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CRISES OF 'CROSSING THE BOUNDARIES' AND 'DISTORTED IDENTITIES' IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

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Even a bird's eye view of "The God of Small Things" would give an impression to any ordinary normal reader that the novel is filled with crises of Personal, Psychological, Moral, Social, Cultural, Political and Economic nature. Indeed, these cannot be compartmentalized as all these are intertwined and intermingled. If one critically analyzes the whole work line by line and word by word one could come to the understanding that the crisis is of two categories i.e. 'Small Category' and 'Big Category'.

Ammu, the divorced mother of Rahel and Estha, for instance, is crushed between the crisis of mortifying-motherly-instinct, vulnerably-feminine-instinct and culpably-violent-instinct. She had faced the personal crisis of being betrayed and sold by her husband Baba. Baba was a 'full-blown alcoholic'. He drank more than Patiala Pegs. He consumed approximately eight large pegs of whisky. Naturally, he did not care for anything or anybody. He did not care for his wife and children. He drank and slept. "Whole days went by during which he just lay in bed and didn't go to work." (p. 41). When his fun-loving English manager called him and warned him he was ready to mortgage his wife to him. Mr. Hollick wanted Baba to go away for a while. He wanted him to be out of the scene as long as it took him to get better. He suggested him to send Ammu to his Bungalow 'to be looked after'.

Psychologically looking at Ammu was not at all happy with her very existence. She felt as though she came into this world for no purpose. Even her marriage did not give her psychological satisfaction. Her husband, wrestled with her often. She felt infuriated. She retorted hence. When he batted her she "took the heaviest book she could find in the book-shelf- *The Reader's Digest world Atlas*- and hit him with it as hard as she could. On his head. His legs. His back and shoulders." (p.42). She was not happy even after her divorce. Her people did not welcome her home. Rather they did not want her coming back. The neighbours got it all wrong too. She had to confine herself within a limited space. She felt as though she was a prisoner. A refugee in her own very house. She knew that there would be no more chances for her. She knew that her only place of refuge would be Ayemenom. There she would be confined to a front veranda and a back veranda. She was worried; tensed; furious; anxious. More than the reality itself the consciousness of the reality agonizes a person. As Albert Camus says in his book 'The Myth of Sisyphus', "If this myth is tragic, that is because its hero is conscious" (p. 109). Ammu is conscious. Hence she suffers. Her feelings of anxiety and anger all of a sudden erupts as though a volcano. These worries and anxieties get aggravated during periods of flashbacks of her past memories.

"Occasionally, when Ammu listened to songs that she loved on the radio, something stirred inside her. A liquid ache spread under her skin, and she walked out of the world like a witch, to a better, happier place. On days like this there was something restless and untamed about her... She wore flowers in her hair and carried magic secrets in her eyes. She spoke to no one... She smoked cigarettes and had midnight swims." (p.44).

There was restlessness in her. There was battle going on in the inner most shrine of her being. She was experiencing an "unsafe edge". She was experiencing certain "unpredictability". She was feeling as though uncared and unsafe in this world. There was a battle going on within her. There was confusion; perplexity; chaos and mixture of all these. This was like an 'unmixable mix. This is the "mix of the infinite tenderness of motherhood and the reckless rage of a suicide bomber. It was this that grew inside her and eventually led her to love by night the man her children loved by day." (p. 44).

Ammu's love-act with Velutha and its cruel consequences haunted her every moment of her life and killed her inch by inch. She became a loner gradually. She was abandoned by her own household. She developed Tuberculosis. At last she died in a encrusted room in a lodge. She had gone there for a job interview as someone's secretary. She died alone. She had only a noisy ceiling fan for company. Estha, who used to lie at the back of her and talk to her was not with her when she died. She was just thirty one years old when she died. "Not old, Not young, but a viable, die-able age." (p.161).



In her recent novel “The Folded Earth”, which is in run for international awards, Arundhati Roy depicts of the strives of a woman who struggles to exist. She tells of Maya’s relationship with her man in the beginning days when they fell in love. She ran away from home. It was because of her father who did not want an inter-religious marriage. She was a Hindu and Michael, her man, was a Christian. They felt so close among themselves especially in the beginning days. In Maya’s words, “those first few months we were exultant castaways who had fitted the universe into two rented rooms and one narrow bed. Day time was only a waiting for evening, when we would be together. Nights were not for sleeping.” (p. 6). Slowly and gradually, this goody-goody relationship vanishes. The physical attractions fade away. Emotional pull repulses. First a little silence; then this silence growing death-like; then his busy-ness in his business; then the normal natural life... love had not diminished yet. Michael dies all at once. Maya feels as though her life has come to a standstill. She feels as though let down. Her man is gone. She becomes lonely. Only the tin with ashes of Michael lay in her bed where Michael should have been. Maya was only twenty five years old she felt as though already her life was over.

