Regional Flavor of Blood: Trauma of the Subjugated in the Nature of Blood and the God of Small Things

Shabana Sayeed

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ABSTRACT

Inequality in the postcolonial context, takes a perilous shape involving tremendous trauma where the victim possesses a broken or no voice to present one’s angsts and sufferings to the world. The marginalization and trauma of the lower castes in India are generated from the custom of inequality that eventually gives rise to violence and bloodshed for generations. Philips’ discussion of Nazism and violence against the non-Europeans in The Nature of Blood and its trope of blood correlates with the hostility in The God of Small Things that looks at the epistemological foundation of casteist narratives in order to castigate the underpinnings of the casteist mythology and culture. Through this atypical juxtaposition of two geographically and temporally distant novels, this research invites a multi-dimensional discourse on Indian caste violence connected with mythology and thus, unfolds new avenues for an enhanced and unusual study of The God of Small Things.

INDEX WORDS: Postcolonial, Trauma, Marginalization, Politics, Religion, Mythology
REGIONAL FLAVOR OF BLOOD: TRAUMA OF THE SUBJUGATED IN THE NATURE OF BLOOD AND THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

by

SHABANA SAYEED

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the College of Arts and Sciences Georgia State University 2019
DEDICATION

I dedicate my Thesis to the synonym of my life- my mother, Nurbanu Begam, the mast of my life boat, the one to bear me in her heart and soul in every moment of her life. To my aunt, Shafika Khatun, who has been keeping me on her literal and metaphorical chest since my day one on earth. To the superman Abdul Sayeed Khan, who, apart from giving birth to me, made me aware of humanity and beyond. To my best friend, Sarfraz Khan, who became my husband to support, tolerate, and encourage me for the life-long. To my parents-in-law, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, co-sister, and my dear nephew Arhaan.
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INTRODUCTION: INEQUALITY AND TRAUMA IN EUROPEAN AND INDIAN CONTEXTS: A COMPARISON

Social inequality in European as well as Indian contexts—in its various forms: racial, financial, gender, caste, class and so on—is perceived as abominable. Trauma studies coupled with a discourse on social inequality recapitulates trauma as a servile experience, a major psychological phenomenon that needs communication and working through. Western trauma theorists have propounded endless discussions on the working through of trauma. One of the trauma-theory pioneers, Cathy Caruth, places the communicability of trauma in a problematic position. Trauma, according to Caruth, is an excruciatingly painful event, and the mind is unable to process the trauma memories. As trauma occurs, the victim is likely to forget the event entirely; if at all there is a chance of recalling the event, the speaker experiences a gap, making the inexpressibility even more probable. For Caruth, trauma is amnestic, “an event whose force is marked by its lack of registration” (Caruth 6). However, drawing on Freud, Caruth also claims that trauma is haunting as it comes back in some other mediums like flashbacks and dreams. Trauma is always “latent” in the victim’s mind. Therefore, in the post-traumatic stage, the victim is always haunted by the latency of the trauma and is “precisely possessed by an image or event” associated with the incident the victim has experienced (Caruth 5). Caruth’s theory although rejects the communicability of trauma, accepts that somewhere the victim is perhaps able to identify the traumatic moment through some other mediums and even express a vengeance and work on the revenge mechanism (Caruth 5). This way, the victim’s internal psychological struggle is somewhat balanced. Although Caruth opposes the idea of communicability of trauma, she agrees that through figural language—if not through literal or discursive language—trauma can be at least expressed.
Dominick LaCapra, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of communicability and working through trauma. Trauma as a psychological condition, could be addressed through various models. In working through, trauma is a double-sided exploration involving a speaker and a listener, through which it is communicated well from the observer to the observed. This ubiquitous nature of a trauma agent is better understood through LaCapra’s concept of traumatic events “that are heavily charged with emotion and value and that always bring out the implication of the observer in the observed” (LaCapra 141). Communication of trauma with an observer helps the patient to augment the process of rehabilitation.

Joshua Pederson accepts the communicability of trauma and argues that trauma amnesia is nothing but a myth, and trauma is communicable and memorable because “while victims may *choose* not to speak of their traumas, there is little evidence that they *cannot*” (334). Drawing on Richard McNally’s concept of the healing power of trauma narration, which “enables survivors to gain more control over the traces left by trauma. . . helping the survivor to remake a self,” Pederson critically examines the narrative to seek for what *is* there (McNally qtd. in Pederson 339). Pederson’s theory represents that a traumatized person may often not be able to convey exactly what they want to convey, and in the process of memory, the images and words could be broken or altered, but this does not implicate the memory’s absence; it emphasizes the memory’s post-traumatic testimonies.

In Marianne Hirsh’s opinion, when the trauma is communicated through someone who was not present in the traumatic moment, there lies a “risk [of] having one’s own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated” (107). She cautions that the transmitted memory is obviously different from the memory recalled by the survivors of the event. Therefore, there is a possibility of misrepresentation or misinterpretation of the catastrophe. In representing the
memory as facts, one must consider “How can we best carry their stories forward without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn having our own stories displaced by them?” (104) The trauma victim has a capacity to deploy the contagious effect on the observer, “an almost compulsive power and should elicit our empathy. This empathy may go to the point of fascination or extreme identification, wherein one becomes a kind of surrogate victim oneself and assumes the victim’s voice” (146). Thus, an over emphasis on empathy may create a gap in solving the problem.

Scholars have pondered much on how the theoretical frameworks of western trauma are not always sufficient to devise a working through in the east or in the colonized countries of the east. However, to underpin the “postcolonial trauma” in the east, I try to fathom another level where there lies a deficit in both the approaches. For that, I turn to the literatures by Arundhati Roy and Caryl Phillips who are great examples of dealing with trauma literature in a subtly different manner although they are different in their endeavors, writing styles, and spaces. For both Roy and Phillips, trauma has certain unknown regions of origin, and that origin is usually overlooked behind the glossy, aesthetic appeals of the settings, plots, characters, and big incidents in the novel. For example, The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy presents innumerable emotions including death, childhood, adulthood, sexuality, and women oppression. My detailed analysis infers that the hidden agenda that this author carries forward throughout her novel is caste discrimination and contribution of Indian mythology in that discrimination in a subtle yet confident manner. Similarly, in Caryl Phillips, the horror of the Holocaust is so massive that we somehow undermine the individual trauma that needs a special attention. We hardly turn to the micro-level exploration of blood and losing of speech of a certain individual, which is a threat to humanity.
To understand the underlined dichotomy of caste and race violence in both the novels, we need to investigate the social set-up, trying to gaze through the perspectives of the superiors: why would a certain community want to consider and treat another group of people as inferiors? In considering the underprivileged caste as “low,” the upper caste not only snatches the lower caste’s established identity and thrust them into the longstanding trauma of living with an imposed “low” identity that presupposes their work as cleaning toilets and human feces. The theme of identity, then, becomes pivotal in search for meaning: What contributes to the longstanding belief system of prejudice? Why is mythology used as a means of suppression? What political interest does ‘subjugation through popular myths’ satisfy? These questions emerge with an urgency while critiquing a cutting-edge trauma literature like the ones under consideration: The trauma literature that imperatively exposes the epistemic qualities of the violence inflicted upon the inferior race, caste, or gender.

“Epistemic violence” is something that is inflicted through polished, sophisticated mediums and not necessarily through physical violence, according to Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak. Epistemic violence occurs when the subalterns have no space in their own historical or cultural arenas in the nation and when they are oppressed and not allowed to speak for themselves, or to have their contributions recognized. For Spivak, “epistemic violence” is incurred when a certain individual loses his or her voice to speak for his or her own self, own history or culture. As an individual’s own stories are replaced by the politically charged representations of his/her superior, s/he essentially is abandoned from his/her own history and society, destabilizing his/her identity. Violence is inflicted through writings, speeches, pamphlets, thoughts, preaching, and other sophisticated means as such, which, in most cases, the subalterns are denied access to. Also, according to Spivak, if ever a subaltern has a capacity to
speak, it is not considered a speech until it is valued and recognized. Unfortunately, the voices of the inferiors are suppressed and never recognized because “[w]hen you say cannot speak, it means that if speaking involves speaking and listening, this possibility of response, responsibility, does not exist in the subaltern’s sphere” (Spivak 4). Hence, the subaltern has no voice and identity but must endure violence. The subaltern can never acquire a voice, as his/her courage is shunned through politically modified speeches by the superiors. Graham K. Riach, extending Spivak’s argument, establishes that if they try to accumulate courage to speak about the miseries, “will this be heard in a way that can begin to effect change? For speech to be successful, it must transmit its message. For Spivak, subaltern speech does not achieve this” (Riach 12).

While Spivak’s discourse in the context of race, for the Western colonization of the subalterns in the East, and women’s double subjugation in the East is apt, marginalization also occurs in the form of domination over the inferior in the east itself, in regard to caste, race, wealth, skin color etc. Among these various methods of suppression, the most prevalent and perilous system that works against humanity is the caste system where, “they [lower castes] are in effect erased from their place in the world.” (Riach 11). The caste hierarchy is antithetical to the basic rights of humanity, as it propagates the categorization of humans based on their birth (high or low), setting a high rank for the upper caste and creating narratives that benefit them socially, economically, and emotionally.

The ranking system in terms of birth eventually creates trauma that is sometimes dangerous and uncommunicable. Through literature that involves trauma rising through inequality is important in the context of postcolonial trauma studies. Jay Rajiva opens his discussion of trauma with a pertinent question: why do we read a certain text as trauma
literature? What benefits does this “amorphous genre” provide? These questions point towards the problem of oppression that is heavily ingrained in a society where superiority and inferiority are incurred upon people based on birth and lineage. A certain group of people having power exercise suppression and torture on every-day basis to another group of people who lack that power. The more they employ this act of supression, the more they gain authority and power to continue it. As a result, they create a massive fissure between communities. The greed for power and struggle for supremacy in terms of class, caste, race, gender, and religion “generate an everyday traumatic experience that demands a historical or cultural account of the trauma’s origination . . . Living with trauma means inhabiting an experience that is both intensely present and elusive within rational and empirical frameworks of assessment” (Rajiva 3). While the empirical sense of trauma is cantankerous and invites for a sense of empathy, in literature, too much focus on the apparent power struggle in certain texts may run a risk of removing the reader from other factors contributing to the trauma of the marginalized. In a usual manner, empathizing with the victim in the novel takes the reader astray from the hidden contributor that the author craftily wants to demonstrate through an underlined theme of the text. According to LaCapra1, empathy is necessary while acting out trauma, but it is important to keep the social influences astray from the actual problem. In reader response to a trauma text, the victim carries “a risk of having the pain of the wound—physical or psychic, singular or collective—heightened and retriggered by the toxicity of social exclusions” (Rajiva 3). Trauma of a character, then, is to be comprehended with the lens of an all-encompassing mechanism that includes the factors

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1 In Writing History Writing Trauma, LaCapra provides the framework for the founding trauma of the Holocaust where the identification of trauma might become somewhat irrelevant, if we provide people “with too facile an identification, which is not earned and which becomes a basis of identity that is too readily available” (162). Therefore, in acting out trauma, it is necessary to exclude the social influences and limit to the cause of trauma, otherwise “it would be hard to justify fully on other grounds” (162).
contributing to that trauma. One individual trauma could have a potential to be collective by the “toxicity of social exclusions” that triggers the traumatic environments instead of condemning it. This happens usually because of the power that the so-called supreme class wants to exercise upon the inferiors, often spawning a collective, intergenerational trauma.

The intergenerational trauma could be channelized through the traumatic past of the family members. However, in The Nature of Blood, the teen-age protagonist herself experiences enormous violence along with all her family members. Caryl Phillips brings up the tremendous trauma of the Holocaust survivors in his novel. He uses blood exponentially to provide a base of understanding of the horror of Holocaust. Phillips in his trenchant account in his nonfiction Color Me English and fiction The Nature of Blood draws a fine line of thread filled with the color of blood. This blood-thread is not only anguished and ravished but also dead and deceased. He evokes the mammoth concerns for horror and Trauma of the subaltern. His narration overtly deals with the horror in terms of skin color, the oppression of the blacks by the European whites, and immigration. The personae he creates in the novel evokes an aghast cry along with a grotesque story to tell. The story is basically formed out of the torture by the superior Europeans or Nazis who exercise violence that is beyond explanation. The Holocaust survivors find no element to substitute their pains and move “from expulsion to extermination” (LaCapra 166).

Phillips deploys the dramatic version of the harsh survival in the form of nasty images like dirt, lice, blood, and even human feces. This method is effective in channelizing the trauma of the character to the audience in that the audience feels the necessary empathy and thus, tries to identify the self with the situation. This process for Phillips could be what LaCapra terms “acting out”. By enacting the actual scenario in the mode of a fiction the trauma could be channelized somewhat more effectively. LaCapra considers this process as effective as “whereby the past, or
the experience of the other, is repeated as if it were fully enacted, fully literalized” (148). While working through the traumatic incidents, Phillips’ character, however, finds no solace. This aspect is fruitfully conveyed by the author to decrease any idealization of the trauma victim or the traumatic act.

