CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION

Postcolonial writers have projected the true image of India and tried to establish its cultural identity by highlighting the prevailing inequalities both social and economic and the maltreatment meted out to the poor, the destitute, the marginalized section of society.

Anand elaborately describes the pernicious effect of caste fanaticism, as he is concerned with the actual state of affairs. *Untouchable* and *The Road* show his anguish and protest against certain social evils like caste system, exploitation, superstitions etc., and these are presented so well that they sink deep into the minds of the readers with ease. The behaviour of the caste Hindus become the greatest subject matter of study for the novelist.

Anand’s *Untouchable* mirrors the inhuman and heartless attitude of the merciless caste Hindus. It is an attempt to project the humiliation and agony faced by a subaltern in the Indian society which is divided into the graded inequality and hierarchical anarchy; where the tall claims of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” have proved to be merely a utopian dream. Anand has railed upon this centuries-old, and deeply-rooted inhuman practice which has denied a subaltern ‘Dalit’ a right to be a fellow human being, a ‘touchable’. The novel is a remarkable piece of art for the convicting photographic fidelity of the pictures drawn, cumulative ferocity and force of detail, and an uncanny accuracy of facts which combine to project “a picture that is also an indictment of the evils of a decadent and perverted orthodoxy” (Iyanger 339). Anand, through his subaltern hero, makes an
attempt to subvert the conventional hierarchical order and challenges the phallocentric ideology since it perpetrated marginalization of subaltern. He has given the subaltern Bakha a voice, an identity and a speech which is denied to him by the upper communities in the caste-ridden society. His main concern is to ‘dismantle’ the social order based on Manu’s ethics.

Anand in his another novel The Road, deals with the same problem but with a difference, as it is a novel of today where casteism is abolished and untouchability legally forbidden. The novel however, shows that the untouchables or ‘Dalits’ are still subordinated and live as subalterns. On a symbolical reading, the novel is a crusade against the inequality and inhumanity practised against a subaltern untouchable—the triumph of good over evil. In this novel, as in Untouchable, casteism is practised and condemned because it disgraces human dignity. The story revolves round the subaltern Bhikhu, the leader of the untouchables of a village, condemned to build a link road. The road, instead of becoming a way to enlightenment is converted into a place of human degradation.

Anand portrays not only the sufferings and agony of the subaltern Bhikhu but also projects the magnanimous caste Hindus in order to awaken, the world over, the conscience of the members of their community against the miserable and inhuman treatment which the subalterns, in society are subjected to. Both Untouchable and The Road portray, in surrealistic terms, the anguish and suffering of subalterns, ‘Dalits,’ who continue to be the victims of ‘othering’ and are forced to stand on the periphery by those in the ‘centre’. The general conviction of Anand is based on a severe critical examination
of the ancient Indian heritage. M.K. Naik observes that the evil of untouchability is the result of years of suppression of a class on religious grounds:

The caste Hindu is armed with the feeling of six thousand years of social and class superiority—a feeling which refuses to accept the fact that the untouchable is a human being, but insists on treating him like a sub-human creature, to be ignored or bullied or exploited as the occasion demands (Naik 29).

Perhaps the novelist thinks that Bakha has to negate the culture which has made him an untouchable. Anand believes that only an adequate knowledge of modern outlook can be a source of strength in removing this social evil. The slightest acquisition of knowledge will bring awakening to them and so the novelist treats this act of denying education as the greatest conspiracy of religion to perpetuate the habit of servility. It is the conviction of Anand that a caste-oriented religion can never cast away this social evil. The remedy comes from the assimilation of modern scientific outlook. Bakha’s plight is pitiable because he is found struggling without any satisfying solution.

Anand is concerned with a logical exposition of the conditions and situations in which Bakha suffers and feels frustrated and humiliated. He says boldly that a caste-conscious society is fully responsible for his suffering. Bakha sees the hypocrisy of Kalinath as well as the good nature of Havildar Charat Singh, who is free from caste consciousness. When he pours tea from his own tumbler and gives it to Bakha, he simply melts into self-pity and tears and says, “For this man, I wouldn’t mind being a sweeper all my life. I would do anything for him” (Anand 96). Bakha is not able to forget the
consoling words of the woman who gives a chapatti to him, “My child, you shouldn’t sit on people’s doorsteps like this” (Anand 63).

Bakha is objective enough to realize the merit of some caste Hindus just as he is pained by the unclean nature of his own brother Rakha. But incidents like Bakha’s accidentally touching a person and thereby polluting him and Kalinath shouting “polluted” in order to escape from dishonour are the major focus of the novel in which the protagonist is placed in a state of agony and shame.

