Chapter 3

The Problematics of Love, Sexuality and Gender

The fact that humanity makes love foolishly and unconsciously, as it does almost everything, does not prevent love’s mysterious nature from upholding the dignity that belongs to it. (S. Piladen, La Science de L’amour, Paris: 1911) 102

Love, sexuality and gender have always been problem areas in almost every society and culture. Literary works often deal with these factors as being very crucial to the whole being of the structure of the works themselves. Every society has its own laid down norms by which it seeks to govern the laws concerning these aspects. Although there are very strict societal codes of conduct prescribed for these, it is an accepted fact that often in love, acts are carried out without much forethought and without paying heed to the consequences of such impetuous acts. We may also say that the mysteries of love are evident only to a small minority of human beings. Indeed there are very few who are able to understand the true meaning of love. Love is regarded in most societies as the elixir of life, and sexuality and gender issues are basic factors, which influence notions and practices of love between people.

Love can be a consuming, devastating, and violent passion working havoc and destruction on both the lover as well as the
beloved or it can be an ennobling experience not only for those in love but also to the people who witness the affair.

Love may be differentiated into EROS, PHILIOS and AGAPE. Eros can be defined as the love between two people wherein the spirit unites them just as much as the body. It is a love that dares to risk, and the quality of Eros is enhanced when united into philios that is friendship. Philios can be considered as the first elemental feeling of love people develop towards each other, and Agape moves into a realm of reciprocal existence and communication in which we perceive God's love for human beings -- spontaneous, altruistic love. Agape is often held as the highest order of love. All these kinds of love can be encountered in the works of Roy and Alexander.

Sexuality as defined in the *Webster's Dictionary* is the state or quality of being sexual, and is often manifested by its interest in or concern with sex. It involves being aware of the differences between male and female, and addresses anything connected with sexual gratification or reproduction or the urge for these, especially the attraction of individuals of one sex for the other.

Love and sexuality invariably bring in issues concerning gender. Society is often prone to making great discrimination on the basis of gender and thus in its wake allows double standards. Wherever love, sexuality and gender are being considered we often encounter power games being played by either both or one or the either of the lovers and / or by the people around them. These power
games then direct and control the movement and growth of love in that society.

Love and sexuality hold prominent places not only in life but also in literature. Love may and is often expressed and experienced as illusion, narcissism, infatuation, inspiration, lust, altruism, philanthropism etc. Love is eulogized as the source of all that is noble in human nature. Ontologically love springs from the knowledge of God and it is the most important gift to mankind. This love is bi-directional, headed towards God and towards his fellowmen. Such love has always had a positive influence on human psyche. But when love gets caught up in motivations and machinations, it turns awry and gives rise to drastic consequence.

Love is more ensnaring for the women than it is for the men for it is an often-noted fact that men do not fall in love, only women (and children) do. They willingly sacrifice themselves at the altar of love. In history, love, sexuality and gender have often been used as the most potent weapons for the oppression of women (children and the lower classes included). Shulamith Firestone strikes at the very core of the issue. She writes:

A book on radical feminism that did not deal with love would be a political failure. For love, perhaps even more than childbearing, is the pivot of women's oppression today. (Dialectic of Sex 26)
On a similar vein is Simone de Beauvoir's statement about love as "the curse that lies heavily upon women" (The Second Sex 669).

The narratives of Alexander and Roy are also replete with instances wherein love is the major theme and the narratives are often exercises in two histories -- one official, and the other experiential or interpretative, resulting from the writer's sensitization to the realities of everyday life. For every given politics of love, sexuality and gender, there exists a corresponding counter politics and for every narrative there is a counter narrative. We address these as literary and hegemonic histories respectively. It is intended in this chapter, to interrogate the accepted notions of love, sexuality and gender, which tend to project these aspects in rather restrictive versions. The halo that surrounds the concept of love ensnares women and those belonging to the weaker sections of society, and once they are under its grip, it crushes them and makes them lose their validity and momentum. It is an accepted fact that men occupy the position of masters in love, whereas women ought and do lose whatever little individuality is allowed them in a patriarchal situation.

It is Julia in Lord Byron's poem "Don Juan" who has said that:

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range
The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart;
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart,"
And few there are whom these cannot estrange;

Men have all these resources, we but one,

To love again, and be again undone.”

(“Don Juan”, Canto the First, CXCIV, lines 1545-1550)

Gender, as differentiated from sex, has little or nothing to do with biology. Sex is a biological given but gender is a social and cultural construct — with set parameters wherein the men and women are called upon to perform their unequal dances. According to Gerda Lerner, patriarchy:

means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power. (The Creation of Patriarchy 239)

Thus the patriarchal structure with its class and gender hierarchy is almost a universal phenomenon, cutting across all nations, religions and races.

It is well known that sex differences do not necessarily imply sexual inequality and male dominance. However in a patriarchal social set-up masculinity signals an advantageous position whereas femininity is obviously linked with subservience and inferiority. Masculinity implies strength, virility, self-assertion, dominance,
decision-making, and ownership rights. But femininity assumes weakness, passivity, docility, obedience and self-negation. Alexander and Roy in their writings seek to free love from these age-old shackles and instead, try to bring the female power into play as one seeking the liberation of women from the restrictive boundaries of traditional societal limitations as prescribed by patriarchy. The women in Roy and in Alexander often find themselves trapped in a conspiracy of male domination in the private domain of the home. The men who are expected to protect their interests fail to do so. They gang up together, well supported by the patriarchal order while the women to whom, they look for support insist on upholding the male hierarchy on which they depend for survival, preferment and social recognition.

In the Introduction to Gender and Literature Iqbal Kaur says:

Patriarchal social set-up firmly asserts men’s superiority over women and is based not on mutuality but on oppression. Although, women have played a vital role in the creation of society and have been active agents, the actors in history, yet the patriarchal thought has always tried to relegate them to the margins, ‘to obscure their history.’ (iii)

It is also interesting to note what Gerda Lerner has to say on this account in her book entitled Women and History. She says, “Women had no history — so they were told and so they believed. And because they had no history they had no future alternatives” (222).
Moving against the accepted traditions of the image of women as created by patriarchy, both Alexander and Roy through their protagonists try to create a new self-image for women, who despite the various trials and tribulations, ultimately evolve into women capable of making and taking their own decisions. The inner experiences of women have been woven into the fabric of their writings thereby rendering the hitherto invisible as visible, and the trivial as important.

Literature in its traditional role provided pleasure to the readers by depicting women as passive, docile, dependent, helpless victims at the mercy of men. The inner experiences of women were rendered invisible because these were considered to be rather insignificant and not worth considering. The roles of women were restricted by their womanhood because of which, the experiences of the muted female half of society had not been reflected by literature. In this context the questions of Gerda Lerner assume a new pertinence. She asks:

What wisdom can there be in menses? What source of knowledge in the milk-filled breasts? What food for abstraction in the daily routine of feeding and cleaning?

