

Intersecting Feminism: Gender, Identity, and Liberation in *Their Eyes
Were Watching God* and *The God of Small Things*

By

Ahana Tabassum

19103021

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

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2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.
5. This thesis was conducted with the help of some authentic primary and secondary sources.
6. This study wishes to interpret some scholarly sources regarding its field of study.
7. The findings of this study are trustworthy and credible.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

Ahana Tabassum

19103021

Approval

<p>The thesis titled “Intersecting Feminism: Gender, Identity, and Liberation in <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> and <i>The God of Small Things</i>” submitted by Ahana Tabassum (19103021) of Fall, 2023 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English on 06 January 2024.</p>	
<p>Examining Committee:</p>	
<p>Supervisor: (Member)</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Jahin Kaiissar Lecturer, Department of English and Humanities BRAC University</p>
<p>Departmental Head: (Chair)</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Professor Firdous Azim Chairperson, Department of English and Humanities BRAC University</p>
<p>External: (Member)</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Dr. Mahruba T. Mowtushi Assistant Professor, Department of English and Humanities BRAC University</p>

Abstract

Women are not given their due social rights from time immemorial. To investigate the deplorable condition of women, two novels of different social contexts, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston and *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, are used in this thesis. The thesis explores feminism and black feminism, considering the themes of society and class discrimination, gender disparity, and the importance of financial security in both novels. Both authors focus on the rules and regulations of society that marginalize women and lower-class people. In the novel, *The God of Small Things*, the protagonist Ammu understands that women's voices are always suppressed and are meant to depend on their male family members. Therefore, Ammu tries to take control of her own life. Unfortunately, she has to bear the consequences of breaking the age-old rules of society. Similarly, in the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie also tries to find her independent voice by denying the typical roles set for women by society. She has to journey long to become a strong, independent woman. In addition, the study also examines the reasons behind men's controlling behavior towards women. From the urge to prove their superiority, men dominate women and snatch their basic rights. To break this chain of injustice, women must struggle a lot. Eventually, during this journey, they are ostracized by the patriarchal society and fail to achieve their long-cherished freedom.

Keywords: Society; class discrimination; gender discrimination; financial security; feminism; black feminism; male superiority.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Contextual background of Zora Neale Hurston, Arundhati Roy and their writings:

The novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was written by Zora Neale Hurston, an African American novelist, short story writer, anthropologist, playwright, folklorist, activist, and journalist. She was born in Notasulga, Alabama, in 1891. In 1887, when Hurston was three, her family moved to Eatonville, Florida, the first all-black town built in America. Eatonville is a small town defined by African American history and culture. As Hurston moved to Eatonville at a very early age, she considered it her birthplace. She often used Eatonville as a setting in her writings. In her second novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, she used Eatonville as one of the significant settings. Moreover, Hurston decided to dedicate herself to promoting and studying black culture. As an anthropologist, she examined black folklore. Hurston incorporated all her knowledge and research into her fictional writings. As a black woman, she felt the necessity to guide other black women about their rights and raised her voice against racial segregation.

In 1925, Hurston actively participated in the Harlem Renaissance and helped protect African Americans' rights. From 1918 to the mid-1930s, the Harlem Renaissance continued. It is the most influential African American movement in literary history. Its main purpose was the cultural improvement of African Americans in literature, music such as jazz music, dance, theatre, arts, fashion, politics and scholarship. The Harlem Renaissance was centered in Harlem, New York. This movement was also known as the 'New Negro Movement.' Before the American Civil War, many Afro-Americans were enslaved and lived in the Southern United States. However, the blacks were free after the war and strove for political equality and civic participation. From the mid to late 1870s, the racist whites in the Democratic Party launched a campaign of racist terrorism so that they could regain political power in the South. They

established many racist laws, and under these laws, the blacks could not eat in the same restaurant that white people were eating. They could not drink water from the same fountain or go to the theatre the white people visited. The Afro-Americans had faced massive inequality, which continued till 1908. After that, the blacks moved from the Southern United States to the Northeast USA in Harlem and formed a community. This huge migration resulted in the Harlem Renaissance. The African Americans started asserting their rights and identity through the power of music, art, and writing. They wrote about slavery and inequality that they have suffered for years. Some influential artists associated with this movement are Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, W.E.B. Du Bois, Countee Cullen, and James Weldon Johnson. During the Harlem Renaissance, Hurston wrote about the experiences of African Americans and racial division.

Hurston's novels include *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), and *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939). In 1938, *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* was published. Here, she wrote about her research on rituals in Haiti and Jamaica. In 1928, she wrote an autobiographical essay, "How It Feels to Be Coloured Me", where she mentioned her experiences as a black American woman in the early twentieth century. When she was thirteen, her mother passed away. She was sent away from her home in Jacksonville to study in a boarding school. Here, for the first time, she experienced racism. Hurston was defined as another "coloured girl." She realized the difference between her and other female pupils who were white skinned. She felt lonely and isolated from everybody. Nevertheless, she was a strong girl and refused to consider herself weak. She believed that if the oppressed and oppressor roles were reversed, whites would be dominated by blacks. Thus, she accepted the power dynamics between the oppressor and the oppressed, but she dared to

write about the actual condition of black women by breaking literary norms. Hurston's most popular novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, is the best example of it.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston portrays the tumultuous life of the main character, Janie Mae Crawford. As part of early 20th-century society, Hurston presents the difficulties an African American woman must face throughout her journey to find her identity and voice. Through Janie's three marriages, Hurston presents a journey to the womanhood of a young and naive girl. At sixteen, Janie's grandmother, Nanny, convinced her to marry a respectable, old landowner, Logan Killicks. As a teenage girl, Janie craves romantic love from a young and handsome man and seeks an identity of her own.

Nevertheless, Nanny wants Janie to have a secure and settled life. That is why she chooses Logan Killicks as her granddaughter's husband. As Janie and Nanny's ideologies are opposite, Janie hates Nanny for marrying her off to Logan. Janie's expectation of marriage does not match Logan's, and Logan does not consider her his equal and always disrespects her. Janie's search for equality, love, and respect leads her to another wrong man, Joe Starks, also known as Jody. Joe is a handsome man, and his ambitious vision impresses Janie. After knowing him only for a few days, Janie impulsively decides to leave Logan and run off with Jody. Later, they get married and move to Eatonville. In Eatonville, Jody establishes a sophisticated community for Black people in America. Jody becomes the mayor of Eatonville. The description of Eatonville is related to Hurston's own life, as Hurston's father was also the mayor of Eatonville. In addition, Jody is respected for his position and power. The townspeople also respect Janie as the mayor's wife, but Jody does not consider her as his equal. Instead, he suppresses her voice and disrespects her individuality. Janie soon realizes that this marriage cannot fulfil her desire. After Jody's death, Janie feels free from male control. When she meets

Tea Cake, she realizes she can also be happy with a man. Tea Cake is a young man, but Janie and Tea Cake fall in love with each other. In their relationship, there is love and partnership. They get married and move to the Everglades. Everglades is very different from Eatonville. The people in the Everglades believe in the notion of living in the moment. They do not save their money for the future.

On the other hand, Eatonville's people are ambitious. They earn and save money for their future. Janie experiences a different life with Tea Cake. However, in their relationship, there is also violence. Hurston believes that "violence is common in heterosexual relationships, and it is considered as an expression of love" (Marks 152). When a rabid dog bites Tea Cake, he tells Janie to shoot her and save her life. By shooting Tea Cake, Janie embraces her freedom.

The God of Small Things was written by Arundhati Roy, one of the most popular Indian writers. Roy is not only an author but also an essayist and political activist who is involved in environmental causes and human rights. She was born in 1961 in Shillong, Assam, India. In 1992, Roy started to write her first novel, *The God of Small Things*, published in 1997. This novel took four and a half years to complete. It brought fame and financial security to Roy. She was the first Indian woman to receive the Booker Prize for fiction in 1997. In addition, Roy has a remarkable talent for laying bare the inner workings of systems of injustice within socio-political structures. She understands an issue and reveals it to her audience, which makes her significant in the political and literary spheres. While criticized and threatened by many of India's right-leaning people, she is simultaneously revered in India and across the globe for her intellectual honesty and alertness to fascism, racism, classism, war, nuclear weaponry, the caste system, environmental destruction, religious discrimination and violence and much more. As a result, she was honored with the 2022 St Louis Literary Award.