In spite of the best efforts made by some social reformers, untouchability remains a great social evil. In Untouchable, the above theme is very well elaborated. We may call it social exploitation; exploitation carried on by the entire society on the low caste people known as untouchables. Sweepers and cobblers are regarded outside the fold of Hindu Castes; though they firmly believe in the cannons of Hindu religion. Leather workers and Washermen, though Sudras are regarded superior to sweepers. The very touch of sweeper is regarded polluting. This type of caste system exists nowhere in the world except in India. Anand has painted very vividly and forcefully the mental anguish that Bakha a sensitive Sweeper boy, who is the hero of the novel, feels untold agony owing to the treatment meted out to him by caste Hindus. He says that these people have got tremendous potential to grow but unfortunately they have never been allowed to show their caliber.

Anand realized that casteism cannot be wiped out easily unless the people are made aware of this evil repeatedly. So, after Untouchable he wrote another novel, The Road, to expose the exploitation of the poor people belonging to the lower castes by the
upper castes. The hypocrisy and dissoluteness of the priest have been exposed by Anand in this novel. Anand criticizes Hindu religion as it allows privileges to certain castes, like Brahmins. He cannot dream of a religion which is not in tune with socialism.

_The Road_ is a symbolic protest against the concept of Karma and Fatalism. _The Road_ represents a period of transition where the old order of the Hindu beliefs in untouchability will change yielding place to a new vision of human unity and cooperation. _The Road_ looks to the time gap needed for the change in human mind for the vision of the coming together of the Dalits and the caste Hindus.

M.K. Naik maintains the view that Anand’s second novel on untouchability _The Road_ written after Independence does not indicate a return to the sources of creativity. What he implies is that the same theme handled by him in _Untouchable_ is repeated in _The Road_. But a careful reading reveals that Anand has a specific preoccupation in _The Road_. His main mission as a social reformer is to lay emphasis upon mass action and collective transformation. Anand’s _Untouchable_ portrays the suffering of a low caste person who is put to shame and humiliation in many situations on grounds of low birth. Anand suggests three possible remedies, Christianity, Gandhism and modernization. In the novel, _The Road_, the novelist suggests a fourth remedy which he considers to be more worthwhile for removing untouchability.

It is felt that the depressed class remains divided and they must organize themselves into a powerful group working towards a common programme of social action. The novelist thinks of a coordinated social programme involving work and activity. He projects a new ideal whereby people can work together for their
emancipation from social stigma. The gospel of work seems to Anand a major source for liberating the depressed class from indignity and wretchedness:

Strong and sincere but calm, he was spiritually too pure to hate and had learnt through long submission, to endure evil and violence from upper castes, without protest, only hoping that, through work and more work, he would be liberated, somehow, he did now know how (Anand 45).

Bhikhu, the protagonist in *The Road*, feels that it is difficult to change the mentality of the caste-Hindus. He thinks of a mass scale of work which symbolizes concerted and organized action on the part of the depressed class. He feels that work is a means of deliverance and that cooperative enterprise provides a new dimension to an old problem. M.K. Naik is of the view that though the novel *The Road* was written twenty-six years after Anand wrote *Untouchable*, people’s minds had not changed and the old caste taboos exercised their despotic authority and influence. But Bhikhu possesses a formidable forward-looking disposition. He gathers his people and puts them on a new path. His plan is to build an approach road which will link the village with the town. “Thus, he is engaged in a meaningful social action” (Sinha 73).

It is wise to say that communities should not be condemned in a general manner and so individuals who harbour evil thoughts should be censured. All the caste-Hindus are not bad according to Anand. For instance, Havildar Charat Singh brings out this aspect clearly: “They have, however, a powerful ally in Dhooli Singh, who helps them continually, at the cost of alienation from his caste and even from his family” (Sinha 74).
Unmindful of all caste barriers, people must place their faith in work. A new social dynamism through work based on human cooperation is what Anand has in his vision. The depressed classes are caught in the cobweb of poverty and social degradation. They can secure social status and gain economic freedom only through the gospel of work. Anand is interested in a collective social action and he thinks that the salvation of human beings lies through work. It is in this respect that the novelist raises the question of the future of the depressed classes. He feels that their social life must be actively involved in an ongoing programme of work. The impact of industrialization is felt in the construction of work.

The novelist knows that education is necessary for emancipation of men like Bakha from the social evil of untouchability. Their degradation is due to lack of education and their lack of education is due to the planned conspiracy of a corrupt religion. He thinks that the liberation of the depressed classes depends on their attitude to life. The salvation of the depressed classes is connected with their mental power to emancipate themselves from the cleverly advocated beliefs of Karma and fatalism by the caste-Hindus. If there is no critical growth of awareness in the depressed class, it will not pave way for their bright future.

Reason brought about a revolution in the West and it was useful in dislodging many superstitions and false beliefs. The spirit of modernity draws its inspiration from the purifying influence of reason. Anand’s profound conviction is that life must be revolutionized by the rational spirit of modernity. Religion of conservatism is a hindrance to any development.
Apartheid, slavery and inequalities are also found in other countries in the past. But now they have surpassed all social inequalities. America abolished slavery and the Blacks are in power and in high position. As long as social inequalities are continued and there is no change in the mindset of the people caste system cannot be eradicated.

