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## "The Un/Touchables:" Quest for Citizenship in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things and Indra Sinha's Animal's People

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**Seton Hall University**

**College of Arts and Sciences**

**“The Un/Touchables:” Quest for Citizenship in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* and Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People***

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Master of Arts

In

The Department of English

Seton Hall University

May 2022

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Seton Hall University  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Department of English

**SETON HALL UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE**  
**Department of English**

**APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL M.A. THESIS**

**Mahreen Shahzadi** has successfully completed and made required modifications to the text of her thesis for submission for the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature during this Spring Semester 2022:

**THESIS COMMITTEE**

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### **Abstract**

This paper argues that Ammu and Velutha, in *The God of Small Things* and Animal in *Animal's People* are not seen as productive citizens of the nation because of their marginalization, which results in their status as second-class citizens. However, Ammu, Velutha, and Animal resist second-class status by challenging the heteropatriarchal nation, rejecting its limited definition of gender, caste, sexuality, and citizenship.

“The Un/Touchables:” Quest for Citizenship in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* and  
Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People*

The term “subaltern” was first coined by Antonio Gramsci to identify the social groups and individuals who are generally outcasted from society. They are excluded from the larger discourse of the nation by being marginalized in class, gender, religion, and race. Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak expands on Gramsci’s definition by stating that subaltern is not just “a class word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who’s not getting a piece of the pie,” instead “everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern – a space of difference” (qtd in. Kock 45). Drawing on both Gramsci and Spivak’s definition, I posit that the “untouchables” who occupy the “space of difference” and are marginalized from social and economic matters fit the definition of the subaltern. The Untouchables also known as Dalits are not only designated the lowest caste of India, but Susan Strehle argues that they are also “poor workers, the crippled, the maimed, the mad. They include those racially darker, closer to the Dravidian roots of South India” ...and women, who are considered the small things in a patriarchal household” (Strehle 126). These individuals are neglected, overlooked, oppressed, and denied a voice in the nation. M Jacqui Alexander expands on this discourse in her informative essay “Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen” as she argues that citizenship is not guaranteed to “just (any) body,” but is rather selective, premised on heterosexuality and primarily within hetero masculinity (Alexander 7). In essence, she argues that “not just (any) *body* can be a citizen anymore, for *some* bodies (non-heterosexuals) have been marked by the state as non-procreative, in pursuit of sex only for pleasure, a sex that is non-productive of babies and non-economic gain” (Alexander 6). Although Alexander is specifically speaking for non-heterosexuals, her argument extends to include any marginalized “other” who is marked by the

state as unproductive and considered “a threat to the nation as they fall outside the realm of hetero masculinity or heterosexual family.” (Alexander 20). Drawing on Alexander’s theorization, this paper argues that Ammu and Velutha, in *The God of Small Things* and Animal in *Animal’s People* are not seen as productive citizens of the nation because of their marginalization, which results in their status as second-class citizens. However, Ammu, Velutha, and Animal resist second-class status by challenging the heteropatriarchal nation, rejecting its limited definition of citizenship. Ammu and Velutha use their bodies as tools to debunk the caste and patriarchal system; they deconstruct the rigid social categorization of class and gender through their love affair while simultaneously revealing police corruption and fraudulent political party leaders. In *Animal’s People*, Animal also finds other ways of belonging: by debunking colonial mentality through his embodiment of animalistic behavior, rejecting social categorizations of identification, challenging the concept of normative human body and western civility, and presenting his own humanity through his humane treatment of Anjali and Nisha, his fellow female colonized natives. Animal affirms his identity as “The one and only Animal,” not as a symbol of human deprivation but to rethink humanity and belonging in other ways. Animal, Ammu, and Velutha, are denied citizenship because they pose a threat to the masculine nation; they challenge the nation’s limited definition of gender, caste, and sexuality.

*The God of Small Things* takes place in Kerala, India, and focuses on a small, multi-generational family in Ayemenem in the Kottayam District of Kerala. The events are told through the perspective of fraternal twins, Rahel and Esthappen. Through this family, Roy details the failure of India to liberate its marginalized people from the “paws of caste systems, patriarchal traditions, and the mimicry of colonial cultures” (Nazari 200). More importantly, she reveals that women and lower caste members are the constant victims of these oppressive

systems as Ammu and Velutha are in this novel. Although post-independence India is still consumed with class biases, religious prejudices, and gender discrimination, Ammu, and Velutha resist caste and patriarchal system by transcending “Love Laws,” that define who should be loved. Simultaneously, they expose the corrupt Indian policemen and the fraudulent political leader of Marxist party.

Velutha is a member of the “Paravan” class, the lowest class in the caste system that is denied basic human rights and performs menial jobs. Roy shares that in earlier times, they were “not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed” (Roy 71). Mammachi, Ammu’s mother, even remembered a time when Paravans were expected to crawl backward with a broom to sweep away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not accidentally step on their footprints (71). Velutha’s place in society is defined through his caste that hinders his ability to move beyond his social standing. He challenges the system of caste and class by succeeding in his profession as a carpenter after attending workshops offered by a German carpenter, becoming an accomplished carpenter with his “own set of carpentry tool and a distinctly German design sensibility” (72). He is more educated and skilled than other Paravans and was hired as the factory carpenter, in charge of general maintenance. Unfortunately, his caste status prevents him from gaining equal footing exemplified in Mammachi paying him “less than she would a Touchable carpenter” (74). Even though Velutha tries to elevate his social standing through his career, his unequal pay signifies his restricted status and affirms the dominating influence of the caste system in Indian society.

