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**How the Caste System and British Colonization which Constructed Class Discrimination in India portrayed in the Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things**

**Johanes Arya Amandu**

Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia

johanes.amandu@gmail.com

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**Abstract**

 The caste system is a unique and complicated social problem in India. The system itself is a Hindu dogma that divides society based on skill or occupation, it consists of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Sudhras. However there is also a group of people who does not belong to any caste, they are the Dalits or the Paravans. Targeting low-caste people and those without caste, the system gives birth to social inequality and nasty human rights violations that have been going on for hundreds of years, especially after the system was codified by the British Colonial Government. This research was conducted to present the reality portrayed in The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy, about how the laws issued by the Indian government itself or the antithesis brought by the West to India such as Marxism and Christianity are powerless to change the Caste System, equalize all people, and eradicate the caste discrimination.

**Keywords**: *Caste System. India. History. Colonization. Social Class.*

**Introduction**

One thing India has and no other country in the world has is the caste system. It has become an integral cultural identity for Indian society, especially the Hindu majority, the religion that gave birth to the caste system. From the nineteenth century until today, the caste system in India has become a very controversial topic because it is the mastermind of many human rights violations in the country. But despite all the controversies and problems that follow, Indians is still reluctant to remove caste from their lives, in the name of religion and cultural identity.

In the novel, Arundhati Roy tells us that the caste system is an ancient entity that has existed in India for thousands of years, long before the arrival of Europeans and all the little things they brought with them: Christianity, Communism, Colonialism, etc. No one knows for sure when the caste system was established, but historians agree that the caste system was born along with the sacred text of the Hindu religion, the *Rigveda* which was transmitted orally in the period 1500 - 1000 BC. The *Rigveda* contains cosmology, religious rituals, rites, teachings of life or dharma, and hymns to the gods.

Rigveda calls the caste system *varna*. The caste system is the division of human roles in society, and consists of four castes: the first are *Brahmins*, religious leaders; then *Ksatriya*, leaders and guardians of society; *Vaishyas*, merchants, and landlords; and lastly are the *Sudras*, slaves and workers, those who do physical labor. This division is not a structured hierarchy of power, but rather a social condition for transmitting and maintaining certain abilities or skills in caste-based families. This is what later underlines the prohibition to marry people from different castes.

However, not all people belong to the caste system or *caturvarna*. Outside of *caturvarna*, there lives a group that, because they do not belong to the caste system, becomes the target of discrimination. *Dalits*, that Is the name given to them. They are lower than humans, equated with animals and dung.

The caste system became the framework of Indian social life from the late 19th century to the post-colonial period to this day, not missing all kinds of its dark sides. In the novel, Arundhati Roy underlines how low the *Dalits* are in Indian society even for those who do not embrace Hinduism: ranging from not being allowed into the house to being made a scapegoat for a crime.

The answer to the question "why?" is more than just "because they are *Dalit*". because they are *Dalits* means that no one cares or is afraid to protest the injustice that has happened to them; because they are *Dalits* means that they do not have a "social position" where their voices can be heard: apart from their identity most of the Dalits are landless, has no political power, etc.

Caste's social life in India differs between today and pre-colonial times. There is no evidence, say Jamison and Brereton in their book *The Rigveda: A Guide (2020),* of a complex, pervasive, or structured caste system. Pre-colonial social stratification seemed embryonic and informal and even seemed verbal—a social ideal rather than social reality as it is today.

When the Mughal Empire collapsed, the British succeeded it as ruler of the Indian subcontinent; and it was the British who played a role in bringing the caste system into reality. The British wanted to rule India based on the "Hindu imagination"—the roots of Indian culture, therefore, when the colonial government conducted a census they included a caste system to classify the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent. Residents, even though they do not feel they belong to a certain caste, must associate themselves with one of the castes as a form of obedience to the colonial government's population census law. The people could not do much and had to get used to this system until it became a habit—the habit of dividing one another based on caste, which long after the end of British colonial rule, the ghost of this division still exists, and it does not only haunt Hindus, it lives throughout the Indian subcontinent. Arundhati Roy calls this division the "Love Laws", the law that dictates who to love and how.