Anand believes that real religion must preach love and peace. When violence, war and hatred are accepted in the name of religion the only way to counter it lies in a plan for liberty and secularism. He thinks that society is like a prison dominated by custom, convention and the evil of caste system. Anand sees a conflict between the individual and society. The caste-conscious society reduces Bakha’s mere sub-human existence. It suppresses his inner energy. His life is a trial and a journey to an unknown destination. Anand is of the opinion that society has the claws of tiger to injure human beings. Without a bold fight and revolt against society, life cannot be made comfortable and peaceful for human beings. Anand considers possession of freedom to be the ideal objective of man. The suppression of individual freedom seems to be the one end of society.

The crisis of Bakha comes from the caste fanaticism of the society. His accidental touch of a person provokes anger and censure. For the caste Hindus, the touch and sight of an untouchable is a mark of pollution and a sigh of sin. Bakha is aware of this peculiar injustice. Pandit Kalinath makes an attempt at molesting Bakha’s sister Sohni and shifts the blame on to her by saying that he is polluted by her touch. Bakha’s anger knows no bounds but he realizes his helplessness on account of his social inferiority. Bakha’s individuality emerges from his perception of the awareness of human inequality.
He feels that dung and latrine cleaning bring indignity to men like Bakha. The only way to remove this dishonour is to introduce a scientific device whereby the life of the untouchable will undergo a sea change. The indignity comes from the work they do. Anand's solution is that the introduction of flush system changes the character of work. Anand adds another point and he says that gaining of economic freedom will modernise their life and make them respectable human beings. The degeneration in social life is considered to be the result of a conservative religion.

Nevertheless, Anand’s fictional aim is quite obvious. His novels Untouchable and The Road are a plea for love, Buddhist renunciation and compassion and Christian sacrifice and charity, which is the only way for the ‘reconstruction of humanity’ to ring out hell and ring in heaven on earth.

Thus a study of the subaltern concern shown by Anand in his novels reveals that despite all tall claims of social reformation and technological advancement, nothing really changes for the subalterns in our Indian society. Despite our progress to a more developed world things remain the same let the statistical data and sociological survey reveal another side of the problem. The exploitation of the lower caste by the higher caste is a bitter truth of modern society, and newspapers, media, television frequently and sharply focus on the atrocities and inhumanities inflicted upon these poor subalterns. To refer to the latest heart-rending human tragedy of devastation and death caused by Asian killer Tsunami tidal waves where death toll went up in millions, and which has made the people of countries across the world reach out and do their bit to help the afflicted humanity, in the relief camps of Nagapattinam caste barriers are forcing Dalits out of the circle of sympathy and relief. Not only have Dalits been thrown out of these camps, but
they are not being allowed to collect food and water supplies or use the toilets—simply because they are subalterns—from the Meenavar (fishermen) community that is graded as the most backward class in the social structure. To quote from the Edit Page of the Hindustan Times. “But in this horrendous case of entrenched apartheid; ordinary people are to blame for perpetuating a crime in the name of tradition. In Nagapattinam alone, families have not only been told to fend for themselves but have also been shoed away from using basic amenities lest they contaminate “caste Hindus” (Hindustan Times 6). And this is the aftermath of a tragedy where they, the high ups, themselves have just about survived. Such forced divisions and caste barriers are not sociological necessities but social evils that need to be dismantled, if need be by forced.

Anand emphasizes the importance of personal experiences of the life of the artist who should cautiously look around him for understanding the world of the people, he happens to live with in order to make his picture realistic. He rejects the dictum of ‘Art for Art’s sake’. He upholds the idea of ‘Art for life’s sake’. In his view, a novel should be concerned with social reality. He adheres to his own theory of diction that contemporary events and social realities are suitable for writing novels. So, he deals with contemporary Indian problems in all his novels.

Samskara presents a vivid picture of a society which has accepted caste discrimination as a norm. It has unquestioningly accepted the Brahmin eminence, and pushed the lower caste people to a periphery. Brahmins are supposed to be the spiritual and temporal guides, teachers and exponents of law, whereas the Sudras perform menial services only. They are routinely denied even the semblance of equality. Their hutments are quite a distance away from the Brahmin agrahara. The abject poverty of their life is
also discernible. They depend on manual labour for their livelihood. Chinni and Belli pick up the cow dung. They are treated with indifference. Chinni begs for something to eat, standing at a distance from a Brahmin woman, “Please, avva, throw a morsel for my mouth, avva” (Anantha Murthy 58). Betel leaf, betel nut and tobacco are thrown at her from some distance. Such incidents highlight the extent of untouchability practised in the contemporary South Indian society.

The remarkable feature of Indian rural life is graphically presented to portray the villagers’ attitude. The novel traces the villagers’ belief in omens, superstitions, traditions and customs and how the Brahmans are rigid in following the religious rituals. The novel vividly portrays caste sanctimoniousness, the Brahmin ways of life, the smug hypocrisy of the local people and the inhuman cruelty in the name of religious rituals. The novelist presents many contrasting natures, affluence, and poverty, goodness and hypocrisy, power and helplessness. The novel decries the existence of superstitions in the age of science and technology, the role of tradition and religion, the sociological obsessions and psychological clashes of individuals.