Due to his marginalized status in society, Velutha joins the Marxist Party because their ideology of a classless state is intriguing and promising. He becomes devoted to the party by participating in their protests and marches that “demand better wages and conditions for poor workers and an end to the use of caste names to address Untouchables” (138). Velutha hopes to eradicate the caste system which restricts his citizenship; he unravels the hypocrisy of the alleged democratic party in helping its poor and weak, when in reality they are looking after their own selfish interests. Fahimeh Nazari and Hossein Pirnajmuddin aptly explain the duplicity of the party by revealing that those who propagate Marxism “are the very members of the bourgeoisie claiming that they are striving for the advancement of the minorities’ rights whereas they are apprehensive of any losing their own advantages” (202). This sanctimonious action is exemplified by the leader of the Marxist Party, Comrade Pillai, who publicly promotes the egalitarianism of minorities and subaltern groups but refuses to aid Velutha in his time of need. When Velutha is falsely accused of raping Ammu, an upper-caste woman, he seeks protection from Comrade Pillai as he believes in the party’s ideology of representing marginalized groups. However, the duplicity of the Party is evident when Pillai refuses to help Velutha, justifying that “it is not in the Party’s interests to take up such matters” because “individual’s interest is subordinate to the organization’s interest” (Roy 271). Pillai portrays himself as a humanitarian, with a Marxist ideology but he still upholds Hindu traditions as the caste system more prevalent than other doctrines. He has adopted, in Maria Redondo’s words, a “communist ideology ‘which centers on worker’s rights and working-class revolution only in so far as it secures (their) position of power’” (Redondo 77). He furthers his own political agenda because he knows that he can benefit greatly from Velutha’s death rather than his life and refuses to feel guilty for symbolically signing his death warrant. Pillai ideally believes “it is not entirely his fault that he

lived in a society where a man's death could be more profitable than his had even been" (Roy 267). The party raises its voices in protest after Velutha's death in police custody, but during his life, it silenced him. The issue of martyrdom is significant here as a person's death is considered more profitable than his actual life, and Velutha ended up dying for a nation that failed to provide him with basic human rights. Nazari and Pirnajmuddin argue that this hypocrisy makes "the grand narrative discourse of Marxism as an empty term throughout the novel which takes no notice of the real plight of the disenfranchised's daily battered experiences" (203). The bourgeois have misconstrued the initial goals of the movement for their own economic and social advantage. Velutha reveals the hypocrisy of the Marxist party as it was constructed by upper-class elitists to be used as a front for their capitalistic and socioeconomic agendas. Dismayed by society's oppressions, Velutha decides to challenge them by transgressing the Love Laws with Ammu.

As a woman, Ammu also lacks social or financial standing in Ayemenem, or as she justly refers to the town, a "wonderful male chauvinist society" (Roy 56). Ammu's upbringing in a male-centric household only provides her with a limited option upon completion of her studies, marriage. Ironically, Ammu dreamed of getting married as it served as an escape from her parents' repressive house; so, when the first man proposed to her, she accepted, happy to leave her oppressive environment. However, her escape via marriage was short-lived due to her husband's abuse and alcoholism, forcing her to return home, "except now she had two young children. And no more dreams" (42). Ammu's status as a woman, a second-class citizen, is further complicated by divorce; as a divorced daughter, "especially from a love marriage, according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all" (45). Ammu loses social, economic, and financial protection after her divorce which signifies women's limited rights to

property. Ammu's divorce nor did her marriage permit her any ownership of their marital property, nor does she have a legal stake in her family house. Rose Casey explores this issue in his article by arguing that women had limited property rights in India until the new legislation came into effect in 2013, which finally gave women "the right to a share in marital property upon divorce or separation" (381). Similarly, Casey discloses that women were excluded from inheriting family property under the Indian inheritance law until 2005 (382). Therefore, Ammu, as a woman in the 1960s has no rights to the family property, leaving her financially destitute after her divorce. She becomes co-dependent on her family to provide for her and her children; to challenge her restricted place in home and society, Ammu disrupts purity laws by having an affair with a lower-caste man, Velutha. As a result, when Chacko, her brother, exiles Ammu after her relationship is exposed, she has no choice but to comply because the Indian inheritance law does not give her the right to ownership. On the other hand, inheritance laws provide Chacko with a financial stake in the house and the family business; as a first-class citizen, he is afforded with unlimited rights of ownership and control while Ammu's second-class status prohibit her property ownership and limit her stature. Even when Chacko returns home from England as a divorcé, he immediately inherits the family business from his mother, Mammachi. Although Mammachi is registered as a partner, he duly informs her that "that she was the Sleeping Partner" (Roy 55), registering women's dispossession, their lack of property rights and by default, citizen rights. Moreover, Ammu is forbidden from engaging in any sexual acts, while these restrictions are not placed upon Chacko. Rather, Chacko openly indulges in affairs that are overlooked by everyone, even Mammachi who he deprived of property rights, defends his actions to Baby Kochamma: "He can't help having a Man's Needs" (Roy 160). Her defense of him extends to her approving a separate entrance to his room, disallowing anyone from

witnessing his affairs. Chacko is afforded unlimited opportunities and rights in the masculine nation, but these privileges do not extend to Ammu. Her exile, which was enforced due to India's gendered inheritance law, also becomes the catalyst for Ammu's death as she died alone in a grimly room from an asthma attack without any medical assistance. Casey comments on Ammu's death, arguing that Ammu "dies, not because she 'wast[es] herself away into an unnecessary death...but because contemporary property law leaves her homeless, forcing her to live in squalor and without necessary medical treatment" (382). Ammu's death is an example of women's legal, financial, and economic vulnerability; it identifies the state's neglect and its maltreatment of women who do not fall into the realm of hetero masculinity. Thus, Ammu decides to challenge the nation's prejudiced laws and her limited status by having an affair as a divorced woman.