In conducting research and compiling this article, I uses three literary approaches to dissect the novel The God of Small Things and examines how the reality of the caste system in the book correlates with the reality of the caste system in the real world.

To examine the history of the caste system in India, I uses the Socio-Historical Approach. With this approach, I assisted to examine references and snippets of history written in the novel, then relating them to actual historical facts in India. With this approach, the question was born *of how the caste system developed in Indian history, and especially how did the British colonial government reshape the caste system?* By answering this question, I will get a linear and factual sequence of historical facts, both from novels and from various sources such as Hindu scriptures, articles, and history books.

The God of Small Things is a novel that tells about the social reality of India in the early years after the end of colonial rule. Coupled with the fact that the British colonial government took part in the reshaped caste system, the writer uses the Post-Colonial Approach to carefully read, disassemble, and analyze the literary narrative in the novel, and photograph the reality behind it, relating to how the colonial government changed the caste system, caste-based discrimination after independence, and the failure of western institutions and ideologies to eradicate caste system inequalities.

And finally, to answer the question of how the caste system is responsible for social class discrimination, I also uses Karl Marx's Class Theory. The author tries to read and compare the theory written by Marx in his book Das Kapital and the Communist Manifesto, with the literary narratives contained in the novel, then concludes.

The issue of the caste system in India is important to study, as a model of class discrimination, tyranny, and corruption of power, and a proof that discrimination against the weak or "those who do not fit into society" is not a personal intention but is the product of a social institution, a long historical process, and the dirty politics of identity.

**Methodology**

**Socio-Historical Approach**

 Every literary work is a portrait of human life, therefore its narratives—both explicitly and implicitly—reveal both historical facts and social realities. The socio-historical approach is a scalpel to open a literary narrative, then identify, and analyze the historical facts and social realities that the author wants to convey in their work, according to the social realities and historical facts of the place where the related literary works were written. In the socio-cultural historical approach, literary works have the same function as history book that it is for the source of information about what happened in the past, but literary work is special because the author is able to portray the condition artistically (text-id.123dok.com).

 However, the socio-historical approach not only examines how social realities and historical facts affect the writing of a literary work, but this theory also analyzes how the background of the author's life affects related literary works, especially the author's point of view regarding the problems raised in the literary work that he/she wrote.

 **Post-Colonial Theory**

Postcolonialism is a critique of colonialism; its influence physically and psychologically, as well as politics & law, science, culture & society, as well as how Europeans constructed their colonized societies according to the construction they wanted. Postcolonialism theory was born in 1978 when Edward Said, a professor of literature at Columbia University published a book entitled Orientalism; where in the book Said classifies the actors of colonialism into two: first, the subject—the colonizing western society; and, object—colonial peoples or peoples of the east or orient. This theory is not neutral, because it involves the construction of the colonized community based on the wishes of the colonizers (Edward Said: 1978). Edward Said added that colonialism also created a west and east dichotomy, as well as a superior and inferior dichotomy; which leads to the exploitation of the inferior and considers it as "exotic": it can be displayed or used as an object of research.

 In relation to literary criticism, postcolonial is understood as a study of how literature reveals traces of colonial encounters, namely confrontations between races, nations, and cultures in conditions of unequal power relations, which have formed a significant part of the human experience since the early days of Europe imperialism (Day and Foulcher, 2008: 2-3).

 **Karl Marx's Theory of Social Class**

Marx's Class Theory in literature is an attempt to identify the division of social class in related literary works and their impact, especially discrimination against the lower class.

 To understand Karl Marx's class theory, we first need to look at Marx's thoughts on Historical Materialism; the following is a simple description. In his book Das Kapital, Marx writes that changes in society or human life are born from human awareness of social conditions, namely the difference between groups of owners of the "mouth of production"—namely landlords or factory owners, with those who do not have the mouth of production--labor or factory worker. Awareness of social conditions will give birth to social interests, and human social interests are determined by their role in the structure of economic production; the interests of the owners of the factors of production are profit, while the interests of the workers are wages or salary.