Although scholars have discovered and rediscovered social challenges like caste and race and have worked through them significantly, even today we face a pressing challenge within a community where caste and race are pivotal aspects of identity formation. This complex structural and behavioral pattern leads one community to act superior and look down upon another group as inferior. The large cracks in between humans consequently leads to hatred, subjugation and life-long trauma. Trauma is engendered by a socially constructed belief hoarded by the superiors regarding caste in the villages and even cities in India. Roy and Phillips invite the readers to consider the tyranny and collective trauma of the Holocaust and caste violence. They attempt to revive and bring forth the too disturbing incidents through violent images so to pin point the actual area of the problem—the suppression and lack of voice of the subalterns, who, according to Spivak, is “irretrievably heterogeneous” (79) or other. The self-indulgent superiors (Europeans or Nazis and upper-caste Indians) must create and employ the myths about the other so that the other irrevocably believes in that myth and contribute to his or her own destruction. This myth-making process is never discussed on a global scale because there is not enough voice to represent these problems. Therefore, we must “confront the following question: on the other side of the international division of labor from socialized capital, inside and outside the circuit of the epistemic violence of imperialist law and education supplementing an earlier economic text, can the subaltern speak?” (Spivak 78). Subalterns, if are considered “irretrievably heterogenous,” then the social mobility in a society is challenged as “inequality remains “grand”-
multidimensional, complex, and interlinked” with an “unequal access to social, political, and economic opportunities” (Mair and Wolf 2022). To understand the dichotomy of caste, we need to investigate the social setup, broadly considering the political dynamics of the caste system and its far-reaching (and often catastrophic) consequences.

In Indian societies the hierarchical structure is maintained through caste system, where the popular belief is that a Dalit (belonging to the lowest category in the Verna system) is considered as an untouchable (and sometimes even “unseenable”). He has supposedly taken birth from the feet of Brahma, the Supreme Creator, whereas the Brahmin (or the upper most caste) is created from Brahma’s mouth and has all the rights and all kinds of privileges including the access to education are reserved only for the Brahmins. According to Mair and Wolf, in India, “[i]ndividuals have obligations to the group they adhere to by birth; groups have obligations to other groups according to their respective social ranks [in terms of] the caste system. Caste is acquired by birth and is believed to be changeable only through reincarnation, which is said to reward those who conformed during life and punish those who did not” (2026). The caste hierarchy in India correlates greatly with the racial hierarchical order that the Nazis followed during the Holocaust. The Imperial War Museum in London writes:

The Nazis founded their state on the idea that there was a ‘master race’, superior to all others. The ‘master race’ (*Herrenvolk*) was made up of the Germans and their neighbors in northern Europe, especially the blond and blue-eyed ‘Nordics’. The dark-haired peoples of Southern Europe were considered inferior, though still ‘Aryans’. Below them were people regarded as ‘subhumans’ (*Untermenschen*): the slaves to the east, Gypsies, and nonwhites. At the very bottom—inferior, yet powerful, the eternal enemy of the ‘Aryan race’—were the Jews. The Nazis claimed that ‘inferior races’ threatened to
subvert ‘Aryan’ culture and pollute ‘Aryan’ bloodlines. They wanted to cleanse Germany—and Europe—of such supposedly alien influences. Children, women, civilians were killed.

The social immobility experienced through the discriminatory caste system is a matter of traumatic concern. The trauma faced by the lower castes in the process of discrimination is not only limited to an individual; rather, his or her individual trauma gives birth to an intergenerational trauma to the upcoming generations because of the “ethics and aesthetics of remembrance in the aftermath of catastrophe” (Hirsh 104). According to Marianne Hirsh, traumatic events, having a “living connection,” pass through history and the family works as a “space of transmission and the function of gender as an idiom of remembrance” (103). Even if the next generations are not the direct victims of the ill practices, they through an internal, biological system of channelization, acquire the pain and sense of life-long suffering as “that descendants of survivors (of victims as well as of perpetrators) of massive traumatic events connect so deeply to the previous generation’s remembrances of the past that they need to call that connection memory and thus that, in certain extreme circumstances, memory can be transmitted to those who were not actually there to live an event” (Hirsh 106). Eventually, they fall prey to the discrimination and self-loathing. Their self-loathing transmits to a level where they accept themselves as lower-category humans. This whole systems of rebooting the caste hierarchy is working through the continuous contribution from all the people of the society including the lower castes.

Traumatic acts, while are incomprehensible in the normal human world, holds theories that invite for a detailed discourse and deep analysis. Arundhati Roy and Caryl Phillips, who by using the theme of shedding blood of the subaltern, present a strong case of subjugation and
hypocrisy. The authors attempt to depict characters, who are born in a low lineage and a menial profession and who try to contest the rules set by the dictators. Thus, these characters, having a so-called low lineage or caste or race, are tagged “inferiors” and become puppets in the hands of the so-called “superiors” who control them directly or indirectly. The terms, inferior and superior, are nowhere expressed prominently, but the treatment always is. Scholars who propounded theories against the bias towards the inferiors also voice their opinions about that not much has been done to eradicate those systems. Basing my argument on the theoretical frameworks of B. R. Ambedkar, Kancha Ilaiah and Arjun Dangle to examine the works of Roy and Phillips, I construct my thesis on a platform that includes the discussion of racism and prejudice in European context and casteism and mythology in Indian context. I establish a close link—the trope of blood—between these two geographically and temporally distant novels. This apparent anomalistic comparison could yield to several new avenues for a comprehensive, detailed, and unusual study of the widely read novel The God of Small Things.

In both novels, violence is a common thread; however, the prejudices, hypocrisy, and regressive belief-systems are my areas of concern while reading these texts. While The Nature of Blood is somewhat vivid in presenting the trauma of the subaltern, The God of Small Things presents the horrific incidents somewhat inherently: in a dark jail cell where the characters as well as we, the readers, have not much access to. But with the craftsmanship of the author, it becomes a penchant for the reader to delve deep into the recesses of the subaltern and investigate the core contributing factors of trauma. Hence, I dissect The God of Small Things not only through the lens of differences and tortuous motives representing some inferior characters crying for their rights, but to read as a subtext, analyzing the root cause of the subaltern’s trauma: subjugation through caste violence and mythology. In this investigation, I aim to look at the social, cultural
constructs that propagate and bolster the trauma of the subaltern. This study will also analyze the politics of myth that plays a significant role in fabricating the trauma of the subalterns in the postcolonial Indian context. In the process, I turn to Phillips for a detailed exploration of trauma that is connected through the trope of blood in The Nature of Blood. Because Phillips’ novel is a portrayal of the struggle of a Holocaust survivor who ultimately dies after encountering a pool of blood, it is pertinent to compare these two novels to see the unsaid areas of suppression little more vividly.

Caste and Trauma:

The trauma and sense of lifelessness caused by the hypocrisy of the superiors is what I term as “anti-life force” where the subalterns experience a pause in life. They encounter a position where they are the living dead, going on breathing. The life substance or the life force, which, in Freudian terms “Eros” is transformed into “Thanatos” easily in regard to the torture they endure every day. Hirsh terms this kind of emotion as “looking backward rather than ahead and of defining the present in relation to a troubled past rather than initiating new paradigms” (106). The inability to move forward because of the tremendous psychological and physical violence they are forced to endure “reflects an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture” (Hirsh 106). My project examines this uneasy oscillation caused to the lower castes in India because of their supposed “low” birth and stinky smell that pollute the environment of the bourgeoisie elite upper castes.

The repression and torture upper-caste people continue to incur upon the lower castes is an example of the theories they believe whole-heartedly. The theories are usually popular myths and legends of the country. Myths form a great part in the belief system of the country, and they usually are the weapons to broaden the fissures Dalits have been enduring since ages. Indian
mythology in a large part is constructed to shun the Dalit sentiments and to augment the upper caste ideologies about privilege and access to resources. As explained by B. R. Ambedkar in *Annihilation of Caste* and *Philosophy of Hinduism*, upper-caste Hindus have formulated rules where a lower caste is deprived of education and other human resources. He raises questions on the disgraceful conditions of the Dalits—their homes, sanitation, education, and their existence as humans. According to the Brahmins, “why should the Shudra need trouble to acquire wealth, when the three vernas are there to support him?” (*AOC* 16) Ambedkar considers this statement and posits that this thought is detrimental to the basic symbiosis of human beings. This thought significantly destroys the equality and fellow feeling.

Subaltern discussion and its effectiveness are deep rooted in the Postcolonial Indian theories of marginalization of the lower castes and the untouchables. Ambedkar, the pioneer of discourse on Dalits, theorizes the concepts, backgrounds, beliefs, and the contributions of the scriptures and mythology to this malpractice of casteism. The arguments of Kancha Ilaiah and Arjun Dangle resonate with the theories of Ambedkar in the context of caste. I use these theories to explore the epistemic violence that is constantly inflicted upon India’s subalterns, who are the Dalits, the untouchables, the Indigenous people, and the ones belonging to the lowest strata of the society. The word “Dalit” literally denotes being crushed under the feet or broken or scattered. According to *Manusmriti*, Dalits are supposedly born from the creator Brahma’s feet; therefore, they occupy the lowest category of the varnas. Their blood is considered impure for the sin they have committed in their previous birth. These so-called low-category people are denied access to education, wealth, respect, and even a commemoration in their deaths just because of the popular belief that they have committed sin in their previous births, and therefore, in this life, they lack the right for education or access to professions that are reserved for the upper castes. In *Annihilation*
of Caste and Philosophy of Hinduism, Ambedkar discusses the paucity of education and the need for an overall upliftment of the Dalits. He strongly facilitates education for all and emphasizes the responsibility of students, teachers, and all citizens to carry forward free discourse about the history and culture of casteism in India. In Ambedkar’s writings and speeches, the most emphasized rudiments are liberation and equality, which, according to Ambedkar, the core tenets of Hinduism violate by propagating the theory of human differences based on birth:

The caste system is the first of the governing rules of the Hindu religion. The second is that the castes are of unequal rank. They are ordered in a descending series of each meaner than the one before . . . the Hindu religion against intermarriage, interdining, interdrinking and social intercourse are bounds to set to show people of unequal rank what the rank of each is. That is, these bounds are symbols of inequality. (Ambedkar’s Speech in Mahad, Dangle 258)

In order to understand the politico-religious context, according to Ambedkar, it is crucial to understand the Indian society, its history and customs where “A[n] immense lot of nonsense is talked about heredity and eugenics in defense of the caste system” (Annihilation of Caste 16-17). His discussion concentrates on the deplorable condition of the Dalits, because their involuntary participation in the culture requires them to believe and accept their belongingness to the lowest category of humans. Dalits are deprived of basic education, ultimately barring them from any kind of intellectual activity. Performing heavenly rites and reading scriptures or other educational activities are strictly preserved for the upper castes or Brahmins. According to Ambedkar, “[T]he entire destiny of a country depends upon its intellectual class,” and Brahmins try to keep the lower castes away from education (AoC 44). Presenting a holistic picture of the caste system, he advocates the decentering of history to facilitate equality and justice (26). A deconstructive
approach to the theoretically established thread of God-religion-domination-caste will help achieve equality and justices.

Kancha Ilaiah supports the deconstruction of upper-caste narratives in his non-fiction *Why I am Not a Hindu*. He expounds that inequality is maintained by the beneficiaries of the caste system who work constantly to exercise power in economic, social, and religious forums. According to Ilaiah, some postcolonial developments that have established liberal and democratic schools are yet unable to provide a better relationship between the castes because of the Brahminical hegemony. These schools keep the Dalitization intact. In the chapter “Dalitization not Hinduization,” he argues that the Brahminical hegemony works against the interest of the Dalits. But unfortunately, no action is being taken to eradicate that.

Even though Dalits apparently belong to the Hindu culture, in actuality, “two cultural worlds are not merely different, they are opposed to each other. Hindu thinking is set against the interests of the Dalitbahujan castes; Hindu mythology is built by destroying the Dalit cultural ethos. Dalit castes were never allowed to develop into modernity and equality” (113). Moreover, many Dalits are hegemonized so severely that they are unable to recognize that “the Dalitbahujan productive structures, culture, economy and its positive political institutions” are destroyed. The colonization of Dalit minds is an epistemic violence from which the Dalits have no way to escape. In fact, the colonized Dalits help to construct parties that augment the ideologies of the upper castes (55-59). Ilaiah terms this group of people as “imperial army” by analogizing with Hanuman, an outcaste in the *Ramayana*, who joined the devotional army of Rama, the upper-caste King God. But out of blind devotion Hanuman himself cannot even realize that his community is destroyed while he is busy serving the destroyer.
Poisoned Bread, a book of poetry, short stories, and biographies, edited by Arjun Dangle, presents a casteist picture where the traditionally revered figures are vehemently accused of maintaining a prejudiced view towards the lower castes. Examples include the case of Shambhuka, a young Dalit, who tried to perform a heavenly rite by reading the scriptures and was, therefore, killed by King Rama himself. Dangle focuses on the unavailability of education for the lower castes. Upper caste narratives, consisting of popular myths and legends, reject Dalit education and enlightenment. Some Dalits, who achieve education through extreme turmoil, “totally reject traditions while non-Dalits maintain that [caste] tradition has to be enriched, not rejected” (Dangle xlix). A Dalit is excluded as an inferior in his own country, if he tries to contest the dictatorship of the upper caste. Their rights are denied, and they have no power to diminish the hegemonic power exercised cruelly upon them.