Challenging patriarchal notions of purity, Ammu and Velutha's affair ironically is based on pure love, unrestricted and ungoverned by class hierarchies. Undeterred by her "lowly" status as a divorced mother of a daughter, Velutha's affection for her and her daughter is palpable as is Ammu's physical attraction to him:

(She) saw the ridges of muscle on Velutha's stomach grow taut and rise under his skin like the divisions on a slab of chocolates. She wondered at how his body had changed – so quietly, from a flat-muscled boy's body into a man's body. Contoured and hard. A swimmer's body. A swimmer-carpenter's body. Polished with a high-wax body polish.

He had high cheekbones and a white, sudden smile. (Roy 167)

Velutha's lower caste status has been used as a form of demasculinization to deny him a place in the male-dominated nation. However, here, Ammu humanizes him by extolling his physical and sexual attributes; she did not look at Velutha as a "Paravan" but simply as a desirable man.

Ammu was the only one in society who looked overlooked the labels to appreciate Velutha's humanity, how his potency is based on his craft as a carpenter. She elevates him from the margins of society by not judging Velutha based on his job or social class as imperialist society did, rather she recognized how those categories had defined him: she "understood the quality of his beauty. How his labor had shaped him. How the wood he fashioned had fashioned him. Each plank he planted, each nailed he drove, each thing he made had molded him" (316). Unlike Chacko or Ammu's ex-husband, Velutha's masculinity is not contingent upon his physicality or sexuality. Chacko's masculinity is determined through his domination of the family business without his mother's consent and through his one-night stands; similarly, Ammu's ex-husband's masculinity is portrayed through his physical abuse of Ammu and his vile suggestion for her to sleep with his boss to get rehired. In contrast to both men, Velutha's humanity is shaped by the hardships he faced and the menial jobs he performed, as they had "left its stamp on him. Had given him his strength, his supple grace" (316). His masculinity is presented through his genuine love for his fellow subalterns and his determination to fight for their equal rights. Lisa Lau and Ana Mendes comment that Ammu regards her lover with some degree of wonder for being anchored so deep in his world, mostly because she feels alienated from her own world (11). Velutha's love for his people motivates him to join the Marxist Party that unfortunately results in his death. His masculinity, demonstrated through his humane treatment for others, subverts his demasculinization by society.

Ammu does not have a group of people to belong to, aside from her children, so she finds that belonging with Velutha, sexually and politically; for Ammu is equally attracted to Velutha's politics which correlates with her view of equal treatment for all under the law. It is only after her daughter, Rahel, recognizes Velutha in a Marxist march that Ammu's admiration and respect

for his selflessness intensifies. Susan Strehle points out his self-sacrifice, his fight for a cause impressed Ammu and “marks the beginning of interest, as Velutha brings his masculine anger to public and political action” (141). Ammu expresses her desire for Velutha’s politics while watching him, she had “hoped that it had been him that Rahel saw in the march. She hoped it had been him that had raised his flag and knotted his arm in anger. She hoped that under his careful cloak of cheerfulness he housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against” (Roy 167). Ammu’s own political views are presented through this statement as she wishes Velutha is also enraged against their systemized society or “ordered world” as she was. Brinda Bose affirms this argument by arguing that “Ammu is not dismissive of Velutha’s red politics but sees in its inherent anger a possibility of relating to Velutha’s mind, not just his body” (64). Ammu’s desire for Velutha speaks for more than her sexuality as it also suggests her political views. However, unlike Velutha, Ammu cannot protest publicly in a march, so she presents her political views through her affair. Ammu and Velutha both fall in the category of second-class citizens as they have been denied citizenship due to their gender and caste status. Their politics speak to their desire to challenge these repressive systems through their unforbidden relationship.

Simultaneously, when Velutha catches Ammu’s gaze, he also noticed that she was an attractive woman, although his desirability for Ammu was contingent upon how she viewed him. Nazari and Pirnajmuddin emphasize the importance of their first exchange by stating that the “first time he (Velutha) perceives his common humanity is when he catches Ammu’s gaze” (202). In that glance, Velutha noticed things he had not considered before; he remembered that “when he gave her gifts, they no longer needed to be offered flat on the palms of his hands so that she wouldn’t have to touch him. His boats and boxes. His little windmills” (168). This was

because Ammu did not look at Velutha as a “disgusting Paravan,” the way the imperialist society views him, but as a desirable man. She looked at him without the societal labels, as he did her; the tags had fallen away, and pure humanity and desire prevailed. In that one glance, “history was wrong-footed, caught off guard,” which signifies that both characters saw one another through a different lens, not as an upper-caste Touchable woman or a lower-caste Untouchable man. This exchange traumatizes both characters, even though it only takes a moment; the reason Brinda Bose explains is because “they are the sources of alternative revolutions” (Bose 65). Velutha was shaking when he put down Ammu’s daughter and Ammu was shaking when she went back to the verandah because both characters knew they were going to cause a revolution through their union.

The chapter of their sexual act is titled “The Cost of Living” which implies that Ammu and Velutha understood the consequences of their affair, and they were willing to die for their principles. The theme of martyrdom is evident once again when Velutha is crossing the river to get to Ammu on the other side. Velutha knew that by crossing the river, he was entering his own annihilation; but he did it regardless because the crossing also symbolizes his eternal freedom. Redondo supports this claim by arguing that “the river functions symbolically as the space in which Velutha can be free, unrestrained by the normative community, the space where the law ceases to operate” (Redondo 80). The crossing is a physical representation of his transgression as the other side of the river is a piece of land where Velutha is a first-class citizen. He is liberated to follow his own desires and needs regardless of societal laws; he wasn’t called an “Untouchable” or a “Paravan” in this free space but simply a man without any social categorization. Likewise, as Ammu saw Velutha walking from the river towards her, she also knew “that the world they stood in was his. That he belonged to it. That it belonged to him. The

water. The mud. The tress. The fish. The stars. He moved so easily through it” (Roy 316). Once again, Ammu admired the way Velutha belonged to his surroundings, nature spoke to him because it was his land, his home. Velutha had been living by the river since he was a teenager, he was a native and a first-class citizen of this small portion of land: “on his back, a leaf-shapes birthmark suggests his closeness to nature” (Strehle 142). Thus, their union is only possible in this free space, which is only irrevocably theirs.