Besides Ammu, the psychological crisis is obvious in many other characters of the novel, *The God of Small Things*. In many cases it’s a mixture of psychological crisis as well as identity crisis. In the case of Pappachi it was when he failed to receive the deserved recognition that he grew melancholic, depressed, furious and sadistic. He was having his regular drinks once. A moth fell into his drink. When he took it out, he noticed its “unusually dense dorsal tufts.” He presented his finding in the Department of Entomology. He sought attention. He hoped for fame. The department accepted it as a special species. For his terrible surprise they attributed the finding to an entomologist junior to him. This made him angry, upset and sad. These feelings made their revelations all of a sudden and gave vent to constant battering of his wife until one fine day Chacko confronted him. Pappachi became a loaner then ceferth.

Chacko, another psychic character, could be said to be eccentric if we look at his ways of behavior closely. There is vast dichotomy between his words and deeds. He could not live peacefully with his wife. He could not care enough for his child. He talked high ideologies of communism. In the name of ideological sharing he womanized. Underlying all these is his deep-down insecurity-feeling. He is not happy within. He says

“We are Prisoners of War... Our dreams have been doctored. We belong nowhere. We sail unanchored on troubled seas. We may never be allowed ashore. Our sorrows will never be sad enough. Our joys never happy enough. Our dreams never big enough. Our lives never important enough.” (p. 53).

Though he intones these lines in the form of elocution, Chacko’s words have much to talk about his hidden cares and worries.

The guilt-conscience of being seduced by the lemonade-man who made the innocent Estha to touch his penis and masturbate it haunted Estha forever. His role in the drama of the so-called killing of Sophiemol devastated him. His conscience-filled inability to recognize Velutha in the Police Station suffocated him psychologically. This was why when he was returned to his biological father Baba, he went with a heart full of burden.

Viktor E. Frankl in his work, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, talks of the need of exact discernment and amalgamation of values and to see them in the perspective of not only connected with life or rather confronting life. He says, “We have to beware of the tendency to deal with values in terms of mere self-expression of man himself. For logos or ‘meaning’ is not only an emerging from existence itself but rather something confronting existence.” (p. 91). All the characters or almost all the characters of *The God of Small Things* seem confusing with this concept.

The moral crisis in “The God of Small Things” is explicit when Ammu seemed “as though she had temporarily set aside the morality of motherhood and divorcehood.” (pp. 44-45). This is why she impulsively clings on to Velutha for sheer sake of satiating her long-longing –lust. Love, no doubt, was not less nevertheless. Lust dominated all the same. Body demanded. She gave way. Rather, she gave away herself. She had no shame to be nude and naked. She was not hesitant to crouch over Velutha. She was not reluctant to place her so-called ‘touchable’ mouth on his dark ‘untouchable’ one or to slide further and further revealing whole of her unclothed self to him. This was why ultimately-



“She sipped the last of the river from the hollow of his navel. She pressed the heat of his erection against her eyelids. She tasted him, salty, in her mouth... she felt his belly tighten under her, hard as a board. She felt her wetness slipping on his skin... She could feel him moving deeper and deeper and deeper into her. Frantic. Frenzied. Asking to be let in further. Further. Stopped only by the shape of her. The shape of him. And when he was refused, when he had touched the deepest depths of her, with a sobbing, shuddering sigh, he drowned... she kissed his closed eyes and stood up... She turned to say it once again: ‘Nalay’. Tomorrow.” (pp. 336-340).

The moral degradation is seen in other characters as well. Pappachi, for instance, always doubted Mammachi. When he became old and got retired he found his wife in the prime of her youth. He could not bear any one admiring Mammachi. This doubt increased when Mammachi tried to occupy herself more in the pickle-processing. Pappachi had always been a jealous man. He could not stomach the attention his wife was getting.

