

Introduction

The God of Small Things is a captivating novel with just about innumerable layers of understanding of human lives and human minds. This story is positioned in a Hindu setting in the early 1960s, only some 20 years after the independence of India. From beginning to end, this book is constructed through the interlacing of ‘flash-backs’, since it begins 23 years after the actual events of the book has taken place, which contribute to the story dissolving more or less at the end of it. The centre of this narrative is a Brahman family (top caste level) living in the small rural town of Kerala situated in southern India. The core of this Indian family is however the two-egg twins Esthappen and Rahel, who through their juvenile eyes experience the hypocritical world of the adults around them. This novel is not only an eye-opener in the vicious influence of the caste system, but also an insight into the bigotry of politics and traditional principles.

The strong power of both caste systems or traditional principles and politics as mentioned above is the starting-point of this essay. As there are different ‘sorts’ of women presented in this book, my approach will be to study the relationship between the postcolonial identity of the women in *The God of Small Things* and their Hindu identity ‘formed’ by Hinduism. In accordance with Chantra Talpade Mohanty who says: “(...) women are *produced through these very relations* as well as being implicated in forming these relations” (203), I will show that the identities of these women are shaped of their respective societies. In order to accomplish this I have chosen to analyse three generations of women in *The God of small Things*, each born and raised under different circumstances and with altering premises. In order of rank (starting with the first age group), these generations consist of

Baby Kochamma and Mammachi, Ammu and finally Rahel and equally for comparison and contrast, the English women Margaret Kochamma and Sophie will be used.

Method

I find the women in *The God of Small Things* very fascinating not only for the reason that they are strongly influenced by their life stories, but even more for the influence their actions and identities have on their children. Of course, none of them can be judged for the shape of their identity, as they all are a merger of culture, religion and politics. In this essay I will discuss and analyse three generations of women, a total of four characters. In addition, two other characters are used in order to illustrate the differences that women from the colonizing country (Great Britain) hold in contrast to women from the colonized country (India). The essay begins with a presentation of the theory that is the background for the analysis. The theory that is employed in this essay is feminist literary as it can be applied to post-colonialism and Hinduism (the Hindu tradition). Since the most important term for my analysis is “identity”, the terms I will use are *postcolonial identity* and *Hindu identity*, with respective definitions of course. Moreover, the term *generation* will frequently be used, as my thesis is related to the matter of age. Concerning postcolonial discussions on identity my main source will be the theories of Mohanty on women and their identities. Furthermore, in discussing and understanding Hindu identities I will employ the religion of Hinduism and its representation of women. Also, the second source is a book on Indian women by the anthropologists Doranne Jacobson and Susan S. Wadley. In addition to these, other sources will naturally be of use. Subsequently, the section of analysis begins. In the analysis I will consider two identity traits, post-colonial and Hindu, for each of the Hindu women, and also discuss the characters of the English women (the first is used in generation two, and the

second in generation one). There will also be a discussion where I link the analysis to the first part of this essay, and finally I will conclude the essay by reflections.

Theory

As mentioned by now, the focus of this essay will rest upon feminist literary theory, since the idea of women and womanhood is clearly emphasized in *The God of Small Things*. Feminist literary theory deals with the female sex and the “matters” that go along with it, matters such as the difference of the sexes and the woman in culture and society. Feminist theory is a premise through the eyes of women claiming that the gender differences carry a fundamental distinction between men and women in society, and additionally that this distinction has meant that women have been placed in a subordinate position in culture. Ania Loomba also discusses this: “...women themselves...seem to disappear...From colonial as well as nationalist records, we learn little about how they felt or responded...” (221) Furthermore, feminist theory is not only concerned with one determined theory, but is prominently a ‘field’ of theory in which different perspectives can be argued (Iversen 55)

The feminist literary theory, or branch of criticism, is often called the first phase of modern feminist theory, which arose in the 1970s (Iversen 56) One of the most important feminist critics of this time was Elaine Showalter, who coined the word gynocriticism and wanted feminists to reconsider the relations between the sexes and womanhood on their own grounds. During the ‘first era’ of this theory women such as Kate Millets, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar and of course Elaine Showalter were among the foremost figures. During the 1980s feminist reading of literature and feminist literary research continued strongly with Gilbert and Gubar, but also with Janice A. Radway, who presented a new understanding of popular literature, which had prejudicially been treated as ‘women’s-literature’ (58).

French feminism, which received much of its support from Marks, Courtivon, and Simone De Beauvoir, considered language as a tool of public discourse, which presents men and women as binary opposites, where men more often than not hold the “stronger” or “better” qualities. This leaves women with an unjust ultimatum, either to adopt the male discourse or to remain silent. The French feminists subsequently suggested that this sort of language (male language) did not enable women to express their life experiences, which differ from those of men (Ray 8-9) Feminist literary critics further argued that western feminism had failed to acknowledge the experiences of Third World women when they “assumed that gender overrode cultural differences” (Ashcroft *et. al* 102) The view of one unified female sex was partly due to the theories of Freud who saw the sexes as a matter of pure biology (Iversen 109) This discussion will continue in the section on identity further on.

The God of Small Things is a book that can be situated and analyzed within various theories, of which I have chosen feminism, which will be applied to the Hindu tradition involving Hinduism and postcolonialism. The terms colonial and post-colonialism require an explanation in order to enable a further discussion in this essay. Colonialism has been a ‘common’ feature in the history of human beings and has been a reoccurring picture in the life of nations. It is a form of ‘cultural exploitation’ that developed in Europe over the last 400 years. The imperialistic ideas of the colonizers brought forth the general idea that those people of different race than the colonizers were biologically inferior. Equally important to notice is the sexist, patriarchal ideologies that excluded women and effected such things as their education and a free voice (Loomba 45-7) In conclusion Ania Loomba plainly defines colonialism as the “conquest and control of other people’s lands and goods” (2) When moving on to the expression “post-colonialism”, which can signify the end of colonialism, Ashcroft *et al.* remind us that: “British India...had to engage in a long and frequently bloody process of dissent, protest and rebellion to secure their independence” (50) Thus “British India” never

'received' freedom without the sacrifice of its people and violent protests. Also India was not formed by itself, rather it was formed by a foreign power and in this case Great Britain.