While going back to the novels mentioned above, the demanding question becomes inevitable again and again: why are these two texts trauma texts? To search for answers, I base my theory on the definition and etymological meaning of trauma in Indian as well as European context. The arbitrariness of the term includes participation of the reader in the text in question. In order to delve deep into the trauma of the subaltern, we need to focus more on the blurred concepts of trauma and acting out of trauma. Trauma theories and texts are sometimes so nuanced and intense that the victim often fails to work on it and loses the speakability or communicability of the trauma. However, it is imperative to bring up several dynamics of voice in order to address the acute problem of trauma. This could be effectively done with the help of the literary prowess of an author.

This project looks at the epistemological difference between the two novels, trying to establish a serious connection through the trope of blood. The first chapter focuses on how blood
works as an important trope in both the novels, examining them layer by layer. It concentrates on how European racism leads to inequality, metaphorical pause and madness in life, leading ultimately to death. Eva in a Nazi concentration camp is so tortured and traumatized that she is incapable of recognizing herself. Similarly, in *The God of Small Things*, blood works as a crucial insignia for the violence done against an innocent person, solely based on his caste. Chapter Two specifically focuses on Roy’s grotesque humor and her use of gothic imageries and dovetail these images with the mythical scenes which are some weapons to exercise the domination. Roy’s use of mythology, especially drawn from the *Mahabharata* is a way to unveil the hypocrisy that society operates to keep the discriminating systems intact. Velutha’s death is perhaps necessary to talk about the plight of the subjugated but the debatable area is mythology here: the connections between Kathakali and Velutha’s death, Karna-Kunti and Ammu-Velutha. The deeper implication of these characters is never made apparent in the novel but somewhere in the background it is working strongly to unveil the tortures against the untouchables, and Roy wants her readers to make that apparent, though the novel itself consciously does not model on any of the mythical tales of perennial importance. Chapter Three emphasizes Eva’s psychological instability expressed though the frequent changes in perspectives, time and languages. Eva’s apparently mispronounced or grammatically incorrect sentences invoke a deep plight of a repressed subaltern. This part is an important exploration of the whole project as it holds the core of the novel’s idea: immigration, blood, and suppression of the refugees. We have no clear answer at the end of the novel but it is suggested that Eva develops psychological problems and eventually dies. The blood in the Nazi camp leaves a permanent trauma in her mind. She finally succumbs to the torture that a subjugated must endure. The whole project involves with the wide network of cultural and religious perspectives woven by theorists and novelists who attempt to
destabilize the mainstream hegemonic depiction of the God-religion-caste that has been thread into Indian culture and grand mythical narratives. Using The Nature of Blood’s recurrent trope of blood, I read The God of Small Things as a literature that looks at the epistemological foundation of casteist narratives in order to castigate the underpinnings of the casteist mythology and culture. Through this atypical juxtaposition of two geographically and temporally distant novels, I expect this research to invite a bi-fold discourse on Indian caste violence connected with mythology and unfold new avenues for an enhanced and unusual study of The God of Small Things.
BLOOD AS A TROPE: VIOLENCE THROUGH MYTHOLOGY, RACISM, INEQUALITY, AND CULTURAL DOGMA IN ROY AND PHILLIPS

Although Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* and Caryl Phillips’ *The Nature of Blood* are temporally and epistemologically disparate, they share important traits that are expounded in socio-economic, politico-religious, and socio-cultural frameworks. While Phillips demonstrates the violence and hatred for the Jews by the Christians and madness in the time of holocaust in a Nazi concentration camp and in England, Roy shows the tremendous physical and psychological violence on the Dalits by the upper castes in India. Eva, the central character of *The Nature of Blood*, undergoes an inhumane treatment after losing all her family members. Her traumatized brain encounters blood everywhere, even in her red lipstick. Her hope for life is smashed when Gerry, the European or the superior, leaves her. *The God of Small Things*, on the other hand, portrays the inferior Velutha, who loses his life, as he aspires to become a Marxist and establish a love relationship with an upper-caste woman. He sheds a pool of blood inside a dark, grim jail where he eventually dies. His hope of upgrading himself by joining the Communist Party is shattered because of his forbidden love relationship. In both novels, the sentiment of being both living and dead, with no voice and authority over one’s own life, are the recurring themes. The superior, be it in the context of casteism in India or racism in England, propagates a mythical narrative responsible for bolstering the fissures between the communities, consequently contributing violently to the trauma of the inferior. Blood is an inseparable constituent in both the novels under review, although represented in entirely different manners, contexts, and backdrops. Reading Phillips’ handling of blood in *The Nature of Blood* helps us to identify the trope of blood that is presented literally as well as in an implied way in *The God of Small Things*. Blood, although not too apparent everywhere, is an important symbol in Roy’s novel. This chapter examines the
role of mythology, superstition, and cultural dogma that are combined to exercise subjugation with power, and how Roy and Phillips’ pervasive referencing of blood works as a significant trope to depict the colonial myths of marginalization. Their usage of blood, although in different contexts, broadly functions to destabilize the assembly of tyrannical patrimony of the superior. Thus, the seemingly anomalous juxtaposition of these two divergent novels provides us with insight into the unexplored areas of postcolonial trauma, enabling us to detect the tension between castes and races. By critically looking into the social networks of supremacy, mythology and popular beliefs because of which the discussion of blood becomes so imperative, this chapter includes the politics of mythology and culture that are the epitome of epistemic violence.

Inequality, Racism, Mythology, and Cultural Dogma Contributing to Violence and Subaltern Trauma:

The superior, whether in the context of Indian casteism or Nazi violence, exercises a monstrous horror in the minds of the inferior using the fragile psychological orientation of the inferior, leaving him/her in a sturdy chain of trauma and sense of lifelessness. *The Nature of Blood*, set after the WWII, portrays subjugation in a Nazi concentration camp. The protagonist, Eva, is petrified and tormented as a result of the Holocaust, in which she loses all her family members, her sanity, her voice, and ultimately her life. After Eva’s sister is raped, and her parents have disappeared, Eva is trapped in a concentration camp where she meets the European Gerry. Although Gerry brings her a ray of hope and love, ultimately, they cannot be together because Eva is a Jew, an inferior or an “other.” Her story forms a larger whole depicting ethnic racism, hatred, hegemony, and marginalization. The ethical question in Phillips if there is any “moral authority of the individual voice [to] raise against tyranny” leads us to consider what it is to be a subaltern and what it is to lose the voice of the subaltern. (Phillips 53).
The novel presents Phillips’ deep exploration of genocide and oppression of the immigrants. These torturous events dovetail with Phillips’s usage of blood as a powerful trope to evoke the acute sense of colonial domination. Through Eva’s helplessness, madness, and incapacity to protect her own life, he reinforces that the superior is constantly violating the inferior’s history. Eva loses her speech because of the hypocrisy she experienced with Gerry, the European. After many ghastly encounters with blood in different forms, Eva ultimately loses her life. A terrible ending of life after a series events involving of bloodshed is prominent in Phillips’s work. In an interview with Renee Schatteman, Phillips makes it clear why the trope of blood is important in colonial myths and power: in an individual’s exploration of blood, the Jewish Holocaust holds collective trauma and blood because of an overwhelming number of death clusters. Blood, therefore, for Phillips, “is deeply ambitious because on the one hand it does create family and bonds which sustain but on the other hand. . . it creates the very divisions, the very hostilities, the very exclusions that in a sense lead one to find kinship with others” (Schatteman 63). Phillips’ redemptive measures through the exploration of blood is vivid from this statement; however, his exploration of colonial domination, supremacy, subjugation and untimely death, depicted through the teenage girl Eva, reduces the possibility of redemption in a world where “[a]ssaults in the street were becoming increasingly frequent, and even decently dressed people were being waylaid by uniformed brutes and ordered to scoop up dog filth with their bare hands, or lick clean the windows of a nearby shop, or simply hand over their money and valuables” (NOB 90). Showcasing a collective trauma through an individual’s ghastly experience with blood, Phillips hints at a threat to humanity through Eva’s atypical speech mechanism.

Critics often wonder who is responsible for Eva’s trauma, or in fact, who is responsible for the Holocaust: Colonial domination, Nazi Germany or European society? Phillips continuously
makes his readers aware of the “role of slavery, colonialism and anti-Semitism in generating Europe’s cultural patrimony” (qtd. in Dawson 83). Critiquing Phillips’ literary oeuvre to establish the horror of holocaust, Bastian Balthazar Becker points out that Phillips focuses on the concepts of “belongingness, exile, and identity,” for, these are the “comprehensible circumstances of his own upbringing” (116). However, Phillips also discovers the myth of modern and ancient Europe that is biased against Africans, Jews, and non-Europeans and that shapes the politico-social context of England. The colonial myth to dominate over the marginalized, the Jews, the Africans, and the refugees is vital while exploring the superstition that enhance the colonial myths.

If we position Phillips’ notion about the blood and lifelessness as a bifocal one—on one hand, he is approaching towards redemption, and on the other, he seemingly disappoints by perceiving the darkest side of colonial aspects where there is no possibility of redemption—then we are left with only one assurance: premature death. In the untimely death, the colonial myths Phillips explores are working in a collective violence, which in the case of Eva, is done by a collective European mob, mercilessly snatching her family. She is left in a hospital with no possibility for her to go back to the “normal” every-day world. Jay Rajiva’s discussion of the morphology of collective violence is pertinent while examining Phillips’ collective violence to an individual in the context of Holocaust. Collective violence is exacted upon a submissive individual who cannot defend herself mainly because of the lack of power. The superior creates her own mythical narrative using madness as an excuse. Madness is created out of the superior’s imaginary casket using power and if, “we think of collective violence as mere madness, we ground the violence act in a single moment or cluster of moments, limiting the scope of ethical inquiry” (Rajiva 50). The superiors, in turn, tag the inferiors as mad, dirty, low, etc. for their own benefits in their own oppressive contexts. Hence, collective violence against the Jews is another way of
inflicting epistemic violence out of which the inferior loses his or her identity and is tagged as a lunatic. Eva’s trauma, which eventually becomes her lunacy, leads her to consider herself as a ghost and her red lipstick as blood. Phillips deploys these two powerful metaphors to inaugurate the conversation on violence and horror in his fictional account of the Holocaust. Eva is so tortured and traumatized that she is incapable of recognizing herself. Her traumatic past and present coalesce in the form of a series of hallucinations and disturbing images like lice, dirt, and a tint of redness everywhere symbolizing blood. Eva’s recognition of the lipstick as blood sets a colonial discourse of violence which takes blood and death as its central components.

The novel ends in an arbitrary manner, without providing any clear conclusion about Eva’s whereabouts. However, at the end, the colonial supremacy potentially destroys her history, existence, genealogy, and any potential of an upcoming generation, reinforcing the power of anti-Semitism, and Eurocentrism. It is perhaps one of the worst demonstrations of human life when one certain group of people experiences “anti” or “phobic” sentiments, practically invoked by colonialism, political dominance and religious fundamentalism. Such hatred and phobia towards the repressed reverses the natural flow of life, perhaps making it an anti-life force for the hated, the oppressed and the marginalized. This anti-cycle, for example, takes Eva to such an extreme of adversity and anguish that she almost forgets her own self. It is the anti-life force that leads her to be petrified of her own image in the mirror and to mistake her bright red lipstick as the sepulchral blood. On the train to London Eva avoids looking at the other passengers, stating that “their eyes pollute my confidence” (NOB 189). Eva’s constant hallucination reveals that she is unable to recognize her own self, which evokes a dangerous plight, being “unable to function”. She cries in agony, “I don’t want to be hurt again. I won’t be able to survive being abandoned again. Not again” (NOB 194). If Phillips’ exploration of colonial myths involves the trope of blood in a horrific
collective sense of violence, Eva is the archetype of that violence sprung out of treachery and ferocity of the superiors.

Phillips’ demonstration of collective violence through treason dovetails with Arundhati Roy’s exploration of casteist violence in The God of Small Things. The novel features a Dalit character who can be called a subaltern in postcolonial Indian context, and who is a direct victim of the physical as well as epistemic violence through popular narratives and myths and legends. The not-so-significant Velutha acquires a position that achieves a substantial importance in the subaltern discourse not only because of Roy’s endeavors to dismantle the colonial myths and powers used by the superior perpetrators, but also because the author invites the readers to delve deeper into the investigation of the historical and cultural basis through which atrocity is actually imposed. Velutha dies a premature death because he belongs to the Dalit community. This category makes him a mute sub-human who must undergo beastly treatments and dreadful violence in order to erase his previous sins that have made him an outcast.² The recognition of being an outcaste is subliminal for the lower castes. However, as an inferior, who tries to lift himself up, Velutha is well aware of the atrocities and impact of caste violence. He, therefore, silently works for his betterment, but ultimately has to pay for it by sacrificing his life.