Chacko’s moral degradation could be seen in his act of flirting with the young women in the name of ‘Party-Meeting’ and ‘Party-Rallies’. He called pretty women who worked in the factory to his room. On the pretext of lecturing them on labour rights and trade union law he used to flirt with them outrageously. He used to take them out in the name of meetings and rallies and please them with food, dresses and bangles.

The culmination of moral corruption and degradation is seen in the case of Rahel and Estha. They could not live without each other. Even though Rahel got married she could not cop-up with her husband, Larry. She could not just be one with him in body and spirit. This was why “when they made love he was offended by her eyes. They behaved as though they belonged to someone else.” (p. 19). The moral crisis of mixing-up and messing-up reaches its zenith when Rahel and Estha get sexually attached to each other and explore each other physically. “A raindrop glistened on the end of Estha’s earlobe... she reached out. Touched it. Took it away... The silence gathered its skirts and slid...” (p. 93).

Collective Class –Psychological crisis also is well-brought-out in the novel. This is seen when the men of higher social status such as ‘Cardamom Kings’, ‘Coffee Counts’ and ‘Rubber Barons’ feeling insecurity within when the poorer stratum of the society rise against them. They exhibit explicit courage. Yet they were frightened within. Cowardice, rather. “*A rose by any other name...* they said, and sniggered to hide their raising panic.” (p. 69). There is split in their conscience. There is split in their personality. They are not reconciled with themselves. They are not reconciled with the society. This leads them to live in fear although they appear to be fearless. It is because the real problems are not solved. They are only patched up. As Freud says, “the unresolved problems about social versus biological causation... bound to cause splits.” (*Freud For Beginners*, p. 106).

Ammu faces the social problem of dowry lacking the amount of which she lacked the privilege of proposals. Her father did not have enough money to raise a suitable dowry. Her birthdays came and went. No one noticed them. This made Ammu desperate. She finds a partner for herself at the end. She falls in love with him in a hurry even though she found in him more of juvenileness and less of a serious personality. She was in a hurry. This was because she wanted to escape from Ayemenem. She yearned to escape ‘clutches of her ill-tempered father’. She wanted to say good-bye to her ‘long-suffering mother’. Hence, she thought that anything and anyone would be better than Ayemenem and the household. She faces the problem of harassment and wife-battering as the drunkardness or rather the alcoholic addiction of Baba reaches its peak.

The pangs of pregnancy and delivery she undergoes is nothing out of the ordinary. Yet the play of fate during this process is, indeed, noteworthy. Her husband Baba takes her to the hospital. Their car breaks down on the way. Hence they had to board on a local bus. This, of course, for her was a below-dignity-matter. Yet need is need. No one can escape the clutches of fate. Things happen haphazardly some times. One has to bear it. It is painful. This is why it is called crisis.

The Indian social and cultural crisis of caste-system is very vividly portrayed by Arundhati Roy. Velutha suffers the crucial crisis of it more than anyone else. Velutha belonged to the ‘Paravan’ caste. “Pappachi would not allow Paravans into their house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched.” (p. 73). By profession Velutha should be a toddy-tapper. He did not like the profession. It might be that he wanted to get freed from the clutches of caste-system. He learnt the art of carpentry and made furniture. He had a knack of doing it. His work had fine finish. The so-called caste Christians and Caste Hindus



enjoyed the benefits of the menial works the untouchables performed. They lived happy at the cost of the untouchables. All the same, they could not bear them. They could not consider them as human beings. Though Kerala claims to be a caste-less state, it still has caste-problems. This was, indeed, worst in the past. As Mammachi tells Estha and Rahel there was a time when the so-called 'cast-Christians' could not consider the others as human beings. She tells them of her girlhood, when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a pravan's footprints. The so-called untouchables were not allowed to walk on public roads. They were not allowed to cover their upper bodies. They were not allowed to carry umbrellas. They were supposed to put their hands over their mouth when they talked. This was to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed.