Post-colonialism or 'after' colonialism is in the words of Leela Ghandi "marked by the range of ambivalent cultural moods and formations which accompany periods of transition and translation" (5) Leela Ghandi discusses the term 'aftermath' in relation to her dialogue of postcoloniality and explains this as the 'spirit' of independence (5) In short, post-colonialism can be described as dealing with the effects of colonization on societies and cultures. Most theorists stress that the word post-colonialism is to be used in a careful mode since the conditions in many post-colonial nations still has a charged atmosphere, and of course because there is no complete and final answer as to how to 'define' post-colonialism. Bart More-Gilbert gives a short history of post-colonial literary theory as a practice that is concerned with the notions of "race, nation, empire, migration and ethnicity with cultural production" (6) Interestingly, the idea of patriarchy is mentioned in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, dealing with the male domination over women. It is however made clear that "the ideology and practices of male domination are historically, geographically and culturally variable" (18)

In the following three paragraphs another type of domination is conferred, which is the domination of one country over another to be exact. In their book *History of India*, Herman Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund illustrate the 'story' of India in colonial rule and after the freedom movement. This part of the essay makes use of their book, as it's basis. India has an interesting, not to mention complex political history and beginning with the kingdoms that existed before the arrival of British rule, kingdoms such as the Mauryan and the Mughal we find that they lasted 130 and 200 years respectively. In between and before these empires there were phases of invasion carried through by armies from Persia, Greece and Central Asia. However, it was in the middle of the Mughal empire (early 17th century)

that India began establishing a relationship with Europe, and especially with Great Britain, which was, then under the rule of Queen Elisabeth I. After the Queen authorized the formation of a company to open trade with India and East Asia (The East India Company), the business initiated with merchandise such as silk fabrics, herbs and Indian cotton.

As India had begun its trade with Europe, their role in the world economy had developed. Shortly the British East India Company expanded their organization and power in India, and by using their expanding authority; they achieved total control over the country in the 1840s and carried through radical changes. Universities for the recruiting of the colonial administration were founded, Christian mission was encouraged and a modernization of the agriculture was forced upon the farmers. Still, one of the most evident changes was the enhancement of poverty since Britain regulated the ownership of land. This led to the increase in loans and debt, and the farmers were required to pay taxes. A seed of dissatisfaction started growing in the Indians who did not feel completely content about British rule in India, and the fact that they lacked equal job opportunities and were not allowed to advance to high positions in government service did not quiet them. Furthermore, it must be noted that Great Britain was not interested in “modernizing and civilizing” India, but merely in using the country’s assets for their own benefit.

After the creation of the Indian National Congress, and with its triumph in the elections of 1937 and a range of freedom movements such as campaigns and demonstrations, India at last announced itself as independent 15 August 1947. In 1951, under the leadership of prime minister Nehru, India began its first five-year-plan designed for improving the country’s standard of living. Its accomplishments are among others the possibility for farmers to own land, the growth of industrial production and the right for women to divorce and inherit property. The 1970s and 80s were portrayed by disturbances between groups and elections, which led to the emergence of many separatist groups in the 1990s. Today India is

a product of the meeting of Hindu and Muslim traditions and social theories from West. Still the problem of castes and religions exist in Indian society, generating prejudices and hatred among the people of India whatever their origins.

Within post-colonial theory my focus will rest upon the identity of women in India (then of course mainly on the three female characters in the book who are parts of my analysis) and to what extent the colonial and/or the Indian culture has effected them. Do the behavior and the view of the women of themselves change because of the changing cultural premises? Is this then visible in the text and the characters? What are the roles of the three women in the book and is there a female identity (that is a female voice) present? These questions are some of what will be taken into consideration when focusing on three generation of women and their relation to society and culture in *The God of Small Things*.

When discussing identity, the essay “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” by Chandra Talpade Mohanty (in *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory*) is employed, but also various other texts that connect to this issue. In her critical text Mohanty primarily objects to “The assumption of women as an already constituted and coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy which can be applied universally or cross-culturally” (199) What Mohanty then objects to is the manner in which third world women are presented by Western feminists as leading an oppressed life that is gender based and victimized. Furthermore, as Mohanty states it: “These distinctions are made on the basis of the privileging of a particular group as the norm or referent” (200) Not only, Mohanty continues, are the third world women seen through the norm ‘window’ of a different group [Western feminists], but more often than not they make up a small group of women in the Third world.

The size of this group does not alter the fact that identity is not based in nature but in nurture. Mohanty says: “The homogeneity of women as a group is produced not on the basis of biological essentials, but rather on the basis of secondary sociological and anthropological universals” (200) The debate of identity in terms of socially, culturally and politically constructed circulates in the following texts that are of interest in this section. In his book *Ethnicity and Nationalism* Thomas Eriksen discusses these various social, cultural and political effects on identity. According to Eriksen the socially effected identity is one of “social differentiation” (154) which in the case of women teaches them “...that their specific social identity is immutable and...biological, and as a consequence that their subordination is ‘natural’ ” (155) This ‘social differentiation’ do not allow women (or in other cases, minority groups) to integrate in society, which he argues prohibits them from producing an engendered social identity (150) A political effect on identity rests in the mixture of cultural and social status and power or, in the case of women, the lack of the latter.

Another interesting conversation in this area is lead by Carlsten Ljunggren in his essay “Questions on Identity and Education—Democracy Between Past and Future” (in *Identity*) where he contrasts cultural and political identity. Ljunggren sees the acceptance of multiculturalism as “...cultural segregation; a segregation where different identities are localized in the name of one or another hegemonic definition of what it means to ‘be a part of a multiculturalism’...” (49) This segregation positions the ‘Other’ identity “...in a problematic relation to politics” (48), which signifies that democracy separates cultures from cultures, where some cultures are privileged and some hold the position of otherness. This leads to democracy not focusing on equality but rather on a “common political identity” (51)

Among the prevailing discussions and definitions of identity, the focus of this essay being on the identity of third world women, the theories of Mohanty provide a fundamental understanding in this area. Third world women tend to be valued on incorrect

basis, which is why they often are portrayed as victims, instead of being valued from their own locations. This is an important piece of information, which must be remembered when studying *The God of Small Things* and the complexity of its female characters. Moreover, the discussions of Thomas Eriksen and Carlsten Ljunggren elucidate the impact that culture and politics have on identities, where they prevent and even direct the development of identity of certain powerless groups, such as the women that will be analyzed further on.

