CHAPTER - III

THE CHARACTERIZATION IN THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

One of the striking aspects of Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things is the subtle characterization. She portrays the intricate human nature with its egotism, selfishness and sometimes the motiveless malignity of certain characters. The characters in the novel appear to be normal, sympathetic and human; but a closer look will reveal the hidden aspects of their mental make-up. In fact, the fountain of good fiction is character creation and nothing else. And character is a fictional personage depicted in a novel.

According to E.M. Forster a novel that is at all complex often requires flat people as well as round. A serious or tragic flat character is apt to be a bore, but the round character is interesting one. In this novel, there are some round characters like Ammu, Rahel, Velutha, Estha, Baby Kochamma etc. And there are some flat characters like Miss. Mitten, Kelan, Rev. Ipe, Aleyooty Ammachi etc.

Ammu:

Ammu's character is very important in the novel. She is the tragic heroine of the novel. She is the most conspicuous representative of third generation. Her suffering started at a very young age. She finished her schooling the same year that her father retired from his job in Delhi and moved to Ayemenem, Pappachi insisted that college education was unnecessary for a girl. So she had to leave Delhi. She had nothing to do at Ayemenem. Pappachi

did not have enough money to raise a suitable dowry. Naturally, no proposals came her way. She dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem, for her ill-tempered father and bitter long-suffering mother Mammachi. Finally, her father agreed to let her spend the summer with a distant aunt who lives in Calcutta. There, at someone else's wedding reception, Ammu met her future husband. He was on vacation from his job in Assam where he worked as an assistant manager of a tea estate. He was a small man but well built, pleasant looking:

> "He proposed to Ammu five days after they first met. Ammu didn't pretend to be in love with him. She just weighed the odds and accepted. She thought that anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem". (P.39)

She had an elaborate Calcutta wedding. But soon things began to take a very bad shape. Her husband was an alcoholic and he made her smoke. Ammu is beautiful, young and cheeky. She became the toast of the Planters' Club. She wore backless blouses with her saris and carried a silver cigarette holder and learned to blow perfect smoke rings.

She gave birth to twins and by the time they were two years old. Their father's drinking habit had driven him into an alcoholic stupor. Eventually, his English manager, Mr. Hollick ordered him to his bungalow to tell him that he should resign. He had interest in his wife, Ammu. He told him:

> "You're a very lucky man, you know, wonderful family, beautiful children, such an attractive wife--- An extremely attractive wife--- (PP. 41-42)

Clearly, the manager had an eye on Ammu. He suggested that Ammu be sent to his bungalow to be looked after. The only choice left before her was to return, unwelcomed, to her parents in Ayemenem because her body is her

estate. As a mother Ammu loves her children. And her shoulders in her sleeveless sari blouse shone as though they had been polished with a high wax. Sometimes she was the most beautiful woman that Estha and Rahel had ever seen. And sometimes she wasn't.

Baby Kochamma disliked the twins. And even Pappachi, Mammachi and Chacko disliked them. Ammu had great pity about her children. She had responsibility of two children's health, education and protection. Ammu had told them the story of Julius Caesar and how Brutus stabbed him, his best friend in the Senate. She advises to children:

> 'It just goes to show', Ammu said, ' that you can't trust anybody. Mother, father, brother, husband, best friend. Nobody'. (P.83)

In this way, Ammu taught general knowledge and practical knowledge to her children. Hence as a mother, her role in the novel is very significant.

Ammu had an awareness of wonderful male chauvinist society. Ironically, she thanks her brother, Chacko. Ammu falls in love and dreams of her untouchable lover, Velutha. While he had held her little daughter in his arms, she felt that he was not only the giver of gifts but she had gifts to give him. The gift was her own body:

> "Her brownness against his blackness. Her softness against his hardness. Her nut-brown breasts against his smooth ebony chest". (P. 335)

Abu Abraham comments about Ammu and Velutha's affair:

> "Respectable Syrian Christians must feel that the book maligns the community and particularly its womanhood. The explicit references to sex are bad enough, but that a Syrian Christian woman would make love to an untouchable youth is clearly abscene".[1]

Meanwhile, Vellya Paapen, Velutha's father was a mute witness to whatever went on near his house and he rushed to Ayemenem house to give a full factual report. Mammachi thought Ammu had defiled generations of breeding. Then Ammu is locked up while false charges against her untouchable lover Velutha take him to the Police station where he dies due to inhuman beating.

As soon as Ammu gets a chance to go out after Sophie Mol's funeral, she goes to Kottayam Police Station with her twins. And she gives a statement to the effect that Velutha was not a rapist. In return, she has to face insults and humiliation from Inspector Mathew.

The statement given at the Police Station plays havoc in Ammu's life. Meanwhile as a coincidence, Sophie Mol got drowned. Ammu was shown the door and soon we hear about her death. In fact, she died in a grimy room in the Bharat Lodge in Alleppy. The church refused to bury Ammu. So Chacko had to hire a van to transport the body to the electric crematorium. Finally, she became a number Receipt No. Q.498673. In this way patriarchy had punished a woman who looked upon her body as her own. She is made to suffer quite early in her life and continues to suffer throughout her life. Even at her deathbed she was left to herself.

Ammu's erotic, emotional and economic needs cannot be ignored as solitary example. She has a special role to play in the novel of the Christian myth. Her name links her to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and indeed she is mother first and woman later. All through Ammu had been a woman of great

strength, that made possible for her to take the initiative in breaking the love laws. Velutha and Ammu shared no future yet they willingly linked their fates, future, love, madness, hope and joy also.

Thus, Ammu is portrayed as a tragic figure, a woman struggling against her family, her motherhood and society. Ammu emerges as a rebel in the novel who challenges the androcentric notions of her society. For the time being Ammu, Rahel and Estha had no surname because:

> "Ammu was considering reverting to her maiden name, though she said that choosing between her husband's name and her father's name didn't give a woman much of a choice." (PP. 36-37)

Ammu does not want to comply with the role assigned to her by the patriarchal society. She is not ready to accept motherhood or divorced, as a mother, she also fears:

> "Estha could grow up to be a Male Chauvinist Pig." (P.83)

Ammu is the most conspicuous representative of the third generation and she is the tragic heroine of the novel.

