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**Depiction of Oppressed in God of small thing**

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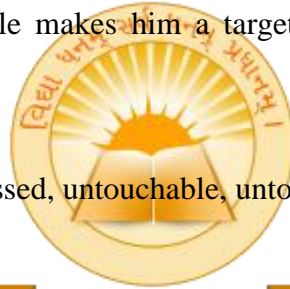
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### Abstract

This Paper focuses on the situations of marginalized characters in “The God of Small Things”. How characters experienced in the hands of upper caste people. The protagonist Velutha rather the character of the novel suffers a lot throughout the novel. Dalit Literature aims at creating a counter-culture and a separate identity for the Dalits in the society. Generally, Dalit writes are not against caste or communal groups but against the establishment, the government and the social system which in their view keeps them depressed and deprived. In other words, the search for identity is a basic dynamism, of Dalit culture. That is why, issues related to poverty, powerlessness, untouchability, hypocrisy and several other corrupt social practices have generated a variety of responses among Dalit writers. These responses are basically forms of protest aimed at bringing about social change through a revolution. Social inequality is one of the themes of the novel. In the traditional India, untouchables always face the problem of inequality in the society. The upper caste of society would not allow equality in the society. Velutha is a talented carpenter. Even he could repair radios, water pipes, looked after the plumbing and all the electrical gadgets in the house. However the deep stigma of being a Paravan or untouchable makes him a target of general hostile attitude, behavior and casteist bias.

**Key words:** Dalit literature, oppressed, untouchable, untouchability, casteist



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This Paper focuses on the situations of marginalized characters in “The God of Small Things”. How characters experienced in the hands of upper caste people. The protagonist Velutha rather the character of the novel suffers a lot throughout the novel. One other character Ammu also suffers a lot though she belongs to upper caste discuss in this chapter.

Dalit Literature aims at creating a counter-culture and a separate identity for the Dalits in the society. Generally, Dalit writes are not against caste or communal groups but against the establishment, the government and the social system which in their view keeps them depressed and deprived. In other words, the search for identity is a basic dynamism, of Dalit culture. That is why, issues related to poverty, powerlessness, untouchability, hypocrisy and several other corrupt social practices have generated a variety of responses among Dalit writers. These responses are basically forms of protest aimed at bringing about social change through a revolution. This has been vehemently opposed by the establishment in our country. (Kumar, 2010:148). In Dalit reform movement many critics have contributed like Babasahib Ambedkar, Jyotirao Phule, Narayan Guru, Periyar, etc.

Dalit Literature supports Dalits in the society of upper caste people. Dalits have their own identity in caste-system. The protagonist, Velutha has same condition. As a Dalit, he cannot utter a single word against majority of the class. Velutha wants to change the society, he always against the rules and regulations created by Hindus. Therefore, he always does his own duties towards the majority of the class but they have no idea about that matter. Hindus always treats these minority class people as Untouchables or Dalits of the society.

### **Maltreatment of Untouchables:**

“More than sixty year have passed since Indian gained its political autonomy, but the fact remains that untouchables living in Indian society are yet to witness freedom in a truer sense.” (Dwivedi, 2010: 387)

After the independence of India, the year of sixty was celebrated by Indians but what was the condition of untouchables, the same situations of them is presented at current time also. Their condition remains problemazied as they continue to be at the receiving ends. Untouchables continue to occupy the lower strata in the social hierarchy. Still, they are considered to be



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defiled creations of this earth having no rights for their formation. Clearly the novel deals with the troubled history of untouchables in traditional India.

“The God of Small Things” is the story about the treatment of Dalit character Velutha and touched woman Ammu presented by Arundhati Roy effects on her own life. This story is real life history of Arundhati Roy’s mother Mary Roy. Mary Roy, well-known social activist from Kerala, but she marries with a Bengali Hindu tea planter. Generally, aristocratic man marries lower level woman. Though, Mary Roy comes from wealthy class she marries a tea planter. Even the marriage was unhappy one. Then Mary Roy has a daughter she is Arundhati Roy. Arundhati spent her crucial childhood years in Ayemenem, a small town near Kottayam. The same reflection of situation portrays in the character of Ammu. Ammu marries a tea planter. After having two children their marriage departs with divorce. Ammu comes back to Ayemenem with her children but society would not accept her as divorcee and her children Estha and Rahel spent their childhood in Ayemenem as Arundhati Roy herself spent. Arundhati’s mother was also not accepted and what happens with her mother and with her, she described as the character of Ammu, Estha and Rahel. Therefore, the researcher would say that Ammu is the mouthpiece of Arundhati’s mother, Mary Roy and Estha and Rahel is the mouthpiece of Arundhati Roy herself. Arundhati Roy develops the real life story in the novel. Even the location used by her throughout the novel is really exists in Kottayam in Kerala.