The concept of the caste which has crystallized in the Indian social structure was made doubly rigorous by integrating it with religion. The cyclical theory of rebirth, with the possibility of birth in a higher caste being linked to faithfully carrying out one’s duties as per caste rules generated a fatalistic acceptance of one’s situation. The pseudo-religious practices of untouchability and endogamy which segregated one caste from another, apart from the various social privileges, drilled into the minds of people that caste is a preordained and hereditary institution which has divine sanction. Samskara indicates the relationship between the division of labour and caste.
The listless poverty of the Brahmins of the agrahara is presented in the novel through various episodes. They depended on cucumber during the rainy season for everything, “curry, mash, or soup made with the seeds” (Anantha Murthy 16). They could walk a distance of thirty miles just for attending a festival feast. Comparing Belli with other Brahmin girls, Shripati scathingly remarks, “cheek sunken, breast withered, mouth stinking of lentil soup” (Anantha Murthy 37). Such incidents describe the poverty of the Brahmins, who are traditionally linked with professional choices and cannot escape them. When Praneshacharya takes up wandering, he is approached by a villager who requests him to read “a bit of the future” (Anantha Murthy 95). Praneshacharya was about to perform the routine Brahmin functions by sheer habit, when he reins himself suddenly and ruefully ponders that one cannot run away from one’s caste, “Even if I leave everything behind, the community clings to me, asking me to fulfill duties the brahmin is born to” (Anantha Murthy 96). The inescapability of the caste is discernible in the debate which followed Naranappa’s death. He had violated and profaned all codes of conduct, still he could not be treated as an outcaste and “remains a Brahmin in his death” (Anantha Murthy 9).

Another aspect of caste based discrimination which Samskara presents before us is related with the taboos which prohibit a Brahmin to eat food touched/prepared by a member of a different caste. Religious treatises like the Vashishtha Dharma Sutra specify what may be eaten and what may not. It stipulates that a Brahmin cannot eat food given by a Shudra. The caste system accepts and encourages a rigid hierarchical structure of social inequality—the greater one’s purity, or lack of contact with pollution, the higher one’s rank is. Dasacharya is afraid of social criticism, if he openly eats food at
Manjayya’s place. Being a *Smarta*, Manjayya is considered to belong to a lower sect of Brahmins. Dasacharya is afraid that if he eats “cooked stuff in a *Smarta* house” (Anantha Murthy 57), he may be socially boycotted by his own sect, “I don’t really mind eating in your house. But if those rascals in our agrahara hear about it, no one will invite me to a ceremony again. What can I do, Manjayya?” (Anantha Murthy 56). When Manjayya amusingly assures him of secrecy, Dasacharya asks for some milk, jaggery and plain flat-rice. Secretly delighted that an agrahara Brahmin had come to eat with them, his wife gleefully serves him. Naranappa did not practise such discrimination, yet Chandri was unable to come to terms with his unorthodox behaviour. She repeatedly requests him not to eat food cooked by her (Anantha Murthy 45). Society can perhaps pardon Naranappa for having close relationship with a lowcaste prostitute, but the fact that he ate what Chandri cooked is still graver, Lakshmana’s statement, in which he lays emphasis on the fact that he, in addition to having a mistress, even ate food cooked by her, makes it amply clear.

Contact with a person of a lower caste can negatively alter one’s purity and may require some form of remedial procedure, such as bathing or changing clothes. When Chandri calls at Praneshacharya’s home to inform him about Naranappa’s death, he had yet to take his meal. The readers are told how he will have to bathe again to purify himself if he talks to Chandri before taking his food, “If the Acharya talked to her, he would be polluted; he would have to bathe again before his meal” (Anantha Murthy 2).

Being a traditional Brahmin, Praneshacharya has been conditioned not to eat food cooked or served by a person who belongs to a lower caste. It is a commonly followed practice as other people also know and respect this constraint.
Samskara also highlights the superstitious attitudes against women, perpetuated by social customs. Praneshacharya cannot shift his wife when the rest of the brahmans decide to send away their families to their in-laws, as she had started her period (Anantha Murthy 80). Abhorrence for impurities, conventionally associated with the bodily functions of women, is a belief cherished in all patriarchal set-ups, which systematically nurtures a consciousness of their secondary status among women. Praneshacharya, seeped into the values of traditional Brahminic culture, unquestioningly accepts such values. Disturbed by the eerie silence of the agrahara and the pervading stench, he had taken refuge in the forest which was still resonant with the memories of Chandri. Towards the evening when he returns to the agrahara, he finds that his invalid wife is flushed with fever. He hesitates before checking her temperature, Nalini Natrarajan in her notes has commented on the untouchability of women during their menstrual cycle. Remembering the stories from scriptures Praneshacharya used to narrate, Shripati vividly remembers a description, “Like the thighs of a blossoming woman, pure after her monthly baths” (Anantha Murthy 38). Tradition encourages men to treat women only as sex objects.