 From this analysis, Marx divides his ideas into two: the Base or Foundation, and the Upper Building; The shape of the Upper Building is determined by its foundation or base. The basis consists of two aspects: 1.) production forces, namely the power used to change nature such as agricultural tools and humans and their expertise, and, 2.) production relations, namely the division of labor between humans involved in the production process, and this division is determined by skills or production forces. Meanwhile, the Upper Building is divided into two aspects as well, namely: 1.) institutional order, institutions that regulate human life: corporate, country, etc., and, 2.) collective consciousness structure: ideology, belief & religion, as well as community values ​​& norms that participate in regulating man's life.

 Historical Materialism can be observed in the following presupposition: thousands of years ago humans recognized and gathered meat to eat, but they need salt to preserve the meat for the winter. One day they met another human who had salt and needed meat, and they decided to barter for the goods they needed. Time passes by, human needs extend beyond just meat and salt, and they meet more and more humans with a wide variety of goods for bartering. Humans who needed meat, in the beginning, decided to raise cows because more and more people were asking for meat from them; they also hired some neighbors of former hunters to take care of the cows and butcher them. The humans who owned salt did the same thing, and the place where they used to meet became a barter market. The two humans also created rules for anyone who would barter in the market: such as what goods could be bartered for meat and which ones could not; and the two men appointed an old and wise member of their family as judges to oversee the execution of the barter. Here we can see how economic necessity gave birth to the regulation and agency of the market economy, and the division of labor in the production structure based on expertise.

 The above conditions gave birth to what Karl Marx called the Capitalist Class: the bourgeoisie, the upper class of owners of capital and factors of production; and, the proletariat, the working class, the workers, and those without the "mouth of production". Marx adds that a new class is considered a class in the truest sense if it is not only objectively a social group with its own interests, but also subjectively recognizes itself as a class, as a special group in society that has specific interests and is able to fight for them. Human history is the history of class struggle, between the ruling class and the ruled class (Karl Marx, 1848: 1). The relationship between the two is a relationship of exploitation and, or suction or parasite

**Findings and Discussion**

**The Birth of the Caste System**

 Estha and Rahel are twins from a Malayali Syrian Christian family. Their religion keeps them out of the Hindu Caste system. One day they cross the river to play in a colonial house with Sophie Mol, their biracial cousin. But the storm came, the river overflowed and Sophie Mol drowned in the current, while Estha and Rahel were stranded on the other side of the river, safe. At the same time, news comes that Ammu, Estha's mother, and Rahel have just made love to their family servant, a casteless man named Velutha. To save the name of the Ipe family, Estha and Rahel's grandmother reports Velutha to the police, falsely accusing him of raping Ammu, and making him the scapegoat for Sophie Mol's death. None of the accusations were true, Estha and Rahel knew very well that Velutha loved them, and so did their family. But no one cares, because he's casteless. The police immediately killed Velutha without trial.

 The injustice experienced by Velutha in the novel is the injustice experienced by most of the casteless people in India. Caste discrimination is a serious social problem and Human Rights violation that has been faced by India since and after India's Independence from British, even to this day. But the problem of caste discrimination is that the caste itself is much more complicated than one might imagine; also far older.

*Equally, it could be argued that it actually began thousands of years ago. Long before the Marxists came. Before the British took Malabar, before the Dutch Ascendency before Vasco da Gama arrived, before the Zamorin’s conquest of Calicut. Before three purple-robed Syrian bishops murdered by the Portuguese were found floating in the sea, with coiled sea serpents riding on their chests and oysters knotted in their tangled beards. It could be argued that it began long before Christianity arrived in a boat and seeped into Kerala like tea from a teabag. (Page 47)*

The caste system was born at the same time as the *Rigveda,* the oldest scripture of Hinduism. The *Rigveda* was written around 1500-1000 BCE, about 2000 years before modern India was proclaimed and *The God of Small Things* was written.