Rahel:

Rahel and Estha are the two-egged twins. The twins are jointly addressed as 'them'. This identification of two separate beings and personalities as 'one' affects Estha and Rahel. They believe that:

> "They had known each other before life began". (P.327)

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As individuals, they lack the definite boundaries, the cohesion of thought, the complete privacy of movement that will make each of them as individual.

This identification with each other allows Rahel to know of the experiences that Estha has had. She knows what happens at Abhilash Talkies, is aware of Estha's dreams and his fears. Extreme simplicity of language and innocence of ideas and expressions represent the world of small things. Rahel who is craving for love and affection asks:

> "Chacko ? Is it necessary that people HAVE to love their own children Most in the World?" (P.118)

Rahel does not suffer as much as Ammu did. She has the most rebellious spirit that makes her resort to sexual intercourse in all civilized society. As a student at Nazareth convent, she behaved with a revolting spirit and the nuns thought that she did not know how to be a nice and decent girl. Rahel spent eight years in a college of architecture at Delhi without completing the five year degree course, there Rahel met Larry McCaslin, and immediately she drifted into marriage.

Then she worked for a few months as a waitress in an Indian restaurant and later got divorced from her husband. Rahel's suffering is more psychological than physical. She failed to receive love and affection from parents and elders. When Ammu died, she was only eleven and naturally her wounded psyche made her a rebellious person throughout her life.

After Ammu's death Rahel drifts aimlessly. Like her mother, she contracts a loveless marriage. The marriage is not successful. Then she had

only the support of her brother, Estha. When she hears that Estha has been sent back to Ayemenem, she gives up her job in America and returns to Ayemenem. After her return from America, her memories are presented in a different vocabulary:

> Around now, Rahel thought, if this were Washington, I would be on my way to work. The bus ride. The streetlights. The gas fumes. The shapes of people's breath on the bulletproof glass of my cabin. The clatter of coins pushed towards me in the metal tray. The smell of money on my fingers. The punctual drunk with sober eyes who arrives exactly at 10.p.m.: 'Hey, you! Black bitch! Suck my dick!'. (P.187)

Rahel owned seven hundred dollars and a gold bangle with snakeheads. At last Rahel accepts Estha as a lover:

> "That it really began in the days when the Love Laws were made.
> The laws that lay down who should beloved, and how.
> And how much." (P.33)

Rahel inscribes a novel history for herself. No enclosure can hold her. As a child, she was more a leader than a follower. In fact, she has the strength and determination of a man. She does not allow Baby Kochamma, her grandaunt and Mr. Pillai, the local Marxist politician tortures a lot to her. She comes to protect her twin brother and to build her own empire that her mother had lost. Rahel never has to search for escape routes because in every manner, she remains free. The financial restraints imposed on her mother are meaningless for her because she is educated. Rahel's future remains bright and promising. Intellectually male, physically female, she is capable of extracting the best from both the worlds.

Both Estha and Rahel went on breaking rules knowingly or unknowingly. The comfort they derived from being with each other never made them draw any lines or limits. When Rahel watches Estha in the both it is:

> "Rahel watched Estha with the curiosity of a mother watching her wet child. A sister a brother. A woman a man. A twin a twin". (P.93)

Therefore the question of being shy or ashamed of each other's bodies did not arise. Such a relationship appears strange and wrong to the conventionalist. But they have comfort in lying with each other. They share a perfect vibration of each other's feelings, miseries, worries, curiosities, it is like two bodies with a single soul.

The twins had to save their Ammu but they had consciously betrayed Velutha whom they loved probably only a little less than their Ammu. The grief was unbearable, the memory unforgettable, the guilt unforgivable. How do they condense a colossal guilt except that the two boldly yet sadly break the love laws?

> "Only that there were tears. Only that Quietness and Emptiness fitted together like stacked spoons. Only that there was a snuffling in the hollows at the base of a lovely throat. Only that a hard honey-coloured shoulder had a semi-circle of teethmarks on it. Only that they held each other close, long after it was over. Only that what they shared that night was not happiness, but hideous grief". (P.328)

This strange and shocking relation, the twins shared. But society certainly cannot digest such a relationship. It is considered morally wrong, biologically unfitting. It is simply unthinkable and so unacceptable to a

conditioned society. Roy has left the end of this particular relationship between Estha and Rahel open ended.

Arundhati Roy chooses Rahel as her spokeswoman and through her she brings all others alive on the canvas of her novel. She becomes an omnipresent and omniscient narrator. Rahel's mind becomes a huge Television Screen where different and numberless channels telecast their different programmes live-all the channels simultaneously of course. Through her we meet the communist marches before the Terror in the Christian Priest, Pillai's and Mulligan's, Police Station and Railway Stations, Police Inspectors and Government Officers, Indians, factory workers and British Hotel waitresses. The girl, 18 minutes younger, to her twin brother becomes his creator and creator of all things –at least the recorder, the story teller, the narrator for us.

Baby Kochamma:

Arundhati Roy makes us hear, feel and see Baby Kochamma, the daughter of Reverend E.John Ipe.. Her life was a crushing defeat. Fate was so cruel and unkind to her that she was made to live her life backwards. Her eventful life made the real beginning when she was eighteen and fell in love with Father Mulligan, a handsome young Irish monk. He was in Kerala for a year on deputation from his Seminary in Madras. More than anything else she was sexually excited and made advances to the Irish monk. Her father was not intelligent enough to notice this weakness in her:

> "At first Baby Kochamma tried to seduce. Father Mulligan with weekly exhibitions of staged charity. Every Thursday morning, just when Father Mulligan was due to arrive, Baby Kochamma

> force-bathed a poor village child at the well with hard red soap that hurt its protruding ribs". (P.23)

However, they get neither wedlocked like Margaret and Chacko nor locked like Ammu and Velutha, and yet both continue to be drawn to each other. She keeps making regular entries in her diaries: 'I love you, I love you'. And Father Mulligan continued links with her by writing to her every Diwali and a greeting card every New Year, till he died of Viral hepatitis in the Ashram at Rishikesh. We sympathize with her at least in her weaker moments when she lived in her dreamy, lost world.