The history of Christianity in Kerala is, indeed, interesting. Many hold that St. Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus came to Kerala and converted many Brahmins to Christianity. Besides this there is a story also that seventy two families from Canon came to Kerala and settled in Kottayam. They had their reserved culture. They considered themselves pure. Their descendants started addressing themselves as 'pure blood'. They did not mix with other Christians especially the ones who got converted from the lower castes. Velutha's ancestors were Hindus. During the time of the British many Hindu families got converted to Christianity. Among them Velutha's grandfather Kelan also got himself converted. They did so in order to escape the cruelty of caste-system. Those who got converted thus were called 'Rice-Christians'. Even though they dreamt of social status and recognition soon they realized their folly of getting converted to Christianity. They felt as though they had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. This was because they suffered the same kind of caste-related agonies which they had undergone when they were non-Christians. They had separate churches. They had separate priests. They had separate spiritual-services. They were also given separate Paraiyah Bishop. After independence the lower-caste Hindus were entitled to special privileges. Unfortunately, the lower-caste-Christians were deprived of all Government benefits like job reservations or bank loans at low interest rates. It was because on paper they were said to be Christians. Christians were 'said' to be casteless. "It was a little like having to sweep away your footprints without a broom. Or worse, not being allowed to leave footprints at all." (p. 74)

Velutha fell a victim of love and lust. It was, of course, not merely his fault. Ammu was equally or more-than-equally culpable. It was a mix. The untouchable-touchable mix. It was a mess. An untouchable touching the touchable. Not simply touching. Feeling her; relishing her; cherishing her, finding nourishment in her.

"He kissed her eyes. Her ears. Her breasts. Her belly. Her seven silver stretch marks from her twins. The line of down that led from her navel to her dark triangle, that told him where she wanted him to go. The inside of her legs, where her skin was so soft. Then carpenter's hands lifted her hips and an untouchable tongue touched the innermost part of her. Drank long and deep from the bowl of her." (p. 337)

Of course, he had had to pay a very high ransom for his act. Unfortunately, he was betrayed by his very own biological father. This, indeed, is the evil effect of casteism. Even persons who are afflicted by it do not seem trying to rise above it. They seem indulging in betraying their very kith and kin just to gain a favour or repaying a favour. They do not realize that they too are human beings. They do not realize that they have the same equal rights as that of any touchables. They do not realize the fact that they need not give up their human dignity for the sake of the so-called 'mite'.

Vellya Paapen, Velutha's father witnessed Velutha's love-making with Ammu. He becomes restless. In fact, any common ordinary logic cannot understand the why of it. Is it because he is a puritan? Is it because he is blindly faithful to the family that gave him glass eyes? Is it because he did not have such a chance in his life-time and hence entertaining a little bit of jealousy over his son? Well... No one is sure of the reason. He reports the matter to Mammachi in such a way that Baby Kochamma could over-hear it. "She said (among other things)- 'How could she stand the smell? Haven't you noticed, they have a particular smell, these Paravans?'" (p. 78) as though she knew it 'well'. The climax of casteism reaches its pinnacle when, though both the touchable and the untouchable had equally sinned only the untouchable is punished - that too in a pitifully cruel crucial manner. No doubt, the 'touchable' would have shared his fate had they allowed her to do so. They did not allow her. She suffered psychological pain and agony all through each and every moment till the end of her life. Even in her



loneliness in a far away hotel-room where she died, ‘the far away man inside her began to shout. The tragic scene of his third-degree punishment killed Ammu inch by inch same as Velutha died bit by bit. The third-degree-doers fractured his skull in three places. They smashed his nose and cheekbones. His face turned pulpy indefinable and un-identifiable. They inflicted blows after blows in his mouth. Due to this his upper lips got split. His teeth got broken and got embedded in his lips. His beautiful smile got inverted. His ribs were splintered. They pierced his left lung. This made him bleed from his mouth. His intestine got ruptured. His interiors hemorrhaged. His spine was damaged. His arms got paralyzed. He could not gain control over his bladder or rectum. His knee caps were shattered. One of the third-degree-inflictors flicked at his penis with his stick saying, “come on show us your special secret. Show us how big it gets when you blow it up. Then he lifted his boot (with millipedes curled into its sole) and brought it down with a soft thud.” (pp. 310-311).

Arundhati Roy looks at Indian politics as something in a hotchpotch. The nation itself has emerged out of a corrupt political structure. In her, *Public Power in the Age of Empire*, she writes, “A deeply impoverished, essentially feudal society became a modern, independent nation state.” (p. 1). More than Political crisis, crisis created by politicians is revealed in *The God of Small Things*. The deaths and destructions have much political connections. The politics and politicians seem to be always siding with the ‘higher-ups’ and twist and turn and mix-up and mess-up facts and fancies. The Community Party, for instance, that had come about for the liberation of the poor and the needy and the oppressed and the exploited had been waning in its ethical reliability. It is said symbolically presenting K.N.M. Pillai’s Printing Press. “The flag that fluttered on the roof had grown limp and old. The red had bled away.” (p. 13). Comrade Pillai, though seemed very simple, was cunning at his heart.