(Women and History 224)

We find both Alexander and Roy trying to move away from the patriarchal literary tradition in which a real woman was one who was self-effacing, submissive and one who had no mind of her own, one
who was prepared to internalize the idea of her own inferiority -- be a quiet ministering angel to all in the house without questioning gender definitions and limitations of roles assigned by patriarchy, by having strong protagonists who defy existing traditional bindings and cross over the conventional borders of unquestioned restrictions to make their own decisions and also to take the responsibility of their actions howsoever faulty they might be.

Roy’s Ammu and Rahel in *The God of Small Things* and Alexander’s Meera, Little Mother, Maitreiyi and Rosamma in *Nampally Road*, Draupadi and Sandhya in *Manhattan Music* are all women who have transgressed these societal boundaries of gender restraints and have become aware of the fact that notions of femininity that society pushes on them are just constructs that can be deconstructed by aspiring women who enjoy soaring into new heights of unlimited freedom, despite the many dangers involved in the exercise. These women have become aware of the fact that the inferior status of women is not divinely ordained, that gender is neither natural nor immutable, for it is just a creation of patriarchy which again is not a given, but a construct based on interpretations made by men in authority. And as such they can be questioned and sidetracked. Here these women in their various situations and social contexts have transformed themselves as emancipating forces and they not only liberate themselves from the shackles of patriarchal constructs but also help and encourage other women to explore their
possibilities and to redefine their potentials. They outgrow the male notion of women's proper place; creatively revolt against their exploitation, victimization and marginalization by patriarchal institutions. Thus we see them daring to question the sexual politics, the gender arrangements so conveniently placed on the already sagging shoulders of women. Prescriptive roles are constantly challenged by these women in their own ways in order to subvert oppressive and tyrannical patriarchal structures.

In *The God of Small Things*, Rahel and Estha the dizygotic twins of Ammu hold the central position and it is heartwarming to see how close they are to each other even when they are surrounded by a houseful of elderly people who either looked upon them as parasites that should be got rid of or just tolerated them as unsavoury residues from the socially disastrous and shameful marriage of their wanton daughter. This closeness between the twins, not only made them feel secure but also infused them with timelessness and a strange kind of oneness, only possible with those who have gone through adversities together, and have also managed to come out of these albeit with many bruises and sometimes with serious injuries also. The readers share a glimpse of this strange oneness unknown to the adult world when they listen to the narrator telling of how

In those early amorphous years when memory had only just begun, when life was full of Beginnings and no Ends,
and Everything was For Ever, Esthappen and Rahel thought of themselves together as Me, and separately as We or Us. As though they were a breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities. (2)

In sharp contrast to this is the harsh treatment meted out to the twins by the elders on the occasion of the drowning and consequent death of the well-loved Sophie Mol (so well loved because she was Chacko’s only daughter from an estranged marriage to an English woman). The readers understand that Sophie Mol was to a very large extent responsible for her own death for it was she who had cajoled the twins to allow her to row along with them in that tiny boat which Estha and Rahel had found, yet the whole blame was finally heaped upon the ‘good-for-nothing’ twins who were forever bringing shame and misery and untenable grief to the family. The narrator tells us that at the funeral of Sophie Mol, “though Ammu, Estha and Rahel were allowed to attend the funeral, they were made to stand separately, not with the rest of the family. Nobody would look at them” (5).

In Roy’s The God of Small Things we find a sort of dislocation, a feeling of lostness and unbelonging. The family atmosphere was full of blame and suspicion; of contempt and spite, where children were considered a burden. Ammu’s twins, Esthappen and Rahel were constantly separated from each other because of their parents’
divorce. Estha was all the time being "Returned" or "re-Returned"(20) from and to Ayemenem as a result of which

. . . no one could pinpoint with any degree of accuracy exactly when (the year, if not the month or day) he had stopped talking. Stopped talking altogether, that is. The fact is that there wasn’t an ‘exactly when’. It had been a gradual winding down and closing shop. A barely noticeable quietening. As though he had simply run out of conversation and had nothing left to say. Yet Estha’s silence was never awkward. Never intrusive. Never noisy. It wasn’t an accusing, protesting silence as much as a sort of aestivation, a dormancy, the psychological equivalent of what lungfish do to get themselves through the dry season, except that in Estha’s case the dry season looked as though it would last for ever.

Over time he had acquired the ability to blend into the background of wherever he was — into bookshelves, gardens, curtains, doorways, streets — to appear inanimate, almost invisible to the untrained eye. It usually took strangers a while to notice him even when they were in the same room with him. It took them even longer to notice that he never spoke. Some never noticed at all.

Estha occupied very little space in the world. (10 -11)
Rahel's lot was equally miserable and lonely except that all this indifference and derision just "ushered Rahel through childhood (from school to school into womanhood"(16). And the poignancy of being unwanted and of being a misfit can be shared by the readers in the following account from the text.

Rahel was first blacklisted in Nazareth Convent at the age of eleven, when she was caught outside her Housemistress's garden gate decorating a knob of fresh cow dung with small flowers. At Assembly the next morning she was made to look up *depravity* in the Oxford Dictionary and read aloud its meaning. 'The quality or condition of being depraved or corrupt,' Rahel read, with a row of stern-mouthed nuns seated behind her and a sea of sniggering schoolgirl faces in front. 'Perverted quality: Moral perversion: The innate corruption of human nature due to original sin; Both the elect and the non-elect come into the world in a state of total d. and alienation from God, and can, of themselves do nothing but sin, J. H. Blunt.'

Six months later she was expelled after repeated complaints from senior girls. She was accused (quite rightly) of hiding behind doors and deliberately colliding with her seniors. When she was questioned by the Principal about her behaviour (cajoled, caned, starved),
she eventually admitted that she had done it to find out whether breasts hurt. In that Christian institution, breasts were not acknowledged. They weren’t supposed to exist, and if they didn’t, could they hurt?

That was the first of three expulsions. The second for smoking. The third for setting fire to her Housemistress’s false hair bun which, under duress, Rahel confessed to having stolen.

In each of the schools she went to, the teachers noted that she:

(a) Was an extremely polite child.
(b) Had no friends.

It appeared to be a civil, solitary form of corruption. And for this very reason, they all agreed (savouring their teacherly disapproval, touching it with their tongues, sucking it like a sweet) – all the more serious.

It was, they whispered to each other, as though she didn’t know how to be a girl. (16 –17)

The saving grace of all this neglect was that it ultimately “resulted in an accidental release of spirit” (17), and twenty three years later when Rahel return6 to Ayemenem to take care of her twin who has become very quiet and withdrawn because of the utter loneliness he suffers during his growing years due to all the returnings and re-Returnings, the nightmares connected with the
repulsive sexual encounter with the orange-drink, lemon-drink man at the theatre, with the violent deaths of Velutha and Ammu, his mother, with the going away of Rahel his twin and with the total atmosphere of lovelessness at the Ayemenem House. Rahel too is equally lonely and now when she returns to Ayemenem, in her effort to comfort her twin she embraces him and once again the love laws get twisted. They think of each other as “strangers who had met in a chance encounter. They had known each other before Life began” (327). No one can say exactly what happened next for there was nothing in Mammachi’s book that would “separate Sex from Love. Or Needs from Feelings” (328). This is their way of sharing, not happiness but hideous grief. Once again the love laws are broken.