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The researcher would say that, Arundhati Roy writes this novel because she wants to show the treatment of Dalits in the society and also what the condition of women is, who divorced in lives. She tries to raise voice against the society that depicts the minority class people throughout the novel. Why the women would not accepted in the so-called society perhaps because women belong to lower level than the high class. Women are considered as downtrodden as Dalits. Dalits would not accept by Hindus in the society because Hindu cannot want equality in their lives. If the equality developed then the priority would not work. Even women are considered as untouchables, they have no status in society. A woman with divorce, something wrong happens in the life. She made a crime and she had a punishment that no one from the society has relation with her, that type of behavior always to divorcee woman as untouchable’s situation. If untouchable accidentally touched the so-called touched people even through, he has to apologize for that situation but the touched man would to suffer from the punishment by Hindus. That type of conditions developed by Arundhati Roy in her novel.



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In the first chapter Paradise Pickles and Preserves, the novelist introduces Velutha the Dalit character of the novel Rahel one of the twins imagines

“Someone like Velutha, bare bodied and shining sitting on a plank, swingling from the scaffolding in the high dome of the church, painting silver jets in a blue church sky.”

(Roy 6)

The intention of the novelist is more than clear from this description. The expression „bare bodied“ gives us enough hints to show that the character she has introduced is certainly not one who belongs to the middle class but an „Untouchable“. The researcher would say that readers or audience can get the idea because the word „bare bodied gives the idea but another thing is that, the people who belongs to untouchables“ caste, they can do the painting of silver jets in the church sky. The downtrodden only do the labour work even the middle class people would not do the labour work. Even the middle class people covered their upper body part. Untouchables cannot cover their upper body part because; the Hindus would not allow them. The question raise that why untouchables not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas and even not allowed to walk on the public roads. The answer of the question must be that, the society not allows them to do that. The upper caste people can used umbrellas and cover their upper body because they have high status in the society. The society provided them the high class position that is why always the Hindus orders the downtrodden to do their works first then they can do their own work. The status of high and low class develops by the people belongs to particular class. If broken people would not accept the Hindus as their masters then the position of high class masters never stay there. If the downtrodden raises the voice that now they want to be masters of the society then what happens? Therefore the attitude of high class people would change towards Dalits. Untouchables want the basic needs at least. Food, water and clothes these are human beings“ basic needs. At least, the Dalits have those basic needs. Always Hindus have good food, they have enough water and also most important things are clothes. Untouchables can get water and food from the upper caste people but this upper class people would not allow them to cover their upper body. Even Dalits have to do labour work throughout the daylight. Why this type of difference between Dalits and high class people because the society provides that situation to untouchables. No one can change the society and the same positions carry on. The whole situation occurs in the very beginning of the novel



because of the conditions of untouchables in the society. Though Velutha considered as the main character in the novel but due to his situation as untouchable he has to suffer in the society. The researcher raises the question that why in the very beginning of the novel, the protagonist announced dead this situation develops in the novel due to the untouchability of Velutha. In that time, Dalits have no status in the traditional India. Untouchables are never measured as human beings. They always exploit in the hands of touchable people. In this case, Velutha is portrays as Dalit so, he can introduced as dead character because untouchables never treated as the upper caste people. Dalits cannot raise a simple word against the authority; they have to follow the order. That is why if introduced as dead then even he has no word to utter. The treatment of the society plays vital role in the conditions of untouchables.

In The God of Small Thing, the action of high class people continues. Ammu saw the dream about Velutha as „God of Small Things“ and „God of Loss“. She goes to the Bathroom, strips and sees herself. Wayward thoughts arise and curl around her. Mammachi had told her that there runs a streak of madness in the family.

*“She saw a wisp of madness escape from its bottle and caper triumphantly around the bathroom” (Roy 223)*

Mammachi added that in the house Ammu started behavior like mad person. Ammu still was in the imagination of the dream. But the family members cannot accept this performance as the part of their lives. Chacko, brother of Ammu would not allow this action of madness, disgrace, soul destroying loneliness of Ammu. He directly go on the decision and warn Ammu that,

*“Pack your things and go”, Chacko would say, stepping over the debris. (Roy 226)*

Chacko ordering Ammu to leave the House this is a sad incident denoting the fatal beginning of her ultimate disintegration. This incident also happens because of Velutha, the researcher would say. The reason is that Ammu demonstrate the dreams about Velutha. Because of Velutha, the untouchable Ammu has to leave the house in this situation also the masters blaming the Dalits. They cannot think beyond the boundaries develops by society. In the traditional time of India, the high class people considered untouchables for any situation of their loves. Dalits have no status in the society.