When E.M.S. Nambodiripad became the Chief Minister of Kerala, he showed off as if going to turn the state upside down overnight. He played the game of reigning over the peaceful people as well as bringing out radical revolutions. Thus he tried to please both the powerful as well as the paupers. His treatise was said to be *The Peaceful Transition to Communism* which in itself is a dichotomy. Doesn’t it seem to be intrinsically diplomatic and duplicity-filled...? Both the rich and the poor seemed satisfied. Two birds at one shoot...? All the same, he could not please them for long. Reality comes to the fore sooner or later. Hence, his so-called *Peaceful part of the Peaceful Transition* comes to an end.

K.N.M. Pillai too played great politics. He provoked the poor. He urged them to come out on the streets and fight openly. He aroused their feelings. “People of the World,” he would chirrup, ‘be courageous, dare to fight, defy difficulties, and advance wave upon wave. Then the whole world will belong to the people. Monsters of all kinds shall be destroyed. You must demand what is rightfully yours. Your bonus. Provident fund. Accident insurance.” (p. 120). All the same he pacified the hungry with provisions which were incompatible with the Communist policy of Peoples’ Revolution. He provoked the people and yet maintained the status quo. He never came openly against Chacko. He ‘showed’ as though respecting him. Hence, he referred to him as ‘the Management’ instead of calling him by name.

The political game of Comrade K.N.M. Pillai reaches its peaks when his hatred towards Velutha reaches to the stage of vengeance. Velutha was a recognized member of the Communist Party. The party had issued an identity card for him. K.N.M. could not contain the idea of an untouchable as a card-holder. He always desired to exterminate him. He sought for a chance for the same. Velutha’s vehement love for freedom irritated him.

In her book, “Walking with the Comrades”, Arundhati Roy, in a tender manner brings out the feelings of fighters of their freedom and the consequences they faced for it. “They crammed into hovels on dusty construction sites, wondering which corner of this huge country was meant for them.” (p.1). Velutha’s crisis-cry or cry-crisis for freedom of his self and his community gets cramped. It gets cramped both by his culpability and the common human culpability of the common human world. The politicians acted as mediating elements. Politicians such as K.N.M. knew how to crush the very willing spirits of the fighters. He knew how to punish Velutha. He knew that the colleagues of Velutha who worked with him in the ‘Paradise Pickles’ did not like him. Velutha’s involvement with Ammu paved a way for his settling of scores. “Comrade Pillai told inspector Thomas Mathew that he was acquainted with Velutha, but omitted to mention that Velutha was a member of the Communist Party, or that Velutha had knocked on his door late the previous night, which made Comrade Pillai the last person to have seen Velutha before he disappeared. Nor, though he knew it to be untrue, did Comrade Pillai refute the allegation of attempted rape in Baby Kochamma’s F.I.R.” (p. 262). Everything was covered up.



It was done in a very cool way. The Communist-Flag became the cover to cover everything. Isn't this the communist-flag meant for?

Economically the family had categorically bankrupted. They could not think of indulging in the extravagancies and luxuries they once enjoyed. They had to struggle so as to both the ends to meet. No one practically earned anything. Hence, they could not manage the maintenance of the house. As a result, the once famous mansion gave a dilapidated look. The ornamental garden, which once, Baby Kochamma tented looked overgrown and jungle-like. The sky-blue Plymouth which was once the symbol of their aristocracy, fame and prestige became perforated and got parked permanently. Persons such as Ammu had to apply for menial jobs for her survival.

Geographic as well as climatic description of Ayemenem in the month of May, is symbolic description of the comprehensive crises depicted in the novel. Why should bluebottles dash and die? Why should fish run out of regular ponds? Why should rat snakes fall to prey on bullfrogs that try to find their mates? These are but symbolic icebergs of the deeper crises of each and every character, whom one would confront, sympathize with and shed drops of silent tears impulsively. There is mental and moral degradation to a dust-to-dust-to-dust-level. One could hearken the vociferous inner cry of Viktor E. Frankl while he narrates in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, the self-emptying and of losing of identity of his very self and of his fellow beings in the concentration camps saying, "we hardly recognized each other..." (p. 24)

Whether the characters and events and obstacles of the so-called 'Big Things' or the 'small Things' all have certain vital obsessions in common. They all crossed their boundaries just like Karuthamma who crossed the boundaries of costal culture and indulged in the 'sin' of loving a Muslim in, the famous novel of Tagazhi Shiv Shankara Pillai, 'Chemmeen'. They distorted their identities.