However, in Alexander’s Fault Lines we encounter another very different kind of atmosphere where childhood is precious and protected. To the child itself, it is an enjoyable period where freedom reigns to give wings to the imagination --where fancy soars into unknown heights of glory and the memory of those bygone days remains a sweet, nostalgic, lingering thought, a beautiful memory to which one would like to return and re-return. Meena’s recollections of her childhood infuses the readers also with a deep longing to return to this magical world and experience the transcendental joy of entering a safe and exciting place. The readers also feel that:

Under those ceilings, in the profuse gardens edged by mango and bamboo and the clusters of gulmohar and
laburnam blossoms, my childhood was free. I did what I wanted to and what I wanted to I did or so it seems now, harking back . . . In Tiruvalla I could run as fast as I wanted, eyes closed, heart thudding and no one would stop me. I felt I had no need of parents. In the large house in which Ilya lived, there were visiting relatives and cousins coming to call, servants and older aunts, multifarious visitors all bound together in the loose yet formalized functions of the family. There were crevices and gaps for me, places I could hide in and find myself again, utterly transformed in the magic of childhood, so that a bush laden with green berries or a goose flapping its wings could make me into that and I raced around crying, “Athe, athe – That, that,” “as if that I was. “Tat Tvam Asi,” it says in the Upanishads and in my childhood I realized its truth. And surely the “I am that I am” of Hebraic religions is much akin and realizes in the child of mud and blood and skin an irremediable joy, the closest we get to any possible paradise. (Fault Lines 38)

In sharp contrast to this pure joy of childhood when surrounded by love and security what we experience in Roy’s The God of Small Things is emptiness, a dull and void feeling, the pathos of a largely love-less existence. Though Estha and Rahel kept each other company and they were well cared for by their mother -- the
genial Ammu. However there was a big ‘hole shaped’ vacuum in their lives, which never could get filled up because of the fact that their parents were divorced. Ammu and the children were not at all welcome in their Ayemenem House. They were considered little better than unwelcome guests. Everybody in the Ayemenem household including Kochu Maria, the maid, made it very clear to them that they had no right to be at the Ayemenem House for that was not their home at all. Estha, being more sensitive to the environment even as a young boy of seven, realized the pathetic fact that they were little better than just uninvited visitors in their grandmother’s house. They were constantly reminded by their Uncle Chacko that they had “No locusts stand I” (57) at the Ayemenem House.

Another instance of love gone awry and misplaced is the case of Ammu whose deep desire to escape from the stifling atmosphere of her own home makes her walk into a disastrous marriage with a total and complete stranger whom she had met at her cousin’s wedding in Calcutta. Mr. Roy was also a guest and the two had met there. Though Ammu knew that she was not terribly in love with Mr. Roy, yet in her desperate eagerness to escape the sickeningly traumatic atmosphere of her own home she accepted Roy’s proposal for marriage. Too many drinks and the exuberance of youth lent him an unusually fatal charm, which made him terribly attractive to the Young Ammu. Of course “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 (39). There was no shared experience, a shared past, shared culture or shared interests between Roy and Ammu except the English language which neither could claim as his/her own, which would help them to build up their marriage. They belonged to two different cultures, spoke two different languages. One was from the north and the other from the south of India. Their marriage proved extremely disastrous. After the initial euphoria, “Ammu realized that the slightly feverish glitter in her bridegroom’s eyes had not been love, or even excitement at the prospect of carnal bliss, but approximately eight large pegs of whisky. Straight. Neat” (39). Mr. Roy, a man of easy ways and values, hated hard work and did not place any premium on his responsibility towards his wife and children. “By the time the twins were two years old their father’s drinking aggravated” (41), and he was generally in an “... alcoholic stupor. Whole days went by during which he just lay in bed and didn’t go to work. Eventually his English Manager, Mr. Hollick, summoned him to his Bungalow for a ‘serious chat’” (41). Mr. Hollick had been frank with his young assistant manager, and told him that the only option for Mr. Roy was that he should resign. But after a while Mr. Hollick slowly eased on Mr. Roy the suggestion of a second option for him since he had such a “wonderful family, beautiful children, such an attractive wife ... An extremely attractive wife” (41-42). Mr. Hollick proposed that Roy go away for a while on a holiday or to a clinic
perhaps for treatment. He could remain there for as long as it took
him to get better during which time Ammu may be sent to his
Bungalow to be “looked after” (42).

Mr. Roy thought of this arrangement as not such a bad option
and shamelessly told Ammu of this. She was terribly infuriated and
hit him hard with a heavy book. He kept on badgering her about
helping with his transfer. “This fell into a pattern. Drunken violence
followed by post-drunken badgering” (42). Ammu became disgusted
with the stale smell of alcohol that seeped through his skin. And:

When his bouts of violence began to include the children,
. . . Ammu left her husband and returned, unwelcome, to
her parents in Ayemenem. To everything that she had
fled from only a few years ago. Except that now she had
two young children. And no more dreams (42).

But “Pappachi,” her father “would not believe her story -- not
because he thought well of her husband, but simply because he
didn’t believe that an Englishman, any Englishman, would covet
another man’s wife” (42).

Regarding Ammu’s love for Rahel and Estha, the narrator
informs the readers that she “loved her children (of course), but their
wide-eyed vulnerability, and their willingness to love people who
didn’t really love them, exasperated her and sometimes made her
want to hurt them -- just as an education, a protection” (43). The
twins didn’t know whom to trust and whom not to. Who cared for
them and who did not. So it seemed “as though the window through which their father disappeared had been kept open for anyone to walk in and be welcomed” (43). Now that Ammu realized that her children had only her to look after their interests she became all the more possessive of them and felt constantly the urgency to protect them from any kind of possible danger. We are told that:

To Ammu her twins seemed like a pair of small bewildered frogs engrossed in each other’s company, lollipping arm in arm down a highway full of hurtling traffic. Entirely oblivious of what trucks can do to frogs. Ammu watched over them fiercely. Her watchfulness stretched her, made her taut and tense. She was quick to reprimand her children, but even quicker to take offence on their behalf. (43)

Rahel came up the hard way, always conscious of the fact that she was a misfit everywhere. She could never really feel at ease with most relationships because she was so confused about what she expected from or what was expected of her in such relationships. It’s interesting to see how disinterestedly Rahel entered into marriage with Larry McCaslin, an American research student. She had met Larry at the School of Architecture in Delhi. He was terribly attracted to her wild, unconventional ways, absurdly beautiful collarbones and nice athletic figure. After a brief stormy romance of sorts, “Rahel drifted into marriage like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied
chair in an airport lounge. With a sitting down sense. She returned with him to Boston” (18).