Roy opens her novel with a violent symbol of blood that indicates the instability of a subaltern’s life. The God of Small Things begins with a dream sequence visualized by a child, Rahel, where “Velutha barebodied and shining, sitting on a plank, swinging from the scaffolding in the high dome… she [Rahel] thought what would happen if the rope snapped. She imagined

² While Shudras are considered to belong to the lowest strata, untouchables are even not included in the caste pyramid. They are treated as the outsiders of human communities and are only required to clean human feces. For more details see Ambedkar, especially pages 20-27 of Annihilation of Caste. Also, for a detailed discussion on the origins of Dalits, their conversion to Christianity, see “History: Origin of the word Dalit.” http://www.dalitchristians.com/html/dalitmeaning.htm. Accessed 31 January 2019.
him dropping like a dark star from the sky that he has made. Lying broken on the hot church floor, dark blood spilling from his skull like a secret” (8) This imagination of spilling dark blood becomes a perilous truth at the end of the novel. Roy’s use of a child imagining dark blood is a ghastly symbol, and it is no wonder that Velutha subsequently dies at the end of the novel with the testimony of two children who are tricked to utter a lie that ends Velutha’s life.

The novel also recounts another pivotal character, Ammu, who after divorcing her husband, comes back with her twins to permanently live with her own family in an interior part in Kerala. The twins—Estha and Rahel—share a bond that is unusual, yet corollary to their plights. In her position as a woman surrounded by patriarchy, Ammu experiences a total lack of voice of her own. Her children are repressed in front of Sophie Mol, her brother Chako’s white daughter, who has come from England to spend the summer with them. The Europhilia of the whole family—generated mainly because of Sophie Mol’s white skin—frustrates Ammu and her children. Surrounded by Eurocentric ideas, Chako’s fake Marxism, and her mother and aunt’s continuous taunts about her divorced life, she breathes an air of relief when she sees a blooming relationship between Velutha, the untouchable carpenter and her children. She feels an indomitable urge to be assimilated with the person who lifts her daughter effortlessly, creating a potential to erase the gap of a father from their lives (160). She succumbs to her infinite longing for a sexual partner. Her anguishes are soothed with a man’s touch of “love by night her children loved by day” (51). In having sex with Velutha, she invites a catastrophic danger for both of them. However, as a caste-privileged lady, Ammu does not encounter a life threat, while Velutha is accused of raping Ammu and murdering Sophie Mol. After the family comes to know about the scandalous affair between the two caste-different lovers, Velutha is tortured to death inside a dark jail. Velutha, who joined the Communist Movement to protect himself and his community from the ever-present malpractice
of caste system, eventually dies, leaving the novel open ended with an arbitrary note for “tomorrow” (Roy 309).

The symbolic concept of “tomorrow” is, however, diminished, as Roy calls the ruler of the world Champa Thamburam, the Lord Rubbish. It is also a godless world where an inferior’s head is smashed to death by the government officials, and therefore, “tomorrow” has no practical implication or potential to bring redemption. In fact, there is no possibility of a future, a “tomorrow.” Because the world is cruel and ruled by a cruel Rubbish Lord, two childhoods are destroyed in the name of the forbidden love rule and of caste. After Velutha’s death, Estha and Rahel are separated from each other for years. This separation tears them apart both physically and psychologically. They meet during their adulthood when they know about Velutha’s truth and are guilt-stricken. They fall into an incestuous relationship in an attempt to forget the traumatic past. The novel aims to provide a psychic recovery to the fraternal twins through the incestuous relationship. They search for a means of existence through their forbidden relationship in a world surrounded by death and treachery. However, Estha and Rahel’s realization of “living on a fiction” that “he [Velutha] escaped to Africa” continuously hinders them from recovering (304). The forbidden love relationship and incestuous relationships are abhorred in the society, where the magnitude of culture, relationship boundaries, proud heritages is immense; however, ironically, the forbidden relationships are the results of the cruelties that society exercises upon the inferiors.

Hindu scriptures, myths and legends, which constitute a huge source of guidance for the majority of the people in the country, popularize the social myths of inferiors and superiors under a metaphorical sword of violence. Through that sword of politics and power the inferiors are often assassinated, ultimately leaving the people broken and shattered. The novel uses breakages, fragments, and shattered characters to bring out the inner implication of the society and disturbing
questions about Indian culture that is predominantly casteist. Roy blurs the temporal boundaries within places, times, and actions to provide the novel the necessary darkness or haze that it deserves because of its recounting of the dark, shameful incidents of the nation. Roy’s interplay of Indian history, politics, social discrimination, forbidden love, and most importantly Indian myths are deployed to achieve a meaningful discourse on the diabolical nature of the casteist culture.

To scrutinize Roy’s reevaluation of Hindu mythology that informs my particular reading of *The God of Small Things* it is crucial to point to the inner subtleties of key scenes that are woven in a frame of mythology. Roy’s endeavor to nullify the empirical importance of the narratives in *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata* is confirmed through the demonstration of these scenes, directly drawn from the *Mahabharata*. One such example is the Kathakali performance that Estha and Rahel watch in a temple in their childhood. The Kathakali presents characters who sabotage the colonial narratives constructed and propagated by the beneficiaries of the caste system. According to Margaret Herrick, the Kathakali performance reveals subversion of a lower caste where Roy creates her own version of the narrative to speak for the subjugated characters in the epic *Mahabharata*. She forms a world that depicts the pain of the inferior without any perilous risk to be castigated because it is a play, a performance (Herrick 593). This performance is “not merely a sort of passive depiction of social hierarchy, it is an “efficacious” reinforcement of that hierarchy” (593). In depicting the subtle dynamics of caste and class hierarchy though mythological scenes and characters, Roy “reproduces the dominant social hierarchies in all their toxicity, but she also insists on the power of play to create the world anew” (593). This is one of the crucial motifs of the novel: to tear apart the mythical scenes of uneasy silence, especially from the *Mahabharata*, and raise question on the rights of the timid subalterns.
In the play, Dushasana is killed by Bhima, which, according to Herrick, is reminiscent of the killing of Velutha by the police officer. While the parallel of Bhima and the cruel police officer is a prudent comparison, my study points further to what hidden message lies in depicting the assassination of Dushasana by Bhima in the Kathakali scene. My examination provides a triangular connection to the scene. While examining the scene, one must keep in mind that Velutha is an untouchable, while Dushasana is not. In fact, Dushasana is a kin of Bhima, as they belong to the same caste. Bhima kills Dushshana irrespective of his caste. Therefore, in one way, Bhima’s killing of Dushasana reveals his characteristic cruelty and his exercise of power to the inferior, which is linked with deserting his wife Hidimba, the monster queen, alone in the forest. Hidimba in the *Mahabharata* is a monster necessarily because she is a lower caste with long hair, big eyes, and dark complexion, an archetypal description of the indigenous inhabitants who are actually the lower castes. Fornicating with Hidimba, Bhima produces a half-monster child Ghatotkacha. Bhima is the prince who, after satisfying his bodily needs, abandons his low-caste wife in the forest and enjoys his later life in the palace. He even asks Ghatotkacha to go to the war of Kurukshetra and sacrifices him in the war. Therefore, Bhima’s killing of Dushasana in the novel has a resemblance to the cruelty he exercised upon Hidimba and their child in the epic. For this reason, Bhima, although a revered character in the *Mahabharata*, becomes a monster, a perpetrator in Roy’s depiction of the Kathakali that is reminiscent to Ammu-Velutha affair. Ammu, being an upper-caste woman, leads Velutha to the catastrophe and cannot accompany him in his doom. Velutha is accused of raping Ammu, but the truth—that Ammu, not Velutha, initiated the forbidden love affair—remains a secret to the world. Again, the secrecy and domination are questioned repeatedly through the mythological scene where Kunti is asked numerous questions about Karna (as a marginalized figure) and his birth. Kunti standing in the riverbank and providing answers to her
abandoned, deprived son Karna definitely is linked to the Ammu-Velutha affair that takes place in the river bank. Velutha, like Karna, is ever deprived. However, the core difference between them is that while Karna has a voice to raise disturbing questions about his fate, an untouchable like Velutha is never allowed to even formulate questions about his oppression. He has no authority to raise those questions because, going back to Spivak’s theory, his subaltern voice is never meant to reach to the wide audience. His voice is, therefore, not heard at all. However, Velutha is a breakaway, a rebel who joins the Communist Party. His connection with Marxism is a potential threat to the upper-caste family, especially Chako, the fake, self-acclaimed Marxist. He, from an upper caste, cannot simply accept the idea of an untouchable’s elevation to a position of a Marxist and thus achievement of equality with a Brahmin like himself. Velutha’s potential to be a liberated, educated, and uplifted human is diminished with the political and governmental interference that propagates the culture of supremacy over a community that is sharing the same space since time immemorial.

**Converging the Far-away Novels through Anti-life force:**

Although Eva and Velutha are culturally tangential, they coincide with each other by sharing the trait of being the violated preys of superior, predatory powers. Also, their encounter with anti-life force binds them in a thread of anguishes and victimhood. The existential angst experienced by both is different from other angsts. This angst, followed by extreme suffering, is closely linked to the reversal of the natural flow of life, as it has something to do with being ”clean” or “dirty”, “superior” or “inferior”, “upper” or “lower” usually based on birth and lineage.

Roy and Phillips’ representations of subaltern dynamics through characters like Eva or Velutha exemplify the epistemic violence that leads to physical injury and traumatic death. This violence works in the forms of extreme humiliation, debasement, and deceit. Phillips, on behalf of
the mute inferior, raises the question of oppression engendered by a specific socio-political context: anti-Semitism. My study of the intersections between these two novels directs towards a common, universal trope: blood coupled with violence in the name of caste and race, giving rise to a kind of trauma that could be termed as “anti-life force” where the eternally-suppressed inferiors feel like a living dead. This metaphorical pause causes madness, leading ultimately to the termination of life. The natural human inherent nature to look forward to the future with hope is turned into a terrible descending force that stops the individual from growing further in life, snatching the vitality and desire to live life and spawning a traumatic death. These novels point to this idea of a living death through the tremendous psychological violence that both Eva and Velutha experience.

Phillips presents characters whose dignity is snatched brutally, and whose humanity is turned into hatred and disgust. This tremendous psychological violence towards the (suppressed) section of the society is the pivotal focus in his literature. Eva’s semi-conscious mind feels the agony of all the marginalized people. Phillips describes Eva’s psychological disbalance through the horror images of the concentration camp: “the body begins to eat itself… women and children burn faster than men. Fresh naked children burn the fastest… Rats feed on human bodies. Dead or alive. The distinction is irrelevant” (NOB 167-171). The recurrent theme of blood exercises a metaphor that binds the characters of the novel in an everlasting bond of existential crisis. Eva is the emblem of the other teen-age girls who suffer tremendously, face the eternal anti-life force. To them, it is a sin to live life and to die as well because they have no ability to die, as if they have lost their rights over their own lives. The humiliations never end and are accumulated in a compound interest so gigantically that no one has the power to diminish the colonial subjugation that is ending the lives of the suppressed.
Similarly, in Roy’s characterization of Velutha, the untouchable’s life is a hollow space where things do not move forward as in a usual mode of living; instead, they experience a cessation or termination of his life force, his happiness and his longings to live life. This ending of desire is caused because of the immense hatred that makes him cease to grow, often causing even death. The novel exposes this irony of the society where untouchables are quarantined except for the time of cleaning the filth or burning the dead bodies. This paradox tells that an untouchable is nothing but a living dead or an animal who is not to be deemed as having dreams or wishes. Thus, he encounters a strong anti-life force.

The darkness and inconsistency in the inferiors’ lives lead to their lifelong trauma. An individual’s trauma contributed by the collective racial and casteist traumas is an omen used extensively by both the authors. In order to establish life of humans as humans it is imperative to look at the contributing factors of instability of life for a particular section of human beings. Without establishing new forms, methods and policies it is impossible to eradicate the danger of being the living dead. By depicting the horror of lifelessness, trauma, and blood, Phillips and Roy’s works serve as a warning to the whole of humanity and a substantial step to stop the ominous forthcoming future.
SMALL BLOOD, BIG POLLUTION OF VELUTHA, THE INFERIOR OTHER IN

THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS:

Towards the beginning of *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy presents a death through Rahel’s imagination that is reminiscent of Velutha’s subsequent catastrophe revealed towards the end of the novel. The catastrophe includes a depiction of Velutha’s blood that is visibly invisible: this blood is thick and fresh, prominent and vivid in the dark jail where he dies but is intentionally kept invisible to the outside world. In Rahel’s imagination, the death of Velutha leads “him [to] drop like a dark star from the sky”; his polluted and “dark blood spilling from his skull like a secret” (8). Embedded in the secret violence, the blood from his skull does spill a secret: the secret of domination and hypocrisy. This secret is the emblem of Velutha, a so-called untouchable, an inferior other, and a filthy, stinking sub-human. Velutha’s grueling pain and blood are invisible to society; however, his “paravan smell” is what society perceives throughout the novel. Through Velutha, the author conveys a grim message of the entire nation in terms of hypocrisy and domination. Velutha’s untouchability and impurity in blood are central themes, contributing to the discussion of the subaltern’s death. Velutha’s blood remains a secret because the harsh society tags him as the source of a distinct “paravan smell,” a smell that is a matter of hatred and disgust. Roy uses a child’s emotion to showcase the grim, serious reality of the adults’ cruel world. Rahel’s imagination of the death of the inferior Velutha holds a solemn truth about the society in general: its hypocrisy and its marginalization of the inferiors using power and domination as well as its castigation of the inferiors from society to fulfil the superiors’ selfish needs. The inferior, a Dalit, must sacrifice his or her life for the upper-caste perpetrators, who contribute secretly to the process of diminishing the voice, power, and ultimately the existence of the lower castes.
This chapter examines the superstitions that are embedded in the shell of hypocrisy, involving the objectification of a Dalit’s body that is not limited to only the objectification of a woman. By looking at Roy’s interplay with the scenes of secrets and mysteries and her usage of sarcasm beneath the serious demonstrations of death and violence, this chapter also expounds upon the trauma of the subjugated—trauma that ultimately leads the subaltern to bleed and suffer a fractured skull. Subjugation is so strongly embedded in India’s past and present that it seems impossible to break the long-lasting chains of marginalization in the future. However, *The God of Small Things* tries to identify and deconstruct the contextual foundation of casteist narratives. It focuses on the distinct smell and inferior body of a paravan, which become the identities of a Dalit or lower caste person. Roy attempts to eradicate the casteist culture, in the hope of forming a ground for a spectrum of the inferior voices to be heard.