The famous 'Paradise Pickles & Preserves' of the Caste-Christian Family, for instance, used to make pickles, squashes, jams, curry powders and canned pineapples. They also produced banana jam. They produced it illegally. This was because the Food Products Organization had banned it. According to their specifications it was neither jam nor jelly. "Too thin for jelly and too thick for jam. An ambiguous, unclassifiable consistency they said.... This difficulty that their family had with classification ran much deeper than jam-jelly question." (p.31)

The life of Baby Kochamma could be said to be a typical example of personal, psychological and emotional crisis. She became a loner in her later days. She locked herself in a house that looked empty. She tried to climb the ladders of love at a baby-small-age with a catholic monk who came to Ayemenem. He came with an intention of studying the Hindu Scriptures in order to condemn it wisely. Baby Kochamma crossed the boundaries of religious denomination. Positively speaking she tried to be ecumenical. Yet this she did for the fulfillment of her selfish motive. Baby Kochamma's father was a Mar-Thomite-Priest. He had the privilege of being blessed by the Patriarch of the denomination. This privilege had been the pride of his family for long. Unfortunately this pride had happened to mingle with the dust when Father Mulligan started visiting their household. There was considerable age difference between Father Mulligan and Reverend Ipe. They belonged to different denominations of the Church. Yet, they enjoyed each other's company. Lunch was only an excuse for Father Mulligan. He ate sitting besides Reverend Ipe, of course. They had interesting conversations as well. Yet their minds and hearts were never together. Father Mulligan's heart started fleeing from his very being. He "recognized the sexual excitement that rose like a tide in the slender girl who hovered around the table long after lunch had been cleared away." (p.23). Baby Kochamma tried to find her creative ways towards getting the attraction of the priest. This was not because he was hard to gain. All the same, she wanted him to fall for her. She tried to seduce Father Mulligan with an demonstration of her artificial charity. Father Mulligan was due to arrive on Thursdays. She bathed a poor village child that day in order to display her ostensible charity to him. She did not think of the red brick-like soap that hurt his skin or flesh or ribs. Indeed, Father Mulligan, being an intelligent person, understood her duality and split-personality. He loved her yet. Her infatuation increased day by day. She awaited Father Mulligan's arrival. She pretended as though she had many matters to be clarified concerning concepts in the Bible. She asked him very pleasing questions in a very pleasing manner. Father Mulligan enjoyed her company. He aroused emotions in her. She was, indeed attractive. She was, indeed, very young. She stood before him with a tremulous, kissable mouth.



Time came for Father Mulligan to go back to Madras. Baby Kochamma was heart-broken. She could not think of this loss at all. She tried to find out all possible ways through which she could continue with her infatuation. The ultimate way she could find fitting was to get converted to Catholicism, become a nun and thus gain an opportunity to be around Father Mulligan. She did so by hook or by crook. Yet, she could not succeed in her effort all the same. Life in the convent became a burden for her. It's because "she found that the Senior Sisters monopolized the priests and bishops with biblical doubts more sophisticated than hers." (p.24). She left the convent. She tried to tend an ornamental garden which she slowly neglected. Gradually, she confined herself within the four walls of her home. She became a loner soon. Together with loneliness a kind of greed set in within her. "As a young woman she had renounced the material world, and now, as an old one, she seemed to embrace it. She hugged it and it hugged her back." (p.22). Ironically, Father Mulligan got converted to Hinduism. Baby Kochamma remained a spinster. Yet her love for him never ended. Hers was an unfulfilled love. It had come to a standstill. As Arundhati Roy quotes Faiz Ahmad Faiz in her *Listening To Grasshoppers*, "If dreams are thwarted, then yearning must take their place. If reunion is impossible, then longing must take its place" (p. xxxvii). Baby Kochamma yearned and longed for the company of Father Mulligan. Faith and religion were just, evidently, media of giving vent to her sexual emotions. Yet could she succeed getting him...?

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