Thus we see that the emptiness, futility and waste because of love-less / un consummated / or forbidden love provide the basic texture of the fabric of people’s lives in *The God of Small Things.*

Love, almost always is narcissistic and as such it allows the woman to play at best the role of man’s echo. The relation that exists between a man and a woman in love may be described as that of the colonizer and the colonized. The halo that surrounds the concept of love ensnares women and once they are under its grip, it crushes them and makes them lose their identity. Men have always occupied the position of masters in love whereas women lose whatever little identity is allowed them in a patriarchal situation. But in both Alexander and Roy we find the women braving all odds against them in a heavily patriarchal environment to emerge free and strong to take the reins of their lives into their own hands in order to direct and control their destinies.

In Alexander’s *Manhattan Music* Sandhya wreathed out of a passive, helpless lover’s position to extricate herself from the stifling strictures of an extramarital love affair with Rashid her Egyptian lover. The relationship appeared to be doing good to her in the beginning, but later when she found herself deserted by her lover she thought that her life would cease to go on at all, but with determination and with the help and love of other women friends,
cousins and her husband, she came out of the affair badly bruised but not broken. A similar case can be seen in the case of Ammu in Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Although she had been trapped in a disgusting marriage with Mr. Roy, and though there was none to help her, neither friends nor relatives, Ammu took a brave decision to return to her paternal home from where she had actually run away to escape the tyranny of her father, just for the sake of her children.

Another aspect of the writings of Roy and Alexander that strikes the reader is that the sexual relationships often approached the metaphysical dimensions of love. Julius Evola in his book *EROS and the Mysteries of Love*, talks of metaphysics as:

> the science of that which goes beyond the physical,...
> into the trans-psychological and trans-physiological,...
> urging the verification of the possibilities of erotic experience leading to a displacement of the boundaries of the ego and to the emergence of profound modes of consciousness.(2)

In accordance with this, it can be observed that in both Alexander and Roy, love in its erotic version is often responsible for a different rhythm because of the intensity of the experience, which invests and transports or suspends the normal faculties of an individual/individuals and opens up vistas onto a different world -- an experiential world. But it is also possible that those who are subjects of such experiences almost always lack the discernment and
sensibility to comprehend anything beyond the emotions and feelings that affect them; they have no basis for self-orientation. The human experience of sexual love may also include mental, emotional, moral, and even intellectual factors that supersede the biological but nevertheless, centres in the actual physical union of two beings of the opposite sex. In Alexander’s Manhattan Music Sandhya’s love for Rashid, and in the love of Ramu for Meera in Nampally Road and also in the love between Ammu and Velutha in Roy’s The God of Small Things we come across this kind of passionate love wherein it is often noted that:

There exists a mental and physical state during which everything is annulled in us, in our thoughts, in our hearts, and in our senses. (P. Bourget, Physiologie de l’amour moderne, Paris. 1980) as quoted in Julius Evola’s Eros and the Mysteries of Love: The Metaphysics of Sex 11).

In The God of Small Things according to Ammu’s aunt Baby Kochamma, the love affair between Ammu and Velutha was just a disgraceful, never-to-have-happened, unthinkable affair, which should have been condemned as an ugly, lustful, shameful and sinful affair. But it is a well-known fact, except to perhaps Baby Kochamma and her likes that “physical love is normally an integrating part of passion love. Taken on its own, perhaps it forms
the lower limit of passion love as it always retains that intrinsic quality" (Eros and the Mysteries of Love 11).

In Alexander's Fault Lines she talks of how passion was so essential for her writing. As a youngster in her teens she used to pour out all her pains into her journals wherein she wrote how she sensed that her sexual desires which were budding at that time, though they had hardly been satisfied in the flesh -- were so essential to her poetry. Regarding queries of how they enabled her to think, pass exams, maintain some independence of thought etc., she had no answer. All she knew was that she could not live without passion. But then she was acutely aware of the fact that this passion also burnt her up. And she described this passion as "... the forked twig that held me. In dreams I was the snake struggling in that grip. The snake about to be beaten to death" (103).

In another instance she talks of another time when she experienced urgency inside her being for a man. This was while she was a postgraduate scholar in English Literature in Nottingham. She says:

I wanted a man, and I had not wanted anyone so much since the friend I had met in Khartoum when I was seventeen. The intensity of sexual passion forced me back into my bodily self, made me turn against the "reason" of the world. Though all the Romantic texts I was studying seemed to work against the sorts of
Cartesianisms that split mind from body, I could not move from those visualizations of personal space into my own ravaged history. (Fault Lines 138-139)

The writer though tormented by a sense of having transgressed a boundary, a code, an edict — something in the law as it stood — was certainly aware at the same time that what had befallen her had nothing to do with her own actions, and everything to do with her being what she was in and of herself.

Thus we see that the experience of or even the very longing for sexual passion even if it may often result in the crossing over of centuries of rigid boundary lines laid down by society did lead to greater creativity and in fact provided the writer with a profusion of new myths and metaphors for enhancing the intrinsic quality of her writings. Of course this crossing over, may and will include a lot of misery and painful struggle to both the doer as well as the rest of the concerned society.

What happened between Ammu and Velutha in The God of Small Things, or that between Sandhya and Rashid her Egyptian lover in Manhattan Music, or that between Ramu and Meera in Nampally Road, cannot be dismissed as just illicit love affairs. Sexual desire here can be perceived as a complex fact of which the physiological is only a part. Sexual excitement, which is substantially psychic, forms the primary element that under various conditions causes physical excitement, and sets in motion all the psychological
phenomena that accompany the excitement but are often absent prior to it, and this can be explained only by what is known as the "metaphysics of sexual relationships" (Julius Evola, EROS and the Mysteries of Love 11). It is not possible to get a satisfying answer either through psychological nor through physiological explanations. We may consider physical union by itself, as only the mechanism through which is conveyed a process of the higher order transcending that union and showing it to be a part of a whole. Recognition of the transcendental aspect of physical union between the sexes, (though a problematic solution) absolves the pleasure derived from a sexual union as being a coarse and carnal satisfaction depending strictly on the physiological conditioning or simply as a procreational effort.

In The God of Small Things almost all the characters get unsuspectingly ensnared or knowingly stuck into a cobwebbish trap of love. The stately looking Ayemenem House never became a "home" to any of the characters in the novel. A house needed to be lined with self-giving love and understanding if it had to be transformed into a home. The Ayemenem House never did manage to offer security and strong emotional bonding to any of its protagonists especially the more vulnerable ones like the women and children except to those who conveniently fit themselves into the existent patriarchal power structures. The protagonists lacked that sense of belonging and none found fulfillment within the four walls of the Ayemenem House.
despite its majestic grandeur and high style. None could claim that “their lives” had “a size and a shape…” (3).

