CHAPTER III
ASSERTION OF SELF IN ARUNDHATI ROY’S
THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

Arundhati Roy has carved a niche for herself in Indian English Literature by writing The God of Small Things. Though this is her first novel, it deals with the issues pertinent to modern India. With the political advancement, the social segregation of some ethnic groups, exploitation, injustice, violence and power politics agitated the country. Arundhati Roy projects these prevalent issues in her writings including her non-fictions.

She is actively interested into the contemporary socio-political issues and has written many thought provoking articles on the national as well as international issues which touch the humanistic aspect of life. The social problems are treated primarily by her. As a creative writer, her main domain is power politics. Since she is a social worker, the focal point of her writing is social consciousness and the consciousness of margins.

The contemporary period has been affected by all the modern ideas which have changed the notions of life and ideological pattern of human beings. After Indian independence, the traditional mind-sets and beliefs of the people are radically shaken and the age-old faiths have been disturbed drastically. The modern writers have percepted the change and responded to the perturbed situations. The writers like Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapoor, Salman Rashdie, Geeta Mehata, Anita Desai, Shobha De, Amitav Ghosh and host of other writers have been engaged in criticizing the old traditions and questioned the authority of the conventional norms. This period Indian English Literature has been called as the period of interrogation. The new themes like the struggle for survival, socially oppressed and marginalized are explored by the new writers. The
forbidden territory was explored to find out the dark recesses of human mind and the culture itself.

Arundhati Roy is the novelist of this new tradition and shows exceptional awareness for the social crises and sensibilities. The socially neglected areas are downtrodden Dalits, women and socially, politically, and economically deprived people are brought to the centre by the writers like Arundhati Roy. The social system itself is brought under scrutiny to review the power politics in each and every sphere of life and deconstructed the value systems through the fictional utopias.

The tradition of women novelists is itself a legacy of revolt, consciousness and reform. From Anita Desai to Kiran Desai, all have contributed to portray the truth of Indian society which is based on the assumptions of patriarchy. But Arundhati Roy has not only explored the feminine sensibility in an utterly traditional social system but also joined the caste consciousness to the struggle for survival and assertion of self. Caste and gender discrimination is an indistinguishable feature of Indian social structure and everything is determined by the way this base of the society is constructed. *The God of Small Things* discards all the pretensions of social decency and unveils the hypocrite ideological bearings about India. In a candid, frank and brutal language, she has delineated the evolutionary political forces which have contributed in strengthening the exploitative strategies. The progressive spirit is marred and the individuals are destined to the hierarchical status and roles in the stratified social structure. Every micro and macro aspect of Indian life is critically analysed in *The God of Small Things*; so the place of the book in Indian English Fiction is perennial.
*The God of Small Things* is a novel of protest and the struggle against the exploitation of the oppressed and downtrodden. The marginal sphere includes women, and Dalits who are deeply engrossed into the patriarchal norms and castes. Though the plight of the Dalits is truthfully portrayed to highlight the exploitative nature of social system, the status of women and their suffering is the pivotal point of the novel on which the structure of the novel is constructed.

Arundhati Roy has registered the predicament of women and their struggle for seeking the sense of identity in a male dominated conservative framework. Roy’s concern is to exhibit the fate of Indian women who are not only bound to the rules of Manu but also the inferior status they are assigned due to male dominancy. Patriarchal framework offers little choices to women who yearn for happiness. The novel telescopes India’s cultural, social, political and economical history. India’s cultural heritage, caste and gender discrimination cannot be separated. These issues are inextricably intermingled into each other and deteriorated the progressive spirit of social life.

The novel has been set into the 1960s, the post independence era of India, devoid of prospects to women and low castes. Though the country is ruled according to the modern democratic values, the inside is all imperialistic. The public sphere is touched by the communistic equality but the domestic sphere is totally out of reach of modernity. Outwardly the rulers are changed but the inside of human beings, patriarchal, capitalist and imperialist values are harboured and protected. The protest against these powers invokes the rage of the privileged. The result is obvious of the destruction of the oppressed ones.
The oppressive caste and gender hierarchal social systems in India originated in Indian scriptures, propagates the discriminatory social attitudes in society. Indian theory of Genesis has given birth to the caste hierarchy prior to gender discrimination. In Western culture women are considered as inferior due to their secondary inbreeding; Eve is created out of Adam, so she is inferior to him but Indian theory of Genesis does not support the theory of the birth of the human beings but the castes and classes. So the caste hierarchy is the prior institution to the gender.

The gender bias has been developed during the period of Manusmriti. The rigid laws for the confinement of women are forged and imposed on women. The ‘ideal’ role of womanhood is praised and supported, therefore enacted. The stray from it is always condemned and consequently the severe punishments are meted out to the rebels. So, the castist Brahminical social structure protects caste as well as sexual hierarchal social structure.

When women are located into the sexual and castist hierarchal social structure, caste is the first criterion of discrimination and categorization. In high castes, men are superior to women and women are as inferior and impure as the low castes. The situation changes when high castes women are compared to the low castes men and women. Though the high caste women are inferior to high caste men, they are superior to the low caste-men. This is the subversion of the pure patriarchy because a high-caste woman can dominate a low-caste man. The low-caste women are at the lowest level in this two-fold oppressive system; they are subjected to the exploitation by the high-caste men and women and the low-caste men.
In India, there is no rigidity in men-women relationship. In the same way there is no rigidity in men-men and women-women relationship. In case of women, they are classified and treated according to their married and unmarried state. The general classification and hierarchization of women in the Brahminical social structure is done on the basis of their married state, capacity of begetting children, particularly son. It confers them social status and sense of identity. The married women without sons enjoy lower status while those who are married but cannot beget children are looked down; widowhood, with a son too brings some pleasure but being remarried, a divorcée and unmarried states are despised. The life without male assistance, independent, and self-fulfilled in case of women is discouraged. If such tendencies are sprout out, the status quo diminishes their social position by detesting such attitudes and the social equilibrium is attained through oppression.

Women of *The God of Small Things* are bound to the Brahminical categorization but not strictly since the society portrayed in the novel is Syrian Christian. The Ayemenem family is originally Brahmin family but later on converted into Christianity. It has affected their view about women but not wholly. The power and position women hold depends on their position in the above hierarchal categorization. The women characters appear in the novel are as follows:

1. Aleyooty Ammachi – the great-grandmother of Rahel (She appears in the novel only in the form of photograph)
2. Mammachi – Rahel’s grandmother. Her position in the family changes when her husband dies
3. Baby Kochamma – Aleyooty Ammachi’s unmarried daughter
4. Ammu – A divorcée having twins
5. Margaret Kochamma – Remarried having a daughter from first husband

6. Rahel – Divorcee (single)

7. Sophie Moll – Margaret Kochamma’s daughter

8. Mrs. Mitten

9. Kalyani – Comrade Pillai’s typical Indian wife

10. Comrade Pillai’s mother

11. Velutha’s mother

12. Latha – Comrade Pillai’s niece

13. Low caste women

The above listed women fall into different categories according to their above discussed categorization. Some women are absolute submissive to the power structure, some show the rebellious force while some fall apart from the categorization itself. Aleyooty Ammachi, Mammachi, kalyani, Comrade Pillai’s mother, his niece Latha and low caste women are the submissive illustrations; the rebellious but acts as an agent to the power structure is Baby Kochamma and the “worst transgressors”¹ are Ammu and Rahel.

This novel is the struggle between the holders of power structures and the “worst transgressors” who try to dynamite it from the roots.

3.1 Ayemenem: Patriarchal Present Verses Matrilineal Heritage:

The setting of the novel is an active participant in the collaboration of the story. The state Kerala itself has its matrilineal history and it acts as a fuel to the actions of the novel. The matrilineal background has paved
way to the rebellious tendencies which proved fatal to devastate patriarchy. Aida Balvannandhan has rightly illustrated the position of women in Kerala before British rule. The Victorian mind-set of the Britishers and their intervention changed the matriarchal structure of Hindu society in Kerala.

In Kerala, despite their loud avowals that there would be no interference in personal law, the imperial state intervened quite blatantly to recast the matrilineal Nair *taravads* (households) into what they spoke of as a “natural” patriarchal mould…. Taravad land was subject land was subject to matrilineal inheritance, but was held by all in common and administered by the eldest brother; women were free to cohabit with other (usually Namboodiri Brahmin) men, but no rights were attached to these Sambandhams. In a series of Nair Regulation Laws, starting in 1868 and continuing well into the 1930s, this form of family organization, which a woman economic power and sexual freedom or, in the phrasing of the Marriage Commission, the right to terminate a union ‘at any time, from wantonness or caprice’, was brought to heel.²

The Victorian censure pushed women back many centuries. The novel strongly reminds the matrilineal society in Kerala. Arundhati Roy, through this novel foregrounds Keral’s history which gave women economic power and sexual freedom, the freedom was not considered as women’s autonomy instead it was named after ‘wantonness’. The old order of matriarchy has been destructed to give space to the Victorian patriarchy. The laws of Manusrimiti confided women to the domestic spheres and the Victorian propriety proved totally destructive to sack
women from their advantageous position. The lack of power automatically invites the slavery of every kind.