 *11. When they divided Purusa how many portions did they make?*

 *What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet?*

 *12. The Brahman was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rajanya made.*

 *His thighs became the Vaishya, from his feet the Shudra was produced.*

 *(Rigveda: 10.90, 11-12)*

 At the beginning of time, God creates *Purusa*, the earliest form of life. Another, similar version of the creation mythology of *Purusa*, can be seen in Norse creation mythology where the Norse Gods split *Ymir* the Giant's body into 9 to create 9 Realms of Life. While the Gods of the Hindus, from the four organs of *Purusha*'s body, create humans:

1. From the mouth of Purusa God created *Brahmins*, people who are tasked with teaching the content and wisdom of the *Vedas*, they are teachers, leaders of religious ceremonies, recipients, and givers of gifts; their power is greatest in society;

2. From the two arms of *Purusa* God created his *Rajas* or *Kshatriyas* as protectors for others: they were soldiers, as well as community leaders - kings and their ministers;

3. From the thigh of Purusa, God created *Vaishyas*, the drivers of the economy, they are farmers and livestock keepers, but they can also become traders, landlords, and money-lenders;

 The top three castes will experience a second spiritual birth after the sacrament of initiation as in Hindu theology. This is what distinguishes the top three castes from the lowest castes that do not experience a second spiritual born:

4. *Sudhra*, whom God created from the feet of *Purusa*, are laborers, slaves, and washers, they do all the menial work that is not done by the top three Castes.

 The four Castes are known as *caturvarna*. And because of the body parts from which they were created, one cannot rule out the sentiment that the four are not equal, but noting that “the feet are as essential to the body as the head.” *Caturvarna* is integral to human life, and therefore no *Varna* is more important than any other.

 In a seminar at North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Sadhguru, a Hindu mystic and preacher from India said that Caste is a social condition for transmitting the skills. So that the special skills possessed by the families of each *Varna* are maintained within the family and Caste circles from generation to generation, this is why it is forbidden for someone from a different Caste to marry. Marrying someone from a different caste was considered taboo and even shameful. The same is true for interfaith marriages. People who marry people from different castes or different religions are considered to be destroying the caste order, traditions, and the sacred distribution of skills. In the novel, Ammu's social reputation plummets after she, a Syrian Christian woman decides to marry a Hindu man. He became the subject of gossip and ridicule from neighbors and relatives.

*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 her divorce. They squeezed her knee and gloated. (Page 47)*

 What Ammu is experiencing is part of a Caste entity that has grown and evolved over thousands of years. When written down in the *Rigveda* mantras, Caste did not necessarily become what is now a social reality in modern Indian society. Significant changes in the implementation of the Caste system occurred after the writing of *The Law of Manu* approximately in 1250 BC.

 The Law of Manu contains the ethics of life, and instructions on how to live purely and piously; all laws and ethics are written in this scripture are based on Caste differences. The punishments imposed on lawbreakers are also based on Caste differences, with *Sudhra* being the heaviest and the lightest being *Brahmins* (Sasha Riser-Kositsky: 2009, 32). It is clear that The Law of Manu is not a democratic law "where everyone has the same right to access the law", the regulations in this book uphold the *Brahmin* Caste as "holy", the highest and perfect among all creations on earth;

*93. As the Brahmana sprang from (Brahman’s) mouth, as he was the first-born, and as he possesses the Veda, he is by right the lord of this whole creation.*

*98. The very birth of a Brahmana is an eternal incarnation of the sacred law; for he* is born to ( fulfill) the sacred law, and becomes one with Brahman.

*99. A Brahmana, coming into existence, is born as the highest on earth, the lord of all created beings, for the protection of the treasury of the law.*

*100. Whatever exists in the world is, the property of the Brahmana; on account of the excellence of his origin The Brahmana is, indeed, entitled to all.*

*101. The Brahmana eats but his own food, wears but his own apparel, bestows but his own in alms; other mortals subsist through the benevolence of the Brahmana.*

 *(The Law of Manu: 1, 93 & 98 -101)*

 The most obvious difference in the legal treatment of caste members is, the difference in treatment between the 3 upper Castes or twice-born men, towards *Sudhra* or the lowest Caste.

*24. Let twice-born men seek to dwell in those (above-mentioned countries); but a Sudra, distressed for subsistence, may reside anywhere.*

 *(The Law of Manu: 2, 24.)*

 The mantra can be interpreted into many interpretations but can be narrowed down to one conclusion: *Sudhra*'s identity as a slave, who could live anywhere no matter the country or land in which they worked; because slaves can be traded and the purpose of a *Sudhra'*s life is to serve the upper Castes.