To provide a voice to the subaltern Dalit, Roy speculates on the authority of speeches. *The God of Small Things* takes into account the agony of the voiceless subaltern Velutha, who works as a carpenter in an upper-caste family. He is loved by the family but is not allowed to enter the house with his polluting body and “paravan smell.” Ammu, Chako, Baby Kochamma, Ammachi, and Papachi treat Velutha well; they even help him by contributing money when his father undergoes an eye surgery. Ammu, the divorced lady, searches for her bodily needs and mental peace, and Velutha loves Ammu’s children endlessly like their father. When Ammu sees Velutha lifting her daughter, Rahel, effortlessly like her father, her sexual desires are ignited (Roy 160). Ammu and Velutha come to closer contact with their bodies, in spite of knowing the catastrophic outcome of the “forbidden relationship.” Their relationship is forbidden not only in their territory of a caste-conscious community, but this forbidden quality lies in the minds of the two lovers too. Sheena Patchay calls this relationship as “breaking the order of things” that involves a
psychological trauma of Velutha “having to “live in the big house,” while seeing his life pass him by in a small claustrophobic hut” (157). Apart from the dichotomy of small and big houses, Velutha’s life is changed significantly when he meets Ammu’s family because in one way he is Ammu’s rescuer, the liberator of her unconscious arenas, but in another way, he himself is a captive waiting endlessly for Ammu to be his messiah. Ironically, Ammu becomes that messiah in their social lives, but at the end, Velutha’s favorite Estha and Rahel, Ammu’s two children are used to mash Velutha’s head inside the dark, grim jail. The twins are forced to utter the terrible “yes,” when the police officer asks if Velutha raped Ammu and murdered Sophie Mol. Roy mentions, “Only the Small Things were said. The Big Things lurked unsaid inside” (165). The big things that the author shows are the immense torture the upper caste people impose on the lower castes, sometimes even causing death. The big things are also the crimes that the upper-caste family and the police officer commit by murdering an inferior Velutha. The small things are Velutha’s psychological injury inside the dark jail, the destruction of Estha and Rahel’s life, and a threat to the upcoming generations of Valutha’s family. These small things are big enough; however, they are never disclosed intentionally. The secrecy and domination of the upper caste and their exercise of power over the inferior are never openly discussed in the society but are questioned repeatedly through images and symbols in Roy’s text. Velutha’s blood is one of those symbols that portrays the trauma of Velutha as well as the trauma the subaltern.

The novel takes its name with two intriguing words: Big and Small. It is no wonder, then, that Roy exposes the reality of the society and pretense to be morally righteous of the big-blooded, upper-caste people and the hardships of the small-blooded, lower-caste people. Using these two terms in the title and in the whole novel extensively, Roy challenges the existing belief system and its duplicity. The so-called upper castes believe in the superiority of their birth and power of their
pure blood. The big-blooded people, the creators of the verna system—that contains the divisions of name types, work types, and ways different castes live life differently—maintain the order of caste hierarchy accurately. The belief in authoritative power inevitably leads the upper castes to exercise animosity for the lower castes, who are considered as servants to the upper castes. This dichotomy in principle leads to a bigger dichotomy in birth. This belief also violates the symbiotic arrangements of nature: equality, impartiality, and fellow feeling. As the brotherhood is absent in the castes (four-varna classification in the Indian caste system), the big-blooded people remain busy in the power struggle and strongly (and deliberately) ignore the trauma of the inferior other.

As an inferior, Velutha encounters a premature death, and this phenomenon leads the novel to a gothic, horrific spot with images such as blood, skull, and surreal deaths. Till the end of the novel, the author does not disclose the trauma Velutha experiences after being betrayed by the society he grew up in, nor does the novel talk about the trauma when he comes to know that Rahel and Estha are tricked to utter a terrible “yes”—something that would bring catastrophe to Velutha and agony to Ammu, Estha, and Rahel. The readers scarcely know about the secret events that happened inside a dark jail cell: how Velutha was beaten, what betrayals the police officers, Baby Kochamma and Ammachi, deployed, how Estha and Rahel were tricked to put Velutha into trouble, and so on. These grim incidents become secrets; not a single pain or struggle of Velutha is vividly shown through direct course of incidents in the novel. Prior to his death, Velutha encounters an awful violence that is hidden to the outside world. The readers will never know the agony, neither will they ever hear the screams of Velutha within the four walls of the dreadful jail. However, the readers encounter Velutha smiling when he senses the presence of his dear Estha in the jail before the beating scene. The author’s description of Velutha’s “dark blood spilling from his skull like a secret” along with his innocent smile in the jail apparently undermines his red,
deceived blood spilling from his heart, but a closer examination reveals his stern sorrows that remained a serious secret throughout his whole life. The horror of Velutha’s death is one of the catalysts that takes the novel to a gothic turn. According to Murugan and Peruvalluthi, Roy combines the horror of Velutha’s blood and skull, displaying “the haunting evil of impulses in everyday figures of the ordinary and often combines well with evil, the beautiful with the terrifying” (151). The horror is reinforced in every juncture of the novel. One of the horrible aspects is Ammu and Velutha’s relationship. It is at once evil, beautiful and terrifying. Evil, because Ammu, even after knowing the outcomes, forces Velutha to remain in the forbidden relationship which leads Velutha to his catastrophe. Beautiful, because Ammu and Velutha’s relationship in one way was a bridge to fill the gap that Estha and Rahel endure for the lack of their father’s love. Again, Estha and Rahel’s innocent relationship to Velutha is terrifying, as it leads Velutha to encounter a bloody, fractured skull.

Velutha bleeds excessively, but his blood is visibly invisible. His hemorrhage is internal, locked inside a jail, far from the regular human world. Velutha’s blood is too small to be observed by the big-blooded people. On the other hand, Velutha’s “paravan” smell is a big polluting factor. As an inferior other, the untouchable’s smell is contaminated, eyes are mortgaged, and life, depreciated. Velutha’s blood never comes to the fore because a Dalit’s tragedy is the least significant element in the lives of people, including Velutha’s loving “Esthapappychacen kuttappen Peter Mon” and his beloved Rahel whose face delighted with happiness when he lifted her up (166). However, the cruel act of shedding Velutha’s blood with the testimony of two innocent children holds a major subaltern discourse about hypocrisy and marginalization. Velutha’s post-traumatic stress disorders and internal thoughts are suppressed, as perhaps the author invites the readers to delve deep into the unsaid and unseen arena of the oppressed, to hear
his unuttered anguish, and to read the novel in the light of the untouchable’s scars even when the scars are not explicitly exposed in the novel. Those scars are buried by the upper castes for their socio-political benefits.

Dalits are incapable of protesting against the violence inflicted upon them. Rajeshwar Mittapalli argues that upper-caste Hindus are the “only people in the world who practice systematic and institutionalized discrimination against their own co-religionists and feel none the worse for it” (Mittapalli 66). This is the reason, according to Mittapalli, the untouchables need a total revolution in religion, culture, society, economy, education everywhere to attain human dignity. But the most critical step needed is to destroy Hindu upper-caste ideologies that endorse the lack of the untouchables’ second names, except their caste identities. And these caste names are used as their second names only to differentiate, to tag them as the inferior others. Mittapalli refers to the Hindu scripture *Manusmriti*, which formulates laws and rules on how the untouchables should behave. They should have easily identifiable names in order for the upper caste to recognize them easily and behave accordingly. According to Ravikumar, this behavior is clearly an act of supremacy and power. Through the easily-identifiable names, the lower castes are directed towards filthy jobs reserved only for them (89). *Manusmriti* says: “Let the first part of a brahmin’s name refer to something auspicious, the kshatriyas to power, the vaishyas to wealth; but that of the shudras [lower caste or untouchable] should refer to something mean. Let the second part of brahmin’s name mean happiness, the kshatriyas protection, the vaishyas prosperity and the shudra’s service” (qtd. in Ravikumar 89). Shudras and other lower castes are forced to believe in their hostile fate as a result of their supposed sin in the previous birth. Therefore, it is essential that Dalits serve the upper castes and clean their filth so that they can be purified eventually, establishing a chance to receive a fair birth next time.
Roy echoes the idea of servitude, commodification of the Dalits, and deprivation of love and dignity in Velutha’s character. All the paravans (Shudras) are named with “easily identifiable” surnames to alienate from the community of the superiors. Roy names them according to the custom to reveal this fact and to show how subtly and cunningly the paravans are separated in a community. Velutha is a paravan, and his service is more important than his internal emotions or even his life. Roy presents a dichotomy of love and hate sprung from the social norms set and propagated by the dictators who are ultimately benefitted by those rules. One of them is the love rule—the forbidden nature of a love relationship between an upper-caste woman and an untouchable man. If Velutha is the embodiment of the timid subaltern, Ammu is the representation of the governor of the subaltern. Ammu, as a caste-privileged lady, does not consider the severe outcome of the forbidden relationship before she steps into it. Also, it is not Ammu’s love that takes her close to Velutha; rather, it is his body that attracts her for her own bodily needs. Though Velutha is a paravan, a formidable untouchable, he has the (chocolate-shaped) body that could be used as a sex toy.

This objectification of a Dalit’s body is not limited to the usual exploitation of the inferiors and is different from the sexual relationship that upper-caste men enjoy. For upper-caste men, “it is a way of not only re-imposing order but also reasserting their masculinity” through which the female body is believed to be a cathartic purification. (Mittapalli 58). In having a relationship with Velutha, Ammu fulfills Velutha’s catharsis through her “upper-caste touch”; she becomes the “social man” (59) by uplifting an inferior figure. However, her “masculine” quality in this case does not act as an antidote at all, rather it maligns Velutha and a bunch of other people’s lives. In fact, Ammu “prove[s] to be her undoing because what she earns as a result in the final analysis is the epithet “veshya” (prostitute) and expulsion from home” (59). Therefore, the upper-caste men
who have earned the “hyper masculinity” are in fact always in charge of the inherited master qualities and therefore, can control the stigmas tagged to both Dalits and women, even if the woman is an upper-caste.

Roy also employs an interesting irony in the binary distinction between dark and fair complexion that is perennially present in Indian society: a Dalit has a complexion of the color of dark chocolate, while the upper castes are fair-skinned. This color-coding imagery takes us to the psychological turbulence of the untouchables who have lost their identities because of the casteist discrimination, an idea evoked in Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*. Roy’s intensive detail on Velutha’s body exemplifies the fact:

Ridges of muscle on his [Velutha’s] stomach rose under his skin like divisions on a slab of chocolate [., h]e held her close, by the light of an oil lamp, and he shone as though he had been polished with a high-wax body polish . . . She could have touched his body lightly with her fingers, and felt his smooth skin turn to gooseflesh. She could have let her fingers stray to the base of his flat stomach. Carelessly, over those burnished chocolate ridges.

(205)

Dalits are used, reused and thrown out of the society when they are no longer needed. Mittapalli, while discussing the gravity of a forbidden relationship and its definite outcome, terms Ammu-Velutha’s relationship as “romantic casteism” (61). Through this term, he means that as a lower caste, Velutha could never achieve the romantic sensibilities, but as it is the need of an upper-caste woman, his body is being used in a romantic trap, regardless of his (impure) caste.

Mittapalli also thinks that it is “not love per se that motivates her [Ammu] to develop a full-blown affair with him [Velutha]” (61). Then the question is: what prompts her to accept Velutha, the untouchable, the unacceptable, as a partner, or rather, an explorer of her most internal periphery?
The answer perhaps lies in Roy’s depiction of Ammu’s struggle between her strong sexual desires and her caste consciousness. At an elderly age she still uses her toothbrush to determine whether her breasts are firm enough or not and “undid her hair and turned around to see how long it had grown. It fell, in waves and curls and disobedient frizzy wisps—soft on the inside, coarser on the outside—to just below where her small, strong waist began its curve out towards her hips” (212). Through these self-examinations of her sexual hunger, she discovers her robust, unfailing sexual desires.