Though the modern women born in Independent India are not confided physically, the notional slavery still persists. The confinement is ideological; patriarchal ideology still dominates the Indian people. The wall of confinement is patriarchal surveillance, under the criterions women are judged and the deviation from the convention invites punishment. Hence the power rigorously works to avoid diversion from the privileged ideologies.

He novel has written form the point of view of the ‘supervised’. When the controlled and manipulated understands the tricks of the ‘discursive practices’ she/he tries to undo it. The deviate thinking is discouraged not only through the oppressors but by the oppressed too. This state has been called as ‘hegemony’ in the words of Gramasci who states that hegemony confirms the rule of the privileged through consent.

*The God of Small Things* is a novel of protest, deviate thinking and action from the patriarchal ‘discursive practices.’ To be submissive and sacrificing are the prescribed benchmarks of the patriarchy for women. The women portrayed in the novel belong to the 1960s period. This period may be called as the transition period in Indian history. The newly born modern India embraced modern principles of equality, fraternity, brotherhood and justice but in the rigidly caste and gender hierarchal India this could not be worked out instantly. The progress was slow. Some people embraced old principles and the young ones who never saw India’s enslavement easily succumbed to the Western philosophies. This transformation has brought a lot of complexities in Indian society. Though India is a land of varied culture, the caste and gender bias is all
pervaded. It is deeply rooted in Indian soil. The patriarchal and 
Brahminical ideology ruled over India more than two thousand years. 
Thus the dethronement of these ideologies has brought turmoil all over 
the country. The novel is the turmoil of transition, the change and the 
devastation caused by it.

The primary concern of the novel is power-politics in human 
relationships. All of the social and private relationships are the 
relationships of power-politics. The man-man relationship, woman-
woman relationship, and man-woman relationship are brought to front for 
the critical assessment. All of these relationships are hierarchically 
organized on the principles of caste system and patriarchy. Man-man 
relationship is bound to caste privilege while woman-woman and man-
woman relationship is based on both of the principles, i.e. caste and patriarchy.

The novel portrays the private as well as public life of the men and 
women of Ayemenem family for three generations whose lives are 
governed by the patriarchal assumptions, caste prejudices and gender 
discrimination. It delineates the domestic, political, social, economical 
and cultural life of women, surrounded by the male dominated world. The 
close study of the novel brings to light the truth that the public as well as 
domestic sphere is dominated by men, leaving no place for women to 
assert their capabilities and talent.

As family is the microcosm of any society, Ayemenem represent 
the Indian life in miniature. Ayemenem House’s significance in the 
collaboration of the story of the novel as a symbol of patriarchy is 
undoubted. It becomes a live entity in the lives of the people who inhabit
It shapes, creates and re-creates the lives of the people. The house symbolized the degenerating values of patriarchy.

It was a grand old house, the Ayemenem, but aloof looking. As though it had little to do with the people that lived in it. Like an old man with rheumy eyes watching children play, seeing only transience in their shrill elation and their whole hearted commitment to life.3

The Ayemenem house holds some magic power. Whoever tries to leave or break its laws is brought or beaten back. Pappachi and Mammachi come back from Delhi in utter despair; Ammu tries to leave the house for “anything”, better than returning to Ayemenem, returns helplessly to condemn herself and her twins; Chacko leaves for Oxford, gets married there but returns after failing in his relationship with Margaret Kochamma; later Estha and Rahel are almost expelled from the house by its inmates but they too return to it. Being rightful heir of the house Sophie Mol returns to her fatherly home for the future death.

Thus Ayemenem House works as a magnet to bring all concerned characters together who defiled its laws.

Though the house shows destructive capabilities of power structure, the town Ayemenem shows the positive and constructive potentials of the protest. Through the natural imagery the spirit of protest is delineated. Arundhati Roy writes that though May in Ayemenem is “a hot, brooding”4 month, the novel starts from the early June.

The countryside turns an immodest green. Boundaries blur as tapioca fences take root and bloom. Brick walls turn mossgreen. Pepper wines snake up electric poles. Wild creatures burst through laterite banks and spill across the
flooded roads. Boats ply in the bazaars. And small fish appear in the puddles that fill the PWD patholes on the highways.\(^5\)

The change of scene is abrupt; the suggestion of future is given on the first page itself. The “Boundaries blur” not only geographically but also historically. The boundaries that make up the culture-culture, civilization-civilization, blur. The Mansoon generally brings greenery and hope at the same time confusion and abundance. The blurring of the boundaries is the let-motif of the novel.

The novel exhibits the crumpled domain of patriarchy. The guardians of patriarchy are the men and women who hold the patriarchal ideologies and perpetuate it. Though it is seemed that men are the only exercisers of patriarchal power and are synonymous to patriarchy, women carry the equal responsibility of holding patriarchal ideologies, they are equally responsible for confirming the values.

Men are the real holders of the power and supposed to be more strong and capable of protecting the weak ones. When it is presumed that they are the protectors of the weak ones or women and children, the men portrayed in the novel are the real weak ones who cannot maintain the power and protect the supposed weak members of the family. The male members of the Ayemenem house are hollow male chauvinist. They are incapable to protect physically or emotionally the supposed weak ones. Instead they are cared and provided. The male characters show the destructive instincts of domineering. Aida Balvannanadhan rightly quotes:

> Male unproductiveness in the novel takes on many aspects amongst which are spiteful destruction of female creativity,
clumsy and hopeless endeavours as to construction, and an inability of assuming a paternal male whether it is real or symbolic. The only successful male endeavours that are enumerated are negative and spiteful acts of destruction by petulant and envious male members of the family or the planned crime by the representatives of law in the name of tradition.6

The world of men is all corrupted and decaying. Though the life of Reverend Ipe’s is not revealed a lot but the emotional disparity in the couple exhibited through the photograph is enough to highlight the dominant position he acquires as Ammachi has to follow his way rather than to assert her own. Pappachi’s life is full of jealousy for Mammachi’s creativity and success. Chacko’s life is nothing but the fluttering of the ineffectual angel in the void. Comrade Pillai holds the flag of communism but uses its philosophy for his own political stand. Inspector Thomas Mathew evokes hatred and disgust among the readers, so much malicious he is. Orangedrink Lemondrink Man exploits Estha for sheer physical pleasure while Vellya Pappen, Kuttapan and Estha succumb to the exploitation of the manipulators. Hence the world is full of men but the men who are degenerating moral eunuchs, unable to keep the values of life.

The only man (hu-man) in the real sense of the word in the novel is Velutha. He tries to promote the principles of good life among the corrupted ones, the only male character who is able to provide the material as well as emotional needs of female and children.

Concentrating on the world of females into the novel, the study leads to transpire the anguish consciousness of feminine world. On the
structural front the novel delineates the three generations of women but in the real sense of the word the first generation woman portrayed by the writer is Aleyooty Ammachi and her married life with Reverend E. John Ipe. She is the great grandmother of Estha and Rahel. Not providing enough information about her life, she is just referred twice in the whole story, existing in the story as a blurred memory. Her description is so much suggestive that the portrait of the women at the time can be drawn easily. The oil portrait of this couple clearly shows the vacuum and gap between husband and wife. Arundhati Roy writes:

Reverend Ipe smiled his confident-ancestor smile out across the road instead of the river.

Aleyooty Ammachi looked more hesitant. As though she would have liked to turn around but couldn’t. Perhaps it wasn’t as easy for her to abandon the river. With her eyes she looked in the direction that her husband looked. With her heart she looked away…

The obligation on the woman to accompany her husband against her desires is compulsive theory of submissiveness, which should be practiced rigorously. Otherwise the law expels women out of the boons of patriarchy that protect the individual as well as social status of them. The photograph is itself a representative of positions men and women hold into the society. Posing himself as assertive and confident, he has on his face the smile of an ‘egoist’. Aleyooty Ammachi is portrayed as if she holds all the dynamite of protest but the compulsive principles compel her to bring her submissive and protective soul together to offer herself on the altar of patriarchy. She “looked in the direction that her husband looked” because she has to do it anyway. Though her heart was on other
things only for the coercion she stays physically with her husband. But it is hard to bring her heart to the centre from which it has been strayed.