Additionally, she contributed to a book, *We Are One: A Celebration of Tribal Peoples*, which portrays the cultures of the people around the world. She wrote many essays about contemporary culture and politics. Some of her collections of essays include *AZADI: Freedom, Fascism, Fiction* (2020), *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2001), *The End of Imagination* (1998), and so on. On November 4th, 2004, Roy received the Sydney Peace Prize for her courage in campaigns for human rights and her advocacy of non-violence. Her demands were justice for the poor and the victims of communal violence, for the millions displaced by the Narmada dam projects, and for her opposition to nuclear weapons.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is a well-known autobiographical novel. This novel is mainly written about her childhood experiences. In this novel, the central character, Ammu Ipe, is inspired by Roy's mother, Mary Roy. In an interview with *Outlook* magazine, Arundhati Roy states that "my book is dedicated to her...It was a difficult book for her to read—not least because of the constant journeying between memory and fiction. But what I think is most difficult for her is the realization that her troubles—her grief and anger at the world were transmitted through her to us—however hard she tried to protect us from it" (Urvashi). Ammu grew up in a typical Indian family in Ayemenem. Her family is Syrian Christian. During her childhood, Ammu's father, Benaan John Ipe, also known as Pappachi (means grandfather), cruelly beats her, causing her to develop a distrust for the patriarchal social structure. Pappachi is also an abusive husband to Shoshamma Ipe, also known as Mammachi (means grandmother). Mammachi accepts his domination and abusive nature. She also supports Pappachi and her son Chacko's decisions. However, Ammu cannot do that, and to escape this domination, she impulsively marries a Bengali named Baba after just a few days of meeting. It is an inter-community love marriage to a Bengali-Hindu. After marriage, Ammu

discovers that Baba is an abusive alcoholic. He tries to make her sleep with his boss, but Baba becomes unsuccessful in doing that.

Ammu soon realizes that it is impossible to live with Baba. Therefore, after the birth of fraternal twins Estha (boy) and Rahel (girl), she leaves him with her two kids. Ammu comes back to her parental house and becomes a divorcee. During the 1960s, society does not see a divorced woman in a good way. As a result, Ammu is mistreated by her family, and now her kids must suffer with her. She does not get financial or mental support from her ex-husband. Indian law does not have any laws about women's property rights. Therefore, she cannot claim her portion of her father's property. She has to lead her life depending on the mercy of others. Ammu works at the Ipe's pickle factory run by her mother.

Nevertheless, Ammu's work is not appropriate. Later, Ammu develops a love relationship with a Paravan and an Untouchable boy, Velutha. He works as a carpenter at Ipe's pickle factory. Though Ammu's family follows Christianity, they believe in the caste system as their ancestors do. They see Ammu and Velutha's relationship as forbidden love. The social structure and laws create suffering for Ammu and all the people related to her. Despite Ammu's higher social status, she has to face oppression. Both Ammu and Velutha are oppressed and do not have any rights. Ammu is oppressed by her father, brother, and aunt, Baby Kachamma. In addition, because of class disparity, her love for Velutha is not accepted.

Hurston and Roy dared to present the hollowness of the patriarchal social norms, values, culture, and social hierarchy through the strong characters Janie and Ammu. Both characters are forced to follow the expectations of patriarchy, which leads them to an identity crisis. Later, they choose their own way, make mistakes, and eventually create their identity.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

This thesis aims to discuss Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* based on the themes of society and class discrimination, gender discrimination in a patriarchal society, and the importance of financial security. Two theories, feminism and black feminism, support these themes. Moreover, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is set in America, and *The God of Small Things* is set in postcolonial India. Although America and India have different social norms and geographical differences, the oppression and struggles that women face to establish their rights are the same. Culture, tradition, norms, and values vary from one society to another, but the fight for women's identity, individuality, and freedom remains the same. The reason behind choosing these two novels is to present the fact that though everything varies from one society to another, the exploitation of women remains the same. The hypocrisy of a male-dominated society is also visible in both novels.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In Wendy J. McCredie's article, "Authority and Authorization in Their Eyes Were Watching God," one of the novel's central themes is authority and self-authorization. Janie narrates her story by incorporating her past into the present. She believes that her present situation is a result of her past. However, at first, Janie's grandmother makes decisions about her life. Nanny has authority over Janie. Then, Logan Killicks and Joe Starks subsequently handled the authority to control Janie's life. In her marriage with Logan, Janie realizes that as a black woman in a male-dominated world, she must struggle to have an independent voice.

Nevertheless, Janie initially accepts Logan's authority over her. He decides Janie will work on the farm with him. She accepts his authority. She tries to develop her **independent voice**. Nevertheless, Janie initially accepts Logan's authority over her. He decides Janie will work on the farm with him. She accepts his authority. She tries to develop her **independent voice with him**. However, Logan drags her past and tries to suppress her voice. He is unable to destroy her articulateness. Janie realizes there is no chance to have her own voice. At this moment, she meets Joe Starks and finds him attractive and powerful. Janie finds him as someone completely different from her husband, and this difference attracts her.

She marries Jody and becomes his trophy wife. She navigates her way to finding authority, but she comes to know that Joe wants her in a passive position. He wants the townspeople to know her by his name, not her name. Janie accepts his control as she is getting protection. Nevertheless, Janie questions Joe's authority over her and the town at the end of this relationship. She finally gets the freedom to speak. When Joe was about to die, the table turned.

Now, Janie speaks, and Joe must listen to her. After Joe's death, Janie meets Tea Cake. Janie finds him different from her previous two husbands. Their relationship is developed based on love. Tea Cake never dominates Janie's voice. Finally, Janie's vocal authority remains intact. In the trial, Janie clears the allegation of Tea Cake's murder, which proves her self-authorization.

In the article "Feminist Fantasies: Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*," Jennifer Jordan argues that Janie cannot establish a bond with the black community. There is no doubt that this novel inspires black women to speak for themselves. As an eighteenth-century African American woman writer, Hurston established Janie's self rather than her marginalized position. However, the novel fails to accomplish the criteria of black feminist criticism. Black women try to find their financial stability through hard work. Janie does not follow that. Jordan states that Janie cannot be independent as she tries to find her freedom through marriage and romantic relationships. She never actively engages in finding her identity, voice, and self-direction. In her first marriage to Logan, Janie follows a traditional middle-class woman's role. Logan is older than Janie. Her grandmother forced her to marry him for a better life, especially for male protection. Logan's controlling nature does not help to grow their relationship. As a result, Janie leaves him and gets married to Jody Starks. Jody marries Janie to remain in his superior position. Her perspectives are not listened to. In this relationship, her role is like an ornament, which means Janie's duty is only to enhance Jody's status. However, Jody's death ends the authority of Jody over Janie and confirms Janie's freedom.

In her third marriage to Tea Cake, Janie has a romantic relationship. Janie is known in the black community by her husband, Tea Cake. Though she is the owner of a shop, she does not have any individual identity in the community. Ultimately, Janie shoots Tea Cake, ensuring Janie's freedom from anyone's authority and domination, and their love touches Eden.

However, Janie does not help other black women to become independent, not even her friend Pheoby. She does not have a sense of sisterhood. Her journey to find self-authority inspires others. Nevertheless, she does not work for other black women to free them from racism and sexism. Therefore, the black woman feminist criteria are unfulfilled.

Sigrid King, in her article “Naming and Power in Zora Neal Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*,” states that the naming of enslaved Black people is always considered an important issue in the African American tradition because it relates to power. The masters take possession of the enslaved people by denying the slaves African identity and renaming them. Those who renamed enslaved people also controlled them. The masters have the power to treat enslaved people as objects rather than subjects. They treat their slaves as non-human. The enslaved people are powerless in front of them. King “further emphasizes the importance of naming for Afro-Americans, saying that names and naming are a heavily ritualized rite (or is that right?) of passage and theme prevalent in African culture” (King 683). Later, when slaves are free, they break the sense of powerlessness and unname or rename themselves. King points out that “unnaming has a particular significance for the questing hero or heroine in much Western literature. Many questing literary characters realize that names are fiction, that no particular name can satisfy the energy of the questing self” (King 684). Name is a social label that only limits the characters’ quest, and unname frees them from all the social expectations and boundaries. However, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, “Hurston focuses on the character Janie, whose quest for the ‘horizons’ of herself finally leads her to a place where she defines herself...the oppressive power of those who name her, the growing potential of being renamed, and finally the freeing experience of being unnamed” (King 685).

According to King, Hurston named the main character Janie because it is unusual and

differentiates her from a literary type. Janie's name gives her an identity but does not limit her to one role. However, Janie tells her friend Pheoby about her journey of naming. Many people give her different odd names. At a very early age, Janie realizes that the names she is called are given as a limiting force and to exercise the power of the white people.

Sharmita Lahiri, in her article "Alternate Visions of a Feminine Space in Clear Light of Day and The God of Small Things," challenges and explores the questions of feminine identity and space in postcolonial Indian society. Through the main character Ammu, Arundhati Roy refuses to accept a social order that demotes women to a subaltern position. Ammu denies accepting the social norms that limit women's freedom and does not consider women as equal to men. She decides to marry Baba and later divorces him. After that, she falls in love with an untouchable man, Velutha. All her decisions challenge social conventions.