One more interpretation is that the same situation occurs with untouchables in the traditional



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society. Dalits never get warmth from the upper caste society. They live lonely, no one ever touched them and always exploited by others. Dalits have their own community in society but all considered as minority of the class.

In the novel also situation affects, Ammu through she born in high class family but marries a tea-planter. After the divorce she came back to Ayemenem with two children. She becomes untouchables because broken people would not accept in the society. She born in high class family but due to patriarchal society she becomes victim and turns into the condition of untouchable. No doubt the family given the space in house but Ammu cannot get the space in the heart of family members. The researcher would add that when she marries to Babu at that time she was full with the emotion from family that mean she was wealthy woman like Kathakali man that when their family lives together the Man was rich enough but as he was alone he becomes the untouchable. In the sense, his condition turns into the situation of downtrodden. Now Ammu as untouchable is alone and no one supports her for living because she come back with two children that is why now she is all alone as untouchables. Untouchables treat always as all alone. Though they have family members but in the society they are treated as people treated the dog. Generally common human being does not exist in loneliness then why untouchables are always lonely in the society, the question raises by researcher. The answer must be that Dalits are not conducted as the masters. They are second than the masters. Untouchables are treated by the high class people in the society that they strictly follow the rules and regulations developed by so-called Hindus. Now Dalits accepted their situation in the society. They do not want to change their condition in the society because they are alone; they have no support from the society. In the world they are lonely because of the treatment of society. The Hindu divided the work that the work with good quality is done by them and the labor work is done by untouchables.

### Social Inequality in Society:

Social inequality is one of the themes of the novel. In the traditional India, untouchables always face the problem of inequality in the society. The upper caste of society would not allow equality in the society. Velutha is a talented carpenter. Even he could repair radios, water pipes, looked after the plumbing and all the electrical gadgets in the house. However the deep stigma of being a Paravan or untouchable makes him a target of general hostile attitude, behavior and casteist bias.



Velutha can build the dining table in the compound of Ayemenem house but he would not enter in to the house. Velutha can do his work at outside of the house but upper caste people would not allow him to enter in the house. The researcher would raise the question that why untouchable cannot enter into the house. Velutha as an untouchable can built the dining table that means Paravans can do their work at the door of house but because they are untouchable, cannot enter into the house. If the so-called touchables have their own work then they to do their work to untouchables. After that work the people of upper caste are getting pleasure from that work. But high class people cannot encourage untouchables to enter into the house. On the other hand the Hindus are selfish because when they have some individual work for their community at that time, they called downtrodden otherwise always ill treat them. The upper caste people still believe in the old traditions which are introduced by English people. Arundhati Roy says,

*“Fifty years after independence, India is still struggling with legacy of colonialism still flinching from the cultural insult (and.....) we are still caught up I the business of “Disproving” the white world’s definition of us”. (Roy, 2001: 13)*

After the independence of fifty years our India is still believing in social inequality, cultural difference, traditions, custom, etc. the Indian society still believes the definition given by the white people still at current time India do not prove that we cannot follow the traditions or we breaks the condition and there is no inequality in the society. Therefore still the Indians believes that Hindus are born to be masters and untouchables are born to do labor work ordered by upper caste people. In India still people have contrast between touchables and untouchables.

In the traditional India, the upper caste people made strict rules to follow that untouchables cannot touch so-called touched people. If accidentally they touched to upper caste people they started shouting on downtroddens. Though actually it is not fault of Paravan but they have to hear the punishment given by touched people. The upper caste people believe that the shadow of untouchables also pollutes them. The high class people follow the customs and traditions of that time. Even Hindus would not allow the present of untouchables in the areas of their existence. If accidentally Paravans touched then they go for bath and then come. The people who belongs to old age they cannot accept these conditions of untouchable. That is why, when





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Mammachi goes to clean her palm with soap at that time, Vellya cries. The reason is that he is not accepted this condition easily.

Thus, arguments used likes, Maltreatment of Untouchables, Social Inequality in society, Caste System of the Society. How characters are suppress in the hands of upper caste people and how the society treats them. Second is about class hierarchy. Upper caste people always treat lower class people as second hand to them. Third is about caste system of traditional India that is major problem of India that time. The character of Velutha suffers throughout the novel due to caste system.

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