As stated previously the focus in this essay is, to quote Mohanty, on the “‘effects’ of...colonialism...on women” (203) next to the consequence of culture (the Hindu tradition) on the women of interest in *The God of Small Things*. The following four pages focus on the Hindu tradition in India and its effects on the identity of Indian women. Hinduism is the major religion of India and is one of the oldest remaining religions in the world as it dates back to 1500 BC. Hinduism has developed gradually over thousands of years and has been shaped by many different cultures and religions. From about 1500 BC and the centuries after that, tribes with Indo-European origins (also called “Aryans”) occupied India and influenced what is now known as Hinduism. This period is also known as “The Vedic Period” (Kingsland 26) For that reason, as written in the *Britannica* on Hinduism, there is no founder, no single sacred writing acknowledged by everyone and no all-embracing organization. For the same reason as there is no single sacred writing, since the many sacred texts of Hinduism all contribute to the fundamental beliefs in this religion. The most important texts include the Vedas, The Puranas, The Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The Vedas are the oldest Hindu scriptures and include prayers, theology and philosophy. The Puranas contain stories about Gods and Goddesses and the long epics about morality, and ethics can be found in the Ramayana. Finally, the Mahabharata deal with the Hindu social law and the caste system (Kingsland 85-92) The caste system as described in the book *Hinduism* is “...the hierarchical ranking...” (89) of people in India. The four existing castes are in order

of rank: Brahmans (priests and scholars), Kshatriyars (rulers and warriors), Vaisyas (merchants and professionals) and finally the Sudras (laborers and servants). (Kanitkar, 87-9). There has also been a fifth group, called the untouchables (the Panchama) who had occupations such as tanning leather, which the Indian laws forbid. Since the caste system is hereditary, people in the low castes have no chance of improving their situation and although the Indian constitution gave this group of untouchables “full citizenship” in the 1950s, as stated in *World Book*, the discrimination of them has not ended.

In order to better demonstrate the ‘place’ in which Indian women (and later the women in *The God of Small Things*) are placed within the Hindu religion and tradition, I have chosen the book *Women in India-Two Perspectives* edited and written by Doranne Jacobson and Susan S. Wadley, two anthropologists interested in the women in India. Susan Wadley begins by considering the view of femaleness in the Hindu tradition, where she presents its dual view on women. She writes: “On the one hand, the woman is benevolent—the bestower; on the other, she is aggressive, malevolent—the destroyer” (112) Thus, a woman holds two ‘personalities’ in her character that are categorized as energy/power and as nature. The energy/power part in a woman is called her *sakti* (113) and underlies creation and power in the Hindu tradition. This power is what distinguishes gods from men, which concludes that without women (i.e. energy/power) there would be no existence. As women are born with their *sakti*, they can increase or decrease it through their actions, such as being a devoted wife or not. It is to be remembered that all beings contain a little *sakti*, but it is with the energy of women they can exist and although men also have *sakti* as a personality trait, the woman is “the original energy” (113) or the embodiment of *sakti*.

The second or other part of a woman is that of nature. As a metaphor women are often seen as a field of earth in which a man puts his seed, and it is in the union of soil and seed that production (beginning of life) takes place. The image of women as earth thus

symbolizes the nature (active) or *prakṛti* in them that is thought of as the counterpart of the inactive male *purusa* (“Cosmic Person” (113)). In the words of Wadley: “The union of Spirit and Matter...inactive and active, leads to the creation of the world with all its differentiated life forms. No life exists without both Matter and Spirit; *prakṛti* and *purusa* are in all beings” (113) In this union, a man contributes with the hard substances in a child, such as the bones, whereas a woman contributes with for instance flesh and blood (soft substances). In the Hindu tradition Nature is viewed as being uncultured or wild, which explains the conception of women being a destroyer (since she is changeable and controls her own sexuality). For a woman to be considered benevolent she must transfer the control of Power/Nature to her husband and live as a ‘part’ of her husband.

The “Ideal Hindu Woman”, says Wadley, is the one who allows her husband to control her and her power. Within the Hindu tradition there are specific guidelines for women as to how to behave properly. These guidelines are known as the *Dharmasastras*, which in English translates as “The Rules of Right Conduct” (117), but these rules also exist in the written and oral Hindu mythology and folklore. The most frequently occurring rule or norm for women is that of her role as a wife. These roles are not conveyed as perhaps expected through ‘stories’ about women, but instead through picturing the male-female relationship in the written traditions. The male-female relationship consists of the behaviour of women in relation to their father’s, son’s, husband’s and brother’s. The only female-female relationships presented are those of mother-in-law/daughter-in-law and husband’s sister/wife, which does not occur in the “more authoritative religious literature” (117) as articulated by Wadley, but only in folklore and oral traditions. Returning to the beginning of this paragraph and the term ‘the ideal Hindu woman’ Susan Wadley writes that “...the salvation and happiness of women revolve around their virtue and chastity as daughters, wives and widows” (118) In contrast, as is uttered in Doranne Jacobson’s essay “The Women of North and Central India”, even if a

woman is of a high status she can only marry once, whereas any widowed or divorced man can marry again if he wishes to do so.

Continuing with the discussion of women's status in Jacobson's essay, she writes that everywhere in India today (the book was written in 1995), women's status seems to be lower than that of the men. Although, she argues that "it is not always as low as these outward signs might indicate" (57) Men and women are rather involved in a complex social system, which both sexes can benefit from. Men dominate the activities outside of the home, such as taking positions of leadership and making most of the purchases. Women on the other hand are "in charge" of the happenings inside the home, such as child care, food preparation and storing the resources men bring home, and are those who 'rule' within the walls of the home. This is what you could call traditional male and female activities. Jacobson continues her statement by saying that "It is really a mistake to see women as competing with and being restricted by men; rather, ...the sexes are seen as complementary to each other" (57) Being complementary means that Hindu women actually influence their husbands in the decision-taking situations concerning the activities outside the home and also participate in selecting mates for their children.

Woman's sexuality is nevertheless a new chapter. Although women's sexuality can be seen as an initial phase of motherhood, women are "feared and despised" (59) as a "sexual being" (59) Moreover, something that will be given more space in this essay is the fact that "A woman can bring devastating shame to her family by engaging in sexual activity with a man of lower caste" (59) As much as the argument of Jacobson sounds logical and comforting, it is difficult to see men and women as complementary when women practically have no rights as sexual beings. In another of her essays ("Women and Jewellery in Rural India") Jacobson says that the power of a woman to make decisions depends on factors such

as her wealth, her age, and her confidence. In the analysis I will consider factors such as the preferred behaviour of women as well as their sexual behaviour.

The discussion on Hinduism provides a necessary, if not a crucial understanding and insight into the background to which the women in *The God of Small Things* have been raised. In appreciating the religiously influenced values that circulate in the Hindu society, and consequently in the society in the novel, the actions and reactions of the [female] characters can be comprehended in a more profound manner. Furthermore, the essays by Doranne Jacobson and Susan S. Wadley provide an intelligible image of Hindu women, as their fellow countrymen perceive them; their existence, their sexuality and their status in society. Through realizing this, the analysis will hopefully be reasonable.