She entered a convent in Madras after becoming a Roman Catholic with special dispensation from the Vatican. Her hope was that it would provide her opportunities to be with Father Mulligan. Somehow she wanted to be near him:

> "Just to be near him. Close enough to smell his beard. To see the coarse weave of his cassock. To love him just by looking at him". (P.24)

Then she realized the futility of it. She found that the senior sisters monopolized the priests and bishops with biblical doubts more sophisticated than hers would ever be. She grew restless and unhappy:

> "Baby Kochamma balanced like a big bird over a public pot". (P.95

She was brought back, sent abroad for studies and two years later she returned with a diploma in Ornamental Gardening. After fifty years, she abandoned the ornamental garden to fall in love with her new love. She had installed a dish antenna on the roof of the Ayemenem house. Wars, famines, football, sex, music etc.began to arrive in her drawing room. She could outline

everybody else only to love the Ayemenem house and the furniture she had inherited. She did not have much faith in others. That was what made her lock even her fridge where she kept her week's supply of cream buns brought from Best bakery in Kottayam. She was fond of rice water instead of ordinary water. Her hypocrisy is revealed about Ammu as a divorced daughter:

> " 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". (P.45)

It is because of this, she never tolerated the presence of Ammu in her house. She also disliked Estha and Rahel. Whenever she caught them speaking in Malayalam they are given written impositions:

> "I will always speak in English, I will always speak in English. A hundred times each". (P.36)

She was more than hurt when somebody in a trade union procession at Cochin suggested 'Modalali Mariakkutty' as a name for her, made her hold a red flag and wave it and made to say 'Inquliab Zindabad'.

The glorification of the West is seen in the whole family's behaviour, especially in Baby Kochamma's. The 'Foreign Returnees' are imagined to be looking scornfully at the visitors at the airport.

> "Look at the way they dressed! Surely they had more suitable airport wear! Why did Malayalees have such awful teeth? ---
> Oho! Going to the dogs India is". (P.140)

The sense of inferiority complex of being Indian makes Baby Kochamma speak with an accent and ask Sophie Mol questions on Shakespeare's The Tempest .She enjoyed when Ammu was punished for her

sins. Ammu's affair with Velutha, the untouchable surprised her quite a lot. Then Baby Kochamma and party were going to Cochin in the car. And they were caught up in the procession of revolutionary Marxists:

> " In the days that followed, Baby Kochamma focused all her fury at her public humiliation on Velutha. She sharpened it like a pencil. In her mind he grew to represent the march---She began to hate him". (P.82)

This hatred was the reason later for her make- believe report of lies to Inspector Mathew against Velutha which paved the way for the night of Terror in the History House. She knew that she had to get Ammu out of Ayemenem as soon as possible. She managed that by doing what she was best at, irrigating her fields, nourishing her crops with other people's passions. She gnawed like a rat into the godown of Chacko's grief. Within its walls she planted an easy, accessible target for his insane anger. It wasn't hard for her to portray Ammu as the person actually responsible for Sophie Mol's death. Ammu and her two-egg twins:

> "Chacko breaking down doors was only the sad bull thrashing at the end of Baby Kochamma's leash. It was her idea that Ammu be made to pack her bags and leave. That Estha be Returned". (P.322)

Baby Kochamma easily accepts Chacko's relationship with labour women. And probably she took sadistic pleasure in Ammu's sufferings. She became cruel towards Ammu. Ammu, Velutha, Estha and Rahel are the victims in the hands of Baby Kochamma.

In this way, Baby Kochamma stands out in her novel as one who last her dreams at a very young age and continued to be so even at the age of eighty-three.

Margaret Kochamma :

Chacko's wife Margaret Kochamma was Sophie Mol's English mother. She used to be Chacko's wife because she had got a second husband, Joe. We find Margaret also had to live a life, which was in no way rosy. She was working as a waitress at a café. Her father owned a bakery in London. She was one who moved out of her parent's home just to assert youthful independence:

> "Faced with the Real World, she clung, nervously to old remembered rules, and had no one but herself to rebel against". (P.241)

Her meeting with Chacko turned out to be a turning point. She had never before met a man who spoke of the world of what it was, and how it come to be, or what he thought would become of it. She was too young to realize that what she assumed was her love for Chacko. It was actually tentative acceptance of her. She had never before met a man who spoke of the world of what it was, and how it came to be or what he thought would become of it. She was too young to realize that what she assumed was her love for Chacko. It was actually tentative acceptance of her. She married him and her father never attended the function, as he disliked Indians.

Within a year Margaret, realized that Chacko was the wrong person she had married. She could easily find fault with whatever he had done or not

done. Meanwhile they moved to London. But Chacko and Margaret had to occupy smaller rooms. Margaret was pregnant and physically more attractive:

> " Pregnancy had put colour in her cheeks and brought a shine to her thick, dark hair". (P.247)

She met Joe who was a biologist. For Margaret he was everything that Chacko wanted. By the time she gave birth to Sophie Mol. Then she realized that for herself and her daughter's sake, she had to leave Chacko. She divorced him, but even after their parting they continued to write letters and over the years the friendship matured.

In fact, several things had happened to her which made her life match that of Chacko's. For her it was not just a tragedy but a chain of misfortunes. Joe died and her daughter Sophie Mol had an unexpected death. So she expressed her irrational rage at Rahel and Estha. But she did realize that she had no right to behave the way she did. She was terribly ashamed of her action which made her write to Ammu apologetically. In this way, Margaret Kochamma does not stand as an exception to the rule.