 Treated special in *The Law of Manu*, *Brahmins* make the scripture a "standard source of authority" to govern the lower castes (Sasha Riser-Kositsky: 2009, 32). The power of the *Brahmin* Caste is similar to Popes and Bishops in medieval Europe. Both the Pope and *Brahmanas* have authority and access to “scriptures” and act as “God's representatives on earth”, therefore no one dares to violate the words or orders of a *Brahmanas* or Pope; because it would also violate the Holy Law and God's commandments. However, what distinguishes the authority of the Pope and the *Brahmanas* is the implementation of the laws and sacred texts that they guard and enforce in their respective society. If we look at European history, we can see that the Pope's orders (which were based on the Bible) were formal, verbal, and centralized or rigid: every word of the Pope would be formally written down, absorbed into the laws of every Catholic kingdom in Europe, and must be obeyed by all Catholics; violating it is tantamount to sin and various punishments await from excommunication to the death penalty. In contrast to *The Law of Manu*; this law was oral and flexible and was never even formally applied: pre-colonial India consisted of many kingdoms and regions, where the implementation of *The Law of Manu* differed depending on the Brahmins' authority in each region or kingdom.

 In their book *The Rigveda: A Guide* *(2020)*, Joel Brereton, and Stephanie Jamison write that there is no evidence of a complex, pervasive, or structured caste system; social stratification appears embryonic, and then becomes a social ideal instead of a social reality. After its birth in 1500 BC with the writing of the *Rigveda*, the Caste system was just a blurry text in a book; we can see that there is a collection of words and sentences forming a paragraph—we can see the shapes and letters, but without being able to read them. Then *The Law of Manu* was written, the laws were the pen that sharpened the blurry letters, so that slowly, haltingly, we could read them. It affirms the identity of Caste and plants the seeds of discrimination that thousands of years later will grow into ghosts.

 India alone created their Caste, and with it, discrimination followed; but the British came and began to rule the Subcontinent, they underlined the obscure text—turning the oral into verbal, the social ideal into social reality.

 **Formalization & Codification of Caste System by British**

 On 24 August 1608, the British East India Company arrived in the Indian Subcontinent as a merchant. Nearly a hundred years later the British had turned India from a spice trading partner into a "colonial land". In the years after the British succeeded in attaching their power to the Subcontinent, British people slowly began to come to India, whether for trading purposes, political affairs, or scientific matters. Castes are particularly interesting entities for social, economic, and anthropological studies; that is a lot of British people want to learn about the caste system that makes up the society of the Subcontinent. This desire prompted social scientists and anthropologists to translate Hindu scriptures into English; and because the scriptures were held by the *Brahmin* caste authority, the British view of the caste system, later on, would be influenced by the *Brahmin* view of the caste system.

 The East India Company had the vision to govern their colony according to local wisdom; therefore to preserve the traditions and values ​​of Indian society, the Subcontinent will be governed according to 'Indian traditions and culture' (Sasha Riser-Kositsky 2009: 33). With the direction of Brahmins, translations of Hindu scriptures such as *The Law of Manu* and *Rigveda*, in 1772, starting from Bengal, the Governor-General of the EIC for the Subcontinent inaugurated a judicial system based on scriptures and the Caste system; to formalize the Caste system and apply it more firmly and clearly than ever before. This is where the turning point begins to change the face of the Indian Caste system. This formalization created a hierarchy in the Caste system that never existed before, becoming what we see today as the pyramid of the Caste system: *Brahmins* being at the top of the Caste hierarchy, followed by *Ksathriya, Vaishya*, and *Sudhra.*

 Throughout the time of British colonial rule in India, considering the many criticisms leveled against the Colonial government from many British social scientists regarding laws based on the Caste system, the attitude of the Colonial government towards the Caste system did not change. The foundations laid by Lord Warren Hastings influenced both the policies and views of colonial governments, both the EIC and the British on the Caste system; including how they treated people from different Castes.