Ammu also sees Velutha lifts Rahel effortlessly, fulfilling one of her empty sides—the urgent need of a father for her children, the need of a secure space in her cruel, patriarchal family. Consequently, she feels an unavoidable urge of assimilation, even after being aware of his “low” caste. She finally allows herself to have intercourse with Velutha because it physically fuels her instincts. She takes shelter in deception and lie, leading herself to “love by night the man her children loved by day” (my italics 51). Velutha works as a mediator between “the infinite tenderness of motherhood” which propels her to see Velutha romantically, and “the reckless rage of a suicide bomber” which leads her finally to commit the crime fortort which she and Velutha both are destroyed (Roy 44). Therefore, it is not just her sexual urge that drives her, but also the fantasy of a father for her children that leads her to touch the body of an untouchable. However, she is well-aware of the fact that the encounter during day-time with Velutha would put Ammu’s status and even her existence at a stake, and in the process of Ammu’s wish fulfilling, Velutha becomes a prey. Characters like Baby Kochamma, who contribute hugely to the smashing of Velutha’s head, are formed as the novel’s integral parts to confirm Roy’s understanding and condemnation of caste violence.
To some scholars, Velutha’s death is also a representation of Roy’s attempt to immortalize and idealize an ever-undermined character. According to Victor Li, Velutha dies a premature death; however, that death confirms his position that he would never have achieved while living. Thus, in showcasing his real plight Roy eternalizes his Inferior presence. Velutha’s forbidden relationship with Ammu in a way lifts him to a position that is only reserved for the upper-caste men. Roy, by violating that order, makes Velutha ensure his “living-on as idealized figures whose sexual affair exemplifies resistance to caste laws and expresses the utopian possibility of love transcending social differences and barriers” (Li 285) Li bases his argument on the views of Dingwaney Needham whose discourse on the “lovers” of the novel presents the concept of “utopian space”. According to him, the lovers should die to achieve the idealized stage of subaltern glorification, and Roy contributes to the idea of victimization of the subjugated in order to lead him towards ultimate glory which he cannot achieve living by any means (275, 276). The subaltern’s ultimate fate is to die a premature or disrespected death, but [t]he subaltern’s death also serve[s] as an irreducible idea” (275). The lovers, in any ordinary case, need to die to idealize themselves. However, one critical point that perhaps needs even more special attention is the fact that Ammu and Velutha are not lovers; they are culturally constructed prey and predator, embedded in the shell of inter-caste lovers.

Li argues that had the lovers not died, the “affair would have been rendered unremarkable, had the lovers eloped and gone on to live happily ever after” (287). This comment about “happily ever after” leads us to consider some questions: does Velutha die because his death would glorify him in front of his fellow Dalits? Does he not die because he is a subaltern who has no voice to raise? Does he not want to embrace a new ideology like Marxism to understand the history and origin of inequality and work on his evil destiny to eradicate the ill fate of his people? Also, Roy’s
Velutha is a skilled carpenter, not a toilet cleaner. His intelligence and his craft indicate his inclination towards knowledge. But his ultimate plight is to succumb to death if he rebels against the upper-caste belief system, which Velutha does by joining the Communist Party. His commitment and exposure to the world outside his ghetto through the Communist movement have the possibility of uplifting him socially in the long run. However, he is an untouchable, and social dignity never can occur to an untouchable. Hence, he encounters his invincible yet secret death. That Velutha’s death elevates both of their positions in a society where Velutha never received a recognition as a human, is also the fact that ultimately makes him pay his life for being a Dalit. He, according to Mittapalli, refuses “to feminize himself while dealing with the upper-caste people” (59). The price he pays is far greater than what Ammu does. The society “presupposes that women do not have individuality and the power to exercise discretion, while men do” (Mittapalli 59). Velutha, as a lower-caste man, lacks discretion in both being a messiah and a rescued, as he is a Dalit, an inferior. Therefore, Velutha’s death, if is a symbol of upliftment of an inferior, is also an extended image of massive subjugation.

Even though Velutha’s blood is everywhere, it is nowhere openly acknowledged. The popular belief that the Dalit deserves unrespectable life and unrespectable death is exemplified through the upper-caste highly regarded family members. According to them, the paravans have a strong, stinky smell that no human can stand. Baby Kochamma’s first reaction when she hears about the calamity of their family because of Ammu-Velutha’s sex affair is “How could she stand the smell? Haven’t you noticed, they have a particular smell, these Paravans?” (Roy 75) The polluting smell is the substance of hate, or rather, a mechanism that contributes to the colonial domination and hypocrisy. The torture done to the paravans is not only inhuman but also beastly. Their generations are destroyed with the enforcement of the dirty jobs. Kancha Ilaiah in Why I am
not a Hindu explains, “For the Dalits life is a one-time affair [while for the upper castes, there is
next birth, and another possibility of infinite life] and a Dalit’s death is a loss in terms of work. In
this philosophy there is no concept of heaven or star or Swarga” (107). Everything is predestined
for a Dalit and he must go through the course of service to an upper caste only to make himself
pious and ensure a possibility of a better life in the next birth through an immense level of torment
and sacrifice, even his own life.

Dalits are born to be punished in every sphere, if they commit a small mistake. The mistake
Velutha commits and the punishment he receives are beyond comparison in their intensity and
depth. Roy brings in an extremely serious crime inflicted upon a child to contradict these two
crimes and to show the hypocrisy of the society. The Orangedrink Lemondrink man after the
Kathakali show forces Estha to hold his penis to help him enjoy an erection. Just after this grisly
violence, he “was eating a sweet. His cheek was bulging with a moving sweet” (Roy 102). This
act remains concealed to the world; he never encounters a trial in the jail and is never questioned
for his abominable act. In fact, he confidently looks at Estha and even threatens that he would meet
Estha again somewhere. On the other hand, Velutha’s father, after devoting his whole life to the
upper caste, has a “mortgaged eye,” as if his stone eye is a result of the mercy of the upper-caste
family he and his son serve. Velutha is beaten to death for a crime he has never committed. He
receives no chance to be a voice for himself. His inclination to join a Marxist movement is a threat
to the superiors like Chako, and therefore, he is to be destroyed by any means. The secrets are
never to be said aloud in the society. No one has the courage to even utter those secrets. The
Orangedrink Lemondrink man’s secret remains hidden; Velutha’s innocent truth remains a secret;
Ammu’s secret sex remains hidden to Estha and Rahel; Chako’s secret sex affairs with the
untouchable ladies remain unknown to the entire aristocratic family (except Mammachi).
Everyone keeps a dirty secret in the game of supremacy and subjugation, but the impure blood, the dirty hands, the paravan smell and the mortgaged eye are the objects to be hated.

The untouchable Velutha is the god of loss whose secret and truth are gone perennially with his dead body. His death is a small thing: “just the end of living” (304). His life is a dystopia, a joke, or a game. His identity is neither recognized nor acknowledged. He is “Born to die unfairly, Majestic in his complete despair” (Roy 220, 221). As per her needs, Ammu uncovers her bodily secrets to Velutha, smiling “down at him as though he was her child” (Roy 318). These secrets hold much duplicity that is rooted in Ammu’s family in particular and Indian society in general. While Baby Kochamma is disgusted about “their [Dalits’] paravan smell”, Ammu smells “the river on him”; she tastes the river water from his body with her tongue (Roy 317). Her intense carnal desire is enveloped in the hypocrisy of need. If Ammu had truly loved Velutha, he would have been saved, by some means. In fact, she would not have invited Velutha for the forbidden relationship at all. This sentiment is evoked time and again through the entire novel. Ammu symbolically assimilates the discrimination in her internal carnal need of a sexual partner’s body. While she sees his countered and hard body (Roy 167), she uses that body for her physical pleasure as well as ironically contributes to the dismissal of that body. Once the desired “sex” was achieved, he was no longer needed or valued, or at least there was no chance to be valued any more.

Roy ends her novel with a positive note, “Tomorrow” (321). However, this positive tone becomes ironic, as in the godless world ruled by the Lord Rubbish (or the age of darkness or the heart of darkness in the country) is it practically possible for untouchables to imagine a better world? Roy confirms that “the world had ways of breaking [untouchable] men” (8). The novel ends with the ending of Velutha’s life. According to Li, the connotation of “tomorrow” at the end of the novel is “aporetic because the small in the shape of Velutha and Ammu’s affair, while
doomed to destruction and death, offers nonetheless a sign of excess that disrupts the order of the
big,” perhaps glorifying them (286). But the grim fact is Velutha dies. A life ends. The potential
of another generation of human ends. There is a possibility of speculation that if Velutha were not
a lower caste would he have ended up dying? For Comrade Pillai, “a [untouchable] man’s death
could be more profitable than his life had ever been” (Roy 281). To hold the cruel reality and to
cautions against that reality, Roy makes Ammu wear a rose in her hair in the last scene, the thorn
of which, it is implied, Velutha will endure for the rest of his life. For her, there is a “Naaley,” a
“Tomorrow” whereas for Velutha, there’s none (321). He remains in the world ruled by Chappu
Thamburan, the Lord Rubbish. The Lord Rubbish lives more than Velutha. He must live. He is to
take care of the discrimination to be incurred upon the upcoming generations of the untouchables.
If Velutha’s death disrupts the big, it also establishes and enhances the order of the big, giving
more authority to the big-blooded upper castes. In fact, Roy reinforces a Dalit’s trauma and identity
crisis through the colonial traditions that she tries to destabilize. To do that, according to Murugan
and Pelluvalluthi, Roy makes her novel a postcolonial gothic hybrid, exemplifying “the lingering
of India’s colonial past upon its present as the country struggles with its modern-day identity”
(150). Roy utilizes dark imagery “in the vein of conventional Western Gothic, yet she also
reinvents it with a unique lyrical quality in specific portrayals of Indian life and turmoil” (Murugan
151). She emphasizes that the blood and horror are concealed under extreme show off and
hypocrisy in the country by the government and the privileged people and violence to the
subjugated never stops (Power Politics 37, 38).

The time differences in the novel, moving back and forth into the future and past create a
labyrinth of scopes for hope and at the same time, a lack of hope. Her connotation of “tomorrow”
might in fact mean the passed yesterday that is intrinsically embedded in a dangerous tomorrow.
According to Elizabeth Outka, time does not move in a binary day-night linear fashion, but time is “a hybrid where different times become simultaneous, multiple, ambiguous” presenting the convoluted emotions of the characters and the stories, “signaling the past traumatic event’s refusal to be integrated into an unfolding narrative” (23). The walking paradox by the author conveys the underlined message that there is no tomorrow, at least for an untouchable, even though the novel ends with a “Tomorrow”. Velutha is an archetype of the inferiors with no courage, no voice, no future, no love, and no “tomorrow”. He only has a lifeless body and red, thick blood. This is how he becomes a “regional flavor”, the flavor of hatred and disgust. The whole book, thus, remains a history lesson that the country must refer to in future. In fact, even if there is no hope, “when we see as readers the vivid details of the sexual passion that Velutha and Ammu share, and when our “participation” knows that for them there can be no tomorrow, a new set of transgressions that challenge the Love Laws, once again occurs” (Patchay 154). The readers at the end of the novel have understood that there is no way one can explain the definitive outcome of a story that is “retold and endless cyclical patterns of deferral are put into play” (Patchay154). However, Roy confirms in some subtle ways that the breaking of the inferiors will continue. Estha sees traces of broken Ammu in Rahel, “and soon the Love Laws are broken again” (Patchay 154). Therefore, the tomorrow the author imagines is a violent one with a lot of possibilities of brokenness. She presupposes the future as a hole containing:

Two lives. Two children’s childhoods.
And a history lesson for future offenders. (Roy 318)

Roy’s novel performs a duty to caution the “future offenders” not only in terms of love, caste, or gender violence, but it also expresses a possibility of another world, not ruled by Chappu Thamburam “where time’s hybridity—through this very access—might reflect not disruption but
also the possibility of radical political and social change” (Outka 22). The political and social change that Velutha dreamed through his involvement in the Communist Party is kept safely in the minds of the readers and the author after Velutha’s death, perhaps with a faint expectation of a better “tomorrow”.

“SUCH DIGNITY. SUCH DARK TIMES”: AN ANALYSIS OF EVA’S ATYPICAL SPEECH MECHANISM AND PHILLIPS’ FRAGMENTED WRITING PATTERN

Caryl Phillips’ The Nature of Blood, set after the WWII, recounts the terror of the Holocaust and the psychological horror of the survivors. It also reveals the objectification and violation of a woman’s body and mind to that extent from where the protagonist cannot but find death as her true companion and solace. In the process from the torture through the train journey from the concentration camp to London through her death scene in the hospital in London, Phillips gives us major goals to talk about intense trauma. However, in doing so, Phillips also vividly emphasizes that the trauma his protagonist faces is beyond cure. While Phillips provides an indication of working through the trauma by letting the protagonist, Eva, fall in love with Gerry and by giving her hope to live, he concludes the novel by reassuring that the working through trauma in case of the teenage Eva is never possible because of the overwhelming intensity of the torture she faced. The Novel’s plot and Eva’s broken languages reconfirms the lack of order and intensity of chaos of the era where teenage victims like Eva are succumbed to violent trauma and then death, and that they have no way to escape these.