The “Love Laws” were transcended by Ammu and Velutha when they made their own choice about whom to love. As their bodies came together, it was the only tangible thing that allowed them a sense of citizenship because they accepted each other regardless of the labels that society had placed on them. Their union, “skin to skin, her brownness against his blackness. Her softness against his hardness,” also symbolized the intermixture of race and caste (316). Through their intimate act, they created a whole new world, a haven where both subalterns were seen, heard, and loved. Velutha’s “untouchable” body was touched and loved by Ammu: “His Particular Paravan smell that so disgusted Baby Kochamma, Ammu put out her tongue and tasted it, in the hollow of his throat. On the lobe of his ear” (317). Ammu looked at him and touched him as a desirable man, as a heterogeneous man who belonged in the society as an equal citizen; whose social status wasn’t used to define or restrain him. Strehle confirms that “the lavish attention paid by Ammu to Velutha’s body removes it from the world of labor, so definitive of caste rank, and places it in the realm of pleasure and desire” (142). Velutha achieves citizenship because he finds belonging on that specific piece of land with a woman who accepted him. That acceptance was a sign of belonging which Velutha had been craving from a younger age and both characters achieved in that moment by debunking society’s social systems.

Ammu gained citizenship through this act by answering her sexual desires, which are considered a danger to the state. Alexander explains that women are imperative to the state only through reproducing, which reconfigures their desires and subjectivity and links the “nation’s survival to women’s sexual organs. This is what Geraldine Heng calls...a nationalism generated from the productive source of the womb” (qtd in Alexander 14). Any woman who cannot benefit the nation economically (through reproduction) is considered a threat to the state (Alexander 14). Ammu challenges her second-class status by having an affair with Velutha for non-economical purposes. She satisfies her sexual desires for her own pleasure and dismantles the restriction placed on her sexuality as a divorced woman. In that one genuine moment of intimacy, “seven years of oblivion lifted off her and flew into the shadows on weighty, quacking wings” (Roy 319). The wings are also symbolic of the freedom Ammu felt after her intimate act with Velutha, it allowed her to be free from the restraints placed on her gender and fly freely with her sexuality. Since her sexual autonomy is considered a threat to the nation’s representation of heterosexual families, she challenges that notion by pursuing this relationship for her own sexual pleasure.

Unfortunately, through Velutha and Ammu’s death, Roy also reveals how the subalterns are further silenced when they rebel against the state. The affair is revealed by Velutha’s own father, Vellya Paapen because he firmly believes in the caste system. He even offers to kill his own son to revert the broken social order. Through father and son, Roy presents the dichotomy of the old and new; while Velutha hopes to eradicate the caste system, his father wishes to regress structure in society. Correspondingly, Ammu’s family places the blame on Velutha by accusing him of raping her. Baby Kochamma goes to the police station and misrepresents their relationship by making Velutha out to be a “sex-crazed Paravan;” she enforces an imperialist

mindset by using colonial stereotypes to misrepresent Velutha as an eroticized male. She knows that her lie will be easily accepted because the inspector, Thomas Matthew, is also a “Touchable:” “he has a Touchable wife, two Touchable daughters-whole Touchable generation writing in their Touchable wombs” (245). Caste hierarchy is once again presented as the predominant system in the social scale of Kerala. Inspector Matthew’s disdain for the lower caste prompts him to convict Velutha without any circumstantial evidence. His “investigation” only consisted of ensuring whether Velutha had any political support because he “did not intend to risk any run-ins with the Marxist government” (248). When it is confirmed by Pillai that Velutha did not have any patronage from the Communist Party, Mathew finalizes his decision to kill Velutha. His lack of interrogation alludes to the dereliction of duty in the police force as the systems of caste and political parties are above law and order.

Through this narrative, Velutha presents a critique of police corruption and the caste system, both of which are imposed by the state. Yumna Siddiqi elaborates on the theme of law enforcement corruption by arguing that “Velutha’s murder is not, in the last instance, an act of private, domestic revenge or a party-political elimination; rather, it is carried out by the village policeman as a representative of the historical forces of order. In the final analysis, she reveals the state to be the brutal enforcer of these hierarchies” (170). Since Velutha and Ammu rebelled against the state for their citizenship, the state retaliated through brutal violence that is carried out by the Touchable Policemen. Velutha’s death is not told from his perspective, instead, the narrative is recounted by the “Posse of Touchable Policemen” who were committing the act. Siddiqi infers that the police are not described as “brutal or cruel, but as dutiful functionaries meting out a just measure of pain” (Siddiqi 171). They are used as henchmen to restructure history on the right path and presented in a positive connotation to insinuate that they are merely

carrying out the state's order as dutiful bureaucrats and not violent enforcers. Through their representation as conscientious workers who "acted with economy, not frenzy. Efficiency, not anarchy. Responsibility, not hysteria," it is accentuated that the state is the main aggressor, and the policemen are merely its agents, asked to use fear and violence to restructure the social order.