Analysis

The focus of this section is on analysing the identities of three generations of women in the narrative of interest. The characters are Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Ammu, Margaret Kochamma, Rahel and Sophie. I will begin with the oldest generation (Mammachi and Baby Kochamma) and move downwards to the remaining generations in order of rank. Within each generation, and for each character, I will first consider the Hindu identity, and second the post-colonial/colonial identity (except for Margaret Kochamma and Sophie, since these two characters are used for comparison to the other characters). In addition, at the end of each part of the analysis there will be a short discussion that concerns the thesis of this essay in relation to each character, which is that these women are shaped by their respective societies and social standards.

The first generation:

Mammachi, the first character to be analysed, is the mother of Ammu and Chacko and the grandmother of Rahel. Her real name being Soshamma, she is called Mammachi, which simply means grandmother. Her husband, called Pappachi (who dies early in the novel) is a respected entomologist, and the son of a well-known reverend. One of the first issues to discuss here is the male-female connection, in relation to both Mammachi and Baby Kochamma. As Mohanty writes in her essay, women's identities are formed by their relations to kinship structures, society structures (such as colonialism in this case) as well as taking part in the creation of these relations. How, then have these women been shaped by their respective relations? In analysing Mammachi and Baby Kochamma the division of their identities into post-colonial and Hindu is quite complex, since they are so imbedded in their high Hindu caste from the very beginning.

Mammachi has two male figures 'operating' in ways that influence her life. Starting with her husband, the first man in her life, we find that the Hindu laws of marriage control a great part of her relationship with him. Mammachi's identity, the wife of a seventeen-year-old Syrian Christian man, has thus mainly been affected by her marriage. Her husband, who "...had always been a jealous man..." (Roy 47), nearly controlled every step of Mammachi. In their younger years when Mammachi had been a promising violinist player "The lessons were abruptly discontinued when Mammachi's teacher, Launsky-Tieffenthal, made the mistake of telling Pappachi that his wife was exceptionally talented and, in his opinion, potentially concert class" (Roy 50) Furthermore, we learn that "Every night he [Pappachi] beat her with a brass flower vase. The beatings weren't new" (Roy 47) The matter of these beatings will be discussed in a moment. In addition, Mammachi's husband insulted her, as she was never permitted to sit in his Plymouth, until after his death. Mammachi's acceptance of these behaviours indicates how she incorporated the patriarchal values of her

husband. Mohit Kumar Ray writes in his essay that "...she [Mammachi] accepted the female role model imposed to her by the society—docile, submissive, ungrudging, unprotesting" (Ray 56) This is not to say that Mammachi lead a miserable life, which she rather would not have lived at all. Remembering Mohanty's discussion, we cannot judge the situation of a Hindu woman (or any third world woman) through a Westernised viewpoint.

Progressing with the analysis, and the occasion of Mammachi's approval of her received treatment (beatings etc.), we find a large foundation in the Hindu tradition regarding marriage. As mentioned earlier, a good Hindu wife is that who is 'mastered' by her husband. This is evidently what we find in Mammachi, when she accepts the beatings and being forbidden from a career as a violinist. Although she never expresses that she desires such a career, the very decision made by her husband is wrong. Furthermore, and in the case of Mammachi, Doranne Jacobson writes: "Most Hindu girls are married before puberty, and virtually all are married before the age of 16. ...Divorce and the remarriage of widows and divorcees are strongly disapproved of only within the high-ranking...Brahman..." (185) In this respect, Mammachi, being a Brahman had not the benefit of divorcing an insufferable husband. Instead, she endured a marriage on her husband's conditions, until his death. "At Pappachi's funeral, Mammachi cried and her contact lenses slid around in her eyes" (Roy 50) And "With her eyes she looked in the direction that her husband looked. With her heart she looked away" (Roy 30) Mammachi's sorrow mostly indicated the loss of someone she was used to, not someone she loved. Perhaps she was used to being beaten from time to time.

Mammachi did not only accept the authorial treatment from her husband, but also that from her son, the second man in her life. Chacko, the privileged and Oxford educated son, who came home for a summer vacation, discovered the regular beatings. Using his physical strength, he becomes the saviour of his mother: "Chacko strode into the room, caught Pappachi's vase-hand and twisted it around his back. 'I never want this to happen again', he

told his father. 'Ever' ” (Roy 48) Despite this defying action towards his father, Chacko slowly takes over Mammachi's pickle factory, making Mammachi the “...sleeping partner.” (Roy 57) and referring to the factory as “...*my* factory, *my* pineapples, *my* pickles” (Roy 57) Mammachi's cause for accepting this is the traditional Hindu view of “...the son as security...” (Wadley 122) On the other hand, for Mammachi, this means the loss of her husband, when she “...packed her wifely luggage and committed it to Chacko's care. From then on he became the repository of all her womanly feelings. Her Man. Her only Love” (Roy 168) As Mammachi's husband never speaks to her after Chacko's interference; she places all her security and trust in her son.

All of this demonstrates her nearly total assimilation and approval of the Hindu laws for women. It is also 'revealed' in the dissimilar behaviour she employs towards her children. Concerning her daughter Ammu, Mohit Kumar Ray writes that although the relationship of Mammachi and Ammu is that of mother and daughter “their relationship, as the incidents after Ammu's return to Ayemenem as a divorcee clearly reveal, is a function of the dominantly patriarchal society” (Ray 56) These incidents are demonstrated not so much through the direct treatment of Ammu, but in the excessive concern of Chacko's well being. For Ammu is not a respectable woman, since she is a divorcee with two young children. Chacko on the other hand, also a divorcee with a child (whom he does not support), is warmly welcomed back home. Mammachi even builds a separate entrance to Chacko's room, in order to maintain his 'social relations' with a range of women, intact. Mammachi explains this as “Men's Needs” (Roy 168) Ammu is expected not to have any bodily desires whatsoever.

Moving on to the colonial or post-colonial signs of influence in Mammachi's identity offers not as much information as the earlier discussions. However, living a great part of her life in a colonized country, she has acquired a small number of personality traits influenced by the colonial situation. The most evident feature in Mammachi is the fact that

she is married to a Syrian Christian man, which she of course would not have been if her parents (who probably arranged the marriage) and herself would not have been under the colonial influence of the time. In addition, as many in Hindu families her son is sent abroad to study in the 'mother-country', which is considered as a rather intelligent move to make. Furthermore, Mammachi's locked away Dior perfume signifies her attitude towards the British or Western products since she kept it locked away: "... (She herself had a bottle of Dior in its soft green leather pouch locked away in her safe)" (Roy 173) Evidently the perfume, *not Indian*, was too valuable to make use of daily, or yet keep out in the open.