The illustrations of the Brahmin women in Samskara clearly evince how gender formation is organically linked with the concept of caste within Indian social milieu. Patriarchal norms become doubly rigid within the stratification of caste. Traditional marriages can take place only within the same caste; there are also rigid laws governing the partaking of food with members of other groups. Similarly, each caste has its taboos as far as the behavioural norms of women are concerned. The inviolability of taboos is relaxed for men, as is evident in the case of Naranappa. Despite his flagrant repudiation
of social norms, the agrahara Brahmins are unable to excommunicate him, “he may have rejected Brahminhood, but Brahminhood. never left him. No one ever excommunicated him officially” (Anantha Murthy 9).

Though Chandri’s relationship with Naranappa was not socially approved yet both of them lived happily for ten years as if made for each other. She neither demanded anything from Naranappa nor did she meddle with his other affairs or tried to transgress her caste limits as she was aware of his and her own caste status but she lived and behaved like a cultured woman.

When the question of meeting the expenses of the funeral obsequies—Samskara—is raised, it is Chandri who comes forward, removes all her gold and offers it to Praneshacharya to meet the total expenses for the proper rites of the man who had given her all the comforts and joys.” Instead of appreciating her act of offering her gold, the staring at the heap of gold worth two thousand rupees and the quarrel of Durgabhatta and Lakshmana and their wives, Sitatevi and Anasuya (mythical names ironically used) over the possession of this gold (who had earlier warned their husbands, whispering into their ears not to agree in a hurry to perform the rites as the guru will excommunicate them) and now their persuading of their husbands individually to claim before Praneshacharya their rights to cremate the dead body of Naranappa so that Chandri’s gold could come to them exposes the hypocrisy, greed, hatred, selfishness and jealousies of these Samskari Brahmins who are expected to be above these base feelings, projects Chandri as a samskari human being.
In the entire novel *Samskara*, caste assumes central importance. The caste system is by common consensus the world’s longest surviving hierarchy and is based on the principles of purity and superiority, qualities that one is supposed to inherit by birth. A person becomes a member of a particular caste with his birth and dies in it. The Dalits or low castes are outside the caste system and their exploitation is common throughout India. They are looked down upon because of their low caste; birth in a low caste is supposed to be the result of their bad deeds or karma in previous lives. The caste system has been recognized by all sane Hindus as pernicious and deserves to be abolished, yet it flourishes due to the hold of racial purity on our minds. If caste system had been done away with, Naranappa would have been given a decent funeral.

Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* reveals her commitment to the present world as she perceives it and convinces the reader of her belief system. She analyses the relationship of individuals and the society, the rational and irrational elements in human psyche. Through her prolific work she has acquired a reputation as one of the most intelligent by differentiating of contemporary English novelists. Her reputation rested primarily on her status as a committed realist writer.

*The God of Small Things* reacts against fatalism, as women particularly recognize the boundaries that society has placed upon them. Through her work social cultural, political, and sexual limitations are represented by images of physical and social enclosures. She intends to show the realistic image of the world.

She presents a panoramic view of society and understands the effect of history on the individual. The focus of her entire work is the vision of the struggle between
individual freedom and physical, psychological, political, and social restraints. The God of Small Things deals with the tribulation of women as daughter and wife in patriarchal society. Women have become victims of gender oppression.

The feminist in Arundhati Roy takes stock of the situation by partially dwelling upon the theme of gender bias by referring to Mammachi’s discriminatory attitude towards Ammu. A daughter estranged from her husband is made to feel unwanted in her parents’ home whereas an estranged son not only receives warm welcome, he remains the rightful inheritor of the family fortune. Profligacy in him is encouraged in the name of ‘Man’s Needs’. Whereas identical behaviour in a girl decrees torture of being locked up in a room. What is desired and facilitated in case of a girl as evident from Ammu-Velutha relationship?

The God of Small Things can be read as a story of crime and punishment, of pride and nemesis. Arundhati Roy examines how various characters in the novel suffer as a consequence of breaking certain inalienable laws which human beings have to obey if they have to live in a civilized society. While she is offering a scathing critique of societal laws, which oppress the underprivileged, the marginalized and the defenseless, she also shows how certain laws, which human beings have to obey by virtue of their being human beings, have punishment written into them almost deterministically. The cycle of the twenty years in the life of the Ayemenem family moves with ‘Karmic’ irrevocability. It is as if one has to bear the fruits of one’s Karma in this life itself. Though Arundhati Roy criticizes some of the socio-economic conventions and norms of the Ayemenem society with great passion, she maintains her aesthetic distance as she portrays the fall of ‘the grand old House of Ayemenem’ as a whole.
The God of Small Things is honest, sincere and uncompromising. It is imbued with deep feelings and compassion. The story spreads like wave on the reader’s mind and the oppressive sense of guilt that stalks the twins and governs the narrative rhythm under the deceptive veneer of frivolity depresses him. Roy’s protest stems from her sense of outrage at the slave-like status of women and untouchables in free-democratic India. Her engagement with the darkness—of power, superstition and ignorance—is a lone one; she has not made any pact with any ideology. The revolt of Ammu is against patriarchy, against the calculated torture and hypocrisy of the male-chauvinist society. She struggles not only against history but also to be a woman to attain her feminine fulfillment which is denied by males, proletariat (Pillai) and Bourgeois (Pappachi and Chacko) alike.