This is the first woman portrayed defiantly. The disturbances in the marriage of John Ipe and Ammachi have been pointed out. The continuation of the grudge about the husbands carries on from one generation to the next. Her presence through the photograph provides the historical background to the maladjustment in marriage. The oil portrait is the perpetual symbol of ill-fit marriages. Male partners “smile” because of the advantages they are graced by the patriarchal laws; women have to accept, live and carry the consequences of such maladjustments. The first generation is of sacrifices. The ‘personal’ is confided to the four sided frame of the photograph or the kitchen; it is not become political yet.

3.2 Mammachi: A Thorough Patriarch:-

Mammachi is the first full grown woman character of the first generation, Arundhati Roy has portrayed. The information about her ancestry is not provided as the necessary part of her identity since a woman is identified by her husband’s name and need not carry the name of her parents. So it is always unnecessary in Indian context to know the ancestral information of a woman.

Her roles in the novel are of a submissive wife, son loving mother, despising and jealous mother-in-law, discriminating grandmother, a successful businesswoman, and a thorough patriarch. The character of Mammachi must be judged in the context of time and history. The generation she represents is bound to the tradition and convention. Though intellectual, her mind follows the patterns of patriarchy without asking any question of its righteousness. The problem she faces is the
protest of the second generation and to cope with the new-born ideologies.

Exploring the life of a married woman the first antagonist relation she lives is with her mother-in-law. As Rahel is the narrator of the novel and she is the granddaughter of Mammachi, she does not recall anything about the relationship of Ammachi and Mammachi. However might be the nature of Ammachi, Mammachi could not have been complaining because as she has accepted her husband’s incongruous behaviour; she could have accepted the lots of Ammachi.

The next relation Mammachi has lived of an uncomplaining wife. Her life as a wife not only exhibits the workings of patriarchy but also the impact of patriarchy on the minds of women. Mammachi’s married life seems ‘ideal’ in an Indian context. As Maya in Cry the Peacock fulfils all the conditions of a happy married woman in the same way Mammachi too fulfils all the conditions of a happy married woman. She has a well settled, educated scientist husband, a son and a daughter, wealth and all caste security. On the surface level she is the happiest woman amongst all the other women characters in the novel. She holds the power to manipulate the lives of the other powerless people. Along with Baby Kochamma, she plays both of the roles of an oppressor and oppressed. When she gets power in her hand she uses it for oppression and mainly against women. This is the role women play to perpetuate the patriarchy. In case of Ammu, Mammachi plays the role almost of a patriarch. Thus she becomes a complex character playing a lot of paradoxical roles at a time.

A noted entomologist Benaan John Ipe, the real name of Pappachi, Mammachi’s husband is a self centred and jealous person from beginning
to the end. His discovery of a newly discovered species of Moth failed him when he was working as an Imperial Entomologist at the Pusa Institute. Though educated he holds the Victorian views of patriarchy. His life certainly changes when after his retirement his Moth is named “after the Acting Director of the Department of Entomology, a junior officer whom Pappachi had always disliked.” This only aggravates his grudge against Mammachi and his children.

Mammachi’s life with him before this incident is not a pleasing one. As a young man, Pappachi goes to Vienna for taking six-month diploma course for the Imperial Entomologist. During these months Mammachi took lessons on the violin. “The lessons were abruptly discontinued when Mammachi’s teacher, Launsky - Tieffenthal, makes the mistake of telling Pappachi that his wife is exceptionally talented and, in his opinion, potentially concert class.” His spiteful nature towards his wife has been exhibited through his ill treatment of her. The life becomes more unbearable for Mammachi when his moth is acknowledged as of different species after his retirement.

Mammachi’s ‘exceptional talent’ has been already recognized by the concert class teacher; it proves further on when she engages into the pickle business. Mammachi becomes successful and persists with the pickles and jam, becoming busier all the year round. Pappachi finds it difficult to cope with her talent at the same time his own ignominy of retirement. Furthermore “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.”

Pappachi’s life changes not only due to his failure in getting fame and success but also due to Mammachi’s success. The realization of her
still blooming youth makes him more perturbed. His frustration over his inability to cope with Mammachi’s capabilities and dexterity in his old age hastens the gulf between husband-wife relationship.

Though educated Pappachi carries the mind of a stern patriarch who distinguishes the masculine world from the feminine, referring what is feminine is inferior. Because of conical corneas, Mammachi is almost blind but Pappachi hesitate to help her, believing that pickle making is not a suitable job for a high ranking ex-Government official. As a man he is conscious of his higher status; he does not want himself to be involved into the kitchen work, the area particularly confined to women only. Associations with this world invite the feeling of inferiority. Instead of showing any sympathy towards her, he “beats her with a brass flower vase,”\(^{11}\) the mark of his right to abuse her lawfully. In a moment of agitation, he breaks the bow of Mammachi’s violin and throws it into the river. The assertion of male chauvinism and atrocities women are subjected to be taken for granted as he is a man and she is a woman. Though Mammachi suffers from the physical as well as emotional abuse she submissively accepts the lots of her husband thinking it as the rule of nature. Mohit Kumar Ray rightly puts the reaction of Mammachi in the following words:

He completely rejected Mammachi and insulted her in every possible way. Even his rejection Mammachi accepted passively and submissively. In other words, she accepted the female role model imposed on her by the society—docile, submissive, ungrudging, unprotecting. It is possibly because of the trained sensibility, the way she had been worked into the feminine role model…\(^{12}\)
The feminine role model of a wife further extends to the role of a mother, though in this relationship women enjoy some status and power, the role shifts from an exploited to the exploiter. Certainly Chacko’s home coming for summer vacation from oxford brings a new phase in Mammachi’s life. A week later after his coming to the house, he finds Pappachi is beating Mammachi in the study. He strides into the room and catches Pappachi’s hand threatening him “I never want this to happen again…” The event completely snaps the thin bond between Mammachi and Pappachi; the bond existed only on the principles of domineering, when the domineering ceased, the bond too fated to cease. Afterwards Pappachi never touches her again, never speaks to her. And if he needs something, he uses either Kochu Maria or Baby Kochamma as intermediaries. Though the bond of oppression ceased, the hatred grows and he starts to exhibit before the people outside Ayemenem. When some visitors were expected;

...he would sit in the verandah and sew buttons that weren’t missing onto his shirt, to create the impression that Mammachi neglected him. To some small degree he did succeed in further corroding Ayemenem’s view on working wives.

The grudge against his wife turns into the feeling of vengeance. Pappachi succeeds in convincing other people that the educated and independent woman neglect the domestic duties, their husbands and children. It should be noted that the educated people work as an icons for the society and what is propagated by them; the common people easily believe or accept. The impression Pappachi makes of Mammachi is opposite to the general expectation of the community. Women’s domestic role and their duties for their family are always preferred irrespective of their economical
status. If they indulge in the economic and political areas neglecting the
domestic duties, such acts are resented and rejected. Therefore the people
always stand opposite to women’s independence.

Mammachi’s life transforms after the complete breakdown of the
non-existent marital bond with her husband. Her maternal love for
Chacko grows into an obsession since the day he has prevented his father
from beating his mother. The day afterwards;

Mammachi 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.\textsuperscript{15}

The description has Oedipal overtones. She drives all her “womanly
feelings” towards her son; the all “womanly feelings” include her sexual
life too. Mammachi’s sexual life is certainly disturbed as her husband is
fairly older than her and she was “still in her prime.” She “can live her
sexuality by proxy through the control she exerts over her son’s
sexuality”.\textsuperscript{16}

Mammachi plays both of the roles as an oppressor and oppressed
with her son, Chacko. When he takes over the factory and declares
Mammachi as a “sleeping partner,” she becomes oppressed. But the role
she plays in feeding her son’s “men’s needs,” becomes the oppressor.
Mammachi becomes the usurper of Chacko’s ‘manliness’ or male role.
Mammachi’s sexuality turns into a perverse and active interest in her
son’s sex life that transforms itself into a symbolic castration of the son
…\textsuperscript{17} Mammachi’s erasure of her son’s maleness comes through the form
of her consumption of his virility as she takes over the control of his sex
life in a subliminal replacement of her lost sexuality with her husband
who no longer even addresses her.