Police corruption is further recognized in Ammu's encounter with Inspector Mathew. He asserts his male dominance to reinforce the gender and class system which was disrupted by Ammu and Velutha's affair. When Ammu informs the policeman that there has been a mistake in accusing Velutha and that she wishes to make a statement, he refuses to listen to her by stating that "the Kottayam Police didn't take statements from *veshyas* (whores) or their illegitimate children" (Roy 9). Through this assertion, he is imposing two things; firstly, he is taking away Ammu's voice as a female subaltern and denying her freedom of speech. Secondly, he is demeaning Ammu by using offensive terminology because he knows the truth about Ammu and Velutha's affair. He knows that there was consent involved, but he despises Ammu for breaking the boundaries of caste, gender, and sexual desires. Thus, by calling her a "veshya," he tries to oppress her back into the role of a submissive Indian woman; he treats her as a "commodity or sexual object, a label given further when her breasts are compared" (Lutz 59). The inspector enforces his superiority by telling her, "If I were you...I'd go home quietly" while tapping "her breasts with his baton. Gently. Tap. Tap. As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket. Pointing out the ones he wanted picked and delivered" (Roy 9-10). Through these actions, the inspector, in Siddique's words is invoking "a simile that is a cliché in India – a desirable woman's breasts are like ripe mangoes – but gives it a macabre overtone by taking it to the logical extreme of commodification and evoking a picture of the mangoes/breasts being picked, packed and delivered" (Siddiqi 172). Inspector Mathew is sexually objectifying Ammu by

commodifying her body parts to fruits. He also extorts this degradation by touching her with his baton, which is an “object that is both an instrument of the state’s repressive function and a phallic icon” (172). His clear intent is to publicly demean her while enforcing his male-authoritative rule; it was not “a policeman’s spontaneous brutishness on his part. He knew exactly what he was doing. It was a premeditated gesture, calculated to humiliate and terrorize her. An attempt to instill order into a world gone wrong” (Roy 246). As a servant of the state, like the group of police officers, his job was to instill fear and order back in society. He reorders the caste and the patriarchal system by treating and looking at “Ammu as an object of consumption” (Lutz 59). Inspector Mathew also knows whom “he could pick on and whom he couldn’t;” even though Ammu is a Touchable just like Inspector Mathew, she was inferior to him because she slept with an Untouchable. Thus, Mathew needed to revert the social hierarchy in order which he did by verbally harassing Ammu. During this encounter, behind the inspector, on a red and blue board, certain words were listed:

Politeness.

Obedience.

Loyalty.

Intelligence.

Courtesy.

Efficiency. (Roy 10)

The words describe all the characteristics that should be embodied in a policeman, but Inspector Mathew lacks all of them because his job is not to be the protector *of* the state but an enforcer of the social structures *for* the state.

Systems such as caste, law enforcement, political parties, and Love Laws are all used to dominate the land and control human behavior. Regarding these rigid systems, Bose observes that “Roy’s novel focuses on the lines that one cannot, or should not, cross—and yet those are the very lines that do get crossed, if only once in a while – and then that makes for the politics of those extra-ordinary stories” (61). The person who crosses these boundaries faces the full force of state violence, as presented through the death of Velutha and Ammu. However, the text does not end in their demise but rather their beginning. The last chapter of the novel purposely consists of their sexual union to allow the subalterns the final say in their narrative, and that voice is an optimistic one. The novel ends when Ammu starts to go back to her house, but she turns back and says to Velutha, “Naaley. Tomorrow” (321). Logically, Ammu is telling Velutha that she will see him again tomorrow in their rendezvous spot but symbolically it also refers to the hopeful tomorrow where more subalterns will also use their voices and bodies to revert their second-class citizen status. Susan Strehle expands on the ending by claiming that Ammu and Velutha’s union presents that if “reciprocal passionate desire can be fulfilled between a woman of good family and an outcaste Paravan, the version of home/land protected in India for centuries crashes into dust. This hope speaks in the novel’s last words, ‘Tomorrow’” (Strehle 152). Ammu and Velutha both have left their footprints by defiling the Love Laws so they hope that tomorrow there will be more “untouchables” like them who will transcend boundaries and challenge the rigid social systems of society. By ending the novel with the only tangible thing that provided both characters equality and acceptance, it is conclusive that Ammu and Velutha were successful

in their quest for citizenship as they crossed the boundaries for their own sexual desires, but also made political statements which they had been denied due to their marginalization. Thus, they made these statements, not only through their bodies but also with the last voice in the narrative.

A similar character to Velutha, named Animal, is also on a quest for citizenship in Sinha's aspiring novel, *Animal's People*. Through a fictionalized plot, the novel recounts the aftermath of a massive gas leak incident that took place in Bhopal, in 1984. The story is narrated by Animal, born on the night of the accident; abandoned in a doorway on that tragic night, the toxins of the poisonous gas were released into Animal's body which severely twisted his spine, causing him to walk on four limbs. Sinha exposes the many long-term bodily harm perpetrated on the people of Khaufpur and the failure of the government in providing proper medical compensation and legal justice even eighteen years after the catastrophic event. More importantly, he chooses Animal's disabled body to represent the dehumanization of third-world citizen by capitalist societies. Animal deconstructs the stereotypes that colonial society places on him by naming himself "Animal" and portraying "beastly" behavior. He further demystifies masculinity through his physicality and sexuality, he asserts that there are different ways of being human other than following the Western ideology of normative masculine gender. Western standards are enforced through the character of Elli, an agent of American imperialism, who looks down on Animal's disability and the destitution of his people. Animal pushes against her standards of western civility through his use of profanities, vulgarity, discussions on desires and sexuality, and by refusing the operation that will conform his figure to a normative human body and further restrict his mobility. Furthermore, Animal's physicality stands in opposition to other wholesome individuals to emphasize that humanity is not contingent upon physical appearances, nor is Animal's marginalization only a result of his disability as exemplified through Anjali's

character. Even as a wholesome individual, Anjali is also repressed in society due to her social class and gender; forced into prostitution, she endures in silence until Animal helps her attain her agency through his reverence for her and her body. He buys back her freedom and exemplifies his humanity through his humane treatment of Anjali and Nisha (another female native) while debunking his categorization as an “animal.”

