



# Untouchability and Social Persecution in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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## Abstract:

*The term untouchability is used for dalit communities in Indian subcontinent. In India dalit word indicates the men and women involved in the activities of mean nature like sweepers, fisherman etc. Actually, this difference made for other human being. Actually, persons are identified by their deeds. God has created everyone in his own image. The sweepers keep our society clean so their status must be like upper class people but they have always been relegated. Sometimes lower caste people tolerate social persecution. B.R. Ambedkar made one social group whom counted untouchable and try to get equal rights to them also. In novel *The God of Small Things* the main character Velutha who is paravans so he had suffered lot of by other people. Roy depicted condition of social persecution of dalit in our society. This article focuses how untouchables are being suffered in our society.*

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**Keywords:** B.R. Ambedkar, untouchability, human being,

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## 1. Introduction

In India the word Untouchable is taken for bad manners. God created to all same then why created big wall in our society? Before in our society, Untouchable condition was very bad because their face no one see and by chance perhaps see then people believe it is bad omen. Untouchable persons prohibited from eating with other members and keep separate cups in village stalls. Recently condition some improved but many places still these conditions continue. If we want to bring improvements in our society then our thoughts must change for lower caste people. We think if we may place to them how we feel. Even after a long time this belief is not change.

In the *God of Small Things* we know by the title when person born with lower caste then other people identify god made to him/her small things but not in reality. Here Velutha is an untouchable person so he suffered social persecution. He is expert in craftsman so Mammachi kept him to do carpenter's work. In the factory other people are not happy for Velutha who come from paravan's and Velutha was fighting for the cause of maxims. But twins were very happy for him. Twins were Rahel and Estha children of Ammu. Ammu is the daughter of Mammachi and her father is pappachi who believed in patriarchy. So Ammu has tolerated lot of difficulties for her brother Chako. In this novel author describes the problems of society. Velutha converts himself into Christianity so that he would not be made victim of castism.

But our society is so cruel he didn't get good result and people's behavior remained same as before to him. Mammachi remembers a day with Estha,

“ When paravanas were expected to crawl backward with a broom, sweeping away their foot-prints so that Brahmins and Christians wouldn't defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a paravan's foot print and 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” (p.73-74)

Our social reformers such Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar, Swami Vivekananda all attacked on mentality of India. In Manusmiriti the Hindu law book of social code we see the pathetic condition of untouchable who didn't gain knowledge and no right to go to the temples also. Mahatma Gandhi having sympathetic overtone towards these people and called 'Harijan' that is 'The man of God.' Thus, untouchability is the evils of our society. Once, Velutha and his father goes to deliver coconut plucked from trees but they are not allowed to the room because they were not permitted to touch the thing that a 'touchable' touched. Here we must remember Mulk raj Anand and his famous novel Untouchable. Bakha the protagonist of the novel had to suffer only because he belongs to a downtrodden community without any reason. In the rage he lashes out his own position in harsh words,

“Why are we always abused? They always abuse us. Because we are sweepers. Because we touch dung. They hate dung. I hate it too; that is why came here. I was tired of working on the latrines every day. That is why they don't touch us – the high caste.” (p.98)

Velutha's grandfather and many others converted to Christianity but they didn't get benefit of it because upper castes people behavior is not changed even after 1947, they have given them separate church and priests also. Velutha never behave like roaring tiger but feel he has nothing to do. Velutha has great ability just like an engineer. He knows machines very well from others. He is simple man but he is god of small things and the god of loss. Mammachi said that if he would have got opportunities for proper education and facilities then he can become a doctor, an engineer or a lawyer also. Ammu's husband abused to her and sends to her for his boss. So Ammu comes at Ayemenem, Kerala. Most of her novels are set in Kerala. Ammu comes back to maternal home and lived with her twins and her brother and Mammachi. Her twins Rahel and Estha likes Velutha loves him also. So sometimes ammu to him for her children. Tragedy begins to here but ammu and velutha liked to each other and their affair is also. He became victim of touchable woman's heart and when he has taken into police custody there he had bitten. They spend with nights on the river bank with each other. In India our society give more importance to castes. So here did not accept Velutha and Ammu's relationship.

Our society is standing on patriarchal system that is why Ammu's brother Chacko married to Margaret an English girl then it was not an issue but girl Ammu tries to establish relationship with lower caste person Velutha then they did not accept it. In Indian society there are many differences between upper caste and lower caste, between boy and girl, between rich and poor. Velutha being victim of patriarchal norms got beaten by police for his daring to fall in love with upper caste girl. He was severely beaten by police for no fault of his own.

Here in India one will have to restrain a normal human feeling. In this way he was beaten and become victim of patriarchal dogma. Ammu's family kept her in a locked room. Sophie is the girl of Chako and Margaret. When someone told to Estha to go to her father, in a rage she goes to Rahel and Sophie went with her. They have to go where there is no barrier of caste and class. As they travel on a cruise Sophie died and her dead body buried into on the bank of river. The tragic death of Sophie leads the narrative of victimization on Velutha and consequently he was tortured by the police. He was blamed being murderer of Sophie under the hatched conspiracy. Velutha is innocent but here he becomes victim of upper-class people. When police beats to him know his affair with upper caste girl then he appears to be victim of dogmatic patriarchal society which makes his condition tragic. Velutha suffers due to his caste and class that is discriminated in a caste ridden society. Arundhati Roy portrays the prevalent disease of caste and class in her novel the god of small things. Roy delineation and her

narrative skill give an edge to the cause of dalit emancipation from the shackles of patriarchal bondages.

## 2. Conclusion

So, our society must need to change attitude for dalit people. By this article people became aware of the condition of untouchable and how they persecuted in our society? Our society's people create this difference between people. Actually no one is upper and no one is lower by born. In this universe all must have same rights and all must equal. Our society became educated but they need to change thoughts for poor dalit people. Our constitution made rules for them but we need to change our mind for them and lived as all are same. We must improve their condition and remove this untouchability from our society.

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