Moreover, Lahiri states that in a patriarchal society, the right to speech is a symbol of power. On the other hand, silence, a desired quality for Indian women, stands against the power of speech. According to Lahiri, "The silence of women is often admired while their speech is considered as trivial by equating it with hysteria, expression of ignorance, and gossip" (134). In this context, Lahiri raises a question: "How can Indian women overcome generations of subalternity?... refuses to compromise and accommodate herself within the limiting bounds of patriarchal norms...by denying equality and freedom to her" (Lahiri 134). Lahiri claims that Ammu's radical rebellion is the only successful approach to the issue of feminine emancipation.

In an article in *Outlook* magazine, Arundhati Roy's most exhaustive interview is published, where she goes to the heart of the novel *The God of Small Things*. Roy shares her brother Lalith's reaction after reading her book. He says that "the real (autobiographical) things in the book are not the characters or the incidents, but the feelings, the love, the fear, the terror.

The book isn't based on research. It's more about human biology than human history” (Urvashi).

Roy states that until she wrote the novel, she was unaware of how much she loved the river in Ayemenem. This river lived inside her since she was four. Roy says that when she was a very small child, she watched and understood what was happening to her mother and, therefore, to her and Lalith (Urvashi). Thus, Roy's mother inspires the character Ammu, but both are very different from each other. Roy's mother, Mary Roy, is a respected and responsible person. As Ammu, Mary Roy challenges the existing order, but Mary Roy does that with significant responsibilities, which Ammu cannot do. Arundhati Roy says that

My mother is very upright. Morally upright. She is a very respected person. Whereas

I'm not. I don't qualify as moral—at least not in the conventional definition of morality. I've been accused of all sorts of things—some true, some not—but then I've never claimed to be a fine human being. I'm quite happy to have a character certificate that says, 'Does not bear good moral character'. (Urvashi)

In the article “Possessive Politics and Improper Aesthetics: Property Rights and Female Dispossession in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*,” Rose Casey gives her feminist point of view by discussing the condition of Indian women in the 1960s. She argues that women are victims of historical injustices. Before 2013, women depended on their in-laws' families for financial support. Also, the male-dominated society does not give women a portion of the property. Only a man inherited the property. Thus, if a woman is a divorcee, she does not get financial support from her parents' or in-laws' houses. For the betterment of women's condition, a new law was passed in 2013 by the Cabinet of India (Casey 381). According to the Marriage Amendment Bill 2010, women have the right to their husband's assets after legal

separation, which ensures their economic security (Casey 381). Before this law, many legislative laws were made. However, they could not secure women's rights.

Feminist legal experts and activists have pointed out that existing property rules prevent women from owning property and deprive them of their legal rights. In short, the patriarchal society never allowed women to have their property rights. However, in the nineteenth century, British law collaborated with the patriarchal system to limit women's property rights. By the name of civilization, the British government banned many barbaric social codes against women. The British wanted to prove themselves more knowledgeable and advanced in each legislative change and claimed they were willing to help India. While Indians were shown to be violent and aggressive against women, the British were portrayed as lawful people who protected Indian women by using their strong force. Hence, the British used Indian women for their benefit. Before colonization, women used to get economic support from marriage. Even after divorce and husband's death, women were economically stable. Nevertheless, after the protest, the British snatched women's economic independence. In the nineteenth century, the new property rights law, inheritance, marriage and divorce laws changed women's position. Women lost their limited economic security. They had to be dependent on the male members of their family.

Later, during the twentieth century, important legislative changes were made to protect women's rights, especially the right over family property and divorce rights. However, Indian women's economic position has always been precarious. According to this law, women can only get support payments from their ex-husband, which means they are not only financially dependent on their ex-husband but also legally dependent on them. Before 2005, most of the states in India did not allow women to inherit their family property, meaning men would have

more money than women (Casey 381). As a result of this systematic economic subjugation, women did not live with any say in society and had to suffer countless oppression. In the novel *The God of Small Things*, the main character, Ammu, is the greatest example of this social oppression. As a 1960s woman, Ammu is deprived of financial support from her father's and husband's sides. Ammu's premature death is a clear example of property law's historical violence.

In an interview with David Barsamian, Roy describes the current social standing of Kerala women. The women of Kerala work all over India and send the money to their homes. Despite this, they must pay a dowry to get married. Their submissive relationship with their husband is quite odd. Roy also says she was brought up in the small village of Kerala. It was a nightmare for her. She wanted to get out of there, so she never had to marry somebody there. Sometimes, she wondered that perhaps she was the only girl in India whose mother said, "Whatever you do, don't get married" (Barsamian).

In the book *The Second Sex*, the feminist writer and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir discusses the myths of women, which is dragged from century to century and era to era. She describes how myths shape our way of thinking. The title itself introduces women as the second sex in this patriarchal society. The male leaders make several myths about society to create an invisible boundary around women. Men force women to follow the set of myths by the name of tradition, culture, religion and rituals. Moreover, if we have a glimpse of history, we can see that all the concrete powers are in men's hands, which ensures domination over women. Men set such rules against women to establish women as the 'Other' and suppress them economically. Men have all the decision-making opportunities, so they are considered more logical than women. On the other hand, since women can give emotional support better than

men, they are considered emotional beings. This idea is a myth. There is no logic behind it.

The Bible mentions that “God does not spontaneously choose Eve” (Beauvoir 161). Instead, she is created to accompany and complement the first man, Adam, in the world. Eve is created from Adam’s flank, ensuring she remains submissive from birth. She is conscious about everything but cannot give an opinion or make any decision. Her only duty is to obey Adam and follow his path. Beauvoir broadly discusses the myths of patriarchal society in many countries. For example, in France, many villages considered virginal blood as a symbol of purity and ensured it on the wedding night (Beauvoir 172). The blood stain proves that men have all the control over women. Now, men become conquerors, and women become enslaved. As women are always associated with ‘nature’ and nature represents life and death at the same time, men see women as a threat to their existence. Nature also can be exploited. Men think they are mere beings and suffer from an existential crisis. Thus, to prove their existence, they possess women. The idea of ‘mere being’ is only in men’s minds. As women consider themselves existent, men find women easy to possess and hope to realize their state. That is why man is associated with the conqueror of nature. In society, men are always in a transcendent position, which means they are powerful, creative and active.

On the other hand, women are in the immanence position, which means they are weak, powerless and passive. In addition, men dream of having a woman who is beautiful, passive and can be easily possessed. For example, women will see God as men described. The playwrights and poets who are male and representative of society have described women as object. It does not matter that women are playing cliché roles or dignified roles. The exaggeration of women’s beauty is far from the absolute truth. Men also fear women. Nature gifts women the quality of reproduction. Once women give birth to a new life, they feel powerful and rejuvenated. Thus,

men fear that if women realize their strength, they will become disobedient. The disobedient woman is rebellious and a threat to society.

In the article, “Older than the Church: Christianity and Caste in *The God of Small Things*,” Ajay Sekher states that despite the introduction of Christianity to Kerala almost two thousand years ago and the emergence of communism as a potent egalitarian force in the twentieth century, caste continues to exert a pervasive, insidious influence in Kerala (3445). By using subversive comparisons and analogies, *The God of Small Things* tries to challenge the patriarchal norms that keep caste and gender dominance in place. However, the old hierarchies that keep caste and gender dominance in place are still strong, and fiction cannot change that. Sekher discusses the problems that Dalit Christians face in India. Sekher estimates that “14 million (or 70%) of India’s 20 million Christian population are Dalits. There are four main sources of persecution for converts: the church, the state, higher and lower castes” (Sekher 3445). According to Sekher, caste predates Christianity in India. Therefore, even conversion, the final refuge of the historically oppressed masses, has deserted them. In each religion, there is a large disparity between belief and practice. “Christianity does not have caste, but Christians do have caste” (Sekher 3445). For example, the Syrian Christian family practices a caste system. According to the caste system, Dalits are outcasts and untouchable. Nevertheless, when an untouchable girl becomes pregnant because of Chacko, it is ignored by saying ‘man’s need’. On the other hand, the rules for a woman are different. According to the social code, the romantic relationship between Ammu and Velutha is not accepted. Thus, it exposed the double standard of a patriarchal society.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Aims

Through the representative characters Janie and Ammu in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The God of Small Things*, respectively, this research will examine the oppression towards women by the patriarchal society. It will also explore women's lack of freedom to express their minds and desires and the role of skin tone in deciding a woman's destiny. In order to achieve these aims, this research paper is organized by analyzing secondary data such as articles from authentic sources, opinions of relevant books and interviews. The primary sources of this thesis are Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

A qualitative method is followed in this paper. I have designed a systematic data collection method in which I aimed to research according to thematic analysis. I have collected some journal articles from JSTOR and renowned books about society and class discrimination, the financial security of women, the distribution of the roles in society, and the hypocrisy of the male members as well as the female agents of the male-dominated society. This research mentions intellectual and prominent scholars and authors such as Sharmita Lahiri, Rose Casey, Simon de Beauvoir, Donald Marks, Ajay Sekher, and Anuradha Dingwaney Needham to understand how they have analyzed Hurston and Roy's novels. Some interviews with Arundhati Roy are also used to understand her thoughts and intentions in writing *The God of Small Things*. Two interviews with Roy are published in magazine articles by David Barsamian and Urvashi Butalia. Moreover, this thesis first focuses on the themes and accordingly selects articles which fulfil the research aims of this paper. In this methodology section, the theories of feminism and

black feminism are discussed as well. Besides, this paper finds gaps between previous researchers and my research. By doing so, it aims to fill the gaps. Finally, it moves to the analysis part, which analyzes the primary texts with the help of journal articles, books, and interviews.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

Feminist criticism focuses on the oppression of women - politically, economically, psychologically and socially. It talks about women's rights, demands equal positions for women and questions the socially constructed gender roles. According to a feminist critic Toril Moi, the term 'female' defines the biological position of gender, 'feminist' can be a man or woman and 'feminine' defines the set of rules which is allocated by the patriarchal society, such as women are weak, and men are strong (Abrams 121). Moreover, the three waves of feminism have significantly impacted the history of feminism. The first wave of feminism began in the late 1700s and ended in the early 1900s. It is thought that the first wave relates to the First World War. The First World War happened between 1914 to 1918.