Mammachi:

Mammachi Soshamma was the unfortunate wife of Pappachi. She was destined to be beaten up frequently by her husband. To add to the misery she was almost blind. It is a second and rather vital factor responsible for uprooting her tree of life. She always wore dark glasses when she went out of the house. She looked small and ill in her crisp off-white sari.

She was not kind to her workers in the factory. When the accountant brought news about dissatisfaction among workers her reaction was:

> "Tell them to read the papers. There's a famine on. There are no jobs. People are starving to death. They should be grateful they have any work at all". (PP.121-122)

Her responses were harsh and straightforward. Her mind often wondered back over the years to her first batch of professional pickles.

Mammachi often said that Chacko was easily one of the cleverest men in India. She had a separate entrance built for Chacko's room so that the object of his needs wouldn't have to go tresspassing through the house. She was full of rage about Ammu and Velutha. She imagined their sexual relations in vivid detail:

> "A Paravan's coarse black hand on her daughter's breast. His black hips jerking between her parted legs. The sound of their breathing. His particular Paravan smell. Like animals, Mammachi thought and nearly vomited. Like a dog with a bitch on heat. Her tolerance of 'Men's Needs' as far as her son was concerned, became the fuel for her unmanageable fury at her daughter". (PP.257-258)

Mammachi thought Ammu had defiled generations of breeding and brought the family to its knees. She was cruel when Velutha arrived before her.

No one can sympathize with Mammachi. We think that she did deserve all the beatings and it was good that she was almost blind. She suffers from no inner guilt. Her physical torture is stopped by Chacko's intervention. Mammachi works hard for her factory 'Paradise Pickles & Preserves.'

As a wife, Mammachi did not cry at Pappachi's funeral not because she loved him but because she was used to him. She not only escapes from its limiting boundaries but also succeeds in creating a new world helplessness in her life. In this way she is another character in the novel destined to lead a life. At last, she died, but makes impressions on our brains.

Sophie Mol:

Sophie Mol along with Estha and Rahel belonged to the fourth generaion of Ayemenem House. She is introduced 'dead' in the opening chapter of the novel. She was Chacko's daughter and Estha and Rahel's cousin:

> " The Government never paid for Sophie Mol's funeral because she wasn't killed a zebra crossing". (P.4)

She was only nine when she died. But her presence continued to be felt throughout the novel as the action progressed. She had a special child- sized coffin:

> "Satin-lined.
> Brass handle shined". (P.4)

And on her tombstone it said:

> "A Sunbeam Lent To Us Too Briefly".

The death of Sophie Mol brings life at Ayemenem to an end. The impression that Sophie Mol leaves of herself is:

> "Sophie Mol, hatted, bellbottomed and Loved from the Beginning, walked out of the Play to see what Rahel was doing behind the well". (P.186)

She had two fathers, one biological, Chacko and the other unreal, Joe. She was taller than Estha. Her eyes were blue-greyblue. Her pale skin was of the colour of beach sand. But her hatted hair was beautiful, deep red-brown:

> "She had Pappachi's nose waiting inside hers. An Imperial Entomologist's nose-within-a-nose. A moth-lover's nose". (P.143)

The biological father could never find his proper place in Sophie Mol's mind. When Rahel asked whom she liked most in the world even without a hesitation. She told her that it was Joe. When Estha reminded her that Chacko was her dad, her reply was:

> 'He's just my real dad. Joe's my dad. He never hits. Hardly ever'. (P.151)

But even within a week of her arrival at Ayemenem she succeeded in confounding the expectations of the twins. She rejected Baby Kochamma's advances and small seductions. But within another week Sophiee Mol became a memory. Then, in the river, the fisherman saw:

> "It's a wrinkled mermaid. A mer-child. A mere mere-child with red-brown hair". (P.258)

She was like a fruit in season. Everyone liked her. She had come to Ayemenem to escape from the pain caused by the death of Joe. But fate had stored a similar destiny to her also. Margaret as a mother loved Sophie but after Sophie's death, she also became helpless one in the novel. The death of Sophie Mol helps to increase the intensity of feelings of the whole tragedy.

Ammachi:

Aleyooty Ammachi is Baby Kochamma's mother. We know that it was she who realized that Koh-i-noor in the letter that Baby Kochamma sent to her father was none other than Baby Kochamma. Long ago she had shown Baby Kochamma a copy of her father's will in which he had written 'I have seven, jewels, one of them is my Koh-i-noor'. In fact, he was describing his grandchildren in these words. Baby Kochamma's mother realized that Baby Kochamma had assumed that he had meant her to be the Koh-i-noor. We don't know anything more about Rev. Ipe's wife except that she continued to live in an oil portrait, which was put up in the front verandah. The portraits of Rev. Ipe and his wife hung on either side of the stuffed, mounted bison head. A contrast is drawn between the two photographs. While Rev. Ipe smiled, Aleyooty Ammachi looked more hesitant. In this way, all the female characters in the novel are unforgettable. A woman in general is victimized everywhere.

Velutha:

Among the male characters in the novel, Velutha can be called the hero of the novel. Velutha which means 'white' in Malayalam. He is represented in the novel as one with black complexion. He is a master craftsman with a German sensibility. His relations with Ammu and the circumstances lead to his tragic end. Rahel one of the twins introduces Velutha:

> "Someone like Velutha, bare bodied and shining, sitting on a plank, swinging from the scaffolding in the high dome of the church, painting silver jets in a blue church sky". (P.6)

Velutha is central to the whole story of the novel The God of Small Things. We see the children playing with them. Ammu hold attraction for him, the promise he can see in her eyes and fear of what it would bring to him. Estha and Rahel are closely related to Velutha:

> "When he saw the children, something clenched inside him. And he couldn't understand it. He saw them every day. He loved them without knowing it. But it was different suddenly. Now, After History had slipped up so badly. No fist had clenched inside him before. Her children, an insane whisper whispered to him". (P.212)

Velutha emerges as the daring trade unionist who has succeeded in shedding his identity as an untouchable by being in his white shirt and mundu and fighting for the rights of the oppressed. Velutha, the untouchable boy had been in the habit of going to the Ayemenem House with his father to deliver coconut plucked from the tree in the compound. These Paravans were never allowed to enter the house. Mammachi remembered a time in her girlhood:

> "When Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint". (PP.73-74)

In fact, Velutha's grandfather, Kelan along with a number of Paravans, Pelayas and Pulayas had embraced Christianity only to jump from the frying pan into the fire. Though they were converted to Christianity to escape from the Untouchability, they were still treated as Untouchables. They were made to have separate churches, with separate services and separate priests. As they

were casteless and Christians officially they were denied reservation benefits after Independence.

