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Depiction of ill-treatment to Down-trodden Characters in *The God of Small Things*.

Dr. Kiran S. Khandare,

Professor in English, Shri Shivaji College, Akola.

Abstract: The writings of great people like Mahatma Gandhi, Mahatma Phule, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Annabhai Sathe to name the few dealt with human values, principles of equality, brotherhood and truth. Throughout their life they have advocated, recommended and lived that type of life. It is true that the development of any country lies in its capacity to uplift the life of the poor and weaker section of the society without any discrimination between class and caste, male and female, poor and rich, small and big. But in India along with other factors, status of lower section of society is in critical situation. In this context to study epoch making novel "The God of Small Things" is significant. The present paper tries to deal with the class and caste discrimination in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*.

The great scholars, and social reformists such as Mahatma Phule, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Annabhai Sathe to name the few only have worked through out their life to establish the human values to be the basic principles social functioning. They put forth their talent and creative genius to depict the equality, brotherhood and truth in their writings. Throughout their life they have advocated, recommended and lived that type of life. It is true that the development of any country lies in its capacity to uplift the life of the poor and weaker section of the society without any discrimination between class and caste, male and female, poor and rich, small and big. But in India along with other factors, status of lower section of society is in critical situation. Many Indian writers from Mulkraj Anand to present generation writers have raised this issue in their piece of literature. In this context to study 'The God of Small Things' is significant.

In Post-modern Indian Literature in English we have Anita Desai, Kamla Das, Arundhati Roy, Kamla Markandya, Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Namita Gokhale, Shobha De and others who have realistically portrayed the picture of Indian Society. Most of these writers have dealt with the problem of Indian woman in present scenario. Most women writers proved themselves as serious novelists rather than entertaining writers. Among these women writers in common wealth literature Arundhati Roy has secured unique place. She has a keen sense and imaginative power. Her present novel *The God of Small Things* has received high acclaim from both Indian and Western reviewers. According to William Dalrymple the novel "makes us laugh" and "finally moves one to tears". It is significant which speaks about the powerless and downtrodden characters. In this novel, she has portrayed the downtrodden characters. They are Vellya Paapan and his two sons Kuttapen and



Veduthu. The novelist describes that the untouchables were given humiliating treatment by Ammu's family. She writes that the untouchables were not allowed to enter into the house of the upper class.

"Mammachi told Estha and Rahel that she could remember a time, in her girlhood when Paravans were expected to crawl back with a broom, sweeping and then put that the Brahmins or Syrians Christians would not define themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravans's footprints. In Mammachi's time Paravans, like other untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed" (TGST, p-73-74)

VellyaPaapan, the senior of three untouchables and father of Velutha born and brought up in the age when Paravanas had to crawl backwards and takes to granted the social bondages imposed on the untouchables by tradition. He doesn't protest against it. On the contrary, he believes it is a scene to break the tradition. **Kuttapen**, the elder brother of Velutha has not taken education and is satisfied with doing the traditional work at his family. He silence of mind refers to his fear of revolution and his fear of change. He is worried about socio-economic activities and the protest of his younger brother Velutha. He is, "A good safe Paravan" because he is unable to read and write. Though there are schools and colleges open for untouchables, people in power want to keep them uneducated because not want to awake their social awareness.

Velutha, the younger son of his father is not a tradition stricken man. He has two internal focus and self-confidence having many head and heart qualities. He was a very talented youngster with a remarkable facility with his hands. He was like a little magician. In addition to his skill in carpentry Velutha also has a way with machines. Unlike most untouchables, Velutha is an educated man. He was a man of character. But Velutha's one unpardonable sin is that he falls in love with a touchable woman, who reciprocates his love. His punishment is the result of false charge of abduction, rape and finally being beaten to death. In this context it is apt to quote AM Dasan, " Velutha is placed on the borders of society caught in between right and wrong; sanity and insanity; morality and immorality. Velutha the untouchable, master craftsman floats on the periphery of the society yearning to be accepted. His condition is like Yank, the protagonist in O'Neil's, *The Hairy Ape*. In the concluding of the novel we get a realistic picture of the cruelty and torture of the prevalent system of the society. Velutha, in the police custody has to endure unbearable physical tortures. Roy truthfully and very sensitively sketches clear picture of the pathetic condition of Velutha:

"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 his six teeth, three of which were embedded in his lower lip, hideously inverting his sensitively beautifully smile. Four of his ribs were splintered; one has pierced his left lung, which was what made him bleed from his mouth. The



blood on his breath bright, red, fresh. His lower intestine was ruptured and hemorrhaged, 'the blood collected in his abdominal cavity' (316).

Through the most important character of the novel *Velutha* the novelist makes a commentary on all declining values and deep rooted age old norms and traditions which denies the fundamental rights and comforts of life to the untouchables. *Velutha's* character is similar to *Bakha*, the protagonist of *Mulkraj Anand's Untouchable*. Both *Velutha* and *Bakha* are the victims of discrimination due to caste factor. *Bakha* is more active and revolutionary than *Velutha*. However, *Velutha* is a man of serious nature and kindly behaviour.

Thus *Arundhati's* novel gives a pathetic picture of the untouchables and downtrodden who are the victims of age old taboos without their fault. *Velutha* suffers due to caste discrimination and social injustice prevalent in our society. Through the story narrated between two families the novelist has given the realistic picture of the Indian society. It is unfair to have such kind of situation in the life of any human being. The constitution of India recommends the right of equality, brotherhood and many more opportunities to live the life without any anxiety, inequality, and antagonism, discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, colour and religion.

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