In this war, many soldiers were brutally killed on the battlefield. Thus, the civilians were forced to get training and join the war. As this bloody war lasted for a long time, the economy suffered. As a result, women got to work outside of their homes. They worked in the factories and hospitals as ambulance drivers, nurses, and so on. Men realized that women could do outside work, and women also realized their capability. After the war, some women went back to their usual household work. However, other women continued working outside. They realized they needed to gain political power to ensure their voting rights. The right to vote in their own country will empower their position. This voting right is known as the women's suffrage movement. In the first wave, feminist activists campaigned for women's reproductive rights and contraception.

Before contraception, women did not have the right to make decisions about childbirth.

Moreover, in this period, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), questioning the socio-political norms of 18th-century society. She is known as the first writer who talked about women's rights. She argues that women can make rational decisions. Virginia Woolf's writings also contributed greatly to the women's rights movement. Her essay, "A Room of One's Own" (1929), is well known in the feminist revolution. In this essay, the author tells women to have financial independence as money is necessary. She demands a separate room for women to flourish their creativity.

The second wave of feminism began in the early 1960s and ended in the late 1970s. This wave was concerned about women's equality in every sector. It prioritized the female view of the world. Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* (1949) is a great example. In her book, she attacks men's view of women. After the failure of the second wave of feminism, the third wave started in the early 1990s and continues to the present. It is different from the first and second waves. It focuses not only on the injustices and inequalities against women but also against men. It challenges heterosexuality. The first and second waves fought for upper- and middle-class women's rights. However, the third wave focuses on the rights of black women.

Nevertheless, all three waves of feminism in every country commonly focus on some concepts. The first one is the patriarchal social structure. Women live in a male-controlled society where they are treated as subordinate subjects. A woman's position is always secondary in society, religion, economic and legal sectors. "They are always defined with negative attributes such as Other, weak, fragile by referring to male organs" (Abrams 122). At the beginning of their life, women are taught that men are the head of their family and society. They must follow what men say to them. This is the unwritten rule for them, borrowed from century to

century in the name of social norms. The second one is gender. When a baby is born, their sex is determined by anatomy. By this, their role is determined. If a baby is a boy, he is considered a masculine figure who is active, creative, and strong. However, if a baby is a girl, she is considered a feminine figure who is passive, weak, and emotional. Simone de Beauvoir states, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female acquires in society; civilization develops this product, intermediate between female and eunuch, which one calls feminine" (Abrams 122). The third one is misogyny, which refers to hatred against women. A misogynist can be both a man and a woman. Misogynistic ideas are spread in many areas of our culture, such as education, science, medicine, social institutions and so on. For example, a married woman should have children.

The need for Black feminist criticism has been felt because of the division between whites and blacks. Black feminist criticism is concerned with the rights of African American women. In the United States, black women are discriminated against by society at large based on their skin tone, gender and race. They are deprived of the fundamental rights that white women easily enjoy. The social, political and economic structure is made in a way that the black women remain in the lower position of the society. Black women are lagging behind the other race and gender in education, employment and financial ability. As a result, they become victims of sexual abuse by white men, get pregnant in their teenage years, and suffer from domestic violence, poverty, illiteracy and malnutrition. Some black feminist scholars such as Bell Hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith address the issues of black women in their works. Firstly, black feminist scholars find that the variables - race, sexuality, gender and class are interconnected. This notion is called intersectionality. Besides, classism and heterosexism are

related to racism and sexism. As these terms are inseparable, women cannot fight for one at a time. They have to deal with numerous burdens. Secondly, they focus on the discrimination against women in the black community. During the civilrights movement, black women spontaneously participated. However, their works were not appreciated. Black men occupied the leadership position. Therefore, black women's participation was ignored, and black men got credit for their job. In the black church, black women are excluded from the decision-making processes, clergy and financial governing boards, which validated the male domination of the black man-woman relationship. Thirdly, black feminists do not target black men by the name of feminism. Instead, they want to work with them for black women's liberation. Finally, black feminists contend that black women work as a team to fight against class, raceand gender oppression. Black women have to experience discrimination and domination in their everyday lives. Thus, they can successfully liberate themselves if they work in a group rather than individually.

Furthermore, some female writers have written about black women's struggles. Alice Walker is a female American activist. In her writings, she portrays the life and culture of African Americans. She is known for her epistolary novel *The Color Purple*. The novel's main character, Celie, inspires other black women for hersurviving nature in the patriarchal society. Another black feminist writer, Toni Morrison, in her novel *The Bluest Eye*, seeks to describe how racism can destroy one's self-confidence. The main character, Pecola Breedlove, suffers from a feeling of 'ugliness' formed by family situations and social standards. She wants to be accepted by others. That is why she desires blue eyes.

Chapter 4: Analysis of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

4.1 Society and Social Class

The novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* exhibits controversial topics such as social class, social conventions, race, and gender inequality. Throughout the novel, Hurston illustrates these subjects, which give a better understanding of the early 20th century issues and an underlying message that humans need to achieve happiness. Hurston begins the story with the return of Janie Mae Crawford in Eatonville, Florida. Janie's grandmother raised her. Nanny worked in Washburn's house in West Florida and lived in their backyard. Initially, Janie considered herself equal to the whites as she did not know the racial system that prevailed in society.

Moreover, Janie's Nanny says to Janie that "So de White man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He picks it up because he has to, but he doesn't tote it. He hands it to his womenfolk. De nigger woman is de mule ud de world so fur as Ah can see" (Hurston 47). Nanny is giving life lessons from her experiences. Nanny states that the white people are the rulers of everything. They have all the authority. They occupy the highest position in the social hierarchy, and black women are in the lowest position. Nanny compares black woman with 'mule'. As mules do, black women work hard throughout their lives and eventually die miserably.

Nanny also compares colored folks with the branches of a tree without solid roots that can hardly support the black community in the world. When Nanny was enslaved, she was abused by a white master and got pregnant with Janie's mother, Leafy. Unfortunately, Leafy suffered the same fate as Nanny. She was also abused by a white schoolteacher and got pregnant with Janie. After Janie's birth, Leafy left Janie and ran off. Nanny worked hard and brought up

Janie. Nanny does not want Janie to have the same fate. Unlike her and her daughter, she wants to give Janie a secure, respectful life. Through the characters Nanny and Janie, Hurston presents the racial discrimination in the white-dominated society.

In the novel, “Janie is involved in four relationships: her first sexual encounter with Johnny Taylor, her first marriage to Logan Killicks, her second marriage to Joe Starks and her third marriage to Tea Cake. These four relationships can fall into two categories. One is passion, and another one is control” (Marks 152). Janie is passionately involved with Johnny Taylor and Tea Cake. She is controlled and restricted in her marriage with Logan Killicks and Joe Starks. Janie’s relationships of passion and control have introduced her to two conflicting ideologies. Her passionate and controlled relationships, respectively, refer to organicist ideology and mechanistic ideology. Hurston uses metaphors of natural fertility and sexuality to Janie’s passionate relationships. The idea of love and sexual awakening makes Janie kiss the “shiftless” Johnny Taylor (Hurston 43). Nanny fears that Janie's sexual awakening may lead her to her downfall. According to Nanny, Johnny is “trashy” and “breath-and-britches”, implying he is poor. Nanny considers Johnny to belong to a lower class and cannot give Janie a secure life. Besides, Nanny values materialistic things and sees Janie’s future with a wealthy older man, Logan Killicks. He is a middle-class black man. He has sixty acres of land, which impressed Nanny. She thinks materialistic things will bring happiness to Janie. Nanny believes that Logan can give a secure, comfortable life, social status, and respect for Janie. Nanny believes material possession is the only medium to gain higher societal status. Besides, Nanny knows from experience that only wealthy people are respected.