At first, Mammachi noticed Velutha's remarkable ability as a carpenter. He could do wonderful things like making tiny windmills and minute jewel boxes out of dried palm trees. He could carve perfect boats out of topioca stems. He used to bring these curiosities to Ammu, three years elder to him. Being an untouchable he would hold them out on his palm so that she wouldn't have to touch them to take them. He called her Ammukutty or Little Ammu.

When he was fourteen, Johann Klein, a carpenter from Bavaria had come to Kottayam. He spent three years with the Christian Mission Society, conducting a workshop for the local carpenters. He had a way with machines and Mammachi had even remarked that:

> "If only he hadn't been a Paravan, he might have become an engineer. He mended radios, clocks, and water-pumps. He looked after the plumbing and all the electrical gadgets in the house". (P.75)

In this way, Velutha was a real master craftsman, 'Jack of the trade' and 'Master of the trade'. Vellaya Paapen an Old World Paravan had his own fears when Velutha grew into a youngman. Whenever Vellya Paapen cautioned him he thought that his father had grudge against him. This ultimately led to a kind of unpleasantness between the father and the son. Velutha slowly began to avoid going home. He worked late and slept outdoors on the bank of the river. Things took a different shape and one-day he disappeared.

When his mother Chella died, there was no way of informing him about it. The Kuttappan, his elder brother fell off a coconut tree and damaged his

spine. Later Velutha reappeared in Ayemenem but he never revealed where he had been. Then Mammachi put him in charge of the general maintenance of the factory workers. They claimed that Paravans were not meant to be carpenters.

As a rebel, Velutha had within him a volcano ready to burst any time. But his father said nothing or rather he was dumb to tell his son anything. But very soon terror took hold of him:

> "He saw what his Untouchable son had touched". (P.78)

Vellya Paapen had seen night after night, a little boat being rowed across the river. He had also seen it return at dawn:

> "The story of a man and woman, standing together in the moonlight. Skin to skin". (P.255)

Arundhati Roy gives a matter of fact description of how Ammu gets sexually attracted to her lover Velutha:

> "She saw the ridges of muscle on Velutha's stomach grow taught and rise under his skin like the divisions on a slab of chocolate. She wondered at how his body had changed-so quietly, from a flatmuscled boy's body into a man's body. Contoured and hard. A swimmer's body. A swimmer-carpenter's body. Polished with a high-wax body polish. He had high cheekbones and a white, sudden smile". (P.175)

Velutha goes on to think and he tried to hate her:

> "She's one of them, he told himself. Just another one of them". (P.214)

Roy recognizes the fear of higher caste members in Velutha when he asks himself:

> "What's the worst thing that can happen? I could lose everything. My job. My family. My livelihood. Everything". (P.334)

It was in a dream that Ammu felt she was close to Velutha:

> "She could have touched his body lightly with her fingers, and felt his smooth skin turn to gooseflesh --- He could have touched her too. But he didn't". (P.215)

Other important event in the novel is that Baby Kochamma rushed to the Police Station to explain the circumstances that had led to the sudden dismissal of Velutha, the factory worker. Then Ammu would go to the police and try to set the record straight. Inspector Thomas Mathew was deeply concerned when the real story that:

> "What the Paravan had taken from the Touchable Kingdom had not been snatched but given, concerned him deeply". (PP.259-260)

The first thing that the Inspector did was to send a jeep to fetch the local communist leader Comrade K.N.M. Pillai. Pillai deliberately concealed the fact that Velutha was a member of the party. He also did not reveal that Velutha had been to his house the previous night. Velutha was declared to have no patronage or protection of the party.

Sophie Mol's death came as the last nail in Velutha's coffin. He was falsely implicated though everyone knew it was an accidental death. The news of the death, of the police encounter with a Paravan charged with kidnapped and murder. The police, who are the servants of the state went to Velutha's house and woke him up with their boots. The semi-conscious Velutha wasn't moving:

> His skull was fractured in three places. His nose and both his cheekbones were smashed, leaving his face pulpy, undefined. The blow to his mouth had split open his upper lip and broken six teeth, three of which were embedded in his lower lip, hideously inverting his beautiful smile. Four of his ribs were splintered, one had pierced his left lung, which was what made him bleed from his mouth. The blood on his breath red. Fresh--- (P.310)

The police knew that it was death in custody of a technically innocent man. To save their face they had to arrange their own story. As the children came handy, they were asked to depose before the police saying that the Paravan abducted them. They were asked to say 'Yes' to the questions put by the uncle with the big 'meeshas'. Meanwhile, Velutha's body was dumped that marked the end of the life of an untouchable, a trade unionist, a rebel, a carpenter and a lover.

In this way, Velutha's figure stands out as a very tall one in the novel. His place in the novel is immortal. His tragedy is representative of the fate of the untouchables. He is more of a dark symbolic figure who inhabits the fantasies of the sexually unfulfilled. Velutha is The God of Small Things and his elevation to a position of God-hood marks the real degradation and struggle in the lives of Paravans of Kerala. The character of Velutha is a good example of what happens when an upper caste Christian of mixed Bengali Brahmin descent, attempts to capture a Dalit life story in literature. And he is the extreme transgressor of rules.