Arundhati Roy exposes the hypocrisy of the upper caste communists, the dominant group, who talk of a casteless and classless society, and raise slogans for the unity of all working class people. They mouth Marxist platitudes but connive with the bourgeois elites to marginalize the subalterns, especially untouchables. This gap between intention and execution, its overt radical surface and its covert bourgeois nationalist unconscious warns us of danger ahead. This danger comes twice. First, Chacko goes to Pillai to discuss the case of Velutha. Before he proceeds to say more about him, Pillai says, “That Paravan is going to cause trouble for you . . . get him a job somewhere else send him off” (Arundhati Roy 278). Chacko “had expected to encounter antagonism, even confrontation, and instead was being offered sly, misguided collusion” (Arundhati Roy 278).

Velutha joined the Communist Party assuming it to be a forum of protest and an ally of the poor and the downtrodden, without realizing that as a progressive/reformist
movement, Communism in India has “never overtly questioned the traditional values of a caste-ridden, extremely traditional community” (Arundhati Roy 66), that the Marxists have always walked within the communal divides, never challenging the deep-seated caste issues and the bigotry of the higher caste people.

The treatment that Ammu received at the hands of the station house officer shows how pitiable is the condition of women in the society, particularly. When a woman is a divorcee and has loved an untouchable. The author drops a large hint that the police officer knows that he can freely insult this woman without any fear or compunction he has the sanction of the society. So, he “stared at Ammu’s breasts as he spoke. He said that . . . the Kottayam Police didn’t take statements from Veshyas or their illegitimate children . . . . Then he tapped her breasts with his baton. Gently. Tap, tap. As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket. Pointing out the ones that he wanted packed and delivered” (Arundhati Roy 8). The officer represents the society’s attitude to a woman who has loved outside the rules of “Love Laws.”

As is well-known, the patriarchal structure with its resulting class and gender hierarchy is a more or less universal phenomenon, which cuts across all nations, religions and races. However, in India, a further dimension was added to it with the origination of the caste system about 2,000 years ago. This system which is an integral part of Hinduism, divides the population into four major groups. The Brahmin (priestly caste) at the top, followed by the Kshatriya (warrior caste), then the Vaishya (commoners, usually known as trading and artisan castes), and at the bottom the Sudra (agricultural labourers) some of whom are beyond the pale of caste and are known as untouchables. The caste system is not only structural, but has a cultural dimension as well. At the structural level
it consists of a hierarchy of in-marrying groups, organized into hereditary occupations. As a cultural system it comprises belief in karma (that the circumstances of birth depend on actions in one’s previous life), “commitment to caste occupation and lifestyle, belief in the hereditary transmission of psychological traits associated with occupation, tolerance of distinct lifestyles for other castes, and pollution. In the scale of purity and pollution, Brahmans are generally, but not always, the purest and Sudras the most polluted” (Joanna Liddle 58).

The novelist also portrays that the impact of the caste system can be felt even among the Christian community in India, which is indicative of the fact that the dogma of equality of this religion has not been able to dissolve it. Christians in India have internalized the idea of caste rank even though they live and operate in a largely Christian universe. Moreover, as far as caste at the lived in level is concerned, purity and pollution are far more important than karma and dharma, and this is true for Hindus as well as Christians.

Roy trenchantly critiques the ways in which caste impinges upon the lives of women and the double standards of sexual morality prevailing in such a society. Within a caste, a hierarchy exists between the sexes. In fact, the entire system is premised upon the cultural perception of a fundamental difference in male and female sexuality. Moreover, the cultural schemes which underlie the caste system are predicated upon a basic difference between male and female bodies in respect of their vulnerability to incur impurity through sexual intercourse. Upper caste women are much more vulnerable to permanent pollution than lower caste women as it is entanglements with men of castes
lower than that of the women that are taken seriously. Thus, women need to be controlled, their sexuality contained at all times.

The historical perspective invoked here touches upon two interesting aspects, a socio-cultural dimension and a political-aesthetic one, to which its socio-cultural reference suggests a fissure between the history of Christianity in South India and ‘Love.’ Christ’s dictum, “love thy neighbor as thyself,” we are meant to understand, has perhaps never really taken root in the Syrian-Christian community’s socio religious make-up. On the contrary, *The God of Small Things*, ‘argues’ that Christian love in its several forms—God’s love and human conjugal, parental, brotherly and sisterly, neighbourly and sexual love—have come to be regulated and subjugated by the ‘love laws’; by such rules, to be more precise, that govern interpersonal relations and were instituted and sanctioned during the pre-Christian era in Kerala; in sum, by a remarkably resilient conception and practice of love insisted-upon and applied ever since, which would denounce, reject and, if the need arose, simply annihilate any alternative idea and practice of love in any religious community, including that of the Syrian-Christians. The conversion of untouchables to Christianity did not remove their social stigma and make them ‘brothers in Christ.’