Janie never liked Logan, but her Nanny forced her to marry him. Through this marriage, Janie begins her journey toward self-awareness and independence. As Janie is naive and does not

know how to express her needs, her relationship with Logan cannot grow. There is a communication gap in their relationship from both sides. Janie's lack of appreciation and connection makes Logan abusive and expresses his anger towards Janie. He starts to dominate Janie. For him, women are objects. He feels that Janie is indifferent to him despite making her the mistress of sixty acres of land. Their marriage turns into a big failure. Logan proves his superiority by saying he married her despite her absent parents and poor family conditions. He taunts Janie by saying that Janie and her mother were born and raised in a white man's backyard. As Janie comes from a lower social status, Logan thinks she has no right to give her opinion and act independently. He further states that Janie should be grateful to him for marrying her. Thus, Janie feels trapped in this marriage. She is suffocated in this marriage and longs for independence.

One day, she meets a handsome, well-dressed man named Joe Starks, also known as Jody Starks. According to Janie, Joe seems to be a member of the upper social class. Joe tells Janie that he wants to settle in a black town in Florida where he wishes to be a 'big voice' (Hurston 60). He dreams of becoming an upper-class man. According to Janie, Joe speaks for change and opportunity. After a few weeks of getting to know each other, they married. The day after their wedding, Joe and Janie travel to Maitland, Florida. Joe takes Janie with him to flaunt his wealth to her. After they reach the black town of Eatonville, they come to know there is no mayor. Joe is an ambitious man. He announces his plans to invest in this town. Joe sets up a technologically sophisticated town. He was the first to set up a streetlamp in the colored town, "signifying his attempt to govern natural processes. Yet the townspeople frequently compare his achievements and powers to those of the whites rather than the prophets" (Marks 153). Joe rents a house and buys two hundred acres of land. He plans to open a store. He built a two-story house. "The rest

of the town looked like servants' quarters surrounding the 'big house'" (Hurston 82). People of the town feel inferior because of his house. Jody brings social stratification and an economically unbalanced structure in the town imposed by white society. Joe urges the residents to elect a mayor. Tony Taylor proposes to Joe for the mayor's post, and he accepts it. The position of mayor puts Joe above the ordinary citizens of Eatonville. Joe is always busy giving speeches while Janie waits for his time. Janie notices that Joe's superiority complex makes their married life less romantic. According to Joe, Janie should be glad that his position as mayor makes her a 'big woman' in the town. She realizes Jody's ideology contradicts her vision of love as fertile and blossoming. Jody Starks is not only the mayor of Eatonville but also a landlord, shop owner, and postmaster, which makes him more powerful. The town's people respect him and admire his initiatives for the town. However, their power and wealth also bring hatred for him. People are jealous of his short-term achievements and resent him for establishing social stratification.

Moreover, Janie wants to participate in the conversation of porch sitters in Joe's store, but Joe forbids her. According to Joe, Janie should maintain her superior position as a mayor's wife and not mix with the commoners. Joe's hypocrisy can be seen here because he can hang out with ordinary townspeople. However, he thinks that if his wife does the same thing, it will hurt his social status. Again, when Janie wants to attend the mule's funeral, Joe tells Janie that she is an upper-class woman. Thus, she cannot spend time with the commoners. Otherwise, she will stain her reputation. Janie does not mind mingling with them, but for Joe, reputation is more important than Janie's happiness. Lack of company in Janie's life makes her lonely: "Aside from Joe's efforts to separate Janie from the townspeople, the fact that she holds a position of authority in a hierarchical social structure which divides her from other people" (Marks 154). Additionally, one day, Mrs. Robbins came to the store to beg for food for her starving children. After she leaves,

the porch sitters, who are men, laugh and joke cruelly about her behavior, which provokes Janie to speak in her defense. The ill-treatment of patriarchal society makes Janie realize that it is high time to speak up against injustices.

After spending a major part of her life in Nanny's authority and male domination, Janie takes the authority of her life. Nevertheless, when Janie meets a charming young man named Tea Cake, everything changes. She observes Tea Cake and comes to know that her ideology matches Tea Cake's organic ideology. Tea Cake's behavior is opposite of Logan Killicks and Joe Starks. He is interested in playing rather than working. He earns money through an anti-structural means, gambling. Tea Cake does not follow a work ethic as Logan and Joe do. He rejects the work-based economic structure of capitalist society and sets up his structure based on the rules of play. When Janie asks Joe's store assistant, Hezekiah, about Tea Cake's marital status, he replies that nobody will marry him because he is poor. Like others, Hezekiah emphasizes a person's social status more than his character. Janie's best friend, Pheoby, also thinks Tea Cake cannot give her the social stability and wealth Joe has given her. Therefore, Tea Cake is not suitable for Janie. However, Janie believes in a different ideology than Pheoby and other Eatonville citizens. As Janie has previous experience of having material wealth, she knows it comes with many burdens and restrictions. Higher social status only controls a woman's life. Eventually, they get married and start their new life in the Everglades.

Everglades represents work, money, freedom, fun, and "foolishness" (Hurston 98). Tea Cake does not save money for his future. He wants to enjoy every day of his life. When he comes to know that Janie has two hundred dollars, instead of investing the money or saving it, he throws a dance party and a barbecue. For Janie, Tea Cake is the gateway to her freedom. When she is with Joe in Eatonville town, she cannot spend her time in "foolishness" and socializing

with the townspeople. Tea Cake offers Janie the opportunity to be “foolish” by teaching her checker. Janie’s life with Tea Cake is centered around leisure and festivity.

Hurston chooses two contrasting major settings, Eatonville and Everglades, which show that having a balance of ambition and “foolishness” in life is essential. In Eatonville, Janie cannot lead her life on her terms. Joe always controls her for his higher position in the town. On the other side, Janie finds her long-desired freedom with Tea Cake in Everglades, where people “distinguished themselves from the power structure of the boss-worker system by continuing to perform rituals of disorder, such as gambling, fighting, gaming and celebrating” (Marks 155). However, the people of Everglades do not save money for their future, which is not right. The best way of leading life is to work hard, earn money, spend some of it and invest or save money for the future.

4.2 Gender Discrimination

The power of naming shows the controlling nature of the male-dominated society. According to Sigrid King, naming is closely connected with power in the Afro-American tradition:

From their earliest experiences in America, Afro-Americans have been made aware that those who name also control, and those who are named are subjugated...The objectification of slaves is a well-documented method used by slave owners to distance themselves from their slaves and treat them as non-human. The namer has the power; the named is powerless (King 683-684).

In the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston portrays the naming system of the society through the main character, Janie. Janie’s first two husbands have called her by different names, referring to her powerless position. Janie remains nameless until several pages of the novel. Later, the porch sitters of Eatonville say so incorrectly that as she had married for a third time,

her name is no longer “Janie Starks” (Hurston 35). They spent their time passing judgment to others. As Janie recognizes that her neighbors exercise power in naming her, it does not bother her anymore.

Janie experienced the power of naming in her childhood. Janie's grandmother works in Washburn's house. There, everybody called her Nanny. That is why Janie never called her grandmother by another name. Many people had called Janie by different names. The Washburn family used to call Janie “Alphabet” (Hurston 41). King states that “as 'Alphabet,' Janie seems to be no more than a character (like a letter of the alphabet) who signifies nothing for herself while facilitating the 'circulation of signs' that reinforces communication among those who exercise power” (King 686).

After Janie married Logan Killicks, her name was legally changed to Janie Mae Killicks. The name “Killicks” is ironic because the power associated with this name “kills” is Janie's definition of marriage. After her first marriage, she learned that “marriage did not make love” (Hurston 57). Janie thinks that Logan has to work outside, and Janie's place is to work inside the house, including preparing meals. However, Logan thinks that women do not have any specific place to work. She should do the work which she is asked to do. A woman has no defined role outside of what her husband gives her. King states that “when they argue about her doing outside work in their yard, Janie calls him 'Mist' Killicks', a name which ironically reflects his attempt to be her master. Logan, on the other hand, calls her 'LilBit', a name which reveals her position of powerlessness in his mind” (King 688). Logan treats Janie as an animal. Logan associates Janie with a second mule for working in his fields. He makes Janie a plough rather than a mule.

Joe Starks is also a misogynist like Logan. According to King, “Starks's name is also ironic because of his focus on capitalistic pursuits” (688). His wealth gives him a false sense of

power to control others. When Janie and Joe meet for the first time, Joe calls Janie “lil girl-chile” and “pretty doll-baby,” which indicates that in the future, Joe will control Janie (Hurstun 60-61). Joe believes a woman’s place is in the home and should obey her husband’s wishes. At the opening party of Joe’s shop, Tony Taylor calls Janie to give a speech. Joe does not give Janie a chance to speak publicly and express her feelings. He says that his wife does not know how to make a speech. Also, he does not marry her to give a speech. She is a woman, and her place is in the home. Joe talks about development. However, his thoughts about women are not developed. He says men have the right to make all the decisions. After this party, Janie realizes that her voice is suppressed, and her life is dictated. Joe controls her life. He does not think of her as human with her thoughts and feelings. In addition, Joe considers Janie and other womenfolk to be on the same intellectual level as children and domesticated animals such as chickens and cows. The poor treatment of Joe creates emotional distance between them. Janie breaks the traditional gender role of being silent, obedient, and speaking up about injustices. In this regard, Walter Thomas says that if his wife does the same thing, he will kill her. Similarly, Coker considers woman too lowly to spend much money on her. A man who never hits a woman is thought to be a fool.