Estha:

Estha is the elder of Ammu's twin children. His childhood is by no means a happy one. Though he always enjoys the company of his twin sister,

Rahel and he also loves to his strict mother, Ammu. At the age of seven he becomes fully aware of his pathetic life at Ayemenem House. His maternal uncle, Chacko tells them that they have no right to be there.

Baby Kochamma, his grand aunt hates Estha and his sister. Even the family cook, Kochu Maria too hates the boy. Once he said in his childish, imitative way:

"Et tu, Kochu Maria!'(P.171)

She believes that Et tu is some obscene phrase in the English language. At night, Estha would stand on his bed, so Kochu Maria complains to Mammachi.

Then Estha's bewildering experience with the Organedrink Lemondrink Man at Abhilash Talkies is shameful and terrific which haunts the boy. The shame of that incident and the sense of guilt arising out of it haunts the boy again and again. These and many other harsh realities of life inflict deep wounds in Estha's sensitive psyche. These bitter experience force him to think two thoughts that anything can happen to anyone and it's best to prepared. He prepares himself to face the worst if that happens. He gradually drifts away from everyone. He knows that only two people in the family love him: Ammu and Rahel. The effect of telling the tale from the point of view of Estha and Rahel is that we are offered a child's view of an adult world:

> " Accoriding to Estha, if they'd been born on the bus, they'd have got free bus rides for the rest of their lives". (P.3)

Sometimes Ammu uses angry words to her children:

> 'Because of you!' Ammu had screamed. 'If it wasn't for you I wouldn't be here! None of this would have happened! I wouldn't be here! I would have been free! I should have dumped you in an orphanage the day you were born! You're the millstones round my neck!' (P.253)

These few thoughtless words could hurt the children's tender mind. Finally Estha and Rahel decide to leave home, and live in the History House, an old abandoned building standing on the other side of the river. Rahel asks:

> 'What if Ammu finds us and begs us to come back?'
> 'Then we will. But only if she begs'. Estha-the-Compassionate. (P.292)

The sense of loss is very much evident in the fact that Estha and Rahel had no surname. That was because Ammu consideration reverting to her maiden name. This is enough to create emotional crisis in young children. They were not privileged to learn what other children learned:

> "While other children of their age learned other things, Estha and Rahel learned how history negotiates its terms and collects its dues from those who break its law. They heard its sickening thud. They smelled its smell and never forget it. History's smell. Like old roses on a breeze". (P.55)

Furthermore, his growing sense of alienation of identity finds expression such as:

> " On the front of the book, Estha had rubbed out his surname with spit, and taken half the paper with it. Over the whole mess, he had written in pencil Un-known. Esthappen Un-known". (P.156)

Baby Kochamma had been put it charge of their education and Estha and Rahel found a torture. They were fond of reading backwards and showed Miss. Mitten, Baby Kochamma's Australian friend how it was possible to read

both 'Malayalam' and 'Madam I'm Adam', backwards as well as forwards. The result was that they were punished. They were made to write:

> " In future we will not read backwards. In future we will not read backwards. A hundred times". (P.60)

Ammu's fear was that her son would grow up to be a male Chauvinist Pig, like her brother Chacko. She continued to teach them manners, which they couldn't take kindly. Many a time they had to sing in English in obedient voices.

Estha was taken to the police station only to tell a lie to say 'yes' to the question asked by the Uncle with the big 'meeshas'. He was the chosen one because he was more practical than Rahel. He was more farsighted and responsible than Rahel. He was made to tell the police that Velutha had abducted them. He didn't know the full significance of why they wanted him to say like this. He only knew that it was to save his mother from being taken as a prisoner. Then he had no alternative other than obeying the elders.

Later Estha returned to his Baba living in Calcutta. His life in Calcutta helps only in deepening his crisis. By the time he returns to Ayemenem House after spending 23 years in Calcutta, he is completely changed man. At Ayemenem House he keeps silence. At home Baby Kochamma feels that he has gone mad, she says:

> 'He's lost his mind, I'm telling you! He doesn't recognize people any more!' (P.21)

In this way the above-mentioned factors are responsible for Estha's alienation. His abrupt separation from his twin sister, Rahel, could be one of the causes. She is an inalienable part of his spirit.

There was a very special relation established between the twins. They always had a feeling of oneness and there were even physical relations between them. They witnessed one of the greatest tragedies in their life. The police infront of Estha and Rahel beat Velutha to death.

For Estha and Rahel it was darkness, absolute darkness even before they were born. They lived in quietness and emptiness fighting a losing battle. The whole novel tells us Estha and Rahel's tragedy.

At the age of 30, Estha is a complete stranger at Ayemenem. His only friend is a dog, which is also his constant companion. That symbolically means his alienation from society and family.

Estha knows the terrible secrets- how he was betrayed and victimized by his own mother, his maternal uncle, Baby Kochamma, Kochu Maria the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, the Kottayam police and so on.

Chacko:

Chacko, Pappachi's son, the self-proclaimed Marxist is a Nehruvian idealist. As his own sister Ammu describes him:

> "Just a case of a spoiled princeling playing Comrade! Comrade! An Oxford avatar of the old zamindar mentality –a landlord forcing his attentions on women who depended on him for their livelihood". (P.65)

Margaret Kochamma and Chacko get drawn to each other when one day Chacko enters a café, orders for coffee and Margaret, a tall blushy eye- browed waitress takes the order. She is impressed by Chacko's overall personality and Chacko is impressed by Margarets's beauty. About Chacko, Margaret felt as if her trapped soul had finally found a huge space:

> " He made her feel as though the world belonged to them- as though it lay before them like an opened frog on a dissecting table, begging to be examined". (P.245)

However, soon the centripetal motion sets in and ends with their divorce due to Chacko's failure on the domestic front and his inability to earn sufficient money. Margaret was no longer amused to live with an untidy man, Chacko.