Phillips, in his essay collection Color Me English recounts the terror and futility of the Holocaust and the helplessness of the immigrant Jews. He raises an extremely vital question about the struggle between two opposite powers—a poet and an emperor—and asks the readers who would win. Then comes his hopeful belief that ultimately the poet possesses the quality to revive and restore the spirit of the nation. The poet represents the voice of the muted; although he has a redemptive potential to restore the faith in humanity, he is ultimately choked with the brutal political and religious interferences. The poet’s choked voice is not a happy, proud martyrdom, but a grossly cry for survival. Phillips in the essay “American Stories, American Silence” confirms
by citing Chinua Achebe that ‘the emperor’, is traditionally fueled by power that emanates from the ballot box or from the barrel of a gun or both. However tangential the relationship of the emperor’s story to factual evidence is, the emperor very much desires that his story should be received as an evident communal truth” (CME 57). The emperor’s history is written with a powerful force to immortalize the version of his narration. In this essay Phillips hopes about the generation and population of the true (although disturbing) stories the writer aims to pen down. His intention to write about misery directly correlates with his direct description of the hopelessness of Eva in his novel. According to Phillips, writing a story is all about words; “[t]here is a directness about storytelling, involving as it does human beings as the central players, … Words cohering into language from the bedrock of our identity, and to explain our human condition, our first port of call is generally words” (CME 57). If words are the essence of a story which represents life altogether, it is no wonder that he intentionally distorts the words, phrases, and sentences of Eva while depicting the fruitlessness of the Holocaust survivors. However, at the same time Phillips cautions that there are two kinds of versions of the story, and we must be vigilant about which one to believe.

However, Phillips’ attempt to subvert the emperor (or the superior’s) narration goes back to the discussion in my previous chapter where I discuss about the status and lack of voice of a subaltern in relation to the caste system in India. The subaltern is often tortured and is considered a subhuman. Phillips’ portrayal of the Holocaust victim resonates with the politically charged emotions of the era when a Jew is looked at as a subhuman having an impure blood and hence, he or she must be killed to cleanse the nation (Imperial War Museum, London). Phillips’ narration expresses a severe agony and in the oppressed and subjugated. The horror of the Holocaust, which is one of the core themes of The Nature of Blood, is intensified through the trope of blood, and
Phillips focuses on the ghastly violence towards the Jews in a Nazi concentration camp in the novel.

The central character, Eva, is an immigrant Jew, who is a victim of the massive cruelties; and as a result, she develops psychological instability. Her speech is broken, and her mind constantly moves around only the traumatic incidents she experiences in the very short span of her life. The horror is expressed through the frequent changes in her perspectives, large time gaps, and inconsistency in languages. Eva’s apparently mispronounced or grammatically incorrect sentences represent the deep plight of a repressed subaltern. The story goes back and forth to history, present, future, and history again. Phillips presents the background and context of the hatred to the Jews by the Christians in a street through the real-life incident that Phillips’ parents faced: “my parents were called ‘nigger,’ my mother was spat at in the streets, my father punched, they were short-changed in shops, offered accommodation that you wouldn’t kennel your dog in, and constantly told to go back to the jungle” (CME 305). Like Phillips, Eva Stern at the beginning of her life experiences discrimination and hatred being a Jew. In her childhood, when the Jews-Christian hatred is beyond her understanding, she experiences a psychological violence:

And then a pebble is thrown… I stand and stare at the children, who laugh and point at me. I know they do not mock me. Eva. They do not know me. They mock what I look like, not who I am. And then another pebble. And another… I walk slowly, but with purpose and dignity. And I feel the pebbles fly past, the occasional one striking me a bruise-inflicting blow. But I do not hurry. I will not run. (26, 27)

This calm and composed nature of childhood becomes the harbinger of the tempest in the later lives of both Eva and Phillips. They both endure the immense torture only because they are the inferiors surrounded and ruled by the so-called superiors. Eva at a tender age encounters such
violence that she ultimately cannot survive. Phillips’ narration about Eva’s tormented mind and ruptured speech reveals the ugly truth about most of the inferior people who lose their voices and have no option but to succumb to the catastrophic end of their lives.

Phillips’ protagonist lacks coherence in language and his entire novel lacks the distinction of time. This happens because the protagonist Eva’s survival is at stake as a result of immense violence, and there is not ample language to communicate about that violence. Phillips’ description of Eva and her speech mechanism may seem surrealistic with ample breakages, incorrect grammar, and lack of steadiness. However, the broken speeches convey the grimness of the reality that the subjugated endures. According to Dominick LaCapra, in the series of traumatic events, “[a]t times surrealistic situations seem to be sublimely irrelevant to ordinary reality but may uncannily provide indirect commentary or insight into that reality” (186). Eva’s life truthfully exposes the uncanny reality that she not only endures, but also is petrified of. Also, this uncanny reality is expressed for the people around her too including her parents and sister, who is a rape victim, and who never appears in the novel but makes her presence recognized with the horrific incidents recounted by Eva very frequently. The violence occurs cumulatively in the novel with frequent and constant scene changes. Eva’s semi-conscious mind and broken words utter all the agonies of the traumatized people and take the readers to the realm of the disturbing reality that we all must know about. Her agonized mind often reminds the readers of the grim condition that no people in the normal world would ever imagine. She looks at herself again and again only to encounter that “the body begins to eat itself … Rats feed on human bodies. Dead or alive. The distinction is irrelevant” (167-171). The powerful death image visualized by Eva at every juncture of her life holds the Freudian idea of Thanatos in the Holocaust survivors. The extreme urge to die and at the same time, experiencing an inability to die take her to an extent where she has no clear notion of her
own existence. In this circumstance, the victim feels a strong pause in life, developing a claustrophobic, nightmarish perspective of life.

I term this state of being as “anti-life force” because the victim is unable to identify her own existence as a human being; rather, she becomes a living dead. I use this term to illustrate the horror of a traumatized mind, undergoing a severe identity crisis. In this chapter, I try to set the anti-life force in relation to Eva’s broken speeches, her hallucination about blood, and her physical and metaphorical death. The anti-life force that is applicable in case of an Indian subaltern is closely connected to the anti-life force that is seen in the protagonist of The Nature of Blood. The novel is structured in a complex manner involving several time differences and nonlinear format, rejecting the unity of time, place, and action. Once the readers enter into the tortuous structure of the novel, they are prompted to confront a new interlocking narrative, often turning back to the former and jumping to the latter. The description of Venice and ghettos in England merges with the concentration camp in Nazi Germany, making the plot not too comprehensible. Phillips employs this kind of narrative technique to hold the authoritative focus on the narrators who are the traumatized victims and who lack an ordinary worldly sense of language, time, and place. Also, to demonstrate the actual image of the broken world and broken emotions of the victims Phillips lets his novel stand in a fragmented and non-linear format. In a world where “women and children burn faster than men. Fresh naked children burn the fastest…,” following a linear pattern makes no sense (167). Benedicte Ledent compares Phillips’ narrative style with a labyrinth that “constitutes an interesting symbolic nexus in The Nature of Blood. [T]his pattern incorporates the notion of wandering and evoke the sense of being lost experienced by the novel’s characters and readers alike ... The labyrinth has, in addition, a chronotropic quality that relates to this novel’s conception of history as cyclical” (186). The chronotropic quality of the victims’ lives changes the
natural rhythm or course of life. In this case, the change is certainly negative with an intense trauma involved in it. This change of the characters and incidents of the novel takes it far from the normal human happy world. It leads the reader to encounter a world that is perceived as “other” by the power-hungry superiors to suppress the marginalized. The Eurocentric techniques of employing marginalization through otherization of the nonwhites, non-Christians, and non-Europeans constitute the novel’s bigger themes. And Phillips creates a labyrinth-like structure to provide a maze that life holds: a maze that covers the clarity and straightness of life. Thus is “apt evocation of the historical complexity and the cultural “impurity” that, for Phillips, have long characterized his native Caribbean” (Ledent 186). His narration about the colonial supremacy holds the real grim facts that are beyond normalcy, and it is not a surprise to express the torture in an anomalistic narrative manner.

*The Nature of Blood* deals with “anti” or “phobic” sentiments invoked by colonialism, political dominance, and religious fundamentalism. Such hatred and phobia towards the repressed people lead them to encounter anti-life force, after which they remain in a condition where working through the trauma becomes challenging. LaCapra provides some methods through which a traumatized victim could work through the trauma. For example, “mourning” is an important mode of communicating the trauma where “One may generate countervailing forces so that the person can reengage an interest in life. One sign of this in the process of mourning is the ability to find a new partner, to marry, to have children, and not to be so enmeshed in grieving that the present doesn’t seem to exist for you, and there is no future” (151). LaCapra’s way of working through mourning is a vital part in revealing the intense trauma that the victim is bearing since a long time, However, in anti-life force, even the scope of mourning and the processes of working through are terminated through a longstanding violence, after which the
victim hardly has a control over his or her own body or mind. In her trial to work through trauma, Eva reaches to a certain extent where she almost forgets her own self. The anti-life force leads her to be petrified of her own image in the mirror and to mistake her bright red lipstick as thick red blood. She loses her power of speech indicating the potential danger of her existence. She lacks not only an understanding of herself, but also a power of communication, and therefore, acting out of trauma seems almost impossible for her. She envisions the disturbing images continually. The recurrent images of burning, death, lice, and blood exercise a close metaphor that has proximity with the trope of blood that leads the character to an everlasting existential crisis.

Phillips’ exploration of blood has to do with the horror of colonial subjugation through which a tender mind like Eva’s could be violated and led to catastrophic death. While on one hand, the protagonist is too attached with the vision of blood, she, on the other hand, constantly longs for a “bloodless palace” searching for solace and peace (169). But ultimately, she fails to achieve a peaceful life and experiences blood everywhere. According to Bastian Balthazar Becker, Eva’s experiences with blood “during her deportation and incarceration reveal to her that menstrual blood within the genocidal mechanisms only exposes women to further humiliation, pain, […] death,” and a severe madness (127). He also believes that because Phillips’ central character is a woman and a Jew, the suppression and torture are even greater. The rendition of menstrual blood emphasizes the subjectivity of a woman body in the time of a massive terror, where “Eva never receives a moment of privacy which would allow her to reclaim her body from the continuing expropriation of herself. Instead, she realizes that her blood will always be over-signified by somebody else” (Becker 128). The oppressed loses a power over her own self, and “[e]verybody is a part of somebody else’s game” (NOB 170). Eva certainly becomes a part of everybody’s game.
She is denied all the rights that belong to her and becomes a puppet in the hands of Gerry, the European male. Phillips’s narrative of the Holocaust victim lacks a solid identity. The breakages and gaps in Eva’s speech is a symbol of that lack of identity. These lacunas create the basic structure of what LaCapra calls “founding trauma” where people are provided with “too facile an identification, which is not earned and which becomes a basis of identity that is too readily available” (162). Eva’s whole identity becomes a lack of identity, which is certainly not earned but imposed.

Gerry’s abandonment of Eva is the peak moment of her self-denial. This is how she succumbs to the torment of life, a life of an “other” where she feels that the “refusal of this world has not gone unnoticed, Death will want me too. Death is hungry. Always hungry” (180). While the human life is denied, human blood is extremely enriched: “river of blood flowing [into an] over blooming flower” (162). Eva experiences a pool of blood everywhere. This hallucination leads her to lunacy. However, through Phillips’ description it is evident that this lunacy is absolutely normal in a crazy, war-mongering world where the oppressed is constantly tagged as mad, sub-human, and lunatic. Eva herself admits the fact that in the ruthless world where blood is everywhere, it is impossible to even strive for the normalcy of everyday life: “Normal? I had almost forgotten the meaning of the word” (64).

Death becomes a solace for the agonized souls. However, through anti-life force the victims already die long before their actual death. As Eva continuously fails to take her own body and mind in her own grasp, she fails to offer a safe place to herself. Her losing of her family members, the rape of her sister, and her hallucination of her disappeared (presumably dead) mother sets the context of lunacy and a lack of redemption in people like Eva. Lunacy is the result of all the accumulated violence. Phillips presents the horrific lunacy as so real that it cannot be denied
or altered. Phillips after reading the Holocaust literature confirms that they were “driving me bloody mad, just painful, painful, painful stuff” (51). To write about the painful stuff, Phillips’ exploration of blood through Eva’s lunacy is a powerful medium. We, the readers, empathize with Eva during the reversal-of-life scenes that are intense enough to give the readers the same angst that the characters are enduring when Phillips writes:

Human life is cheap. (I sometimes think that I would even kiss one if it meant that I could live.) Young bodies rusted like old taps… That boy begins to eat itself. Fat. Flesh. Muscles. In this order… An unaesthetic drop of menstrual blood signaling death, a tongue coated in a white deposit signaling death… But they must remember to wash with the coffee, they must remember to try to keep clean. Picking at each other’s lice like monkeys. (NOB 167, 168)

Amid menstrual blood, lice, and monkey-people, Eva still finds a ray of hope through Phillips’ introduction of love relationship. The reader when takes a comforting breath thinking about the only hope of Eva’s life, things turn opposite even more brutally. Phillips employs this device to portray the reality and erase any misconception about the tremendous intensity of horror in the Holocaust victims and reaffirms the fact that there is no hope for life and no scope for idealization of the Holocaust.