 Discrimination and injustice in the Caste system existed when the British came, and many efforts were made to change this social reality but changes to culture and traditions in India risked causing public anger and hatred against the colonial government, one proof of which was the outbreak of The First Indian Rebellion in 1858 which occurred due to the prohibition of the colonial government to wear religious attributes in public spaces. The rebellion cost the colonial government financially and materially, so the British decided not to take the risk to tamper with Hindu culture and traditions and continue to rule over the Subcontinent based on these traditions.

 Here are two of the most prominent policies inaugurated by the British Colonial Government, both East India Company and British Raj, which takes part in the codification of the Caste System:

1. Population censuswhich recorded based on the person identity; for instance religious identity, and of course Caste identity. Recorded in the 20th page of the Memorandum of the British India of 1871 – 1872. As I said earlier, even though some people do not feel they belong to a certain caste, they must associate themselves with one of the castes as a form of obedience to the colonial government's population census law.

2. Indian Councils Act of 1909 introduced the separate electorates based on religious identity especially for Muslims. Subsequently, the concept of separate electorates were expanded to other religious communities. While the separate electorates themselves were not explicitly caste-based, there were caste considerations influenced the politics and dynamics within the religiously defined electorates.

 These policies made by the colonial government were one of the factors that led to the increasing awareness of one's caste identity; a process of codification of tradition into a norm makes the tradition no longer a tradition but closer to law. People flock to register themselves in the census with the caste identity they believe in and everyone has a personal definition of their caste and the Caste system as a whole. Thousands of years ago when the *Rigveda* was just beginning to be prayed and sung, the Caste classification was a religious social domain, whereas in the early twentieth century this classification turned secular and formal.

 **Discrimination against the Casteless**

 Caste injustice which is "emphasized" by the British not only occurs inside the *caturvarna* but also to the castleless people; which is the focus of the novel. Even though caste is a product of Hinduism, the novel shows us that injustice and discrimination based on caste are not carried out and experienced by Hindus alone, but non-Hindu as well. The British call them "depressed caste", they are also known as *Dalit, Paria, Harijan*, and *Paravan* in the novel.

 *Dalits* are people who don not belong to *varna* or do not belong to a certain caste—casteless Hindus. They are prohibited from doing public works without the permission of caste people, therefore most of the *Dalits* are scavengers, beggars, and landless laborers; and when they have jobs it is usually a difficult and inappropriate one, one of which is cleaning sewers or septic tanks. They were prohibited from entering temples, houses of caste people, eating in front of or with caste people, and were not even allowed to stand in the shadow of caste people.

*"As a young boy, Velutha would come with Vellya Paapen to the back entrance of the Ayemenem House to deliver the coconuts they had plucked from the trees in the compound. Pappachi would not allow Paravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched. Caste Hindus and Caste Christians. Mammachi told Estha and Rahel that she could remember 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. 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." (Page 104)*

*"She said (among other things), How could she stand the smell? Haven’t you noticed, they have a particular smell, these Paravans!" (Page 111)*

 When the British came to India, the spirit of the Reconquista and the Christian Law of Love made the British people move to change the social situation there, seeing how the Caste system had created social injustice, poverty, and discrimination against Low Castes and the Casteless—you could say the basis this is what social scientists and anthropologists use to criticize colonial law based on caste.

 For this reason, many *Dalits* convert to Anglicans to avoid the bad luck of becoming Casteless. The majority of the population of the Indian state of Kerala, the setting in which the novel is based is Christian (to this day), and the colonial religion is completely silent in the face of the Caste system, which existed long before Jesus.