The reader comes to know a dark, grim and alluring story, insidiously seductive, a story of “terrible passions, impossible love and betrayal” that dissect a society ridden with untouchability, entrenched orthodoxies and crippling taboos which not only frustrate an individual’s hopes and longings but also, sometimes, imperil his/her life.
In a sense, the story of Ammu and Velutha is not a story of Ayemenem alone. It is the tale of almost every Indian village immersed in darkness and nurtured by orthodox social codes and patriarchal values. Ammus and Veluthas have always broken the ‘Love Laws’ with a hope to find a better, happier tomorrow. They will again break the laws in future. Tomorrow will arrive with all its terror. They will wait for it knowing well that “things could change in a day” (Arundhati Roy 339).

Arundhati Roy, like her predecessors in Malayalam, Telugu, Bengali and Hindi literatures, has written *The God of Small Things*, in the early nineties, espousing their themes- in English fiction, without any courage for “an insurrection against this leper establishment.” She shows plebs, as opposed to a small village communist, comrade Pillai. Communists fight for classless, casteless’ exploitation-free society, all over the world. The Indian Communists are no different, at least theoretically. Roy shows comrade K.N.M. Pillai as a small feudal lord of the past. He is as much caste-conscious as a bourgeois, colonialist or nationalist. He calls Velutha “Paravan” and cautions Chacko against this “card-holder” (Arundhati Roy 277). His wife Kalyani “will never allow Paravans and all that into her house. Never Even I cannot persuade her. My own wife” (Arundhati Roy 278). Velutha’s co-workers resent any favour shown to him. Comrade Pillai explains, “They see it as a partiality. After all, whatever job he does, carpenter or electrician or whatever it is, for them he is just a Paravan. It is a conditioning they have from birth . . . Change is one thing. Acceptance is another” (Arundhati Roy 279).

In *The God of Small Things* Arundhati Roy attempts to sensitize the male-chauvinist and extremely traditional society to the cruelty of its treatment of women and low-caste people and register her protest against its dehumanizing taboos which thwart
individual’s dreams, longings and claims for justice and respectability. She brings a freshness of imagination and linguistic inventiveness to tear on a long-abiding social ill which Gandhiji had stigmatized as the greatest blot on Hinduism, and centuries of exploitation and suffering that have been the lot of Indian women and untouchables. In his classic human document, Untouchable, Mulk Raj Anand had denounced the complacent attitude of caste Hindus to the horror and ugliness of their unreasonable social customs and the suffering and exploitation of the untouchables who have been driven to the periphery of the social structure and denied any human rights. By presenting two innocent children as responders to the tragedy resulting from the rigidity resulting from the rigidity of petrified social mores nurtured by the patriarchal ideology of a caste-based culture that cultivates snobbery and violence to maintain social order, Arundhati Roy condemns and rejects the tyranny of this tradition for a story of her own. The anguish of the guilt-stricken and grief-crazed children who are traumatized by the ‘Terror’ perpetuated by the adult world serves as a powerful language of rejection of this authoritarian system that has no place in it for dissent and for self-asserting individuals.

In the democratic India, the untouchability still exists. Novelist Arundhati Roy has brought this fact before the world through her novels just as Mulk Raj Anand did. The God of Small Things, depicts the cross-caste conflicts. As a matter of fact, we have witnessed caste and sub-caste based social divisions in the Hindu Society since long. Untouchables are only found in the Hindu religious works, neither in Islam nor in Christianity. Christianity is worldwide known for universal “brotherhood and humanism” but here, in this novel Arundhati has described the intense cross-caste conflict; the conflict is not taking place between touchable Hindus and Untouchables, it’s between
Syrian Christians and Untouchables. It shows that untouchables are not only suffering or tortured and harassed from Hindus, but also from other religious communities in this democratic India. Roy reveals a child’s vision of the adult world in this novel, she herself being an “unprotected child in some ways.” Perhaps the most striking aspect of the novel is the treatment of the Dalits. Velutha, the titanic figure stands out as the representative of the untouchables in the novel. They were a class of people who were not allowed to walk on the public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies and not allowed to carry umbrellas. To add to the humiliation they had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed.

Even after six decades since India achieved Independence, Dalits are still oppressed in one form or another. If Dalits in villages are subject to punishments such as lynching death, rape and other humiliation, Dalits in urban spaces face a ‘White-Washed’ form of caste based-discrimination. If feudal society is responsible for the injustices meted out to the Dalits in the rural setting (as seen in Untouchable), crimes, committed on Dalits in urban spaces are perpetrated by the state (as seen in The God of Small Things).