Animal topples colonial mentality by conforming to the stereotypes given to him by the imperialist society. He gets the name “Animal, jungli (wild) Animal” after he gets into a few violent altercations with other children, but he embraces it, not as a sign of acknowledging the negative connotation of the name but as a form of taking back power and affirming his agency. He proudly declares “My name is Animal...I’m not a fucking human being” to overturn colonial mentality by embracing the stereotypes that are generally associated with colonized natives as wild, native animals (Sinha 23). In support of this argument, Adele Holoch observes that Animal’s claim “asserts his right to his own categorization, as well as his sense that what honor accompanies the construct of human is dubious” (132). Animal’s declaration of his name as “Animal” and not “human” also signifies that the construct of humanity is doubtful as no one has the authority to categorize another individual nor does a name define the character of a person. Animal resists social categorization through his refusal to adapt to a caste, family, or religion; for example, he denies committing to any religion as he does not understand it. Animal shares, “I’m not a Muslim. I’m not Hindu. I’m not an Isayi (Christian), I’m an animal, I’d be lying if I said religion meant a damn thing to me” (14). Religion does not hold any significance to him because it is a symbol of conforming to certain rules and obligations to which Animal does not wish to confine himself. By choosing his own name and refusing to abide by a religion, Animal debunks

the notion of categorization in society which he believes restricts an individual and oppresses his agency; his rejection of these social constraints enables his freedom from normative regulations.

Similarly, Animal performs “animalistic behavior” to debunk the stereotypes associated with him by presenting his actions are a result of social injustices cast upon him. Poverty leads him to scavenge for food from people’s garbage while viciously competing with other street dogs. In one of these many instances, Animal meets his best friend, Jara, a cat; he relates to her because they both are four-legged poor creatures and like Animal, she has “no fixed abode and no traceable parents” (Sinha 18). His low social class status leads him to hunt for food like an animal, up to a point where he would “break off lumps of the dry skin (from his feet) and chew it” (13). Through this narrative, Sinha presents a critique of poverty where starvation leads people to behave like savages by eating their own flesh, which, in a desperate point of hunger, becomes edible. His actions are instigated by the people of society who have named and treated him as a nonhuman, so he learns to embrace and act upon the name given to him to revert that identification.

Animal further challenges the concept of normative human body through his physicality. Catherine Parry defines a normative human body consists of definitive properties such as being two-footed and having an upright body; however, since Animal is a four-footed human, he expresses “the property of quadrupedalism” (24-25). As a “quadrupedal,” Animal walks on four legs, but he challenges the concept of disability as it enables him to witness things he could not from an “eye-level;” by being crouched to the ground, Animal views the world from “below the waist” (Sinha 2). While “eye-level” may be thought of as a view of equality, Animal debunks this fallacy by verifying that he has access to the “smells of abject materiality” which cannot be viewed from eye-level; Animal exemplifies that he knows which person “hasn’t washed his

balls” and he can “smell pissy gussets and shitty backsides” (Sinha 2; Johnston 121). His disability presents him with another form of viewing to which other humans do not have access.

Furthermore, the ideology of the normative human body and Western standards are enforced through the character of Elli, an agent of American Imperialism. Ellie appears in the text the “way a spider does, from nowhere. Catch a movement in the corner of your eye, it’s there” (Sinha 66). Her obscure arrival suggests that just as America slyly crept in and destroyed the community of Khaufpur, so too might Elli. She comes to town to open a free clinic to treat the victims of the gas leak who are still suffering from the long-term effects of the gas. She instantly takes an interest in Animal’s deformity and informs him that he can regain mobility on his two legs through an operation in America. However, while being a benefactor, her character presents the nuances between social classes and colonial thinking; her status as an American who has always been privileged with human rights prevents her from understanding their impoverished lifestyle or empathizing with their suffering. Instead, her disconnect allows her to categorize them as “illiterate, uncivilized natives” and their environment as “disastrous.” Thus, Elli presents an impediment in Animal’s quest for citizenship because to accomplish her humanitarianism, she dehumanizes Animal and his people.

Elli's inability to understand the Khaufpuris is a result of her privileged upbringing. Coming from a middle-class family, her father worked as a steelworker and her mother was a mental health patient; however, Elli was able to rise from poor conditions and attain the American Dream by becoming a doctor. She highlights class ambiguities in Khaufpur and America as Elli was able to get an education, become a doctor, marry a lawyer, and relocate to the third world. She was allowed to move up the social ladder and establish a successful career because she was provided with the prospects of unlimited education; even when her marriage fell

apart, she was privileged to escape the realities of her life and start over in another country. As an American, she is bestowed with human rights and privileges while the people of Khaufpur are denied those basic rights by their government. Thus, Elli fails to understand their lifestyle due to distinct social classes and privilege; for instance, Elli is shocked to learn that Animal only spends four rupees each day because for her “that’s ten cents US. No one can live on that, not even in Khaufpur” (176). Similarly, she’s astonished to see Animal’s decaying and molded house, and she pities him by exclaiming “Oh poor Animal, what a life!” (184). Her reaction emphasizes that as a foreigner, she can only sympathize with Animal on his destitute condition, but she cannot empathize with his suffering as Elli herself admits to Animal that “I don’t know what such suffering is like” (186). Even though Elli tries to assimilate with the Khaufpuris by speaking their language, Hindi, she was unable to gain their trust because she is a representative of their colonizers.

