but she has now developed a materialistic
interest in life. She poses to be very decent and modest but
inwardly she is rotten as ever. She still detests the twins and
repents informing Rahel about Estha being re-returned. Rahel
notices that she has started wearing make-up too:

Baby Kochamma had lived her life backwards, as a young
woman she had renounced the material world, and now, as
an old one she seemed to embrace it. She hugged it and it
hugged her back. (22)

She dyes her hair and wears all the jewellery left behind by
Rahel’s grandmother. She is not ready to accept old age willingly.
It is as if the make-up and hairdo would bestow her with her youth.
Young Baby Kochamma had fallen in love with Father Mulligan,
an Irish monk who didn't himself make any obvious efforts to provoke her feelings nor did he try to stop her. She tried ways and means of winning his attention:

'At first Baby Kochamma tried to seduce Father Mulligan with weekly exhibitions of staged charity. Every Thursday morning, just when father Mulligan was due to arrive, Baby Kochamma force-bathed a poor village child at a well with hard red soap that hurt its protruding ribs.' (23)

The young Father Mulligan too couldn't put restrain on his passions for Baby Kochamma. But the overriding feelings within the two hearts near the Ayenemen public well had to subside after every such Thursday meeting was over. After a year Baby Kochamma was distraught when Father Mulligan returned to Madras. The heart broken Baby Kochamma now faced social dissemination in Ayenemen where no respectable suitor would condescend to marry her:

'Reverend Ipe realized that his daughter had by now developed a 'reputation' and was unlikely to find a husband. He decided that since she couldn’t have a husband there was no harm in her having an education. So he made arrangements for her to attend a course of study at the University of Rochester is America. (26)

Thus we see that Baby Kochamma had lost on all fronts. Her father was forced to again oblige her and grant her the wish to study only because she was quite infamous. Nobody hoped of seeing her
respectfully married. Society would not accept the escapades of the Reverend’s daughter easily. Her immaterialized love left her bitter with life rendering her stiff and brutal. She had accepted her fate and was under the delusion that she had made the right choices in life. She lived under the smug complacency of being chaste and saintly. On returning from Rochester she concentrated wholeheartedly on her ornamental gardening but with thorns is her heart. Baby Kochamma went to extremity with every interest of hers, be it gardening creaming her feet, malicious attitude towards the kids or watching satellite TV later. But even after years her love for Father Mulligan remains steadfast and she expresses it covertly by writing ‘I love you’ innumerably in her diary.

Baby Kochamma’s selfishness and cynicism in life was the result of a deep rooted fear:

Baby Kochamma’s fear lay rolled up on the car floor like a damp, clammy cheroot. This was just the beginning of it. The fear that over the years would grow to consume her. That would make her lock her doors and windows. That would give her two hair lines and both her mouths. Hers, too, was an ancient age old fear. The fear of being dispossessed. (70)

The forces of religion and tradition were operative against her. She considered herself condemned by an immaterialized love. She was herself victimized by the conventions of respectability and social
taboos. She suffers from these psychological disturbances and the fear of being isolated from her family. Desolation terrifies her and so according to her perception of right and wrong she insists on an obdurate behaviour.

She pretends to be magnanimous but is self-centred to the core. She has a streak of cruelty in her and she manipulates her ideologies very easily. In her nervousness over the years she can’t trust anybody:

She put the dozen or so bottles of insulin that Rahel brought her in the cheese and butter compartment. She suspected that these days, even the innocent and the round eyed could be crockery crooks, or cream-bun cravers, on thiieving diabetics cruising Ayemenem for imported insulin.(29).

In The God of Small Things, Arundhati Roy tells many tales of injustice and oppressions being forced by women within their house and beyond it in the andro-centric and patriarchal society of India. Yet they continue their struggle for establishment of their identity and their economic and social freedom. Ammu is one who comes out from the suffocated male dominated family atmosphere... The novel in set in three cultures—Kerala, Bengali and Western and they are intervened and intermingled into the very texture of the novel. However the most part of the novel and its action takes place at Ayemenen in Kerala, which is the ancestral home of the main characters. While talking about the novel, the
author herself declares that while the Naxal sensibility questions human history ‘The God of Small Things’ probes biology.\textsuperscript{21} 

‘Arundhati Roy exposes the unenviable state of the helpless Indian women who are also often seen as objects. The lives of the women characters–Ammu, Mammachi and even Baby Kochamma–evidence incompletion, helplessness and defeat.\textsuperscript{22}

As Ng Shing Ti writes, ‘Within the family whose matriarch is Mammachi but whose head is necessarily the male heir, Chacko, Ammu, the divorced daughter, occupies a marginal position that is economically dependent on Chacko and culturally bound to conventions of decorum and subservience dictated by the society and reinforced by the older women in her family. She is conscious of, her life is often described as being “over”, having been married once before. She is one of the small things, creatures of marginality and near-invisibility, that constitutes the subject of the novel. Together with her children, Rahel and Estha, as well as the mostly absent but pivotally significant Velutha, they form the novel’s heart: socially marginalized, their personal histories constitute what Roy could call “A hole in the Universe”, that is, their narratives are largely absent from the longer narratives of history and politics, since they are mostly victims rather than enactors of the rules comporting their society. Roy writes movingly, and bitterly, of the
amoral social-historical phenomena that leaves in its wake oft-unrecorded trauma and victimhood.\textsuperscript{23}

In illustrating Pappachi’s unreserved leanings and favours for Chacko, Roy has brought out the realistic glimpse of segregating mores of the day-to-day world around where women are supposed to be the second sex and designed for mating, procreating, tending and attending the family.

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. (65)

Thus, the novel ‘The God of Small Things’ exposes the cruelty of men who discriminate their own daughters and favour their sons in every aspect of life. It also lays bear the empathetic approach towards the twin children, Rahel and Estha. In brief Roy’s The God of Small Things presents a vivid spectrum of contemporary Indian society which is still infested with gender bias, caste - class-race discrimination and male supremacy. The novelist sensitive exploration into female psyche indicates that freedom, equality and autonomy are still distant dreams in Indian society. The pathetic lives of women characters, especially of
Ammu, evidence that there is no room for passionate love and self
dignity of women in our society which treats every autonomous step of women as social and moral transgression.

The four characters namely Ammu, Rahel, Velutha and Estha are so inseparably fused that they constitute one soul of the novel. As Anja Sundberg opines, ‘Some of them are transgressors; people who resent old norms and who will not live the suppressed lives that their predecessors have done. These people such as Ammu, Rahel and Velutha, end up being those who are more hurt, shattered and lonely than anyone else. However, they reach further because they refuse to conform to patriarchy. It is unquestionably these people who represent the hope, the love and the understanding that Roy’s novel evokes. In the end they are more free, because they all broke the laws, echoing the question of who should be loved and how. And how much.’
1. References:


5. Ammu’s Life Betwixed Between Small Beliefs and Big Betrayals of Fate and Time, Some Reflections on Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things, Indian Women Writing in English Dr. S. Prasanna Sree (ed.) (New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2005) p. 151.