Baby Kochamma (born Navomi Ipe), who is Mammachi's sister-in-law, is a rather bitter woman leading a bitter life. The Hindu personality traits in Baby Kochamma are not as obvious as they are in Mammachi. Being the daughter of a Syrian-Christian reverend, she inevitably was under the influence of a separate religion than that of the Hindu. Nevertheless, growing up and living in India, the influence of the Hindu society was just as unavoidable. First and foremost, Baby Kochamma shares the 'common' caste view on the lower castes and especially the Untouchables. After the news of Ammu and her Untouchable lover Velutha is revealed, one of Baby Kochamma's first reactions is: " 'How could she [Ammu] stand the smell? Haven't you noticed? They have a particular smell these Paravans.' " (Roy 257) Naturally, Baby Kochamma would rather see to it that the Untouchables lived in separate cities of their own. Nevertheless, this arrogant attitude from Baby Kochamma was not only aimed at the Untouchables. At the sight of a group of pilgrims she states: " 'I tell you, these Hindus' ...' they have no sense of *privacy*' " (Roy 86) These statements show that this is a haughty upper caste woman, with little emphatic understanding for the less fortunate.

Furthermore, Baby Kochamma is in contrast to Mammachi, much less affected by the Hindu laws of conduct for women and marriage. As a young woman, Baby Kochamma fell in love with a young handsome Irish monk, Father Mulligan. Her love for him was so

strong that she was content “To love him just by looking at him.” (Roy 24) Still, as Father Mulligan was in Kerala only for a year studying the Hindu scriptures, the inevitable day of departure separated Baby Kochamma from the man she secretly had come to love. Her defying spirit led her to a different fate as she “...defied her father’s wishes and became a Roman Catholic” (Roy 24) As she took her vows and entered the convent in Madras, she hoped for a reunion with Father Mulligan. Eventually, as the situation unveiled itself she learned the opposite. Baby Kochamma left the convent without having met the only man she considered loveable. However, as written in the essay “History, Community and Forbidden Relationships”, by staying ‘faithful’ to Father Mulligan Baby Kochamma turns against her rights to her own femininity (Barat 96).

As this ‘love-story’ is revealed for Baby Kochamma’s father, it is decided that she goes abroad for an education. “Reverend Ipe realised that his daughter had by now developed a ‘reputation’ and was unlikely to find a husband. He decided that since she couldn’t have a husband there was no harm in her having an education.” (Roy 26) Clearly, the Hindu traditions effect Baby Kochamma’s life, since no husband indicates education. Ray points out in her essay. “the decision of her father makes clear the society’s priorities. A girl can be given education only if she cannot be given in marriage...Marriage, in the eyes of society, is the *summum bonum* of a woman’s life” (Ray 55) Two years later, Baby Kochamma returns from the University of Rochester in America, with a diploma in Ornamental Gardening. Still, after a very long time Baby Kochamma loves Father Mulligan, and with his death many years later she can make him correspond to her desire, “His rejection of her in life...was neutralised by death. In her memory of him, he embraced her. Just her. In the way a man embraces a woman” (Roy 298) For this very fate, Baby Kochamma cannot comprehend Ammu’s desires:

Baby Kochamma resented Ammu, because she saw her quarrelling with a fate that she, Baby Kochamma herself, felt she had graciously accepted. The fate of a wretched Man-less woman. The sad, Father Mulligan-less Baby Kochamma. She had managed to persuade herself over the years that her unconsummated love for Father Mulligan had been entirely due to her restraint and her determination to do the right thing. (Roy 45)

Again, to quote Mohit Kumar Ray, and assenting with her as she states, “it is her [Baby Kochamma] frustration in love and the unspent force of repressed desire that makes her instrumental in making the life of Ammu miserable” (55) This very fact has prohibited Baby Kochamma a life as a mother and wife, which are the most important roles for a woman in the Hindu tradition. This signifies that she never had a home to ‘rule’ or to be in charge of, which in itself would have given her some sort of voice. As she, in the words of N.P. Singh “submits to the old-age norms of love and marriage” (69), her life becomes the eternal misfortune of a miserable woman.

The colonially or post-colonially influenced identity in Baby Kochamma is shown by various factors. Her foreign education in America has a great part in making Baby Kochamma separate herself from ‘ordinary Indians’. With the arrival of the English woman Margaret Kochamma, the former wife of Chacko, Baby Kochamma tries to bring forth all the British or ‘non-Indian’ behaviour she can find within herself. At the airport, meeting Margaret Kochamma for the first time, the children are quite shy which Baby Kochamma, not wanting to let go of the attention she has, uses to say: “ ‘He’s [Estha] doing it deliberately...in a *new strange British accent*” (Roy 144, my italics) In addition, wanting to boast her knowledge for Margaret Kochamma, she asks Sophie: “ ‘D’you know who Ariel was...Ariel in *The Tempest*?’...‘Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*?’ Baby Kochamma persisted” (Roy 144)

Madhumalati Adhikari discusses the notion of power in *The God of Small things*, and writes: “He, the colonized, deviates from the accepted values of his culture and attempts to prove his supremacy through the colonial forces” (46) Noticeably, Baby Kochamma in the need of acknowledgement strives to prove herself unlike the rest of her Indian kin, by referring to Western texts (‘the colonial forces’).

A shared personality trait in Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, which signifies their values recruited from the colonial days, is their almost toady attitude towards the English woman Margaret Kochamma and her daughter Sophie. Madhumalati Adhikari writes:

The colonial psychology is also perceptible in the treatment of two women—the dark skinned Ammu and the white skinned Margaret. Ammu, a divorcee, is repeatedly humiliated. Margaret, a divorcee and a widow, is placed on an altar. All eyes are focused on fair Sophie Mol. Rahel and Estha, the natives, are constantly side-tracked and overlooked. The colonial forces, active through the colonized, create a pattern of master-slave relationship that realigns the entire power structure. (46)

This demonstrates the colonial values that construct parts of Mammachi’s and Baby Kochamma’s identities. The respective identities of these women are on the one hand for the most part coloured by the Hindu traditional thinking than by colonialism (which still is there). Remembering the discussion of the French feminists, who suggested that the language does not enable women to fully express themselves, we find a small development in this first generation. Despite their restricted roles and rights as women, they have a defiant spirit. In Mammachi it is the fact that she starts a pickle factory of her own, which is nevertheless overtaken by her son. In Baby Kochamma there is the defying of her father and converting to

another religion. She too however, eventually gives in to the traditional Hindu values. Their unhappiness in love also affects their behaviour towards the rest of their female relations, most importantly Ammu and Rahel (which we will see later on in the essay). One of the most evident features of colonialism in the first generation is the infatuation of Baby Kochamma with the Irish monk. However, Baby Kochamma learned that a relationship with him was not accepted in her contemporary society. In conclusion, they are the voices of the past, linking and passing on a mixture of traditional Hindu turn of mind and the consequences of colonialism.