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Mammachi’s attitude towards Margaret Kochamma is also a function of the same patriarchal society and shows her feminine jealousy for the woman whom her son has loved and got married. Mammachi despises Margaret Kochamma not because of her being a shopkeeper’s daughter but Chacko’s wife. Ammu feels that though Margaret Kochamma has left Chacko, he has continued to love her. But Mammachi disagrees. “She liked to believe that he had never liked her in the first place.” She looks down upon Margaret Kochamma just as another whore so when she sleeps with him; Mammachi pays money in exchange of sex to her. In this way she tries to posses her son’s sexual life by any means.

Mammachi as a grandmother of Ammu’s children is different to Chacko’s daughter. In the first place Mammachi believed that the children cannot be brought well without father. Her daughter after the divorce is unwelcome, so her twins are. This is not only the reason why she resented the twins’ return to Ayemenem but also for that they are not the rightful heir of Pappachi. Hence her treatment of the twins is discriminatory. It is clearly evident through Sophie Mol’s arrival. She was eager to receive her son’s daughter, the rightful heir of Pappachi’s lineage. When Sophie Mol arrives at Ayemenem she asks “Where’s my Sophie Mol?” The question sounds more affectionate than she demonstrated at the arrival of Rahel and Estha. Mammachi draws Sophie Mol close to her eyes to look at her so that she can find the traces of Pappachi’s lineage in her. Finally she succeeds in tracing “Pappachi’s nose.” She feels pride in her son’s daughter more than daughter’s twins.

The death of Sophie Mol brings havoc as it denotes the erasure of Pappachi’s lineage. It proves more disastrous than anything else to the family. Daughter’s children are milestones for the family and if they are
responsible for Sophie’s death, they are more despised after the hazardous incident. The treatment meted to the twins is out of only the patriarchal ideology of ‘Bij-Kshetra Nyaya’ theory. It is the son’s children who carry the seeds of the lineage and not the daughter’s.

The shams and hypocrisies of the patriarchy are all exposed through the character of Mammachi. She is the archetypal character who protests the patriarchal ideologies. She acts as an active agency to perpetuate the male domination supporting gender discrimination and caste biases. She represents the first generation woman who actively participates in the destruction of the innovative ideologies which fights against the patriarchal outlooks.

3.3 BABY KOCHAMMA:

Baby Kochamma is one of the important characters in the novel as she survives till the end of the story. She plays the two decisive roles of a transgressor of patriarchy and the conformer of it. She is the only living character of the first generation showing two aspect of womanhood; one tries to revolt against the age old tradition by loving a man before marriage and the other is the suppressor of the revolt itself. In the first instance she is a rebellious, living her life according to her own wishes to some extent; she is also a revolutionary force who tries to assert the self. But the suppression of the same force transforms her into the violent force which works as a suppressor.

Though Baby Kochamma and Mammachi belong to the same generation, Mammachi does not find emotional fulfilment in her life and Baby Kochamma defies the codes of love by loving Father Mulligan before marriage, and succeeds in finding emotional fulfilment. The patriarchal setup not only controls women’s physical, sexual life but also
their emotional. Baby Kochamma’s love for Father Mulligan is her emotional right to be fulfilled but is denied. Though on practical level, she cannot be a woman who can drive Father Mulligan towards her, she defiles the patriarchal norms by loving him in her mind. Hers is a platonic love. Anyhow this can be counted as a courageous act in the rigidly oppressive environment. To live her emotional life according to her own wishes, she dares to go against her father; to be with Father Mulligan, she converts to Roman Catholic. This indicates her “stubborn single-mindedness” in defying her father. Though patriarchy succeeds in controlling Baby Kochamma’s physical life, her emotional life stands apart to the submission.

Patriarchy exerts its power not only through ideologies but also through physical confinements and sexual control. Although she ventures to go against the set-norms, she can be captured at the physical level. The realization of her father that her daughter has developed a ‘reputation’ he decides not to find a husband for her. The decision affects Baby Kochamma’s sexual life as well as her psychic make-up due to the unfulfilled desires in her mind.

The decision has been taken on the behalf of Baby Kochamma without consulting her as her opinions are completely out of question. She has to be the passive receiver of the commands of her father though it concerns her. She has to live as a spinster throughout her whole life. Thus her sexual life is automatically controlled.

Baby Kochamma’s suppressed sexuality transforms her into a sadist. “Baby Kochamma is a study in meanness and perversion that may result from unnatural self-repression and the consequent frustration.” The natural self of a woman is either negated or transformed into the
patriarchal pattern. If a woman could mould herself into the patriarchal role she acts as an oppressor, if she forcibly made to accept the role, she becomes sadist, and if she chooses intentionally to rebel, she becomes rebellious or oppressed. Mammachi falls in the first kind of women; Baby Kochamma falls in the second category and Ammu in the third. Baby Kochamma’s subsequent villainy is the result of her suppressed sexuality.

Baby Kochamma’s relationship with Mammachi is based on the communal agreement. They both share the patriarchal ideology. When Mammachi tells her of Chacko’s “men’s needs” she willingly accepts it, never complaining against Chacko’s sexual indulgence with the low caste women. As there is an antagonistic relationship between Chacko and Ammu, there is not between Pappachi and Baby Kochamma. Knowing that Ayemenem is not her rightful place to live, she willingly accepts Pappachi’s right over parental property and as a girl child she should not interfere in the tradition. Furthermore she is a spinster and all of the members of the family have accepted her spinsterhood; she is only the member of the family and not the usurper of his property. The other reason lies in “an ancient, age-old fear, the fear of being disposed.” Baby Kochamma takes protective stance by accepting the age-old laws of property inheritance. Hence she is not a threat to the patriarchal ideology.

Baby Kochamma directs the suppressed instinct of revenge and antagonism towards Ammu, Velutha, and the twins. Though educated abroad Baby Kochamma is unmoved by the liberal ideas. It is difficult to uproot patriarchy from the Indian soil. Baby Kochamma is so much embedded in patriarchal ideology that the western education and the modern principles prove failure to change the patriarchal mind. Not acknowledging the injustice meted out to women and the oppressed, Indian notional system harbourers the traditional views of male
domination. Baby Kochamma, though suffered herself does not recognize the need of transformation and collaborates to strengthen the power structures acting as a powerful tool of oppression. The first target she sites to condemn the violation of laws is Ammu. For three reasons Baby Kochamma hates Ammu:

1. Ammu has the courage not only to choose herself but without informing her parents she gets married Baba while Baby Kochamma lacks this courage.

2. When Ammu finds herself caught in her wrong decision, she lives her husband behind. Baby Kochamma never approves this action because a woman has been given no chance of remedies.

3. The third and the most important reason is Ammu’s sexual involvement in a low caste Paravan. Ammu defies all norms of caste and community and dares to fulfil herself both physically and emotionally.

The above discussed reasons aggravate Baby Kochamma’s suffering as she proves herself weak to assert her ‘self’. Arundhati Roy writes, “Baby Kochamma resented Ammu, because she saw her quarrelling with a fate that she, Baby Kochamma herself, felt she had graciously accepted. The fate of the wretched man-less woman. The sad, Father Mulligan-less Baby Kochamma”.25 Hence the word “fate” is once again synonymous to patriarchy. In Cry the Peacock the word too connected with patriarchy.

Instead of physical inhibition, Baby Kochamma continues to love Father Mulligan after his death. She herself transgresses the code of love and religion and disapproves the true love of her niece. Baby Kochamma tries to posses Father Mulligan at least in fantasy. She felt that “her memory of him was hers. Wholly hers. Savagely, fiercely hers. Not to be shared with Faith, far less with competing co-nuns and co-Sadhus or
whatever it was they called themselves.” All her life she made a fresh entry in her diary, “I love you I love you” and even after Father Mulligan’s death, “every night, night after night, year after year, in diary after diary, she wrote: I love you I love you.” Mohit Kumar Ray is right in his judgment that “her frustration in love and lack of understanding of her feelings on the part of her parents made her a neurotic…”

Baby Kochamma understands herself better than any other women characters; she is self conscious; she too understands the “men’s needs.” But she fails to understand the needs of women. Her workings against Ammu are nothing but the destruction of her true self. Paulina Palmer quotes Rhodes Dusty and McNeill Sandra in connection with women’s violence against women:

Under male supremacy women’s status depends greatly on male approval. If we don’t conform we pay heavy penalties. It means that many women mutilate and injure themselves… This is important in the maintenance of male power. It prevents us seeing each other as allies, but sets us as enemies, always in competition.

Injuring other women or the oppressed one, women almost work as a patriarch. When women are the oppressed one, their mind is dominated by the feminine mould of submission and acceptance but when these oppressed women preside over the power structure the patriarchal power structure works through them. It is not the women who injure other women but the power structure works through them to destruct other women.