In the novel, it is shown that not only do men mistreat women, but also women mistreat other women. For example, Tea Cake and Janie’s neighbor, Mrs. Turner, is an Afro-American, but she uses the word “nigger” to give her a sense of power (Hurstun 198). She tells Janie “Ah can’t stand black niggers. Ah don’t blame de white folks from hatin’em 'cause Ah can’t stand 'em myself...If it wuzn’t for so many black folks it wouldn’t be no race problem. De white folks would take us in wid dem. De black ones are holdin’ us back” (Hurstun198). The point of view of Mrs. Turner proves that prejudice exists in the black community.

However, Joe's behavior towards Janie gets worse with age. As Joe notices that he is getting older than Janie, his verbal abuse of Janie becomes worse. Janie fights back by insulting Joe in front of the townspeople. Janie recognizes the double standard of men that they always put down women and expect them to take it, but when women do the same thing, men cannot take it. Joe has never been able to accept Janie the way she is. He always imposes his thoughts and power over her, which leads to a terrible ending to their marriage. Joe's repression and abusive nature cannot suppress Janie's quest for identity: "The young girl was gone, but a handsome woman had taken her place" (Hurstun 45).

At the time of Joe's death, Janie does not feel grief; instead, she feels a great sense of freedom. After Joe's funeral, Janie burns all the head rags that Joe forced her to wear. Burning the head rags represents Janie's sense of freedom. She embraces her freedom by socializing with the townspeople. She feels "a new sense of strength and identity that comes from within herself rather than from her association with someone else" (King 692). Now, she is also free from the naming and renaming process, which she has carried out from a very young age. After Joe's death, Janie becomes the owner of Joe's wealth. Janie's suitors think that women are incapable of taking care of themselves. In Janie's case, she is not only a beautiful woman but also a wealthy woman. That is why her suitors think that she needs male protection.

Furthermore, Tea Cake is completely different from her previous two husbands and other men. Tea Cake's real name is Vergible Woods, but he renames himself. King states that "Tea Cake does not name to gain power; he names to explore the true nature of a thing. As their relationship develops, Janie finds that naming no longer holds the limiting power that it manifested in her relationships with Logan and Joe" (King 692). The renaming of Tea Cake gives Janie confidence that she can also rename herself. Tea Cake makes her way easier towards

self-authorization. He gives her confidence that she can do whatever she wants. Tea Cake's unconventional thinking attracts Janie. He is different from Jody because he tells Janie that she will never be able to learn checkers. The excuse he makes is that checker is a very hard game. Nevertheless, Tea Cake thinks that Janie has the potential to learn this game.

Besides, Pheoby says about Janie, "Still and all, she's her own woman. She oughta know by now whut she wants tuh do" (Hurstons 7). Being a woman, Pheoby realizes that women, especially Janie, are intelligent enough to know what she wants to do. The sense of self-ownership and self-confidence Janie feels is usually reserved for men. However, Tea Cake and Janie's relationship also ends with sexual violence. Though Tea Cake loves Janie, he flirts with Nunkie. It angers Janie, and she hits Tea Cake by breaking the traditional gender boundaries.

Marks states that "both mechanistic ideology and organicist ideology Janie must face violence because violence is inherently present in heterosexual relationships" (Marks 152). In the novel, Hurston connects sexuality with the element of violence. For example, "When Janie first becomes aware of love and marriage in her grandmother's garden, she feels 'a pain remorseless sweet.' Her first kiss with Johnny Taylor is described as 'lacerating.' At one point in their marriage, Joe Starks slaps Janie's face 'until she had a ringing sound in her ears'" (Marks 156). Additionally, Hurston gives justification for Tea Cake's beating of Janie by saying, "No brutal beating at all" (Hurstons 218). "Though she attempts to minimize its gravity, Hurston does find an inherent violence in a passionate love relationship" (Marks 156). Hurston's autobiographical book *Dust Tracks on a Road* presents a similar violent quarrel with her lover. "By saying, 'No broken bone, you understand, and no black eyes' justifies the violent behavior of her lover" (Marks 156).

Moreover, “When a rabid dog bites Tea Cake, and madness inflames his already violent temper, Janie is forced to kill him to survive. In doing this, for the first time, Janie achieves independence from a heterosexual relationship and, subsequently, her lasting, personal peace” (Marks 156). After Tea Cake’s death, Janie isolated herself from the physical world. Through Janie’s isolation, Hurston shows that to understand the organicist ideology, one should be isolated and think deeply in along.

4.3 Financial Security

In Janie’s life, Nanny plays a significant role as she is Janie’s only guardian. Nanny wants to see Janie get married to Logan Killicks because of his financial security. Nevertheless, Janie tells Nanny that “he looks like some ole skulhead in de graveyard” (Hurston 46). As a young and naive girl, Janie cannot understand the importance of financial stability. Nanny did not want Janie to suffer financially and bear humiliation as they had faced. Nanny decided to get married soon to protect her from the same fate. For Nanny, Logan Killicks is the best suitor, not because Nanny wants to ensure love in Janie’s life but because she prioritizes his financial well-being, which also brings respect. Nanny not only forces Janie to get married to Logan but also imposes her materialistic ideology on Janie.

Nevertheless, Janie’s desire for love remains incomplete. For the second time, Janie gets married to Joe Starks by her choice. Sigrid King states that “Joe Starks, with his ‘big voice’, became Nanny’s successor, and so it is appropriate that after his death and burial, Janie discovers her true feelings about Nanny. Nanny’s dream for Janie has been realized in the security offered by Joe’s wealth” (691). However, Nanny’s definition of happiness is not enough for Janie.

According to Nanny, love is not an important factor. She thinks that if Janie marries a wealthy man, she will be happy with him. Nanny gives Janie life lessons from her experience. However, Janie realizes that Nanny's life experience is different from hers. The only truths she will now accept are those derived from her experience. Janie's experience of material life leads her to the conclusion that material wealth does not necessarily ensure happiness. After Joe's death, Janie becomes the owner of Joe's wealth. Besides, her long-desired love is fulfilled by an open-minded man named Tea Cake. Eventually, both Nanny's dream for Janie and Janie's desire is fulfilled. Moreover, though Hurston presents the importance of financial security, she gives more importance to love.

Chapter 5: Analysis of *The God of Small Things*

5.1 Society and Social Class

The God of Small Things is a twentieth-century novel where Arundhati Roy writes about the story of an orthodox Syrian Christian family. Roy presents the theme of society and class system through the story of the Ipe family. The members of the Ipe family, such as Pappachi, Chacko, Mammachi, and Baby Kochamma, have given importance to social norms rather than their family, especially the female members. Ammu and Chacko's father, Pappachi, set a practice that the female members of the family must obey the decisions made by their husband, father, brother, and even her son. Mammachi perfectly fits Pappachi's expectations. Initially, Ammu follows Pappachi's orders as her mother does. However, she dreams of escaping "from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother" (Roy 39). Finally, one day, Ammu gets the chance to escape when Pappachi agrees to let her spend a summer with her aunt in Calcutta. There, she meets her future husband, Baba, and after a few days of getting to know him, she marries him, which is her first transgression. However, her fate does not change. Like her mother, she must face the same oppression. Ammu comes to know the truth about Baba. He is an abusive husband who tries to make her sleep with his boss. She does not compromise her dignity. Mammachi believes that good wives must tolerate their husbands' abusive nature and remain faithful to the vows of marriage. Ammu refuses to follow this way of thinking and takes a stand by divorcing him.

Roy believes that if women are allowed to choose their husbands, it does not mean that women find fulfilment through marriage. It is ultimately a myth. Ammu is the best example of this statement (Lahiri 139). However, unfortunately, her decision makes her return to the same prison, her parental house. Now, her situation is worse than before because she has the burden of

her twins' children, social stigma, and the constant consciousness that by marrying the wrong person, she has wasted the sole opportunity of creating a satisfactory life. Ammu's miserable condition highlights society's strong denial of options to women. In India, women are supposed to live in their fathers' homes and then their husband's homes without having a place of their own. As Ammu gets divorced and returns to her parental house, the secondary status of a daughter is denied. In a patriarchal society, the values, norms, and even laws are different for men and women. Ammu realized it. That is why she does not use Baba's surname on their children's names. Ammu says, "Choosing between her husband's name and her father's name does not give a woman much choice" (Roy 37).