When Rahel came back to Ayemenem many years later she found that:

The old house on the hill wore its steep gabled roof pulled over its ears like a low hat. The walls streaked with moss had grown soft, and bulged a little with dampness that seeped up from the ground. (1)

Yes, the House had managed to maintain its imposing outlines but “the house itself looked empty” (2). But of course Baby Kochamma was still inside the house. She was Rahel’s grand aunt. But Rahel hadn’t come to see her. “Neither niece nor baby grand aunt laboured under any illusions on that account. Rahel had come to see her brother Estha” (2), her dizygotic twin. Strangely one bond of true affection and love lay between them despite the fact that they had had to suffer long years of physical separation from each other not due to any fault of theirs, but by the strange decree of a fate or chance or divine providence too much beyond their control. However this proved that blood was thicker than water especially the blood of dizygotic twins.

Alexander’s and Roy’s writings provide ample scope for what Elaine Showalter in her essay entitled “Toward a Feminist Poetics,” resourcefully terms as ‘gynocritics.’ It is the study of woman as writer, and “women are invited to speak for themselves, even if they
continue to do so from a patriarchal culture” (Showalter 1979, 22-41). The writings of these authors do certainly move towards what Showalter calls the ‘female’ phase wherein the writings of women work increasingly towards self discovery, the exploration of an inner space of female experience. This female experience could threaten the social order as a whole by suggesting new possibilities for women’s sexuality. The women, through their struggles to wriggle out of the suffocating bondage of the patriarchal order, emerged as empowering figures defying the dominant sexual order wherein women were not expected to have a sexual life of their own. In fact they rebelled against their position wherein they were just instruments by which men could derive sexual satisfaction. This case is well exemplified by Ammu, Rahel and Margaret Kochamma in *The God of Small Things*, Little Mother, Pithulbai, Rosamma, Maitreyi and Meera in *Nampally Road*, the two grandmother figures and Meena in *Fault Lines*. Women from countries like India, which have a colonial past, suffer dual colonization. To begin with, the patriarchal tradition of male domination persisted through economic relations, where women had always been seen as objects of male gaze. In the chapter entitled “How to Reinvent Your Body in Cameroonian Women’s Writings,” Frieda Ekotto’s description of the colonization suffered by Cameroonian women can be thought of as a very close comparison of the state of women in Roy’s and Alexander’s writings. Ekotto writes:
A woman’s “traditional” identity is defined by her dowry, which value her as a commodity. Simultaneously, under capitalism, she becomes a different sort of object: commodified labour power, vulnerable to exploitation by the opportunity structures built upon wage labour. This dual struggle moves on the margins of traditional and imperialist economies.

For a Cameroonian woman, the practice of writing may be similarly enforced and structured by the way her possibilities in politics, theory, and literature are constituted for her by dominant discourses: in other words, she is told, “This is your body; this is your literature,” . . . [Thinking Bodies 1994, 149]

In The God of Small Things we are told how Rahel was denied her ‘traditional identity’, which is obviously based on the size of one’s dowry. But then it released her from being obliged to marry a man of someone else’s choice whom she may never learn to care for. Roy says:

Rahel grew up without a brief. Without anybody to arrange a marriage for her. Without anybody who would pay her a dowry and therefore without an obligatory husband looming on her horizon. (17)

In Alexander’s writings too we find an effort at reformulation and at representation of desire for liberation with the awareness that it was crucial for her to make direct intervention upon the collective
consciousness not only of women but also of that of the body politic. Therefore in very strong terms through her literary corpus she denounced the marriage of girls before the age of puberty, the tragic plight of young, unwed mothers who instead of jumping over wells jumped into them to escape the ridicule, derision and scorn of society, and she also talks against the mutilating and bloody ritual of clitoris amputation of young girls in the middle east, as a serious breach of the integrity and physical fulfillment of women. Alexander writes in *Fault Lines* thus:

The journals composed . . . in Khartoum contain within them a desperate awareness of my femaleness, a sense of shame of power drawn back that in its very intensity was a threat to the order that governed my young life.

For not only did I bear the shame from the Kerala world within me, but I set by its side the burning horror of clitoridectomy that many of my friends had described. Some . . . had escaped it. Others had suffered its brutality and were silent. In my years of growing up, from time to time I was filled with the image of what women might suffer --- whether through mutilation or through shame -- sufferings caused purely by being female. (111)

One striking feature about the novels of Alexander and Roy is that they have followed the general pattern in fiction towards sexual
confession. We find that the structure of the novels is in a way directed and controlled by the voice of the protagonists describing the events in their lives involving a stream of consciousness technique which is more and more preoccupied with talking about sex and gender constraints.

In Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, and in Alexander’s *Fault Lines*, we find that the protagonists have met the crucial determinant of their lives in the ‘formative’ encounters of childhood and adolescence. Childhood becomes a period permeated with sexual meanings, foretastes and crucial moments in the development of sexual identity. With this concentration on childhood, a kind of writing, which is peculiarly regressive in its style, has occurred. It may be considered as the written equivalent of the family album. The regressive-ness may be attributed to the fact that it arises from an ideology of how children are supposed to see the world. The central protagonists are shown making sense of the world as children make sense of their world. Children, it is believed, work out their world slowly, making enquiry after enquiry, through eaves-dropping, prying and looking into the closets of their immediate family. Children, like detectives tracing their genealogies, are quick to notice the missing links, and they have a special knack to fill up the gaps and spaces with their own wisdom. The result of all this is that children perceive their worlds as essentially eccentric for they believe that their family members are quite bizarre and unpredictably strange in their ways.
and thinking. So there is in these novels an attempt at re-creation of this child's world of eccentricities, anecdotes, and the sense of haphazard happenings. The complex family history and interrelating anecdotes presented as if passed from one generation to another, the whimsical and unconventional view of the world, are all practices aimed at creating the sense of the autobiographical which is a very feminine strategy, adopted in their writing.

In *The God of Small Things*, what revolts the reader is the terrible incident of paedophilia that takes place between the Orange drink -- Lemon drink man and the seven-year-old Estha at Abhilash Talkies, where the family had gone to see the movie *The Sound of Music*. Ever since this revolting affair, Estha becomes a changed person. His innards repulsed within him and left him affected with the nauseating and sickening memory of this shameful incident for many years of his life. Estha lived under the perpetual dread of that disgusting man walking into the Ayemenem House any day and exposing him to all the self-righteous older generation of people there.