Not only women’s rebellion is crushed down but also of men through the patriarchal and caste systems. Baby Kochamma, though
being a woman, cannot accept Ammu’s voluntary sexual involvement but she can easily accept Chako’s “manly needs” and Inspectors Mathew’s humiliation of her niece. The reason lies in communal approval. In case of Velutha the law does not permit to “enter” into the high caste woman. The defilement of the laws brings due punishment of castration. Indirectly Baby Kochamma is responsible for Velutha’s death and mutilation of his genitals.

Baby Kochamma tries to posses throughout her life what is her due by trying to secure her place that is why she has not defiled. After the death of Pappachi, Mammachi, the rightful heir of John Ipe- Sophie Mol, Ammu, Chacko’s exile, Baby Kochamma inherits the whole property. She wears;

Rahel’s dead grandmother’s jewellery. All of it. Winking Rings. Gold bangles and a beautifully crafted flat gold chain that she touched from time to time reassuring herself that it was there and that it was hers. Like a young bride who couldn’t believe her good fortune,”

Baby Kochamma never gets possession on the things she coveted. When she gets the opportunity, she does not want to share this prospect with anyone. Rahel and Estha’s presence in the home poses threat to her. After her death they will be the usurpers of her belongings. So she dislikes the children thinking them as not her responsibility; they are the rightful responsibility of their father. If Sophie Mol could have lived, Baby Kochamma would have declared her as the rightful heir of the property. So she instructs Rahel to leave the house as early as possible with Estha, as their mother does not have “locus stand I,” the children too do not have.
3.4 AMMU: A REBELLIOUS FORCE:-

The transformation of the whole feminist history of Indian modernist era has been summed up into this novel through the attitudes of various male and female characters. From a submissive feminine role to a partly rebellious one and to the completely transformed panoramas are beautifully portrayed with its effect on the society and the subject itself. The next woman character study which carries the force of revolution and the stamina to bear all the lots of revolt is Ammu. She is the life force of the novel and represents the whole generation of lacerated anguish.

The full portrait of a woman from childhood to a grown up woman, from an unsuccessful wife to a defeated mother, from a rebellious daughter to a successful beloved and from a defiant rebel to a horrifyingly crushed soul is the life sketch of Ammu. She is the single character which is portrayed with gusto, life, consciousness for one’s right and the assertion of self. From her childhood to her viable-dieable age, *The God of Small Things* is Ammu life story.

Ammu’s childhood is peculiar as she is the daughter of a wealthy, highly educated scientist. The world ‘daughter’ itself determines her future although she is born in an educated family. She suffers from discrimination, negligence, atrocities, vengeance, hatred, expulsion and subordination. Both her father and mother treat her as an unnecessary burden that should be relieved anyhow. The discrimination sows the seeds of rebellion and it later on sprout out in the form of acknowledgement and assertion of self.

Ammu, Chacko, Rahel, Estha and Sophie Mol are all the by-products of broken marriage explicitly or implicitly. In case of Ammu and Chacko, they are not literally suffered from the break-down of
marriage; they are the output of the ill-fate marriage. As a boy Chacko is not affected by the broken relationship of his parents as Ammu as a girl suffered at the hands of her father and mother. The treatment she meted out in her childhood makes her life worst later on.

As a girl Ammu is open to all hazards in her own family; in her case Electra complex does not work; her father never loves or protects her. In case of Maya, her father over protects her from all of the threats of life she is likely to face. But Pappachi is not the type of father who cares for his daughters emotions. As a girl she is fairly beaten by her father along with her mother. Once he sniffs off her gumboots out of his hatred towards her; the incident later on widens the gulf between their relationship and aggravates hate in her heart for her father to the degree that it compels her not to count him at all in her life. Afterwards he never cares for her studies or marriage. Her parents’ company, she abhors and considers Ayemenem as nothing but suffocation for her growing spirit.

As a child Ammu realizes the discriminatory approach of her parents. Mammachi dotes on Chacko; Pappachi has never inflicted Chacko more than Ammu. As a girl she is deprived of education since her father considers education of women an “unnecessary expense.”

contrary, Chacko is sent to continue his education to Oxford because it is deemed his right as he is born as a boy. Leaving education incomplete, Ammu has to come back to Ayemenem after Pappachi’s retirement. Now she has to wait for marriage, a necessary condition for a girl to live life. Meanwhile she works with her mother in household chorus, living with a sense of a worthless life. But soon the disinterest from her parents’ results in just the pending of marriage and Ammu begins to grow desperate. She tries to escape from the dull household chorus. “All day she dreamed of
escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother. She hatched several wretched plans."

Ammu’s struggle from “the clutches” is symbolic of generations’ protest of women. Home always symbolizes confinement in women’s literature. Ammu urge to cross the threshold is nothing but women’s dissent to the age old traditions and values. As she gets the opportunity, she utilizes it to make herself free from the suffocating clutches. Only marriage can guarantee her escape from the desperate situation she has been caught in. One day “Pappachi agreed to let her spend the summer with a distant aunt who lived in Culcutta” where she gets married Baba, a man of low morals.

Ammu gets married Baba not out of love but out of the wish to leave Ayemenem; in a fit of desperation, “She thought that anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem.” But it soon transpires that she has actually fallen from the frying pan to fire. She realizes that her decision of marriage is wrong but the Indian marriage tradition does not permit to mend the wrong. This is the compulsion on both of the partners to carry the vow though it is harassing to either of them or both of them.

Ammu is really a self respected and confident woman. As Mammachi bears all the callousness of her husband, Ammu is not a type of woman who confirms the strategies of ideal womanhood. To secure his job Baba readily accepts the offer of Mr. Hollick to procure Ammu. He not only imposes the proposal on her but also beats her up badly. The outlook of the men towards women is evident through the incident. For both of them, Baba and Mr. Hollick, women are nothing but the commodities to be exchanged. Mr. Hollick’s attitude is just of an
exploiter while Baba’s is of a master. He can rule over his wife as a slave; she is treated as a property that can be sold or exchanged.

Ammu’s reaction to the proposal is unconventional, just and violent. She knows the dignity of herself as a human being and protest to the treatment as a slave. Initially she just keeps the angry dissent over the proposal but infuriated by the silence, Baba mal-treats her. “Suddenly he lunged at her, grabbed her hair, punched her…” The treatment projects the viewpoint of men towards women when they do not comply with the men’s words.

Ammu cannot be a silent sufferer like her mother as she does not tolerate the ill-treatment of her husband passively. She transpires the changed temperament when she hits him back with The Reader’s Digest World Atlas. When the ill-treatment terminates nowhere and he starts to beat the children along with her, Ammu leaves her husband and returns, unwelcomed, to her parents in Ayemenem.

It can be counted as a revolutionary step in 1960s to break off a marriage for a woman. For Indian women dignity and self respect lies in the moral life. Immoral life for the sake of material gains is disapproved. Furthermore purity in sexual life implies purity of married life. The efforts are taken to keep sexual life as pure as possible. Ammu as a woman has considered both about her self-esteem as a human being and the improper advice of her husband to procure herself to a foreigner for the material gain. As the situation deteriorates to the bouts of violence towards her children, she adopts the stance of a genuine mother.

In Ayemenem no one appreciates Ammu’s decision of leaving her husband. Mammachi prefers to live with her husband though he is domineering; she does not believe in the independent existence of a
woman outside marriage. As far as Ammu’s children are concerned they are nuisance for everyone and especially for Mammachi as she thinks that “what her grandchildren suffered from worse than Inbreeding. She meant having parents who have divorced.”

Ammu’s life as a wife is ceased only at the age of twenty-four. Unwittingly Ammu spoils her “only one chance” by making the irrevocable mistake of choosing the wrong man. The status of a woman instantly changes after a woman’s decision of leaving her husband. She is demeaned to the status of an untouchable, a symbol of complete deterioration of her social position. She is ostracized by the members of the society and mostly by women who always sympathise with her lowly state:

Within the first few months of her return to her parents’ home. Ammu quickly learned to recognize and despise the ugly face of sympathy. Old female relations with incipient beards and several wobbling chins made overnight trips to Ayemenem to commiserate with her about the divorce. They squeezed her knee and gloated. She fought off the urge to slap them. Or twiddle their nipples. With a spanner. Like Chapline in Modern Times.