In addition, both Ammu and Chacko are divorced. Nevertheless, nobody questions Chacko for this, and he will get both his and Ammu's portion from his father's property "because a man's divorced status does not compromise his familial or social standing. In sharp contrast, Ammu, as a Christian woman in Kerala in the nineteen sixties, legally has minimal claims to her family's property, and as a divorced woman, must relinquish all her rights to social dignity" (Lahiri 139). Thus, there is no doubt that the patriarchal society systematically established those rules through which they can deprive women of their basic rights, such as the freedom to express themselves, pursue their education as much as they want, do their desired job, and choose their life partner. In this context, Simone de Beauvoir states that man does not establish their individuality. They only focused on controlling a woman and proving their superiority in society. She further says,

Woman is discovered first as wife in the patriarchate, since the supreme creator is male. Before being the mother of the human race, Eve was Adam's companion; she was given to man so that he might possess her and fertilize her as he owns and fertilizes the soil; and

through her he makes all nature his realm...Woman is like the field, and man is like the seed, says the law of Manu... Woman is her husband's prey, his possession (Beauvoir 170).

However, Ammu is tormented by all the male family members, her mother and aunt, Baby Kochamma. Both female figures failed to sympathize with her revolt against the established rules. As Indian women, both Mammachi and Baby Kochamma are deeply rooted in the structures of family, neighborhood and religion, and they work as agents of patriarchal moral norms. Therefore, women play the role of oppressors just as much as men. Although Mammachi is a victim of physical and mental torture by Pappachi, she believes that Ammu needs to preserve her marriage because this is what society expects from a woman. According to Lahiri, "Mammachi's endorsement of the patriarchal moral system of assigning lesser value and rights to women becomes blatantly obvious in her disparate treatments of her son and daughter" (143). Mammachi's loyalty towards the social prestige of her husband's family restricts her motherly sympathy for her daughter. In addition, Baby Kochamma preserves the patriarchal order from her jealousy of Ammu, who has dared to challenge her fate, which Baby Kochamma cannot do. "The only way she can justify her barren, loveless, and compromised existence by supporting gender discrimination and restrictive moral codes, as its collapse will render her accommodation meaningless" (Lahiri 153).

Moreover, not only Ammu but also her kids do not have any right to Ammu's ancestral house. Estha and Rahel's grandparents, grandaunt and uncle considered them a burden. The Ipe family behaves nicely with Chacko's half-English daughter, Sophie Mol, then Estha and Rahel because of her British nationality. Therefore, when Sophie dies, Ammu is unfairly blamed. At Sophie's funeral, Ammu and her children are allowed to attend, but nobody looks at them, which

makes them stand separately from other family members. Chacko takes revenge for his daughter's death from Ammu by banishing her from the parental house and separating her from the children. After Sophie's funeral, Ammu and her children go to the Kottayam police station to counter Baby Kochamma's allegation to Velutha that he has murdered Sophie. In the police station, Inspector Thomas Mathew does not allow Ammu to make a statement. He has misbehaved with Ammu. He says to Ammu that "police know all they needed to know and that the Kottayam Police do not take statements from *veshyas* or their illegitimate children," which shows that women's voice is not considered necessary (Roy 8).

Furthermore, Ammu falls in love with a lower-class man, Velutha, which is her second transgression. Though Velutha is a part of the patriarchy, he rejects the idea of heteronormative masculinity and sexuality, which attracts Ammu. Despite their different social statuses, Ammu and Velutha are victims of unjust social practices. Ammu is victimized because she is a woman, and women are not allowed to make decisions and cannot have a relationship with a lower-class man. On the other hand, Velutha is victimized as he belongs to an Untouchable category. At last, they both tragically die. Ammu is partially responsible for her tragic death. Ammu directly challenges patriarchal norms that wasted her childhood, leading to her tragic end as well as the unstable lives of her children. Ammu's protest would be more viable if she lived in her parental house and protested for her rights by accepting some of the unfair demands of society. Rather than directly challenge the deeply rooted norms of society, Ammu can work for her rights and liberation. In this way, she can better her and her kids' lives.

In India, the class system depends on the caste. The Ipe family practices two religions, Hinduism and Christianity. Although they are Christians, their ancestors followed the caste

system, and the family also follows this tradition. In the novel, Roy presents how one's caste comes with many expectations, boundaries and domination. The members of the Ipe family belong to an upper caste, such as Ammu. People from the upper caste are categorized as Touchable. On the other hand, Ammu's lover, Velutha, belongs to a lower caste, and this is categorized as Untouchable. According to the Hindu caste laws, an upper-caste man or woman cannot marry or develop a love relationship with a lower-caste man or woman. Thus, inter-caste affairs or marriage is highly prohibited in Hindu society. Despite knowing this, Ammu and Velutha break the rules of society. Velutha is a Paravan and Untouchable and three years younger than Ammu. Velutha's father, VellyaPaapen, is an old and loyal servant of the Ipe family. Thus, when he comes to know about his son and Ammu's love affair, he discloses this matter in front of Mammachi despite knowing the consequences. Vellya is aware of Kochamma's anger that if she comes to know about this, she may kill Velutha. Even Vellya offers to kill his son by his hand, which suggests that he is so dedicated to following the social orders that he places social norms above his own blood.

When Velutha was young, he used to come with his father to the Ayemenem House through the back entrance, which was only used for the servants or lower caste people because Pappachi did not allow Paravans into the house as other Touchable. The Untouchables are not allowed to touch anything which Touchable touched. Even Velutha and his father are only allowed to enter the Ipe house when Mammachi needs to mend or install something. Moreover,

Vellya Paapen, was an Old World Paravan. He had seen the Crawling Backwards Days...with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's

footprint...they could not walk on the public roads...had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath (Roy 73-76).

These rules show the pathetic condition of the Untouchables. The rules are set in this way so the lower caste people cannot come in contact with the upper caste. As Ammu and her twins, Velutha is also marginalized.

Velutha is more perseverant, efficient, and talented than any other Paravan. He completed his schooling and high school at the Untouchable's School. Mammachi hired him as a carpenter at the factory and put him in charge of general maintenance. Nevertheless, the other Touchable factory workers do not support this decision because "according to them, Paravans are not meant to be carpenters. To keep them happy, Mammachi pays Velutha less than she will be a Touchable carpenter but more than she will a Paravan" (Roy 77). Mammachi believes that allowing a Paravan to work with the Touchable and allowing them to touch the things they touch is a big advantage for Velutha.

Although Velutha is a Paravan and an Untouchable, he is skilled, walks confidently, and does not bow down his head, which makes him different from other Untouchables. He does not see his caste as an obstacle to his way of establishing his own identity. He offers suggestions without being asked as well as disregards suggestions without appearing to rebel. Velutha's father says these attributes are considered insolence in a Paravan (Needham 374). Velutha does not consider him an Untouchable, which is troublesome for the Touchable because if Velutha keeps vocal about his desires and life, the other Untouchables will start to cross the boundaries society has made, hampering the caste system. Despite being part of the patriarchy, Velutha rejects the idea of hetero-normative masculinity and sexuality, which also attracts Ammu.

5.2 Gender Discrimination:

In the novel *The God of Small Things*, Roy presents the heinous practice of the patriarchal society, which is gender discrimination. In the Ipe family, the head of the house is Ammu and Chacko's father, Pappachi. For him, his wife Mammachi is a puppet in his hand. He can control and impose his decisions on her, and she should always obey him. From the first day of their marriage, Pappachi used to "beat her with a brass flower vase" (Roy 47). When Mammachi and Pappachi were in Vienna, Mammachi spent her time learning the violin. Nevertheless, her violin lessons were discontinued by Pappachi when her teacher told him that "his wife was exceptionally talented and, in his opinion, potentially concert class" (Roy 50). Pappachi's action suggests he cannot see his wife being known for her talent and work. After Pappachi retired from Government service in Delhi and returned to Ayemenem, Mammachi started making pickles commercially to support her family. For this reason, Mammachi was very busy with her job. Pappachi could not tolerate the "ignominy of retirement" (Roy 47). He was jealous of Mammachi's younger age as well as the sudden attention she was getting for the pickle business. As a result, Pappachi used to beat Mammachi more frequently to satisfy his insecurity.

Though Mammachi is blind, Pappachi does not "help her with the pickle-making, because he does not consider this job suitable for a high-ranking ex-government official" (Roy 47). However, the physical abuse does not stop because of Mammachi's visual disability. Mammachi never raised her voice against Pappachi's domination. Since Mammachi is visually disabled, she may think herself inferior and vulnerable to Pappachi. That is why she is grateful to him for marrying her and never tries to raise her voice against his abusive behavior. Mammachi accepts all the decisions made by Pappachi without any hesitation. Mammachi's subservient attitude will eventually affect Ammu's life. Throughout her life, Mammachi witnessed that men have the authority to make all the decisions for women. Therefore, she started to make her

daughter follow this by becoming an agent of the patriarchy. She treated her daughter Ammu and son Chacko differently. When Chacko married a waitress named Margaret Kachamma, Mammachi accepted it because her son chose Margaret, and she was British. Later, when Chacko got divorced, it was also accepted. Mammachi always prioritizes Chacko rather than social obligations. However, when Ammu marries Baba by her own choice and later gets divorced because he tried to make her sleep with his English boss, no one in the Ipe family welcomes her back into the Ayemenem house: “Ammu's father does not believe her story – not because he thinks well of Ammu's husband, but simply because he does not believe that any Englishman will covet another man's wife” (Roy 42). In India, a male-dominated society can accept a man who takes a divorce but never accept a woman who takes a divorce on her own.