Elli appears suspicious to the Khaufpuris because they have constantly been denied compensation by the same American corporates who have destroyed their society but allowed Elli to succeed in her community. Julietta Singh justly defines Elli’s ambiguity that she “refuses the tendency to conflate the Kampani and America, insisting that, unlike the Kampani whose investments are purely economic and thus insidious, America is a place like all others that fosters both good and evil” (146). She idealistically tries to hold on to her American status while staying distinct from the Kampani. However, Elli fails to realize that for the Khaufpuris, they are the same people: Kampani is America. In this sense, Singh rightly argues that Elli

rehearses humanitarian fetishism by obscuring the material and structural existence of her humanitarianism. For Elli to be capable of providing the form of charity she desires to offer through her medical services, she also needs to believe in herself as merely “good,”

unhindered by American imperialism and the global power relations that make her charity possible while ensuring the destitution of other. (146)

Elli stubbornly ignores the American imperialist power which has rendered the society of Khaufpur physically and economically disabled in order to believe herself as “good” and elevate her own humanitarianism. To overlook the capitalist societies upon which Elli’s humanitarian aid is contingent, she inverts the blame on the people of Khaufpur by declaring they must be “either blind or mad” for not accepting the free help they are receiving from her. Holoch’s aptly captures Elli’s disconnect, arguing that she adopts “a philosophical position that assumes an unbridgeable gap between two apparently discontinuous worlds. What is human in one, is not so in the other” (131). The mindset of “what is human in one is not so in the other” reflects the rationalization of the power structure of colonialism as colonizers justified their violence on the colonized natives by conceptually aligning the natives with “animals” who needed to be civilized into “human beings.” Elli practices this colonial mindset by thinking of herself as the civilized, American subject who must educate the illiterate, savage natives of Khaufpur. To exemplify, she recommends to the government doctor to “organize people into teams to pick up the litter. Bring in pipes, water taps, build proper latrines;” Elli is convinced that community service can serve as a straightforward remedy for their impoverishment (Sinha 106). Her solution speaks to her imperialist thinking because she envisions in Andrew Mahlstedt’s words a “western-style development as the simple path of resolving the problem of poverty...(because) Elli believes she can detect the problems of Animal and his people like she examines an X-ray, looking into the life of the slum-dwellers to diagnose and resolve their problems” (66). Correspondingly, her colonial gaze is reflective in her perspective of Nutcracker, the post-disaster area; while Anima

views his town as “Paradise Alley,” through Elli’s eyes it appears to have been wrecked by an earthquake.

On hearing Elli speak this one work, *an earthquake*, something weird and painful happens in my head. Up to that moment, this was Paradise Alley, the heart of the Nutcracker, a place I’d known all my life. When Elli says earthquake suddenly, I’m seeing it as she does. Paradise Alley is wreckage of baked earth mounds and piles of planks on which hang gunny sacks, plastic sheets, dried palm leaves...the houses of the Nutcracker lurch along this lane which, now that I look, isn't really even a road, just a long gap left by chance between the dwellings. Everywhere's covered in shit and plastic. Truly I see how poor and disgusting are our lives. (106)

When Animal looked at his “Paradise Alley” from a westerner’s eye, he realized that all the things he had been grateful for were only covered in “shit and plastic:” what Animal previously had considered a road, wasn’t even an actual road, “just a long gap” left by accident. Her imperialist gaze destabilizes Animal’s understanding of himself and his environment, while it presents Elli’s inability to see Khaufpur’s land past its initial disaster. She is not different from other journalists, filmmakers, photographers, and anthropologists, who only come to Khaufpur for self-serving purposes. Animal pushes against the narrative of destitution by trying to make Elli understand that privileged people as her cannot comprehend their lifestyle because they see them as “untouchables” who are meant to be seen and pitied but not heard.

Animal further challenges western civility through his constant use of profanities, vulgar talk, and discussion of his desires, sexuality, body, and its function. For example, Animal constantly boasts about his size, stating, “...My god what a lund. Fucker is made like a donkey,” which plays into colonial stereotypes of the ‘other’ as highly sexual beings (Sinha 46). Holoch

extends this discourse by explaining that “For centuries, the uncertain continents – Africa, the Americas, Asia – were figured in European lore as libidinally eroticized...men sported gigantic penises and women consorted with apes” (Holoch 134). Animal, in rebellion, unabashedly conforms to the stereotypes of his people and embraces his “otherness” as a sign of resisting neo-colonial power. This is reflected in his conversation with Elli about “communal shitting” where she expresses the disdain of exposing your private parts in public and Animal defends his people by listing its advantages. He angrily states to Elli, “You foreigners talk as if the sight of a bum is the worst thing in the world, doesn’t everyone crap” (Sinha 184). This conversation imitates the ideology of comparing colonies and third world countries with filth because they do not conform to the western standards of civility; instead, communal shitting can be considered a form of exercising agency and rejecting the capitalist structures of latrines/bathrooms. This is further epitomized when Animal gives Elli a tour of the “Kingdom of Poor” and in a moment of raw frustration, Elli screams in the street, “HEY, ANIMAL’S PEOPLE! I DON’T FUCKING UNDERSTAND YOU!” (183). Although the statement is directed at people for boycotting her clinic, by referring to the Khaufpuris as “Animal’s People,” Elli is also demoting them to “animals’ status by virtue of their illogical refusals, while she remains a modern subject par excellence, able to dictate proper behavior even in the midst of squalor” (Singh 149). Elli needs to dehumanize Animal and his people so she can elevate her humanity, and she believes that her western status allows her the advantage to do so.

Through his discussion of sexuality and bodily functions, Animal further demystifies western civility while challenging masculinity through his sexual desires. He spies on a naked Eli in the shower, on Nisha and Zafar in their bedroom, and Elli and Pandit on the terrace. While his act of voyeurism might be considered offensive, Animal challenges this by directly

addressing his readers; he advises his female readers to leave if they're embarrassed or offended (even though he hopes they won't) but for his male readers, he adds "if you're a man it doesn't matter, you're a dirty fucker anyway" (79). By addressing his male readers as "dirty fuckers," Animal is implying that they, like him, also enjoy watching women undress; Holoch argues that Animal is "making a sweeping identification that lumps his illicit desires together with theirs, under the same principles of human masculinity. Their vulgarity is therefore implicated in his vulgarity, and his masculinity implicated in theirs" (Holoch 135). Animal is challenging the realm of masculinity by linking his sexual desires and voyeurism with their sexual desires and voyeurism to reaffirm that he has sexual drives like any other member in society. At the same time, Animal plays with the notion of male dominance by exercising his male gaze on Elli, a foreign white western woman while giving reverential treatment to his fellow female colonized natives, Nisha and Anjali. While spying on Elli, Animal shares the intimate details with his readers, but he chooses to reserve those details while looking at Nisha: he alerts his readers that the "things I witness now are not for you or the thousand other eyes" (Sinha 117). By refusing to share the intimate details with his readers and guarding Nisha's honor, his actions prove that Animal holds Nisha in higher value as a fellow native and presents his humanity through his benevolent treatment.