The state of separation from husband is considered as ominous. Especially the female relatives lament the divorce as it is regarded as the death of the self of a woman. Indian patriarchal culture does not support the culture of independence among women. They are either condemned on the basis of being immoral or irresponsible for domestic duties. The most respectable state a woman enjoys only with her husband and dies in her in-laws house; however it may be harassing. The biased attitude of
the people towards the norms of a married woman carries the responsibility of harbouring the wrong notions into the society. The extent to which Ammu is ostracized by the society is emphasised by Baby Kochamma in the following words;

… a married daughter had no position in her parent’s home. As for a divorced daughter—according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma’s outrage. As for a divorced daughter from intercommunity love marriage—Baby Kochamma chose remain quiveringly silent on the subject.41

The grounds on which Ammu is spurned are counted with precision. She is fourthly removed from the safety of arrange marriage and each word in italics assigns the lower status to her existence and highlights the digressions Ammu has made.

The divorce extinguishes Ammu’s life as a woman, her physical, sexual and emotional needs are ended as soon as she parts from her husband. The only role which is left to her is of a mother, the challenge of bringing children without the economical and emotional support of their father and her parents, a quite difficult thing for a single woman, devoid of personal fortune of her own. Being economically dependent on her brother and parents, Ammu is unable to afford the expenses of her children. They are wholly dependent on the mercy of Mammachi, Chacko, and Baby Kochamma. The situation affects not only to their material position but also to their psychic life. The life seems struggle for survival for the twins and Ammu herself.
Ammu is conscious of the fact that her children are the product of broken marriage. She tries to love the twins more than a father and a mother could do; she feels elated whenever she sees her children happy. She acknowledges the truth that no one in Ayemenem loves her twins. For Mammachi they are nothing but nuisance; Baby Kochamma “grudged them their moments of high happiness.” Ammu’s struggle for rights, hate for her relatives including Chacko, and her urge for sexual fulfilments are the issues discussed in the novel. Her love for her children and her urge for sexual fulfilment are the two sides of her same ‘self’ which strives for self-fulfilment.

The intimacy between Velutha and the twins is the aspiration of a mother who tries to fulfil the world of her children through love. Along with her Velutha is the single human being in whole Ayemenem who loves her twins. When she watches Velutha tossing up Rahel and catching her again, she becomes glad since she “saw on Rahel’s face the high delight of the airborne young.” The moment proves decisive as she becomes conscious of herself as a ‘woman’ and Velutha as a ‘man’.

She saw the ridges of muscle on velutha’s stomach grows taught and rise under his skin. Like the divisions on a slab of chocolate. She wondered at how his body has changed—so quietly, from a flatmuscled boy’s body into a man’s body. Contoured and hard. A swimmers body. A swimmer-carpenter’s body. Polished with a high-wax body polish.

Ammu’s sexual urge is not only fired by Velutha’s ‘manly’ presence but also because of his love for her twins. Her oppressed existence, trodden youth and frustrated desires draw her towards Velutha who is also a transgressor, an oppressed and marginalized. She loves Velutha for his
courage to dissent from the established norms and for the same rebellious force, she carries in her heart of heart.

Ammu’s relation with Velutha has complex dimensions. As a high caste woman she hates him but as a marginalized woman she loves him more than anyone else. Ammu loves Velutha more because of his protesting spirit than his exceptional body features and his adoration for her children.

The treatment she has been meted out from her parents and the society has developed in her a sense of grudge against the oppressors. Her subordinate status and the lack of “Locusts Stand I” diminishes her existence to the level of a no-where woman. Her brother, Chacko possesses everything what is his and her too. Ammu develops a kind of rancour against the society and her own relatives. Rahel describes Ammu as an “unmixable mix” combining the infinite tenderness of motherhood and “the reckless rage of a suicide bomber.” The determination with which she fights with the fate is praiseworthy. Knowing that Small things are always bullied by the Big things, she articulates “cold calculating cruelty” against the Big things. These realizations project the two rebellious forces together.

The third reason for which Ammu has been driven towards Velutha is sexual urge, her right which is denied by the social oppressive strategies. Her sexual life ceases instantly along with the change of legal status. “However, the sexual energy cannot be purged even it is suppressed or controlled, can turn into energy used elsewhere, or it can also ‘turn’ in the sense of becoming altered in a negative manner.” Mammachi’s sexuality turns into a perverse interest in her son’s sexual
life, Baby Kochamma’s turns into a sadist and Ammu’s turns into a rebellion.

Ammu has lived a conscious life from her childhood to death. Her ever looking conscious lurks over the narration providing it the feminist edge. Ammu’s “fatal attraction” for the untouchable Velutha does not sprout out of sheer physical intimacy; “She knew who he was – the God of Loss, the God of Small Things of course she did.” The conscious intentional transgression lies at the root of the revolt and not the fleeting anger.

Further Ammu’s sexual desires are indebted in her individuality. A woman is burdened with the wifely, motherly, and womanly duties of motherhood. But when she becomes conscious of her body, “She shrugged her children off the way a bitch shrugs off her pups when she had enough of them…. She wanted her body back. It was her body.” Her own identity as a woman/female having sexual desires and her role as a mother is clearly distinguished by her recognition of presence of body. Hence the romantic notions of motherhood are terribly shaken. A woman is portrayed realistically who wants herself free from the compulsions of carrying children all her life. Thus her fatal attraction is the representation of her true ‘self’.

Ammu breaks the discourse of sexuality by loving a Paravan and taking initiative into the sexual boats. Fearlessly she mixes with him and lays the length of her body against his. Velutha knows it is his own annihilation. Though he is a man, he does not hold the power before her as an untouchable, he is marginal before her. Merging of centre and periphery into each other is an act of Ammu and Velutha’s involvement into each other. This is a “worst transgression” for the tradition keepers.
Ammu as a high caste woman plays the role of a patriarch and taking the side of Paravan means marginalizing her own status. This poses a threat to the other patriarchs who try to secure the centrality and power. Men’s exhibition of sexuality is a token of their virility. If a man engages in extra-marital love affairs, it is taken as normal course; Chacko’s “men’s need” are all known, even though no one has shame on his misconduct, even it is never considered as misconduct. Mammachi, Baby Kochamma and all the members of the society have accepted it as a norm. But when the same thing happens with a woman, the case becomes the annihilation of the reputation of the family. Mammachi and Baby Kochamma’s reaction to Ammu’s love affair is worth noting:

She has defiled generations of breeding (The Little Blessed One, blessed personally by the Patriarch of Antioch, an Imperial Entomologist, a Rhodes Scholar from Oxford) and brought the family to its knees. For generations to come, for ever now, people would point at them at weddings and funerals. At baptisms and birthday parties. They’d nudge and whisper. It was all finished now.49

The comments represent the extent to which women are confined to the moral laws. The social inhibition to keep a woman moral is so intense that when it is defiled the social life of the concerned family terminates within seconds; this brings to the front the hypocrite moral principles. The double standard of the patriarchal society favours men more than women.

The brother patriarch is mostly affected by the deviant act of Ammu. The rightful heir of Ayemenem threatens an outsider to leave the
home as early as possible. The voice with which he speaks is of an authority, right and supremacy; he gives command to her;

*Pack your things and leave,* Chacko had said. And Ammu, though her hands were trembling, hadn’t looked up from her unnecessary hemming. A tin of ribbons lay open on her lap.⁵⁰

Ammu is thrashed down by the authorial power of Chako. She does not have now any right to live in Ayemenem. She is so much helpless that she couldn’t even look at Chacko. Though traditionally she is wrong, biologically she is right. If she herself is non-existent how her biological self could exist. If publically she is exposed, she must bear the consequences of it. The rightful punishment for her is death-in life.