The attraction between Larry McCaslin and Rahel was also based on the physical. Her wild hair, the tiny diamond gleaming in her nostril, her absurdly beautiful collarbones and trim athletic figure, all made Larry think of Rahel as a popular "jazz tune" (18). This affair ended in a quick marriage without either of them thinking seriously about the responsibilities and commitment that marriage entailed. But the physical attraction was so strong for some time
that it eclipsed all other considerations. Whenever Larry held his wife in his arms he loved every movement of her pulse under her skin and he "held her as though she was a gift. Given to him in love. Something still and small. Unbearably precious" (19). But Larry was terribly offended by Rahel's eyes whenever they made love. The eyes seemed to behave as though "they belonged to someone else. Someone watching"(19). Larry soon got frustrated and exasperated trying to fathom the meaning of that look in Rahel's eyes. The narrator's comment in this regard is worth noting because it not only summed up the traumatic essence of Rahel's early life which cannot be separated from the equally traumatic experiences faced by her dizygotic twin brother Esha, but also was in some way bound up with the despair of myriads of unfortunate people of Rahel's country where "various kinds of despair competed for primacy" (19). Larry of course put the look in Rahel's eyes "somewhere between indifference and despair"(19). He didn't realize that in Rahel's country

*personal* despair could never be desperate enough. That something happened when personal turmoil dropped by the wayside shrine of the vast, violent, circling, driving, ridiculous, insane, unfeasible, public turmoil of a nation. That Big God howled like a hot wind, and demanded obeisance. Then Small God (cozy and contained, private and limited) came away cauterized, laughing numbly at his own temerity. Inured by the confirmation of his own
inconsequence, he became resilient and truly indifferent. Nothing mattered much. And the less it mattered, the less it mattered. It was never important enough. Because Worse Things had happened. In the country that she came from, poised forever between the terror of war and the horror of peace, Worse Things kept happening.

So Small God laughed a hollow laugh, and skipped away cheerfully. Like a rich boy in shorts. He whistled, kicked stones. The source of his brittle elation was the relative smallness of his misfortune. He climbed into people’s eyes and became an exasperating expression.

What Larry McCaslin saw in Rahel’s eyes was not despair at all, but a sort of enforced optimism. And a hollow where Estha’s words had been. He couldn’t be expected to understand that. That the emptiness in one twin was only a version of the quietness in the other. That the two things filled together. Like stacked spoons. Like familiar lovers’ bodies. (19-20)

This marriage in haste soon ended in divorce bringing both misery and liberation to both Larry McCaslin and Rahel the misfit. The marriage can be seen as a whirlwind love affair, short lasting, and as devastating as a cyclone. The one good thing to have happened to Rahel was to have come out alive out of all those wild, traumatic experiences.
Another example of misplaced and unrequited love in *The God of Small Things* is the strange love affair between Father Mulligan and Baby Kochamma. Father Mulligan and Rev. Ipe (Baby Kochamma’s father) were friends despite the fact that there was considerable age difference between them. They belonged to different denominations of the church, but both men enjoyed each other’s company. Father Mulligan was frequently invited to stay for lunch and soon a strange type of attraction grew between the young girl Baby (Kochamma) and the much older Jesuit priest. There was a great deal of “sexual excitement that rose like a tide in the slender girl who hovered around the table long after lunch had been cleared away” (23). In the beginning Baby Kochamma tried to attract the attention of Father Mulligan with her “weekly exhibitions of staged charity” by “force bathing’ a poor village child every Thursday just when Father Mulligan was due to arrive. And then standing at the well-side, Baby Kochamma would heap one biblical doubt over the other and seek explanations from him. And Father Mulligan:

was more than merely flattered by the emotion he aroused in the attractive young girl who stood before him with a trembling, kissable mouth and blazing, coal-black eyes. For he was young too, and perhaps not wholly unaware that the solemn explanations with which he dispelled her bogus biblical doubts were completely at
odds with the thrilling promise he held out in his effulgent emerald eyes.

Every Thursday, undaunted by the merciless midday sun, they would stand there by the well. The young girl and the intrepid Jesuit, both quaking with unchristian passion. Using the Bible as a ruse to be with each other. (23)

And ultimately when he did walk away from her we wonder whether he realized that:

He had young Baby Kochamma’s aching heart on a leash, bumping behind him, lurching over leaves and small stones. Bruised and almost broken. (24)

Finally when it was time for father Mulligan to return to Madras, since charity did not produce the desired results, Baby Kochamma invested all her hope in faith and under special dispensation from the Vatican, she took her vows and entered a convent in Madras as a trainee novice. She hoped somehow that this would legitimately enable her to be close to Father Mulligan and:

she pictured them together, in dark sepulchral rooms with heavy velvet drapes, discussing Theology. That was all she wanted. All she ever dared to hope for. Just to be near him. Close enough to smell his beard. To see the coarse weave of his cassock. To love him just by looking at him. (24)
However she was soon to realize the futility of this step for other “Senior Sisters monopolized the priests and bishops with biblical doubts more sophisticated than hers would ever be” (24-25). And it might take ages for her to get anywhere near Father Mulligan. So she soon got herself discharged from the Convent under pretext of illness. Baby Kochamma could not marry since she had by then developed a reputation. So her father sent her to the University of Rochester in America for further studies. She returned to India two years later, with a Diploma in Ornamental Gardening, “but more in love with Father Mulligan than ever before” (26). Baby Kochamma developed a special sarcastic, uncaring, selfish, vain attitude to life and was convinced that it was only due to her unwillingness to compromise on essential values of moral integrity that she kept herself from committing fornication with Father Mulligan. That was one reason why she despised Ammu so much because she dared to have a sexual liaison with Velutha, and that too an untouchable.

In Alexander’s Manhattan Music we read of Sandhya’s love affair with Gautam who was her first real love. However their love could never mature into marriage because Gautam was a naxalite, a revolutionary, who had to go underground most of the time. In an encounter with the police he was badly injured and suffered a violent death. She could never free herself from the memory of his love. “Again and again Gautam came to her in her dreams, only to torment her by vanishing. She tried to put him out of her mind by turning to
Stephen, who slept by her side" (10). She “grew to desire the man by her side” (11). She soon forgot the dreams that had grown so ungovernable. For many days after that Sandhya remained basking in the love and security of her new husband. But as time passed by she found herself being frequently visited by strange and troubling dreams of Gautam and his badly mutilated body. Such dreams continued to haunt her and she would wake up sobbing and shaking. But on awaking she found herself being comforted tenderly by Stephen. And Sandhya resolved to forget her past affair and live with Stephen in America as he had married her and brought her to America as his wife. “She decided to give herself to him and he would love her” (14). Soon after they settled in New York, Stephen took his wife to visit Ellis Island. In the months after this trip, Stephen started to worry about how Sandhya would keep herself occupied now that Dora, their daughter, was in daycare centre for little kids for the good part of each day. Actually he was “scared of what was lurking in her” (37). He tried to talk to her of the many choices that she had in New York. But she was already beginning to feel somewhat disillusioned with her marriage and it was with a jolt that:

It came back to her how on hearing Stephen enter, the scrape of the key in the lock, slight jangle of the Maharashtrian cowbells she had hung on the doorknob as a signal of entry, she had felt her whole body stiffen. Now it seemed even the corners of her mouth hurt with
the effort of trying to smile back. Their trip to Ellis Island, the discomfort she had felt in the museum, made things much worse for her. It was as if he were proposing a past she might enter, but her flesh resisted. Staring out at the cold waters, she felt her thoughts turn to the early days with Stephen, memories of shared emotion on the cool slopes of Nainital, the freedom he seemed to offer. Now she couldn't even speak openly with him, locked as she was into a world she felt she had not chosen. (38)

It took her a number of years to acknowledge that with Stephen, her sexual body was growing more and more frigid. Sandhya constantly felt as if she had to overcome her body, rise beyond it in some difficult, inescapable way.