Through Gerry’s continual care and interference in Eva’s life Phillips first assures that however tough the situation gets, the hope for life is still fresh in Eva’s mind. Her continuous denial for life or Thanatos is turned into the Freudian Eros (life force) when she meets Gerry. Even after losing all her family members, she clings on to life. She tries to work through all her past trauma and agonies in the hope of a shelter and an end of the torture she has seen all her life. On the train to London, Eva dreams of meeting Gerry soon and having a home of her own, devoid of
all the miseries. She avoids looking at the other passengers who remind her of the grim real condition of a Jew, stating that “their eyes pollute my confidence” (189). But this redemptive hope is diminished because in reality, the fulfilment of a Jew’s dreams in a Nazi camp is simply not feasible. In the next moment, she hallucinates about the menstrual blood and dead people. Her resignation for herself leaves her unable to function. She cries in agony, “I don’t want to be hurt again. I won’t be able to survive being abandoned again. Not again” (194). Phillips confirms and reconfirms through the deadly imageries visualized by Eva that redemption and hope in the deadly world are nothing but unreal imaginations.

When Eva, a Jew, is helped by Gerry, a white European, the readers look forward to a happy ending, but “[t]he fact that he is a Nazi trying to help Jews is retained in its tension” (LaCapra 157). Because the political, religious, and national interferences will never allow a White European and a Jew to assimilate in marriage or love, it is almost certain that Eva is alone again, even though the scene of Gerry’s abandonment is not shown emphatically. LaCapra confirms the fact that “you have a Nazi friend who is also an impresario, self-interested, self-indulgent, but nonetheless trying to help other people—in that, you have a certain interesting tension… leading the people across the horizon toward some unimaginable new beginning—you don’t know where they’re going; you think they may be going to a land of redemption” (LaCapra 157). Truthfully, that hope of redemption is shattered in every moment of Eva’s life. Phillips displays Eva’s contradiction when she hopes for betterment and how she returns to her traumatic condition through her irregular and abnormal speeches. Phillips retains and reuses Eva’s disabled speech mechanism that reveals a severe truth about an inferior’s life in isolation. The frequent changes in the perspectives throughout the novel tells that the psychological and physical violence the victims
endure are beyond cure. The assumption of this redemptive measure is actively diminished by Phillips with the characterization of Gerry, the European and Eva’s eventual death.

Although it is sometimes evident that Phillips dreams for an “other” narrative consisting of a hope for a better tomorrow, he discovers that every day one person is killed out of social or racial or religious discrimination. He hopes for the ‘new’ people to “bring with them new narratives which grow and flourish in the very heart and bosom of the society” (52). Eva and Phillips both imagine about immigrating to another country as a potential solace. Eva hallucinates, “I can now begin to plan a future for both of us” (36). But instantly, the longing for immigrating to another country and bringing forth their own narratives is diminished. She realizes that she is a Jew and for her, the concept of home is too metaphorical. She utters in distress, “How can she [the stupid woman in the camp] use the word ‘home’? It is cruel to do so in such circumstances” (37). The sin of calling something ‘home’ on part of the outcasts is a recurrent image in Phillips. The refugees and immigrants are naturally tagged as “other” and therefore, evil. In this context Ashley Dawson’s argument is pertinent to Europe’s sentiments towards the immigrants, “political sentiment in most European nations remains stridently averse to all forms of immigration” (83). Eva’s wish “we will go on together to America” broadly intensifies Phillips’s own inner psychological preference of the American land for immigration and ultimately happiness. Dawson posits that Europe runs the mythological base for people to believe in her super power and to diminish the identities of the blacks, the inferiors, the Jews, the oppressed and the “other (s)”. Thus, this type of racism not only aggravates the existential terror but also it “is gradually displacing phenotypically-based models of difference derived from the social Darwinism of the nineteenth century” (84). In an attempt to provide a potential resort to the bereaved characters, Phillips ultimately confirms that there is no possibility of such resort.
However, even if in Phillips there is no potential base for hope and positivity, by effectively using blood as a powerful symbol, he at least destabilizes “the officially sanctioned narrative” that “rescues the… writing that celebrated such sentences as ‘I still believe that people are really good at heart’” (Ledent 126). By doing so, he is able to put forth the serious problems that demand a heavy discourse. As a whole, The Nature of Blood explores the obsession with race, lineage, and endogamy, but it also portrays the true picture of Europe “that has for centuries acted like a figurative cannibal who spits out the bones of people whose flesh she has devoured” (Becker 126). The novel ends with a hallucination by General Othello, which signifies that there is no concrete answer to the victims’ existential questions, and at the end, it is the common human who suffers the most. The hallucination also takes the readers back to Eva’s hallucination about blood. After a series of hallucinations, hopelessness, and images of blood, the readers are left with no clear answer about Eva or any other character’s whereabouts. The novel also withholds a solid ending with characters and incidents, but it is suggested that Eva dies after her innumerable encounter and countless hallucination with blood. The blood in the Nazi camp leaves a permanent trauma in her mind. She finally succumbs to the torture that a subjugated has to endure. The character in Color Me English (that is Phillips himself) finds a way to escape England and eventually gets an education to live life, which Eva (and most of the children of the oppressed) is denied of. However, Phillips adeptly recognizes how the ruthless society can end a blooming life in the “river of blood flowing [into an] over blooming flower”. He loudly cries with Eva with several repetitions of these phrases: Such dignity. Such dark times.
CONCLUSION: “HOPE IN BLANK UTOPIA”: SYMBOLS OF COLONIAL APORIA

In colonialism, politics have used myths excessively, which have even intensified colonization. The supremacists actively employ the politics of myth and the myths of religion to demean the other perceptible truths that could potentially damage the colonization process. Colonizers often create a colonial aporia by craftily forming narratives that benefit them only and hinders the inferiors to dissect, analyze, reach to a conclusion, and ultimately protest it. The aporia involves a careful internal conflict and logical disjunction to maintain the colonial power by breaking the self-confidence of the inferior. The aporia is so mystic that it is almost impossible for the oppressed to clearly understand the superior’s politics covered with a heavy maze of political narratives. These narratives are propagated through what Gayathri Chakravorty Spivak calls “epistemic violence”. The superiors, through the infliction of epistemic violence (hugely using speeches and writings) not only colonize the minds of the inferiors, but also force them to believe in those narrations whole-heartedly. If the inferior tries to break the chains of epistemic violence, they are targeted even more violently. Once the superiors target the inferiors through physical and psychological violence, there is a vacuum created not only in the lives of the oppressed, but also in a society that should be equal. The vacuum does a tremendous harm in the lives of the masses, which Dominick LaCapra terms as “hope in blank utopia,” a hope that realistically is never reachable. However, ultimately, with the subversions of those narrations we are perhaps able to somewhat reach to a region where the trauma-generated minds still are searching for meaning—the meaning that will destabilize the existing oppressing rules.

In The God of Small Things and The Nature of Blood, both Phillips and Roy employ some different myths that strongly destabilize the longstanding biased myths prevalent in the
society, but no one ever questions them. The authors consciously criticize those mythical narratives or beliefs to form, reform, and unform identities that are in flux in both Indian and European communities. Both the novels expose the intense trauma that the subaltern endures, and at the same time, both fail to offer a solid conclusive solution to the problems identified and fought in the novels. Part of the reason is because in the colonized minds where tortures and trauma are so ingrained and overflowing that they have a meager possibility to come out of those painful memories. In fact, both the novels truthfully showcase that death is the ultimate outcome of the severe colonial oppression, and the lack of a formed conclusion is the embodiment of the death that has no official “conclusion.” Trauma, death, and oppression in terms of colonial identity crisis is enveloped in the theme of blood so intrinsically that blood becomes “a unifying symbol, thematic, and structural device” without which the novels or in fact the characters lack existence altogether (Becker 125).

Blood functions as an immense psychological support to the authors writing about the colonial supremacy and violence as well as in another way works as a thread among all the violent tortures the world encounters. Trauma functions to house the violence that literature subtly exposes. Literature, in all its forms, takes the liberty to deal and represent the reality behind a comparatively sophisticated medium: a story. A story while represented in a sheath of reality, becomes another story containing a bunch of stories. The popular mythical stories that children hear, even if are biased, overshadow the stories that are real but never find a place in the popular mediums. These stories prevent people from having access to the truth, and they eventually believe whatever is written in the sacred pages and encounter self-loathing and lack of indulgence in more research or protest against biased narratives. Eventually, this phenomenon caters to subjugation and oppression to the inferiors and consequently, to trauma.
Postcolonial scholars identify the system as dangerous, as it maintains domination and supremacy. Inequality is best understood in the postcolonial context, where marginalization takes a perilous shape with a potential to even end life. Consequently, it contributes to the unfailing trauma and unending sufferings. Literature that deals with inequality or trauma takes into account the various contributors of trauma. Also, while the discourse of trauma takes a literal humongous shape in the colonization process, the discourse on inequality becomes vital in terms of the literature that represents the marginalized voices. Jay Rajiva posits a question regarding the connection between literature and postcolonial trauma: “Why is literature the most suitable vehicle for representing postcolonial trauma? (1)” and “What is the specific nature of the reader’s encounter with literary representations of postcolonial trauma? (1)” Perhaps literature is the finest medium as it contends with its various forms against the colonial aporia the supremacists maintain through myths and stories that they call history. Literature that deals with inequality or trauma considers the various contributors of trauma. If we take trauma literature as a vital subfield in the postcolonial context, then the question that arises is whether the traumatized victim has a voice to represent or communicate the trauma. In most cases, the victims possess no voice to present their angsts, sufferings, deprivations to the world, and their voices are translated through the altruism of a writer. Also, while the discourse of trauma takes a literal humongous shape in the colonization process, the discourse on inequality becomes vital in terms of the literature that represents the marginalized voices. Postcolonial scholars identify the system as dangerous, as it maintains domination and supremacy. Inequality is best understood in the postcolonial context, where marginalization takes a perilous shape with a potential to even end life. Consequently, it contributes to the unfailing trauma and unending sufferings.
Trauma induced by colonialism and identity crisis is a case of hybridity. It moves with a number of nuanced phenomena involving trauma in every phenomenon. Like Caryl Phillips, Arundhati Roy intentionally establishes an order of the things without an order in the novel. She mentions big things and small things. And her novel moves with a lot of breakages in between the stories and a lot of time differences. The size correlating with order is important. She names her novel with the words big and small. The order of the big overshadows the order of the small. However, the novel eventually makes the small big (by depicting Venu, the inferior as the God of small things). The disruption of order of big and small helps tremendously to understand the intention of destabilization of the order set by the colonial power. Roy points to the aporia by creating an aporia herself: mixing the big and the small and ultimately there is a blur between the two sizes. This connotes the unfailing desire of the novelist to form a society free from sized based on birth, color, caste, and creed.

Roy and Phillips attempt to provide a solution for the problem of the colonial aporia that the supremacists try to maintain. Like Phillips, Roy also reconfirms the order by breaking the stereotypical order of things in a linear fashion. As Elizabeth Outka propounds, Roy’s novel organizes its order of time by breaking the order. The order of big things lurks inside the order of small things. The traumatic moments and people “reorder time itself, and thus in Roy’s novel, the temporal mixture must be read not simply as a feature of a postmodern or postcolonial narrative, but also as the sign of traumatic experience” (Outka 22). Small things become big in Roy and the big things are embedded in a shell of hypocrisy and oppression that the author intends to reveal in front of the world. The whole story is an exploration of trauma in terms of its political, religious, and social orders, and “the breaking of these silences may also be seen in the carnivalesque-like routines” (Patchay 150). If trauma could be linked with literature, does it help
to satisfy the need of the subaltern to speak for freedom? Is writing about traumatic past using
the literary mediums prudent at all? If the post-traumatic stress disorders are demonstrated
properly, is there a risk that “the writer traumatize the reader through this depiction? And within
this struggle of representation, how might both author and reader avoid the aestheticization of
traumatic experience, one that potentially revictimizes a victim?” (Outka 24). Roy uncovers the
historical narratives through her own understanding of history that is embedded in a shell of
hypocrisy. She in her last chapter writes that the whole novel intends to provide a “history lesson
to the future offenders” (321). The history that is created by the emperor is ultimately restored by
the poet here, as Phillips imagines. In tying the history through a channel of truth and it is
imperative for these writers to bring up the trauma the subaltern endures.

The last chapter of The God of Small Things reiterates small things. It is perhaps
reassured again and again that we turn to the small things for a bigger analysis of the problems
not noticeable at the first reading. Thus, the two novels stand as complimentary to each other in
terms of depicting how blood can be a symbol depicting “a river of blood flowing over blooming
flower” the seeds of which we need to identify to understand the colonial aporia that are spread
globally, be in a Nazi setting or in the Indian subcontinent.
Notes:

i. Rohit Vemula, a young scholar in the University of Hyderabad, was forced to commit suicide recently, as he was a Dalit scholar and an activist who joined the Ambedkar organization to fight for the untouchables. His stipend was stopped, leading him to eventual death.


ii. For details, see “Problem of Isolation”, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writing and Speeches (Mumbai: Government of Maharashtra), 1989, vol. 5, pp. 112-16.

iii. In Kerala, where the novel is based, Breast Tax was imposed on Dalit women by the Brahmins. They ensured that no Dalit woman covers her breast. If they do, they need to pay heavy taxes. A woman cut her breast as a protest of this ill practice. See [http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-36891356](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-36891356)

iv. Mittapalli reinforces that “unless the caste system itself is dismantled, Velutha and others like him will continue to be outcasts—dehumanized, desexualized, and excluded from the mainstream Indian life, and subjected to ill-treatment and injustice of the kind that obtains in The God of Small Things” (Mittapalli 65).
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