Similarly, Animal debunks his categorization of an "animal" through his compassionate treatment of Anjali. Even as a wholesome individual, Anjali is also repressed in society due to her class and gender. She was kidnapped at a young age and forced into prostitution, her body has been abused and defiled by men without her consent. However, Animal refuses to partake in this illegal act when Farooq takes him to the brothel and pays for Animal to have sex with Anjali; instead, Animal requests her permission to stare at her as he had never seen a naked

female. He relates to the bodily harm perpetrated on Anjali, and in his own way, reverts the sexual abuse she endured through his reverential treatment of her body. Delice Williams affirms that “Animal recuperates what sexual violence has almost destroyed in the woman, and in doing so he speaks to his own ability to move beyond violence and to counteract its effects. Life and reverence for life persist despite the forces that would bring psychic and social death to both of these socially abject figures, survivors of extreme violence” (595). Animal restores her dignity through his gaze by emphasizing the power of life that she controls, motherhood. As a prostitute, Anjali is profitless to the state because she is used by first-class citizen men for sexual pleasure, but Animal reverts that ideology by reminding her of the power of life that she holds within her. He commends that “it’s more powerful than all the world for it contains the whole world plus heaven and hell besides, in its depths is the whole of the past plus all that will be” (244). Through his stare, Animal is reverting Anjali’s subaltern status so she can gain first-class citizenship status and become beneficial to the state from the role of motherhood. At the same time, Animal is obsessed with the womb for his own identification. While gazing at it, he states this is “where life begins, where I began” to remind himself that he is a human being who came into this world the same as the rest of people (244). Williams supports this claim by stating that Animal’s “reunification with that body is important to him precisely because it allows him, an abject being, to be reincorporated into the realm of the human, albeit temporarily” (595). The gazing of the womb reinstates for Animal that he is in the world of humans as he was also born to human parents like the rest of the people of Khaufpur while deconstructing his status as an “animal” through his humane treatment of Anjali.

In his final act of rebellion, Animal deconstructs the western ideology of civility and normativity by refusing to have the operation that will reconfigure his body. Elli wishes to

eradicate Animal's non-normative body by transforming it into an ideal human structure acceptable to Western standards but Animal refuses to be remade to fit into a traditional model of an upright human. Animal argues that even if he has the operation, he will still need "a wheelchair, but how far will that get me in the gullis of Khaufpur?" (Sinha 366). Even though Animal can have an upright human, his mobility will still be restricted due to the operation, so he embraces a "human-animal" identity by the end of the text. Animal shares that "I can run and hop and carry kids...climb hard trees, I've gone up mountains, roamed in jungles," however, in a wheelchair, he can't have the freedom he craves; his free mobility allows him to not be restricted to any societal role or category. Therefore, Animal rejects the Western standards of the normative human body that Elli tries to force on him. Parry fortifies this discourse by arguing that the surgery gives Animal a normal human body with a straight back but it "requires that his back must be broken before it can be remade, and his potential literal breaking is a figuration for the breaking of his deviant otherness to fit in a single model of perfect humanness" (40). Animal refuses to be used as an experiment by his colonizers and restructure his body for their appeasement; the literal breaking of his back will also break his agency and identity as a Khaufpuri. Thus, he rejects American imperialism and the exploitation of his body through his denial of the operation while simultaneously refusing to adhere to the nation's ideology of normative masculine gender. Parry adds that Animal's body illustrates all of his "physical experiences, such as hunger, illness, pain, suffering, joy, sexual desire, and the need to breathe...as such, Animal's body is a condensation of all the biological, political, ethical, and economic difficulties of the people of the Khaufpur" (Parry 43). His body becomes a physical representation of all the biological, social, economic, and political struggles that Khaufpuris faced, thus, Animal's decision to maintain his distorted body, speaks to his need to eternalize the

image of Khaufpur's hardships through his unchanged body. His body, which symbolically and literally "has been bent double beneath the weight of Khaufpur's foreign load" (qtd in Parry 43) will immortalize Animal's and his peoples' experience and suffering for all the world to witness. In doing so, Animal also chooses to embody his citizenship status as physical proof through his unchanged disability. Through his distinct body and his identification as "the one and only Animal," Animal redefines citizenship by not adhering to the normative conception of gender and body but by retaining a unique universal identity, which represents him as a Khaufpuri citizen.

*Animal's People*, like *The God of Small Things*, also ends with the subaltern having the last word in the narrative. Animal ends his narration by telling his readers that "All things pass, but the poor remain. We are the people of the Apokalis (apocalypse). Tomorrow there will be more of us" (Sinha 366). By declaring, "the poor remain," Animal does not disregard the present and continuous suffering of his people, instead, he reminds his readers that "tomorrow" there will be more "untouchables" like him who will fight for basic rights and a voice in the nation. Animal, Ammu, and Velutha were all marginalized in society and given second-class status. However, they reject their restricted place and challenge the masculine nation by defying its systemized systems of race, caste, political parties, gender, and sexuality; this allows them to find belonging through non-normative ways and redefine the nation's meaning of humanity, acceptance, and citizenship.

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