Moreover, “Mammachi is aware of Chacko's libertine relationships with the women in the factory,” but she has no objection (Roy 168). Instead, she says that “he cannot help having a Man's need” (Roy 168). The illegal relationships of Chacko are defined as man's needs. Both Mammachi and Baby Kochamma do not see “any contradiction between Chacko’s Marxist mind and feudal libido. They only worry about the Naxalites, who has been known to force men from Good Families to marry servant girls whom they have make pregnant” (Roy 168). They are afraid to lose their “family’s Good Name forever.” For this reason, Mammachi plans to build a separate entrance for Chacko’s room to keep his illegal activities secret (Roy 189). On the other hand, Ammu's love relationship with an Untouchable named Velutha is forbidden, which presents the double standard of society. The relationship between Ammu and Velutha and Velutha and the twins are built based on love. However, society is unable to see their unconditional love. According to Mammachi, “Ammu has defiled generations of breeding and brought the family to its knees. For generations to come, forever now, people would point at

them at weddings and funerals. At baptisms and birthday parties” (Roy 258). Mammachi always considers Chacko above any social rules and regulations, but when it is about Ammu, she chooses social rules rather than her daughter. This type of hypocrisy suggests that in the patriarchal society, a man can lead his life the way he wants, but when it comes to a woman, she cannot do the same thing. The partiality of society is always present.

Even women are deprived of their educational rights. While Chacko’s education is considered essential for him, Ammu’s education is viewed as a waste of money regarding her higher education. According to Pappachi, “a college education is an unnecessary expense for a girl”. Besides, he has to give a heavy dowry of Ammu’s wedding. Therefore, it is better to save money for her dowry. Ammu is always deprived of the rights which are easily accessible to Chacko. The Ipe family considered her a burden on their head and never gave her the opportunity to establish herself.

5.3 Financial Security:

In the novel *The God of Small Things*, Roy shows that female characters such as Mammachi, Ammu, and Baby Kochamma do not have property rights. In the nineteenth century, women were excluded from property ownership in their parents’ and in-laws' houses, which continued till the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Men believe that women are their responsibility, so there is no need to give women the property rights. Men also do not allow women to be educated because they want them to be financially unstable, and the instability of women automatically puts them in a submissive position. According to Simone de Beauvoir,

History has shown us that men have always kept in their hands all concrete powers; since the earliest days of the patriarchate, they have thought best to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes of laws have been set up against her; and thus, she has been

definitely established as the Other. This arrangement suited the economic interests of the males. (159)

The protagonist of Roy's novel, Ammu, suffers from social and economic problems. Ammu's status as a divorcee and her lack of property rights makes her suffer both emotionally and financially. Ammu's family forced her to leave her natal house; she is separated from her children and, ultimately, left to die alone. Moreover, Rose Casey states that

Despite significant amendments to matrimonial law and inheritance law, most notably in the Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act (1937) and the Hindu Succession Act (1956), Indian women have continued to hold only minimal property rights for much of the twentieth century, being only partially and problematically conceptualized as 'individuals' within the law. (386)

Ammu's situation is not different from other Indian women. She does not get her legal rights from either her parental house or in-laws. According to the 1960s matrimonial law, Ammu continues to depend upon her abusive ex-husband. As their divorce is granted, Ammu does not get any right on their marital property; she is entitled only to maintenance payments which she never receives. In addition, India's gendered inheritance law, which is controlled by patriarchy, prohibited Ammu from inheriting immovable property (as land) from her parental house. However, Ammu's brother, Chacko, legally gets his ownership of parental property based on the same law. In India, women only get "*stridhan*" or dowry as their portion of their natal property, which is a smaller portion of the land (Casey 387). Besides, *stridhanis* easily moveable, and the maximum time it is forcefully kept by the in-laws. That is what happened with Ammu. Therefore, *stridhan* cannot provide financial security for Ammu. Ultimately, she remains economically dependent on others. Ammu's economic dependence brings suffering not only for

Ammu but also for her children. According to Baby Kochamma, Ammu's twins have "no rights" on their grandmother's house and their property because their aunt considers them as "doomed" and "fatherless waifs" (Roy 45). She also says that the twins are "Half-Hindu Hybrids whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry" (Roy 45). Besides, Baby Kochamma tells Ammu that after the marriage of a girl, she has no right to the parental house. She will not even get any support from her parents. Nevertheless, if the girl is a divorcee, she has no position in society, her in-laws, or in the parental house. The position of a married girl from an inter-community love marriage such as Ammu is the worst of all of them.

Moreover, Ammu's mother, Mammachi, had established a pickle business, which was small but profitable. After Pappachi's death, Chacko returned from Oxford University and took control of Mammachi's pickle factory. As Chacko is now the only man in the family, Mammachi has no objection to Chacko's authority in the family and business as well as Mammachi believes that Chacko is one of the cleverest men in India because he "goes to Oxford" (Roy 56). Ammu tells Mammachi that "going to Oxford does not necessarily make a person clever" (Roy 56). However, Chacko has registered the business "as a partnership and informed Mammachi that she was the sleeping partner" or a silent partner, which foreshadows Chacko's exclusion of his mother from all the operational decisions but ensures that Mammachi can continue her financial involvement (Roy 57). This systematic setup only benefits Chacko, but not for long. His inability to run a business leads to huge financial losses. Thus, he "mortgages the family's rice field" without consulting with his mother to protect the sinking business (Roy 57). Mammachi remains only a participant in the business without getting any economic benefit, but she again has no objection.

In the factory, Ammu does as much work as Chacko. Though Chacko knows that Ammu has the potential to run the factory profitably, he never realizes her contribution and never leaves a chance to refer to the factory as “my factory, my pineapple, my pickles. This is the case because legally, Ammu, as a daughter, has no claim to the property” (Roy 57). According to Chacko, Ammu has “no Locusts Stand I” or no place to stand (Roy 57). He also says that ‘what’s yours is mine and what’s mine is also mine’, which implies that legally, Ammu has no right to act against her brother because the 1960s property law does not give women the inheritance right (Casey 386). In this way, women are denied the opportunity to become self-sufficient by getting involved in financial activity.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Although *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The God of Small Things* are set in different countries, both novels have many similarities, demonstrating that the hardship of women does not have any geographical boundaries. The domination of men over women is similar in both continents, Europe and Asia. In these novels, there are female characters who do not feel the need to protest for their rights. Instead, they accept male domination. For example, in Hurston's novel, Nanny raises Janie believing that women need the support of men to be respected in this patriarchal society, and this is only possible through marriage. Rather than inspiring her to follow her typical ideology, she can show the path to becoming self-dependent and develop her own identity, which will also bring respect for Janie.

Similarly, in Roy's novel, Mammachi accepts Pappachi and Chacko's suppressive behavior. She believes that as a woman, she must follow her husband's orders. Thus, she cannot accept Ammu's rebellious behavior. In this sense, Nanny and Mammachi; and Janie and Ammu's ideologies are the same. Nanny and Mammachi only want men's protection. For them, it does not matter what this protection will cost. Besides, in both novels, women are women's big enemy in achieving self-authority. On the other hand, Janie and Ammu do not want to lead their life under restrictions. They choose to lead their life for themselves and embrace their freedom by crossing the boundaries of social norms and choosing their loved ones.

However, despite the different social contexts, the sufferings of women have not changed. Nevertheless, due to race, caste, social class, religion and culture, the way of oppression also varied, which differentiates the two novels from each other. In Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, women are victims of racial oppression. Due to their black skin tone, white considers black women as their slaves, and they can do whatever they want. Black

women are oppressed not only by white men and women but also by black men. Black women are abused by their husbands because black men are abused by their white bosses, and they burst their anger on their wives. This is how the oppression carried on. On the other hand, in Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things*, Ammu is oppressed by social class, caste and religion. According to Ammu's family and caste-conscious society, Ammu cannot fall in love with an Untouchable. Besides, society does not accept inter-community marriage.

The paper concludes with a proper description of society and class discrimination, gender roles and the importance of financial security. Even though there are enough research articles about social expectations, social structure, class discrimination, and gender discrimination in both novels, there are not enough research materials about the importance of financial security. However, in both novels, more research needs to be conducted about the importance of financial security. This paper has filled the gaps to some extent and provided new dimensions for future research.

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