The words of Leo Tolstoy are relevant in the present society as quoted by V.R.Krishna Iyer. “The abolition of slavery has gone on for a long time. Rome abolished slavery, America abolished it, and we did too, but only the words were abolished, not the thing” (Iyer 27).
The ghastliest and inhuman sexual violence occurred on September 29, 2006, in the village of Khairlangi, Bhandra District, Maharashtra is a great shame to the nation. The massacre indicates how Dalits are leading insecure lives in democratic India.

The incident began as a land grab by local agriculturalists – of the five acres the Dalit family owned, two acres had been taken over to make way for a road, and the remaining three were in danger of expropriation. It ended with the mutilation and rape of forty-four year-old Surekha Bhotmange and her teenaged student daughter, Priyanka and the brutal murder of Surekha’s two sons Roshan and Sudhir, aged nineteen and twenty-one. The family was paraded naked, beaten, stoned, sexually abused, and then murdered by a group of men from the Kunbi and Kalar agricultural castes. Surekha and her daughter Priyanka were bitten, beaten black and blue, and gang raped in full public view for an hour before they died. Iron rods and sticks were later inserted in their genitalia. The private parts and faces of the young men were disfigured (Anupama Rao 237).

Caste is a wrong notion. It is neither seen nor smelt. Though modernization and other factors have eradicated untouchability to some extent. Now it has changed its forms and Dalits are being wounded psychologically and denied equal opportunities with other sections of the society.

The monstrous evil of untouchability can be rooted out only through secular education and awareness among the people about man-made social inequalities. Reclamation of human personality enhances human values. We must realize that the ideal
of one man and one value in all walks of life i.e., social, economic and political to establish egalitarian society.

Although India’s Constitution of 1950 abolished the practice of untouchability, the Dalits continue to experience discrimination, segregation, and violence. The laws providing for the welfare of Dalits are often ignored. The government of India maintains that the problems should be handled internally and do not represent a form of racism, while the sections of Dalit intelligentsia seek international attention to the problems they face.

The Dalits, mostly landless agricultural labourers or menial labourers, need greater political voice and participation in political processes to break free from the age old socio-culturally imposed bondage, segregation, and discrimination. Despite the advances brought about by the reservation system, customs and other social practices continue to hinder rapid and all around social emancipation of Dalits.

As landless labourers who depend upon the landlord farmers for their livelihood, the Dalits continue to suffer from the traditional caste equations and the landlords continue to profit from it. This system provides fertile ground for atrocities. Only economic empowerment of Dalits, providing them with land and the related wherewithal, can mitigate the social tension.

Caste is inlaid in a predetermined hierarchy. It is something one cannot choose, but inherits caste matters a lot in everyday life, and marriages are negotiated on that basis. Dalits, as is known, are a bloc of castes in the lowest rungs of the social hierarchy that stand condemned as ‘Untouchables’. If every sixth person in the world is an Indian,
every sixth Indian is a Dalit. In spite of the constitutional guarantee of civil rights and the special law enacted (1989) to prevent atrocities against them, the Dalits continue to be the victims of social discrimination and oppression across the country. It is examined that the irony of the Dalits having no security of life or dignity, despite all the legal protection they enjoy.

Previously, religion and tradition could be blamed for Dalits’ vulnerability and discriminatory treatment. But now, for all the help they are getting from government, Dalits seem to have become more vulnerable and much less self reliant than earlier.

Instead of enhancing the level of self-confidence in them, affirmative action by the state would appear to have rendered them unwilling to resist domination by the upper castes.

Then have changed their forms. It is observed that most of the atrocities on Dalits occur in the country are related to land issues.

Recent inhuman and barbarous attack on Dalits at Lakshmipeta of Vangara Mandal, Srikakulam District in Andhra Pradesh indicates how caste system prevails in India. The differences arose between two communities over use of leftover land alienated for the Madduvalasa reservoir. The government acquired lands for the reservoir but a portion of it remained vacant. The land has been cultivated by Dalits and backward class communities for years. In recent past the Dalits are not allowed to cultivate the left over lands. While both sections claiming ownership, the district administration’s efforts to bring about a rapprochement did not bear fruit. The dominant section went on the rampage attack upon the Dalits with crude bombs, sickles, hatchets, axes and other weapons. Five Dalits were killed and 25 injured in the attack. Anuradha, who had become unconscious after witnessing the attack says that “My father Venkati begged with
folded hands to spare him saying the entire family depended on him. But the attackers did not heed his appeal and killed him on the spot” (The Hindu 3).

The conventional Indian ethos is being subverted and redefined by the voices of the Subaltern. Dr. BR Ambedkar described “India is a multi-storeyed building without the staircase where the life on each storey remains untouched by the life on the other. He further had compared the nation with a dilapidated structure in need of the rebuilding not Just a white wash” (Rang Rao vii). There have been no efforts, what so ever, towards rebuilding the Nation, except, perhaps as tactical devices of political gain.

Anand says that “we must destroy caste, we must destroy the inequalities of birth and unalterable vocations. We must recognise an equality of rights, privileges and opportunities for everyone” (Anand 145).
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