That this elusive sense remained with her even during consummation was something she had learned to accept in her conscious mind and cope with, much as she coped with dislocation, and her several homes. (42) Slowly this sense of emptiness grew in her. Stephen neither knew about this nor could he touch the gnawing hunger and desperation in her. The closest it came to be eased was when she held her child in her arms and rocked her or when the child ran her hands through her hair or “clung to her in a delicious burden of touch” (42). Then
Sandhya met Rashid and soon their meetings turned into a companionable twosome with the two becoming romantically involved with each other. Sandhya soon became conscious of:

Something else that gripped her inner world, a turbulence she could scarcely spell out. The thought of Rashid took root with an intensity she could not have predicted. He, in turn, overwhelmed by his emotions, threw caution to the winds. He would have her, he swore, whatever that took. And they would try their best to keep the world from knowing. (75)

After a brief passionate love affair, Rashid slowly started avoiding Sandhya. He was still fond of her but he knew that somehow their marriage would not be accepted in his circle so he moved away from her. Sandhya just could not accept this neglect and avoidance and she succumbed to a mental breakdown and even made an unsuccessful attempt at committing suicide. It was with great difficulty, through the persistent and loving care of her cousins Sakhi and Jay, her friend Draupadi, and her husband Stephen that she was finally restored to life and health. She gathered strength, and wisdom finally dawned on her to grapple with the here and now. Neither the past mattered nor did the future and “She was no longer fearful of the shadows in the trees, of the sharp cries of a strange bird with long tail feathers . . . there was a place for her here. . . . And she . . . knew she would live out her life in America” (227-228). She
accepted the fact that her life was to be with Stephen, her daughter Dora, her work as a writer based in America, with intermittent visits to loved ones of her family and friends back in India.

In *The God of Small Things* we find that between Mammachi and Pappachi there existed a very strange relationship based on a matrimony structured on violence, envy, doubt, vain boasting and selfishness, a total lack of love and understanding. To the outside world the marriage seemed to be a normal one but all those inside it, specially the women and the children suffered hell because of the insecure environment the marriage produced. The following account from the text can well illustrate this.

Mammachi had started making pickles commercially soon after Pappachi retired from Government service in Delhi and came to live in Ayemenem. The Kottayam Bible Society was having a fair and asked Mammachi to make some of her famous banana jam and tender mango pickle. It sold quickly, and Mammachi found that she had more orders than she could cope with. Thrilled with her success, she decided to persist with the pickles and jam, and soon found herself busy all year round. Pappachi, for his part, was having trouble coping with the ignominy of retirement. He was seventeen years older than Mammachi, and realized with a shock that he was an old man when his wife was still in her prime.
Though Mammachi had conical corneas and was already practically blind, Pappachi would not help her with the pickle-making, because he did not consider pickle-making a suitable job for a high-ranking ex-Government official. He had always been a jealous man, so he greatly resented the attention his wife was suddenly getting. He slouched around the compound in his immaculately tailored suits, weaving sullen circles around mounds of red chillies and freshly powdered yellow turmeric, watching Mammachi supervise the buying, the weighing, the salting and drying, of limes and tender mangoes. Every night he beat her with a brass flower vase. The beatings weren't new. What was new was only the frequency with which they took place. One night Pappachi broke the bow of Mammachi's violin and threw it in the river. (47-48)

A week after Chacko their son, now grown to be a big man, returned home for summer vacation from Oxford, he found Pappachi beating Mammachi in the study. Chacko strode into that room caught hold of Pappachi's arm in which he held the vase and twisted it around his back and forbade his father strictly to ever do that again, and like a spoiled, petulant child, Pappachi sat in the verandah for the rest of that day and stared stonily out at the
ornamental garden, ignoring the plates of food that Kochu Maria brought him and

Late at night he went to his study and brought out his favourite mahogany rocking chair. He put it down in the middle of the driveway and smashed it into little bits with a plumber’s monkey wrench. He left it there in the moonlight, a heap of varnished wicker and splintered wood. He never touched Mammachi again. But he never spoke to her either as long as he lived. When he needed anything he used Kochu Maria or Baby Kochamma as intermediaries. (48)

Pappachi’s mal-intentions did not stop with that and in the evenings, when visitors were expected, he would sit and sew buttons that weren’t missing onto his shirt to create the impression that he was being neglected by Mammachi and he was successful to some small extent in “further corroding Ayemenem’s view of working wives” (48). He also bought himself the skyblue Plymouth car from an old Englishman in Munnar. He frequently coasted down the narrow roads of Ayemenem in his wide car, “looking outwardly elegant but sweating freely inside his woolen suits. He wouldn’t allow Mammachi or anyone else in the family to use it, or even sit in it. The Plymouth was Pappachi’s revenge” (48). His daughter Ammu too became a victim of male dominated patriarchal society when she was not allowed to pursue her studies beyond her high school. Pappachi retired the same
year that she had finished her school education. He retired to settle in Ayemenem. But since he considered the education of women an “unnecessary expense” Ammu’s education had suddenly come to a stop and she had no other alternative than to come with her father to Ayemenem and wait for a marriage that might never happen at all as her father had not taken the trouble to gather a dowry for her. Meanwhile she was supposed to help her mother with housework while Chacko, the son was sent to Oxford for his higher studies.

Thus we see that this was a marriage based on sadistic tendencies, mistrust and bloated egos, and the treatment of women as property because she was after all, created for the benefit of man, was quite a common feature of the Ayemenem household. This same kind of marriage existed between Shobha and her husband in Alexander’s Manhattan Music.

Simone de Beauvoir in her book The Second Sex offers the following explanation as to why men enslave women in the first place. She says:

The devaluation of femininity has been a necessary step in human evolution, but it might have led to collaboration between the two sexes; oppression is to be explained by the tendency of the existent to flee from himself by means of identification with the other, whom he oppresses to that end. In each individual man that tendency exists today: and the vast majority yield to it.
The husband wants to find himself in his wife, the lover in his mistress, in the form of a stone image; he is seeking in her the myth of his virility, of his sovereignty, of his immediate reality. But he is himself the slave of his double: what an effort to build up an image in which he is always in danger! In spite of everything, his success in this depends upon the capricious freedom of women: he must constantly try to keep this propitious to him. Man is concerned with the effort to appear male, important, superior, he pretends so as to get pretence in return; he, too, is aggressive, uneasy; he feels hostility for women because he is afraid of them, he is afraid of them because he is afraid of the personage, the image, with which he identifies himself. What time and strength he squanders in liquidating, sublimating, transferring complexes, in talking about women, in seducing them, in fearing them! He would be liberated himself in their liberation. But this is precisely what he dreads. And so he obstinately persists in the mystifications intended to keep woman in her chains. (728)

In the same book she also gives us another plausible explanation of how

It is possible to avoid the temptations of sadism and masochism when the two partners recognize each other
as equals; if both the man and the woman have a little modesty and some generosity whereby ideas of victory and defeat are abolished: the act of love becomes a free exchange. (701)

This kind of an understanding is found in the marriage between Joe and Margaret, and also in the relationship between Ammu and Velutha in The God of Small Things. Here the love relationship between the man and the woman is both reciprocative and gratifying to each other. The bonding may be a very conservative one like the marriage of Joe and Margaret, acceptable to them as well as their society of relations, well wishers and friends, or it may be a very unconventional bonding of hearts totally unacceptable and unallowable by the laws laid down by society as in the case of the brash love affair of Velutha and Ammu. However these bondings were based on mutual respect and understanding. These couples could satisfy each other’s needs physically and mentally. That is why Margaret Kochamma was filled with real grief when Joe died.