The second generation:

Ammu, the young mother of the twins Esthappen and Rahel, is perhaps the one who is mostly restricted by her situation. Her mother Mammachi and aunt Baby Kochamma, both hold traditional values as discussed previously, which directly restrains Ammu's happiness. Being the single mother of two children, her position in society does not bring about happiness or a fresh relationship for her. After being denied an education, Ammu had no other choice but live in her parent's house and wait for marriage proposals.

Since Ammu did not receive any suitable marriage proposals and began to grow distressed, she 'arranged' her escape: "She hatched several wretched little plans. Eventually, one worked. Pappachi agreed to let her spend the summer with a distant aunt who lived in Calcutta" (Roy 39) It is during this summer, at a wedding reception that Ammu meets her future husband. After a short acquaintance, more exactly five days, she accepted a marriage proposal from the young man, not because she was in love but because "She thought that *anything*, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem" (Roy 39) Unfortunately, Ammu soon realized that her husband was not a man of quality. Her growing frustration tipped over when her alcoholic, unemployed husband required sending Ammu to

his manager, Mr Hollick "...to be 'looked after' " (Roy 42) Alongside her divorce came the agonies caused by society.

Ammu's defying spirit is made clear early in the book with the story of her marriage. Ammu does not submit to the patriarchal male values as she chooses a life as a single mother and divorcee, and challenges both her husband and father. Her return to her parental home is the end of her marriage and the beginning of unhappiness. Adhikari writes: "In Indian culture, it is expected of a woman to remain totally faithful to a man—dead or alive" (47) Furthermore, Nirmala C. Prakash says: "Life offers little choice for a woman who yearns for happiness" (80) Ammu, wanting nothing but happiness for herself and her children is thus faced with a hard reality. At this point the Hindu influenced part of Ammu begins its story.

The Hindu factors in Ammu are not as strong as those in the first generation. Yet, being the kin of those two women, she is inevitably influenced by them. It is Mammachi and Baby Kochamma; women themselves, who have decided that Ammu is 'used property'. Roy writes: "Old female relations with incipient beards and several wobbling chins made overnight trips to Ayemenem to commiserate with her about her divorce. They squeezed her knee and gloated" (43) As discussed earlier by Jacobson and Wadley, we have learnt that a divorced woman of high caste is forbidden to remarry. Ammu's mother, Mammachi, enlightens Rahel and Estha that they what they "suffered from was far worse than Inbreeding. She meant having parents who were divorced. As though these were the only choices available to people: Inbreeding or Divorce" (Roy 61) Eventually, Ammu succumbs to these values, as "For herself she knew that there would be no more chances" (Roy 43) She has partly prepared to accept the truth--that she is a disappointment in the eyes of society.

In contrast, Margaret Kochamma, the ex-wife of Chacko, is never despised for being the exact same thing as Ammu: a divorcee with a child. A year into their marriage

Margaret Kochamma realized that Chacko was not the man she thought she had married. Instead she found herself with an unemployed man who never made an effort to look after himself. Margaret had “just discovered that she was pregnant when she met Joe. He was an old school friend of her brother’s” (Roy 247) And she “found herself drawn towards him like a plant in a dark room towards a wedge of light” (Roy 248) Finally, with her new insights Margaret Kochamma asked Chacko for a divorce. But in comparison with Ammu she had the possibility to re-marry and continue with her life. Ammu is however, as Doranne Jacobson writes, despised for her sexuality (59). Moreover, there is the difference of educational opportunities for these dissimilar women. Ammu’s father decided her fate by prohibiting her a formal education while after having her child “Margaret Kochamma enrolled herself in a teacher training course, and then got a job as a junior school teacher in Clapham” (Roy 250) Also, seemingly being a white English woman brings about various privileges as is shown by this passage: “On the way back from the airport, Margaret Kochamma would sit in front [of the car] with Chacko because she used to be his wife. Sophie Mol would sit between them. Ammu would move to the back” (Roy 46) Thus it is not complicated to see how Margaret Kochamma could have a normal relationship with Joe whereas in the case of Ammu it was called ‘a forbidden relationship’.

The ‘forbidden’ relationship between Ammu and Velutha, a low caste Paravan (Untouchable) triggers a number of reactions from their surroundings. Ammu’s family is familiar with Velutha, a poor carpenter. As a child, he usually helped his father working for the Brahman family. As an adult, Velutha himself, being a highly skilled carpenter, worked for Mammachi. Due to the existing values of society, Ammu had under no circumstances viewed him as a possible partner, although her children were madly fond of him. One day though, Ammu discovers Velutha as a man: “She saw the ridges of muscle on Velutha’s stomach grow taught and rise under his skin...A Swimmers body. A swimmer-carpenter’s

body ... Ammu saw that he saw. She looked away. He did too.” (Roy 175-77) Velutha on his side “saw that Rahel’s mother was a woman” (Roy 176) Little did they know that their secret relationship would be revealed and gradually escort them to death. As this short (13 days) relationship is revealed, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma are the first to act and are the reasons to the shattered lives as a result.

Nirmala C. Prakash writes:

Arundhati Roy subtly suggests that even though Christianity survived in India on the strength of low caste converts, these converts could never be assimilated into the mainstream Christianity. And hence, a relationship between a Christian and a “paravan” (outcaste) is bound to be doomed. It is for this particular reason that the Ayemenem House acts swiftly. (82)

This passage illustrates the actions taken by Baby Kochamma and Mammachi and their strong aggression towards both Velutha and Ammu. Despite this, there is a second reason to the old women’s plotting against the young lovers. Doranne Jacobson writes in her essay “The Women of North and Central India”: “A woman can bring devastating shame to her family by engaging in sexual activity with a man of lower caste” (59) Baby Kochamma and Mammachi were not only disturbed with Ammu’s relation to a man of lower caste, but they were also vexed about their own names as a high caste respected family. For Ammu however, this relationship was the result of the unwarranted situation imposed upon her by society and her desires to love and be loved as a woman.

Regarding the post-colonial features in Ammu, the distinction is not as easily visible as in Baby Kochamma and Mammachi. Ammu is a mixture of Hindu and post-colonial influences. This mixture is mainly shown in her defying spirit against the male dominated

Hindu family and society. Mohit Kumar Ray writes: “She took a definite step in trying to flee her tyrant father...she refused to comprise with her spineless husband and hit him back when she was physically assaulted by him and showed admirable sense of self-respect...” (57) Ammu was never prepared to let her life be completely ruled by the men in her life. With her tyrant father, harassing her as a child, while he was a well-known Imperialist Entomologist, she learnt how to resist unjustness forced upon her.