By the time Sophie Mol was born, Margaret decided that she had enough of Chacko. Her tolerance towards Chacko had reached its ultimate point. She finally thought it best to leave Chacko for the child's sake and herself. As the marriage crumbled, Chacko returned to India. He never exhibited his pain on the surface. Then Margaret married Joe who was an old school friend of her brother. Margaret was happy to be with Joe but never really forgot Chacko. She thought of Chacko:

> "It simply did not occur to her that she had hurt him as deeply as she had, because she still thought of herself as an ordinary woman and him as an extraordinary man". (P.249)

Then Joe was killed in an accident. Margaret concealed her pain wearing the mask of a practical school teacher. When Chacko learnt of the

tragedy, he invited Margaret and Sophie Mol to Ayemenem to spend Christmas with him.

However, the most striking nature of this particular relationship is that both of them accepted each other as they were and it is a rare quality to be found among the separated couples. They continued to respect each other without any demands or expectations. Their maturity made them forgive the mistakes committed earlier. Although their marriage failed miserably, their relationship survived.

When Baby Kochamma tells Mammachi about Chacko's libertine relationship with the women in the factory, she simply says:

"He can't help having a Man's Needs." (P.168)

Chacko is only Sophie Mol's biological father. Like Ammu, Chacko's marriage too is an utter failure because of cultural contrasts and different national identities. The loss of Sophie Mol is a loss of everything in his life.

Chacko, the present patriarch, enjoys the rights of the pickle factory, which his mother has established and built up. He is an Oxford scholar. As an educated one, he had not sympathy for Ammu and her children. He had a selfish nature. He provided the care of food, clothes and fees to Rahel but withdrew the concern. Because of Chacko's negligence towards Rahel, she became an aimless girl in her life.

Ammu's lover, Velutha was tortured a lot by Chacko. Chacko become a victimizer of Velutha. In this way, Chacko's character is depicted very cleverly and imaginatively in the novel. Being a man, his right to freedom is a

foregone conclusion. He fails to use husbandhood for his personal gain and prosperity. His failure as a husband, as a father and as a good businessman suggests his physical and emotional enclosures. He has no authority. He exercises his power on Ammu, Rahel and Estha. His own daughter Sophie Mol refuses to accepts him as father. And in the name of Marxism, he flirts with labour women. He represents the highcaste feudal morality. The only option before him is the way of escape, the path of withdrawal. That is why he leaves the field of activity and escapes to Canada.

Pappachi:

Pappachi, the son of Reverend E. John Ipe, is the brother of Baby Kochamma. His real name is Bennan Ipe. He is also one who suffers multiple shocks and lives a lost life. He could never reconcile himself to the fact that Mammachi, his wife was seventeen years junior to him. He was a self conscious man who took pride in the fact that he was a high ranking ex-Government official. And he considered pickle making is not a suitable job for such a person. His behaviour is very strange. He was jealous of his wife even. Perhaps, this might be the reason why he took pleasure in beating his wife quite frequently, sometimes even mercilessly. It was Chacko, his son, who came from London who put a sudden end to this practice. Then Pappachi stopped beating Mammachi, because of his jealousy towards his enterprising wife.

Pappachi always had the feeling that Mammachi was neglecting him, which was an added reason for making his life miserable. His daughter Ammu

finished her schooling the same year Pappachi retired from his job in Delhi and moved to Ayemenem. After the failure in married life, Ammu comes back to Ayemenem house. She narrates her traumatic experience to Pappachi of how her husband asked her to share the bed with the British manager, Mr. Hollick, but Pappachi doesn't believe in it and says:

> " Simply because he didn't believe that an Englishman, any Englishman, would covet another man's wife".(P.42)

In Pappachi, Arundhati Roy presents an incurable Anglophile who drives the skyblue Plymouth car bought from an Englishman in Munnar. The snobbish man sweated freely inside his woolen suits. The Plymouth was Pappachi's revenge and he never allowed Mammachi or anyone else in the family to use it or even sit in it. This dream of driving away people from his car was smashed the moment when he died and it passed on to his wife. His misfortune continued to chase him. He had been an Imperial Entomologist at the Pusa Institute. One day, the moth fell into his drink was identified as a slightly unusual race by the taxonomic experts after an anxious waiting for about six months. Then came the real blow. The experts discovered that Pappachi's moth was a separate species. Then he retired. His moth was named after the acting director of the Department of Entomology, a junior officer whom he had disliked. The moth tormented him and his children and his children's children.

Pappachi's children Ammu and Chacko had no good words to say about him. Chacko liked to refer to him as Anglophile. He did have a double face. He donated money to orphanages and leprosy clinics. He like the public to

look at him as a sophisticated generous, moral man. But with his wife and children, he became monstrous and cunning. Pappachi died of a massive heart attack. His death was reported in the 'Indian Express' and his photograph was framed and put up in the drawing room. At Pappachi's funeral Mammachi was crying more because she was used to him than because she loved him.

In short, Pappachi too died in disappointment. Fame was his life's aim. Naturally, such a person cannot be blamed when he behaves unexpectedly. He is a second member of the second generation who dreamed and ultimately lost the love and respect of everyone including, that of his wife and children.

Comrade K.N.M. Pillai:

He is introduced in the novel as the loyal leader of the Marxist Communist party. A post-graduate degree holder, Mr. Pillai divides his time between running a family enterprise- a printing press and leading the Communist Movement at Ayemenem. Marxism as a political philosophy aims at creating a classless society. He believed in the theory that work is struggle and struggle is work. He cherished the dream of becoming a member of the Legislative Assembly one-day. It is fair to Comrade Pillai, he did not plan the course of events that followed. He merely slipped his ready fingers into History's waiting glove.