When Ammu came back to the Ayemenem House after her divorce from Mr. Roy, she realized that she was most unwelcome there because as “a married daughter she had no place in her parent’s house” and as “a divorced daughter she had no position anywhere at all” (45). And Chacko kept reminding her that “Ammu and Estha and Rahel were millstones around his neck” (82). Under these circumstances, she was naturally attracted to Velutha, who not
only acknowledged her as a human being but also responded to the woman in her gracefully. Ammu became conscious of Velutha's physical presence and:

wondered how his body had changed — so quietly, from a flat muscled boy’s body into a man’s body. Contoured and hard. A swimmer’s body. A swimmer-carpenter’s body. Polished with high-wax body polish. (175)

His smile reminded Ammu of Velutha as a little boy “holding out little gifts he had made for her, flat on the palm of his hand so that she could take them without touching him . . . and Ammu started caring for the youthful young paravan (an untouchable) before her” (176). One day as Velutha stood in the yard of the Ayemenem House holding Ammu’s daughter Rahel in his arms he “glanced up and caught Ammu’s gaze. Centuries telescoped into one evanescent moment” (176). And once again a love law was broken for in that moment “history was wrong footed, caught off guard sloughed off like an old snakeskin. Its marks, its scars, its wounds from old wars and walking backwards days all fell away . . . ” (176). And Velutha noticed certain things that he hadn’t noticed before:

Things that had been out of bounds so far, obscured by history’s blinkers.

. . . . . . . . . .

For instance, he saw that Rahel’s mother was a woman.
That she had deep dimples when she smiled and that they stayed on long after her smile left her eyes. He saw that her brown arms were round and firm and perfect. That her shoulders shone, but her eyes were somewhere else. He saw that when he gave her gifts they no longer needed to be offered flat on the palm of his hands so that she wouldn't have to touch him. . . . He saw too that he was not necessarily the only giver of gifts. That she had gifts to give him too. (176-177)

In spite of this strong bonding between them, things turned tragic for them because they had dared to break the rigid love laws of Ayemenem. Despite being fully aware of the forbidden nature of their love, neither Ammu nor Velutha was bothered about what would happen to them if the affair between them became public. They were just too deeply involved in the present moment and dared to love each other for hearts that love cannot think of the future because the present moment of love has compressed eternity into it for them.

Chacko's marriage to Margaret, an English lower middle class woman, is also in defiance of the love and land Laws of Ayemenem. Therefore it didn't last long enough. A year into marriage, the charm of Chacko's "studently sloth" wore off for Margaret Kochamma and soon she got fed up with all of Chacko's irresponsible ways. She was no longer amused to find the flat on her return, in the same filthy mess that she had left it in, while she went to work. He wouldn't
make the bed, or wash clothes or dishes or apologize for the cigarette burns in the new sofa. He never did all this simply because he had never been trained to do such things back at home as the gender laws there forbade males from such menial tasks in and around the house. All this and more left her exasperated. She thought of her marriage as a big mistake. And it was while she was in the throes of disillusionment with her marriage to a foreigner that she met Joe, her brother's friend and Margaret Kochamma found that Joe was everything that Chacko was not. He was “steady,” “solvent” and “thin” and “Margaret Kochamma found herself drawn towards him like a plant in a dark room towards a wedge of light” (248). And Margaret Kochamma was happy with Joe but it never occurred to her that she had hurt Chacko as deeply as she had because he had not then, or since, exhibited any of the usual symptoms of grief and outbreak. When she told him about Joe he had left sadly but quietly, but they maintained contact through frequent letters and developed a mature relationship. “For Margaret Kochamma it became a comfortable, committed friendship. For Chacko it was a way, the only way, of remaining in touch with the mother of his child and the only woman he had ever loved” (250), though he had had a number of affairs with the good looking women who came to work in the pickle factory.

Strange was the love between Mammachi and her son Chacko. It was not just a mother – son kind of love. The love between them suffered from the Oedipus complex. Though Mammachi had never
met Chacko’s English wife, Margaret Kochamma, she despised her anyway. “Shopkeeper’s daughter -- was how Margaret Kochamma was filed away in Mammachi’s mind” (167-168). But then, she would have despised and resented her:

\[ \ldots \text{even if she had been heir to the throne of England. It wasn’t just her working-class background Mammachi resented. She hated Margaret Kochamma for being Chacko’s wife. She hated her for leaving him. But would have hated her even more had she stayed. (168)} \]

Ever since Chacko prevented Pappachi from beating Mammachi, she “packed her wifely luggage and committed it to Chacko’s care. From then onwards he became the repository of all her womanly feelings. Her Man. Her only Love” (168). She was tolerant towards all his vices. She was aware of his libertine relationships with the women in the pickle factory, but had ceased to be hurt by them. When Baby Kochamma brought up the subject Mammachi supported him saying “He can’t help having a Man’s Needs” (168). Surprisingly this explanation was accepted by Baby Kochamma, and “the enigmatic, secretly thrilling notion of Men’s Needs gained implicit sanction in the Ayemenem House” (168) and Mammachi had a

\[ \text{Separate entrance built for Chacko’s room, which was at the eastern end of the house, so that the objects of his ‘Needs’ wouldn’t have to go traipsing through the house. She secretly slipped them money to keep them happy. They took it because they needed it. They had young} \]
children and old parents. Or husbands who spent all their earnings in toddy bars. The arrangement suited Mammachi, because in her mind a fee clarified things. Disjuncted sex from love. Needs from Feelings. (169)

Thus we see that the laws of love, sexuality and gender are problematic issues in the works of Alexander and Roy and it can be said that in the final analysis, almost all the protagonists in both Alexander and Roy prove themselves to be trespassers because they have all crossed over into forbidden territory by having “tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much” (The God of Small Things 177). And all the breakings, all the crossings of borders are at times liberating and at other times they are punitive for those engaged in such exercises. The laws of love need to be handled with great care and caution and all trespassing perhaps comes with a price tag.