Post-coloniality in terms of Mammachi’s perfume or Baby Kochamma’s citation of Shakespeare is not completely applicable to Ammu. However, in her days as a married woman she “wore backless blouses with her saris and carried a silver lamé purse on a chain. She smoked long cigarettes in a long silver cigarette holder and learned to blow perfect smoke rings” (Roy 40) Ammu’s backless blouses and her long silver cigarette holder are the indicators of her liking this luxurious life. Unlike Mammachi who locked away her Dior perfume and Baby Kochamma who locked away the T-shirts she won from English TV-shows, Ammu’s desire of leading a ‘British-inspired’ lifestyle never prevented her from letting it go. When Ammu divorced her Bengali husband, she also divorced a life with “silver lamé purses”. Seema Bhaduri notes in her essay “History, Social Dynamics and the Individual” the rebellious character of Ammu against her family and society and does not find it strange that she was driven into the arms of Velutha, the only person who respected Ammu’s identity.

Continuing with Ammu’s post-colonial traits, her behaviour towards her children is an indicator of her considering the British as somewhat affirmative. Again Bhaduri writes:

Self-depreciation and a corresponding idealisation of all things English constitutes Anglophilia and accounts for a large part of the tragedy in this novel.

The much anticipated visit by the family to the airport becomes a sad affair

because Estha and Rahel refuse...to greet their English ex-aunt...in the way they had been taught and trained to for quite some time. (197)

We see the part in Ammu that wishes to present herself and her children as something other than a “damn godforsaken tribe” (Roy 180) as she expresses it in anger. Ammu “had wanted a smooth performance. A prize for her children in the Indo-British Behaviour Competition” (Roy 145) In the way Baby Kochamma quoted Shakespeare in front of Margaret Kochamma, Ammu tries indirectly (through her children) show that she to is civilised (read British).

Ammu is one of the most complex women in *The God of Small Things* since she, representing the second generation, is the first woman in her family who dares to defy the old traditional Hindu values, and patriarchy in Indian society. The notion of gender difference discussed by feminist theorists, is seemingly unaccepted by Ammu. Rather, she views herself as the equal of any man. Ammu cannot remain silent and adopt the male discourse as her mother and aunt did before her. Due to this fact it is nearly impossible for her to integrate in society. As she longs for happiness and approval of her identity she finds herself in situations that force her further and further away from her desire. Also, as written in the essay “Arundhati Roy’s and Salman Rushdie’s Postmodern India”, to approach Ammu merely in terms of post-coloniality is to ignore “her awareness as a Post-Independence Indian” (157) With the character of Ammu we learn more about the effects of breaking the communal laws of India rather than seeing the pure consequence of the British occupation of India.

The third generation:

The situation and life of Ammu inevitably effects the life of Rahel, just as Ammu is effected by her own mother and aunt. Rahel is the daughter of Ammu, and the younger twin-sister of Esthappen. She is very young when her parents divorce, which leaves her with no complete knowledge of the man she should call father. Living in her

grandparent's house does not enable a normal childhood since she constantly witnessed the injustice her mother suffered and the loveless environment she was forced to accept as home. Rahel differs from the earlier generations of women in that she does not experience the Hindu tradition directly as did her mother and grandmother. The Hindu identity or perhaps consciousness in Rahel is mainly the result of witnessing the life of her mother. Consequently, as Victor J. Ramray writes, Rahel becomes aware of deeper aspects of Indian life. (159) She thus learns what a Hindu woman can or cannot do, and especially she learns to experience the latter through her mother. Roy explains:

While other children of their age learned other things, Estha and Rahel learned how history negotiates its terms and collects its dues from those who break its laws. They heard its thickening thud. They smelled its smell and never forgot it. (55)

This excerpt relates to a number of situations that effects Rahel's life and therefore her identity. These are that Ammu is a single mother, the fact that she takes a lover from a low caste and also the consequences of this love affair as it is revealed.

Being the child of a high caste woman, who has divorced from a love marriage, Rahel was not seen as a gift to the family. Rather she (and her brother of course) was seen as an illegitimate child with no place in the family. Not even their grand aunt, can come to terms with the idea of two "illegitimate" children finding happiness in each other. M.L Pandit writes in the essay "Childhood Feelings" that "...Baby Kochamma, grudges them their moments of happiness, but most of all she grudges them the comfort they draw from each other" (Roy 244) As a little child Rahel cannot understand the reason she is treated as a burden for the

family. However, as she grows older, she learns to recognise the way in which some people are favoured and others are not.

Those who were favoured in that family could be the children of English heritage, as Rahel's half-British cousin Sophie. In the essay "Interrogating Change", it is noted: "The arrival of an English girl really begins to affect the life of the twins. Due to the fuss made about her, they desist her from the outset" (181) Sophie Mol as she is called, being the child of a divorced single mother, is treated as a precious gift that might break at any point. In contrast to Rahel, she is quite confident with herself, which is evident in this quote, "Tell me, are you a pretty girl?" she [Mammachi] asked Sophie Mol. 'Yes,' Sophie Mol said." (Roy 174) What is more is the scheming nature of this fair-skinned little girl. As Estha and Rahel plan their escape, Sophie Mol points out that "the absence of children, *all* children, would heighten the adults' remorse" (292) Unfortunately, Sophie pays with her life for her desire to attract the attention of the adults. In contrast to Rahel, who constantly is punished for her childish games and behaviour, Sophie knew that avoiding punishment meant hiding 'unwanted' behaviour:

At supper silly, the children sat at a separate smaller table. Sophie Mol, with her back against the grown ups, made gruesome faces at the food. Every mouthful she ate was displayed to her admiring younger cousins, half-chewed, mulched, lying on her tongue like fresh vomit. When Rahel did the same, Ammu saw her and took her to bed. (329)

As Adhikari discusses, the colonial forces are alive through the colonised. Here it is the diverse treatment of the children that reflect the Anglophile family values.

When the 'news' of Ammu's love affair with Velutha is revealed, Rahel becomes a witness of the patriarchy in the Hindu society. Velutha who is thought to have raped Ammu, and kidnapped Estha, Rahel and their English cousin Sophie is brutally murdered by the local police. In fact, the children, who had escaped, happened by coincidence to be at the same place as Velutha, at the time of his murder. Moreover, their English cousin who unwontedly had joined them had accidentally drowned. With Velutha's death Ammu herself is banned from the village, due to the shame she has brought upon the family. Simultaneously, Estha is blamed for the death of Sophie, and is sent to live with his alcoholic father and his new wife. This leaves Rahel to live alone with her insensitive relatives.