He interacts with the working class people of Ayemenem to make them conscious of their rights. Though he attempts to create an image for himself as a champion of the downtrodden and a friend of the working class people, yet at the core of his heart, he is a class conscious one. He does not stand entirely for

what Karl Marx teaches. There is a gap between what Pillai preaches and what he practices. He does not like Velutha just because he is an untouchable man:

> "The only snag in Comrade K.N.M. Pillai's plans was Velutha. Of all the workers at Paradise Pickles, he was the only card-holding member of the Party, and that gave Comrade Pillai an ally he would rather have done without".(P.121)

He tries to persuade Chacko to fire Velutha from his service. Pillai tells Chacko:

> 'That Paravan is going to cause trouble for you', he said. 'Take it from me--- get him a job somewhere else. Send him off'. (P.278)

The caste prejudice is deep rooted in the Comrade Pillai's mind. Comrade Pillai exposes hypocrisy and double standard in his life:

> "Comrade K.N.M.Pillai was essentially a political man. A professional omeletteer. He walked though the world like a chameleon. Never revealing himself, never appearing not to". (P.14)

When the police began to hurt Velutha, Comrade Pillai betrays Velutha by willfully suppressing certain vital information about him.

Comrade Pillai told Instpector Thomas Mathew that he was acquainted with Velutha, but omitted to mention that Velutha was a member of the Communist Party, or that Velutha had knocked on his door the late previous night, which made Pillai the last person to have seen Velutha before he disappeared.

Velutha's tragic end takes place because of Comrade Pillai's words and deeds though he would not admit it. He behaved shrewdly for his personal advantage:

> "Nobody ever learned the precise nature of the role that Comrade Pillai played in the events that followed". (P.281)

Comrade Pillai as a Communist who speaks passionately about the rights of the workers, and who preaches to them caste is class. His attachment to Communist is only a mask. At one stage he confesses to Chacko that his own household is not free from caste prejudices. He says, even his wife, Kalyani, would not allow Paravans:

> 'See her, for example. Mistress of this house. Even she will never allow Paravans and all that into her house. Never. Even I cannot persuade her. My own wife. Of course inside the house she is Boss'. He turned to her with an affectionate, naughty smile. 'Allay edi, Kalyani?' (.278)

Pointing out that Mr. Pillai's son finally satirizes the hollowness of Comrade Pillai's commitment to the Communist ideology:

> "Levin, who lived and worked in Delhi-he took care of the painting, plumbing, and any electrical work-for the Dutch and German embassies. In order to allay any fears his clients might have about his political leanings, he had altered his name slightly. Lenin he called himself now. P.Levin" (P.128)

It is also ironical to see Mr. Pillai using Marxism for poor personal gains rather than for poor labourers or for the lower caste. Mr. Pillai refuses to help saying.

> "Party was not constituted to support workers, indiscipline in their private life." (P.287)

Mr. Pillai couldn't fight for Velutha's personal matter. He acts and brings ideals out the hypocrisy of Marxists.

Rev. Ipe:

In the opening chapter of the novel itself Rev.Ipe is introduced. He was a priest of the Mar Thoma Church, well known Christian community. He continued to be known as Punnyan Kunju-Litle Blessed One and people came down to him to be blessed. He grew up and became a priest. He got the first shock of his life, which ultimately shattered his dreams when his daughter Baby Kochamma defied his wishes and became a Roman Catholic. Within a year of her joining the Convent, he began to receive puzzling letters from her in the mail, which made him go to Madras and withdraw her from the Convent. Her insistance is that she would not reconvert. It was a second shock to him. He started realizing that his daughter had developed a reputation and was unlikely to find a husband. This made him to think that since she couldn't have a husband he would send her abroad for studies. After two years she returned. He gave her charge of the front garden of the Ayemenem house.

Naturally his daughter's fate might have made Rev.Ipe a disappointed man. A sad end should await him even in the portrait.

Vellya Paapen:

Vellya Paapen is the father of Velutha and Kuttappen. He has seen the days of 'Walking Backwards' to remove pollution of touch. He goes to Mammachi to complain about his son being torn between Loyalty and Love. Then he complained about Velutha and Ammu's affair. He offered to kill Velutha with his own bare hands. He feared for his younger son. He couldn't

say what it was that frightened him. As a Paravan, his role is very important in the novel.

Kuttappen:

Another son of Vellya is Kuttappen. He was the elder one. And he was a good, safe Paravan and he was an illiterate one. One day, Kuttappen fell off a coconut tree and damaged his spine. He was paralyzed and unable to work. He was paralyzed from his chest downward.

All day he lay in the house listening to the silence of huddled trees with only a domineering black hen for company. He missed his mother, Chella, who had died a coughing, spitting, aching phlegmy death. He remembered noticing how her feet died long before she had, how fearfully he watched death creep over her. He had no sensation in his feet at all.

After Chella's death, he was moved into her corner, the corner that Kuttappen imagined was the corners of his home that Death had reserved to administer her affairs.

Almost all the characters in the novel have something to say about their loss. Even the minor characters are not an exception to this rule. The novelist is ironic in characterizing those who are trying to maintain the Establishment in order. Even Inspector Thomas Mathew who attempts to instil order into a world had gone wrong. In this way, the dream world of the characters in the novel is slowly built up and we witness the collapse of this world.

Undoubtedly, the novelist shows her capacity of probing deep into human psyche, especially female psyche, by exploring vast tracks of human

experience in a unique manner. Like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, Arundhati Roy has tried to probe into psyche of her characters. She has given more emphasis on delineating 'individual' rather than 'social'. She has tried to capture psychological tremors in the minds of Velutha, Ammu, Estha and Rahel. Rahel becomes her mouthpiece and sometimes-authorial comments are used to probe into consciousness.

Being a woman novelist, Roy supershines in delineating female experience, female psychology with a feminine sensibility in the female characters-Ammu, Rahel, Margaret Kochamma, Mammachi etc. Besides there is an Indianness in her portrayal of male and female characters. It seems that all the characters have been affected by the ideologies of culture, caste, gender, politics and religion in the post-colonial Indian Society. It would be no exaggeration to say that what happens in the town Ayemenem can take place anywhere in India.

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