*"When the British came to Malabar, a number of Paravans, Pelayas and Pulayas (among them Velutha’s grandfather, Kelan) converted to Christianity and joined the Anglican Church to escape the scourge of Untouchability. As added incentive they were given a little food and money. They were known as the Rice* Christians. *It didn’t take them long to realize that they had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. They were made to have separate churches, with separate services, and separate priests. As a special favor they were even given their own separate Pariah Bishop. After Independence they found they were not entitled to any government benefits like job reservations or bank loans at low interest rates, because officially, on paper, they were Christians, and therefore casteless. It was a little like having to sweep away your footprints without a broom. Or worse, not being allowed to leave footprints at all." (Page 105)*

 Seeing how Dalits & Paravans or Untouchables are treated in Indian society, it is no exaggeration to define them as "no value in the eyes of society", "no identity", "equal to animals"; because caste people even have to wash their hands or take a bath when they touch a Paravan. I made this definition based on the fate that Velutha experienced in the novel, as well as actual experiences experienced by the Untouchables in India. Velutha did a great job for the Ipe family: she did all the heavy lifting in the house, and Estha & Rahel loved her and she loved them and Ammu too. And he was killed in a very heinous way by high-caste cops for false accusations brought against him without trial. Everything happened around Sophie Mol's death and the revelation of Velutha's secret relationship with Ammu;

*"She groped her way to the sink, and soaped away the sodden Paravan’s eye-juices. She smelled her hands when she’d finished. Kochu Maria gave Vellya Paapen an old kitchen cloth towipe himself with, and said nothing when he stood on the topmost step almost inside her Touchable kitchen, drying himself, sheltered from the rain by the sloping overhang of the roof. –" ( Page 358)*

*He could make intricate toys-tiny windmills, rattles, minute jewel boxes out of dried palm reeds; he could carve perfect boats out of tapioca stems and figurines on cashew nuts. He would bring them for Ammu, holding them out on his palm (as he had been taught) so she wouldn’t have to touch him to take them." (Page 106)*

*Mammachi (with impenetrable Touchable logic) often said that if only he hadn’t been a Paravan, he might have become an engineer. He mended radios, clocks, water pumps. He looked after the plumbing and all the electrical gadgets in the house." (Page 107)*

*(It was Velutha who made Rahel her luckiest-ever fishing rod and taught her and Estha to fish." (Page 112)*

*"He would bring them for Ammu, holding them out on his palm (as he had been taught) so she wouldn’t have to touch him to take them. Though he was younger than she was, he called her Ammukutty–Little Ammu." (Page 106)*

 *"They woke Velutha with their boots." (Page 403)*

*"They heard the thud of wood on flesh. Boot on bone. On teeth. The muffled grunt when a stomach is kicked in. The muted crunch of skull on cement. The gurgle of blood on a man’s breath when his lung is torn by the jagged end of a broken rib." (Page 404)*

*RAJAHSTAN, KOMPAS.TV - A Dalit caste man and his son were beaten by 15 people and forced to drink their urine or urine. ( - Kompas.com, July 15, 2021)*

*Last month, a 13-year-old Dalit girl was raped and murdered in Uttar Pradesh. In December last year, a 23-year-old Dalit woman in the same state died after being set on fire by a group of men as she went to court to file rape charges. Both cases are still pending in court. ( - Kompas.com, Sept 2020)*

 Although criticized by social scientists and anthropologists, unwittingly caste-based legal policies brought great benefits to the British. Caste-based policies further emphasize Caste identity and the disintegration of them, as a result, it is difficult for Indian society to unite and foster nationalism because of inter-caste feuds. *Divide et Impera*: divide and rule. Perhaps the British are deliberately ignoring criticism of the caste-based law, perhaps they do care and hope for disintegration in a caste society. Few colonizers are happy about the emergence of integration and nationalism.

 **Caste, Foundation of Social Class**

 At this point, it is easy for us to point our fingers at which caste system is bourgeois and which is the proletariat. Kerala is fertile ground for Communism and Marxism, these ideas coexist with Hinduism and Syriac Christianity.

 If we take a closer look to socio-economical condition that the novel showed and compare it to Marx’s theory of class, we can conclude that: the Syrian Christians and the high caste Hindus in Kerala are the bourgeois landlords, represents by the Ipe family who owns a pickle factory namely “Paradise Pickles & Preserves, and hiring many peoples includings Velutha, a *Dalits;* his existence add to the fact the he join the Kerala Communist Party makes him the representations of the Proletariat.