The woman involves in extra-marital sexual relationships is labelled as *Veshya.* For every digression, a woman is labelled with derogating term. But no such derogating term is labelled to check immoral conduct of men; these are the consequences of the patriarchal social-set. When Ammu’s own relatives despise her on account of her illicit relation, the society will definitely expel her to the domain of prostitution. Inspector Thomas Mathew goes to the extent of humiliating Ammu openly by touching her breasts as she has lost the social respect by involving in a low caste Paravan. He knows that he can openly insult this woman without any fear or compunction. When Ammu visits the police station, he;

stared at Ammu’s breasts as he spoke. He said the police knew all they needed to know and that the Kottayam Police didn’t take statements from *Veshyas* or their illegitimate children…. Inspector Thomas Mathew came around his desk
and approached Ammu with his baton…. Then he tapped her breasts with his baton. Gently. *Tap, tap.* As though he was choosing mangoes from the basket. Pointing out the ones that he wanted packed and delivered.\textsuperscript{51}

The behaviour of the inspector is one of the methods of controlling women’s protest. If it is a male as a protector of the norms then it is the body of the woman which is mean of controlling them. Inspector Mathew uses the ancient armour to defeat Ammu i.e. sexual harassment. A woman exposed publically for her extra-marital sexual involvement means this is a feast to the leers. Ammu is denigrated to the status of a prostitute; she has been caught so much into the fear of being dishonoured that:

She had woken up at night to escape from a familiar, recurrent dream in which policemen approached her with snicking scissors, wanting to hack off her hair. They did that in Kottayam to prostitutes whom they’d caught in the bazaar – branded them so that everybody would know them for what they were. *Veshyas.* So that new policeman on the beat would have no trouble identifying whom to harass. Ammu always noticed them in the market, women with vacant eyes and forcibly shaved heads in the land where long, oiled hair was only for the morally upright.\textsuperscript{52}

Hence women are made target to the humiliation on the pretext of moral behaviour. The social domination drives them almost maniac. Ammu’s horror for her consequences throws her on the verge of degeneration. The “love laws”\textsuperscript{53} are so much valued and protected that the defilement of it devastates the world’s consistency. Ammu’s life shatters after Velutha’s arrest. Her life as a woman has been already extinguished. But what is
affected is her life as a mother. Her twins are deprived of the love of mother; Ammu, Rahel and Estha are badly affected by the separation from each other. Ammu is expelled from the house to live on her own account, Estha is sent to Culcutta to live with his father, Rahel remains with her grandmother for her good upbringing since Ammu has already been labelled as a woman of low morals. Thus life becomes something near to death for all of them still they continue to live till their biological death.

Ammu death is the final expulsion from the right to live. She endeavours to secure a job for her own survival and her children. Slowly as her reputation decays, her body and spirit too loses touch with the life. She attempts frantically to bring her children under her wings but fails to get a job and the right to live a happy life with her children. Her death evokes pity and a sense of regret over the demeaning standards of life which ascribes very few opportunities to women;

Ammu died in a grimy room in the Bharat Lodge in Alleppey, where she had gone for a job interview as someone’s secretary. She died alone. With a noisy ceiling fan for company and no Estha to lie at the back of her and talk to her. She was thirty-one. Not old, not young, but a viable, die-able age.54

The expulsion never ends at the death; it continues after it. The church refuses to bury her. Chacko takes her body to the crematorium where beggars, derelicts and the police custody dead are cremated. Except Chacko and Rahel no one is there to attend the funeral. To collect Ammu’s remains, Chacko and Rahel wait for the pink receipt. “Her ashes. The grit from her bones. The teeth from her smile. The whole of
her crammed into a little clay pot. Receipt No. Q 498673.” The death is not the full stop of humiliation. Ammu is so much erased from the pages of history even the receipt does not name her. What is left, only the ashes and the number of the receipt.

Ammu is a courageous woman who can exhibits her disgruntlement, though she does not have the courage to safeguard herself. She has the courage to accept Velutha as a human being. “She could go out of herself and intensely love a Paravan, an untouchable, shows her moral courage in accepting a man not as a member of any particular class of the society but just as a human being, free from the trappings of the society and capable of authentic human feelings.”

3.5 MARGARET KOCHAMMA: EAST VERSES WEST:-

Margaret Kochamma is the representative of the western ideologies. She poses a stark contrast to the Indian women, particularly Ammu. Her life as a woman, her upbringing, her stance towards marriage and divorce, her life after divorce is in totally contrast to Ammu’s life. Actually both of them have gone through the same pattern of life but the Indian and the Western ideologies have changed their life and destinies.

When Ammu’s life with Margaret’s life is compared, the roots of Ammu’s misery can be examined. Where Ammu has to leave school education and wait for marriage, Margaret has been left to explore the world on her own; she is allowed to live independently. She can make “a youthful assertion of independence;” she can decide what to do with her own life.

The next most important event of Margaret’s life is her decision to marry Chacko. She marries him not out of sheer necessity but love, although that is romantic one, though she herself feels it a real one, or
least at the time of marriage she feels that she loves Chacko genuinely. When the situation is collated to Ammu’s life, she marries Baba not out of love but the compulsion of leaving Ayemenem and the tyranny of her parents. Margaret’s parents do not show any interest in her marriage as in the case of Ammu, but in case of Ammu, her parents are not interested because a daughter has nothing to do with their prestige while Margaret’s parents don’t demonstrate any interest particularly her father because he does not like Indians. So he refuses to attend the wedding. Her mother too disapproves the marriage as she is looking away in the photograph “as though she would rather not have been there.” Within a year Margaret realizes the futility of the marriage and the feelings for Chacko so she decides to leave him.

Chacko as a man in India and in Oxford is totally different. In the West he is as liberate as the liberated western ideologies. He never dominates his wife as a patriarch in India. It is just the shabbiness and insufficiency to feed her and their daughter compels Margaret to leave him. As Ammu has been suffered from the hands of her husband, it is out of the sphere of Margaret’s imagination. Therefore she asks for the divorce.

Before divorcing from Chacko she met Joe, a biologist. He was everything that Chacko was not. “Steady. Solvent. Thin.” Being a practical woman, Margaret Kochamma decides to take divorce from Chacko though he loves her genuinely. After the birth of her daughter she confirms the decision by divorcing her husband.

Margaret leaves Chacko because of his incapacity to make for their family. When compared to Ammu’s involuntary compulsion, hers is a voluntary decision. Ammu is a helpless, dependent, wretched Indian
mother; she cannot bring up her children independently while Margaret is an independent woman from her early life. She can look after her daughter without any other’s help.

After divorce she happily gets married Joe, actually for getting married Joe she divorces from Chacko. Though foreign returned or educated from the foreign countries, the minds of the people from Ayemenem are never changed. Chacko can appreciate Margaret’s decision but cannot imagine of Ammu’s second marriage. Even her family never thinks of her future or happiness. Ammu does not have the right to ponder on her own behalf or her twins. Hence from the age of twenty-four, Ammu has to live a life of a widow. Divorce is not a word for choice but for fate that cannot be altered or changed. Divorce and widowhood are the synonymous words which suggest the same meaning of the extinction of the married or sexual life only for women.

Thus Margaret’s decision of divorce and getting married for the second time is granted, understood and appreciated while Ammu has to fight for her right to be happy with another man.

After Joe’s death Margaret can visit her former husband at least for comfort. She is welcomed to Ayemenem along with her daughter though Chacko’s divorcee married another man and now becomes a widow. Ayemenem’s is a colonial mentality. So the arrival of Margaret is approved due to her ruling class breed. Mammachi though hates her, welcomes her due to the privilege of her son into the family. Margaret is all unknown about Mammachi’s attitude towards her. It is just a visit for her but Mammachi treats her as if she is the real wife of Chacko. Here in India everything comes into the sphere of politics but Margaret’s is a world of fair hearts where human beings and their freedom are counted
most and not the tradition; she is out of the ugly gender and caste politics in India.

3.6 RAHEL: THE WORST TRANSGRESSOR:-

The novel has been seen through Rahel’s red sunglasses. The novel is certainly “by a woman about a woman seen through the eyes of a woman.”60 The novel is suffused with feminine sensibility. Rahel’s narration of Ammu’s tragedy has played the role in making the novel compassionate towards a suffering woman. Next to it, she is a sensitive daughter who can perceive injustices her mother faces. Rahel is the heir of a transgressor so her life is too full of transgressions. She passes all of the boundaries of “Love Laws” and stands as an emancipated woman beyond the sexual taboos.

The study of Rahel as a woman character starts with her being a daughter of a divorcee and a woman who leads immoral life. Rahel in her childhood is immature than Estha; she is portrayed as an innocent girl. But in her adulthood she plays role of an active re-creator of the history. Their life after their departure from their father is fully occupied by Ammu. Estha and Rahel carry their father through their habits. Ammu always endeavours to protect them from the hostile world. When Ammu’s love affair with Velutha is detected, three of them suffer to their utmost. Being the children of a divorcee they are marginalized from the rights of being loved. After Velutha’s arrest they are abandoned from their mother’s love. When their mother dies they really become “a pair of small bewildered frogs engrossed in each other’s company, lolling arm down a highway full of hurtling traffic.”61 But soon they are divested of the comfort of each other’s company too.
Rahel knows that as the children of a daughter, they are not important in the house. Chacko does not give them the pleasure of calling him father. Everyone looks down upon them. When Sophie Mol enters into the family, she instinctively feels that they are abandoned by the family. She is not the centre of the world of Ammu. She “looked around her and saw that she was in a play. But she had only a small part. She was just the landscape. A flower perhaps. Or a tree.” The sense of negligence ascribes in her the feeling of insecurity. When she has been forsaken by her mother, she takes refuge in Velutha’s affection.