As Rahel is left to grow up unwanted, she never experiences the 'real' Hindu traditions that are meant for women:

Oddly, neglect seemed to have resulted in an accidental release of the spirit. Rahel grew up without a brief. Without anybody to arrange a marriage for her. Without anybody who would pay her a dowry and therefore without an obligatory husband looming at her horizon. So long as she wasn't noisy about it, she remained to do her own enquiries: ...Into life and how it ought to be lived. (17)

Fortunately, Rahel grows into a free woman. A woman who unlike her own mother is not restricted by the mental restrictions of the Hindu tradition, regarding caste systems and the restricted life of women. This is why, at her return to Ayemenem, she answers an old man asking about her marital status: "We're divorced." Rahel hoped to shock him into silence" (Roy 130) The only Hindu effected restrictions in Rahel are the memories she holds of the direct treatment and the aftermath her mother had to live.

Post-coloniality in Rahel is, like her Hindu identity, mostly evident in her childhood. Mary Conde writes: “The twins’ world is plotted by a whole range of Western references, both literary and popular. Rahel expresses her love for her mother in a quotations from Kipling’s *Jungle Book*...Estha is a devotee of Elvis Presley...Chacko...quotes...*The Great Gatsby*” (171) Experiencing these aspects of the ‘non-Indian ness’ already as a child, helps Rahel to develop “a cosmopolitan and liberal not a colonialist or postcolonialist consciousness” (159) as noted by Ramray. Nevertheless, being cosmopolitan or strongly effected by the postcolonial aftermath is a matter of nuance of argument.

Moreover, whether naming Rahel’s post-colonial traits cosmopolitan or postcolonial, Rahel is educated at a college of Architecture in Delhi, without taking her degree. She too, as her mother, marries a man outside her own society. Barat notes: “However, this time her choice is socially acceptable because it conforms to the rules of patriarchy: Larry is an American, and Americans rule the world” (93) Nevertheless, “Because Worse Things had happened” (Roy 19) Rahel was indifferent in her marriage, without having any love to give. Her indifference stems from the hard life she had to live as a child, but also because she does not view the Hindu tradition or the British as merely good or bad. Leela Ghandi writes: “Anti-colonial identities...do not own their origins to a pure and stable essence. Rather, they are produced in response to the contingencies of a traumatic and disruptive breach in history and culture” (130) So in the case of Rahel, the effort of her family trying to be both or either has ruined her life and left her with no sense of belonging. It must also be noted that Rahel is the most developed woman in relation to her female kin. She does not succumb to patriarchal values, and lives by her own rules. Being aware of the role she is supposed to adapt as a woman (see theory) Rahel purposely defies them.

Discussion

Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Ammu and Rahel have been the focus of my essay in its strive towards identifying or at least creating a deeper understanding of how identities can be and are effected by culture and society. Each generation of women in *The God of Small Things* thus “suffers” the existing social and cultural constrains in their respective societies. These limits differ from society to society, from time to time. However, a striking similarity proves to be the inferior position each generation must manage. Even at this point the three generations differ, that is the variation in the way they choose to handle their situations. The development is seen in the increased self-reliance in these women as the generations move downwards. As we have seen in this essay, and in the discussions lead by Wadley, a husband, son, or brother controls the ideal of the Hindu woman. However, it must be held in mind that each generation is effected by the other.

Mammachi and Baby Kochamma are both controlled by male figures, but in diverse ways. Mammachi is first controlled by her husband (mentally and physically), and later by her saviour, her son, who succeeds in taking charge of her business. Baby Kochamma on the other hand, we learn through the narrative, has been under the strong influence of her father as a young woman. Though, as she never marries, as a grown woman, she is under the constant obsession of Father Mulligan. Thus she has, despite it being an illusion, the influence of a ghostlike man colouring her life. For Ammu, it is the shadow of a husband who by his presence ruins her chances of joy. In contrast to her mother and aunt, Ammu does not have compliance towards her situation, an attitude Mammachi and Baby Kochamma had against their situations. She cannot accept a life where she is under the judgment of society, due to one mistake and two children. Consequently, Ammu gives way for her true emotions. Rahel, the new generation, the one who experiences the unjust conditions from within, applies quite a different attitude towards her own power. In her eyes she is the master of her being, and

despite marriage and divorce she does not suffer the consequences her mother endured. Rahel, with the knowledge of the predetermined opinion of society, refuses to be embarrassed for being the woman she is.

Along with the restricted behavioural possibilities, there is the matter of love and happiness. Happiness does not play a strong part in the lives of three generations of women. However, as we move downwards in the generations, we find a small development in the love lives of this family saga. Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, both live without the unconditional love from a partner. Mammachi lives in a relationship where she is degraded by her husband, and where she plays the role of a servant, rather than that of a wife. Baby Kochamma, who never succeeds in marrying, holds on to the man in her fantasies, leading a one-sided relationship. Ammu, who also begins her happiness with the wrong man, is restricted to search for love and happiness elsewhere (in resemblance to her mother and aunt). Nonetheless, with her defying spirit, she manages to find love, if just for a moment. Ammu succeeds in being part of a relationship in which she is not required to follow predestined “Love Laws” (Roy, 177) Rahel, who like her mother becomes a divorcee, is not restricted to find new love, although she is unable to do so because of her own psyche. Being the child of a family torn to pieces far too early in her development, her only way back to love (and happiness) is to become whole again. As Rahel reunites with Estha, the process of rebirth takes place, allowing Rahel to return to her source of love and happiness. Even though the narrative does not take us into Rahel’s future, we learn that a fresh seed of love has been planted inside her, hopefully opening her heart to the world outside.

If Western feminists have failed to acknowledge third world women, this novel presents a foundation on which new understanding can be created. *The God of Small Things* holds the story of the diversity in the personalities of Hindu women in a post-colonial setting. In addition, it illustrates the development these women undergo, alike all other women and

human beings in the rest of the world. The implicit growth of the female characters in the novel represents the increasing knowledge within the women themselves, concerning the influence they have and can control. Moreover, this novel proves that the assumption of women as a gender-based group is a great mistake, when they, according to Mohanty, should not be seen as victims who are defined by their sexes.

Conclusion

Throughout my essay I have tried to demonstrate the ways in which the women in *The God of Small Things* are shaped by the milieu they live in. In the beginning of this work (page seven) I proposed a few questions in relation to my thesis. The behaviour and the view of the women on themselves are altered due to the cultural and social premises they are exposed to. As each generation effects the other, a slow development in the characters of the women is thus inevitable. This is revealed in the book through the liberties each generation employs, which in turn facilitates the life/lives of the coming generation. The three generations of women analysed compose the interlacing link connecting the voices of yesterday with the dreams of tomorrow.

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