 We know that Marxism aspires to create a classless society in which the Mouth of Production is ruled by "the people for the good of the people", or "one for all". But the novel tells us that, like Christianity, Marxism is helpless in the face of the Caste System:

1. Economic injustice due to stigmatization; their "Casteless" status makes it difficult for *Dalits* or *Paravans* to get decent jobs for a living. They live in uninhabitable huts on other people's land or on the outskirts of the village. The same thing is experienced by black people in Toni Morisson's novel The Bluest Eyes;

*"Velutha, Vellya Paapen and Kuttappen lived in a little laterite hut, downriver from the Ayemenem house." (Page 111)*

2. *Dalits* or *Casteless* people get very low wages when compared to High Caste people. This can be seen in the novels; Chacko, uncle of Estha & Rahel—Ammu's older brother, claims to be a Marxist even though he owns a Preserved Foods company where Paravans earn less than High Castes;

*"Mammachi rehired Velutha as the factory carpenter and put him in charge of general maintenance. It caused a great deal of resentment among the other Touchable factory workers because, according to them, Paravans were not meant to be carpenters. And certainly, prodigal Paravans were not meant to be rehired." (Page 110)*

According to Marx, in order to create a equal communist society, it is important that the class consciousness is exist in the society. Class consciousness refers to the understanding and recognition of social classes and their respective interests and struggles within a capitalist society; it entails recognizing that individual struggles and grievances are not isolated incidents, but rather part of a broader systemic issue.

 Velutha has the class consciousness, as well as any other Low Caste and Dalits who joins the Anglican Church or the Communist Party. But as Velutha died, we came to a haunting understanding that Caste System is far more bigger than those two West institution, at least in India. Those two institution for sure, did not want to interfere the Caste, did not want and too afraid to change anything or to nudged the status-quo of the three thousand years old systems.

*"The real secret was that communism crept into Kerala insidiously. As a reformist movement that never overtly questioned the traditional values of a caste-ridden, extremely traditional community. The Marxists worked from within the communal divides, never challenging them, never appearing not to. They offered a cocktail revolution. A heady mix of Eastern Marxism and orthodox Hinduism, spiked with a shot of democracy." (Page 95)*

**Conclusion**

 Putting aside all good and bad, Caste System is the thread that knits Indian Hindu society and traditions for thousands of years. It becomes a guide for people on how to live their lives in the world, how to carry out their roles according to Caste for the common good and the glory of God, and how they interact with one another. Caste is deeply ingrained in the land of the Subcontinent and grows without being restricted by religion or state, removing it is impossible, experts believe that India will collapse if the Caste System is repealed or abolished.

British fault or not, Caste discrimination undermines the integrity of Indian society slowly, like it or not India has to live with the Caste System. What India finally wants to achieve seems to be living together in a Caste without hierarchy, living in a Caste without a barrier, or living in a tradition without a aCste. These efforts can be seen in the prohibition of Caste-based discrimination in article 15 of the Indian Constitution, and humanitarian efforts to fight for equality and a better life for *Dalits* or Untouchables. Former President of India, Ram Nat Kovinh who is a *Dalit*, proves the extent of India's efforts to fight the disease of discrimination in the body of the Caste System tradition.

Meanwhile, the fight against the caste system ghost in the novel is described by the story of the secret and forbidden relationship between Ammu, and Velutha. They love each other, that is what matters. They have been in love with each other since they were young without realizing it. When they finally decide to make love by the river, at the end of the novel, Ammu and Velutha are fighting the Law of Love; rules governing who can be loved and how much. It is forbidden for Ammu and Velutha to love each other, because death is at stake. Even though death is the price of love, Velutha and Ammu still loved each other, they still tried.

*"When she was ready she squatted facing him. She touched him lightly with her fingers and left a trail of goosebumps on his skin. Like flat chalk on a blackboard. Like breeze in a paddyfield. Like jet-streaks in a blue church sky. He took her face in his hands and drew it towards his. He closed his eyes and smelled her skin. Ammu laughed.*

Yes, Margaret, she thought. We do it to each other too.

*She kissed his closed eyes and stood up. Velutha with his back against the mangosteen tree watched her walk away.*

*She had a dry rose in her hair.*

*She turned to say it once again: “*Naaley*.”*

*Tomorrow." (Page 475)*

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