Ammu’s death makes her a completely forsaken child. The only source of solace for the twins is Ammu and Velutha who leave them. They themselves destruct their source of love by giving false evidence against Velutha that destructs the lives of all innocent people.

After Ammu’s death Rahel lives with Chacko. Her loveless life makes her an odd girl, exploring life on her own account. She was blacklisted in Nazareth Convent at the age of eleven and was punished to look up the meaning of the word *depravity*. Six months later she was accused of hiding behind the doors and deliberately colliding with her seniors. She confesses the reason why she has done this, “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?” Rahel tries to find out openly the existence of breasts which Ammu does in the privacy of her bathroom. If the search for the hurting of breasts is going on, then their existence should be noted. The religious authority never wants to dig up the bodily presence of a woman. If someone tries to make the presence of the womanly body then definitely, “she didn’t know how to be a girl.” Knowing oneself as a girl means not
questioning or exploring one’s body, a prohibited idea in a male-dominated world.

As an adult woman, Rahel is the representative of the third generation of feminist era. As Ammu is kept as the precious property of honour, Rahel is neglected the more because of her odd behaviour. She too is left without anybody to look after her and to arrange marriage. She is as free as she could. She took admission into a mediocre college of Architecture in Delhi. There she met Larry McCaslin, an American with whom she “drifted into marriage like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge.” But like her mother she too is unsuccessful in her marriage. He is not a patriarch like her grandfather; he loves Rahel as if she is something very precious. “But when they made love he was offended by her eyes. They behaved as though they belonged to someone else…He was exasperated because he didn’t know what that look meant.” It is not only Rahel’s insignificant life which is reflected in her eyes but also Estha’s emotional vacuum too has taken its place in it because “the emptiness in one twin was only a version of the quietness in the other. That the two things fitted together. Like stacked spoons. Like familiar lover’s bodies.” She is nearer to Estha than her husband that causes turmoil in husband-wife relationship which results in the separation of them.

Rahel’s divorce does not cause havoc in her life as she defiantly faces the truth with casual acceptance. Like her mother, she returns to Ayemenem as a divorcee. Ammu represents the generation which considers social norms above individual rights and fulfilment. Rahel projects the transfigured outlook which never bothers about the social inhibition or does not consider the separation from husband as a mark of
denigration. When asked by Comrade Pillai, without feeling any kind of shame and moral weakness she shocks him by saying:

“We are divorced.” Rahel hoped to shock him into silence. “Die – vorced?” His voice rose to such a high register that it cracked on the question mark. He even pronounced the word as though it were a form of death.68

Comrade Pillai still relates divorce to the death; his expression is not shocking for Rahel but amusing one. Thus Rahel represents the emancipated generation of feminism.

Rahel’s relationship with Ammu is based on perfect understanding while all of the other woman-woman relationships are portrayed in the negative light. Ammu is always subjected to the segregation and Mammachi despised her own daughter. Ammu never mal-treats and distinguishes between a daughter and son which results in communal understanding. That’s why Rahel sympathetically re-creates Ammu’s life and becomes as her mother.

Ammu defiles only the caste and community taboos to fulfil her sexual urge while Rahel defiles the taboos of relations and commits incest. Socially the union of Estha and Rahel is repellent and sinful but this is the only relation where they can find fulfilment. They never think of “themselves together as Me, and separately, individually, as We or Us. As though they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities.”69 The feeling of oneness they enjoy from their childhood but their sexual union takes them back to their unified life in their mother’s womb.

In both of the cases of Ammu and Rahel, they initiate to transgress. It is Ammu who first licked Velutha’s body and it is Rahel who pulled
Estha into the bed. Both of them share a kind of rebellious instinct. It is also noteworthy that the love outside marriage fulfils them. One gets love through an untouchable and other from her own brother in the right words her soul-mate.

3.6 OTHER WOMEN:-

The few other women characters appear in the novel. Though they are inconsequential in the development of the plot, they play decisive role in representing the patriarchal mindsets and ideological contribution of them. Among them Kochu Maria accompanies the narration to the end. Along with Kochu Maria, Kalyani – Comrade Pillai’s wife, his mother, niece – Latha and Velutha’s mother contribute to patriarchy. All of them are marginalized and try to keep other women’s status marginalized assuming the state of slavery as natural state of thing.

**Kochu Maria** is an example of the archetype character, the keeper and propagator of the patriarchal norms. What is deep rooted about caste and gender bias, she protects it as if something very important and precious. She tries to keep her identity as a high caste woman, keeping herself aloof from the untouchables. Though a cook in Ayemenem, she does not bear the shadow of untouchables in her kitchen. She wears silver jewellery to show her high caste belongingness.

She always reminds the twins about their right position in the house. Along with all of the members of the family she also despises Ammu and the twins. Once when Estha makes noise by falling into the bed she chides him, “These aren’t your beds. This is not your house.”

She equally contributes to Ammu’s tragedy and the damnation of the children.
Kalyani, Comrade Pillai’s wife is the best illustration of Indian womanhood. She thinks of her husband as a kind of God or Master. To serve is her duty. Comrade Pillai treats her as an object of entertainment while he is at ease. The power relation is evident through the following situation, “Comrade Pillai took off his shirt, rolled it into a ball and wiped his armpits with it. When he finished, Kalyani took it from him and held it as though it was a gift.”71 His mother portrayed as if a non-existent but ever lurking philosophy. She looks “like a bored passenger on a long bus journey.”72

Latha, Pillai’s niece, though a combative looking young girl of about twelve of thirteen, does her part mechanically in reciting a poem, but when interrupted by the appearance of Chacko waits for the permission of Pillai to continue with the poem. The authority of the patriarch is accepted and honoured.

The Dalit women are portrayed superficially. The portrayal is done by the eyes of a patriarch. Though the Dalit men are conscious of the inequality in the caste system, women are portrayed as if they are out of the sphere of public life.

The low-caste women portrayed in the novel are all helpless. They exchange their bodies to the landlords for their “young children and old parents. Or husbands who spent all their earnings in toddy bars.”73 They are exploited on the pretext of earning livelihood. Chacko calls the pretty women of his factory to his room on the pretext of lecturing them on labour rights and trade union law. He then flirts with them calling Comrade, and in return insists them to call him Comrade back.

Once he even took a group of them to attend Trade Union classes that were held in Alleppy. They went by bus and
returned by boat. They came happy, with glass bangles and flowers in their hair.\textsuperscript{74}

The women are portrayed as if they are full time prostitutes. Roy is unsuccessful to look into the sorrows and the compulsion in submitting themselves in sexual harassment. It is only due to the class to which Roy belongs. She could easily critique Chacko’s playing “Comrade! Comrade,”\textsuperscript{75} but fails to probe the inner of the Dalit women. The one line on the death of Velutha’s mother is sufficient to describe the lives of the Dalit women. His mother is died of tuberculosis. Death, misery and humiliation are bound to them from their birth.

It is a worst kind of irony that the Dalits are conscious of inequality among human beings but not among men and women. Though they fight for the honour of the Dalit servant girls “whom they had made pregnant”\textsuperscript{76} i.e. the landlords like Chacko but they fail to understand the inequality of wages among men and women. They fight for “women’s wages be increased from one rupee twenty-five paisa a day, to three rupees, and men’s from two rupees fifty paisa to four rupees fifty paisa a day.”\textsuperscript{77} Communism is itself ignorant about men-women equality. Men have been given more privilege than the women. Hence Dalit women do not have the prospects to be improved on. They are marginalized in their own sphere.
REFERENCES


5) *Loc. Cit*


14) *Loc. Cit.*


170


20) *Loc. Cit.*


36) *Loc. Cit.*


171
40) Ibid., p. 43.
41) Ibid., p. 45-46.
42) Loc. Cit.
43) Ibid., p. 175.
44) Loc. Cit.
45) Ibid., p. 44.
48) Ibid., p. 220.
49) Ibid., p. 258.
50) Ibid., p. 44.
51) Ibid., p. 8.
52) Ibid., p. 161
53) Ibid., p. 177.
54) Ibid., p. 161.
55) Ibid., p. 163.
58) Loc. Cit.
59) Ibid., p. 248.
62) Ibid., p. 172.
63) Ibid., p. 16.
64) Ibid., p. 17.
65) Ibid., p. 18.
66) Ibid., p. 19.
67) Ibid., p. 20.
68) Ibid., p. 130.
69) Ibid., p. 2.
70) Ibid., p. 83.
71) Ibid., p. 272.
72) Ibid., p. 269.
73) Ibid., p. 169.
74) Ibid., p. 65.
75) Ibid., p. 85.
76) Ibid., p. 168.
77) Ibid., p. 69.