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## Unveiling Political Deception; Velutha's Portrayal in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*: A Research Study

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### Introduction

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is a powerful literary involvement into the social, political, and moral issues of postcolonial India. Behind its lyrical narrative lies a sharp critique of caste suppression, ideological hypocrisy, and institutional violence. Among its many characters, Velutha emerges as the most politically charged figure. His life and death expose the deception embedded in political systems that outwardly claim egalitarianism while inwardly sustaining caste hierarchies. This article argues that Velutha's portrayal acts as Roy's most phenomenal critique of political deception, revealing how progressive ideologies, state machinery, and social morality collaborate to silence the subaltern people of India.

### Velutha and the Illusion of Political Equality

Velutha is a Paravan, an "Untouchable" in the traditional caste order, yet he is displayed as intelligent, skilled, and emotionally complex. Roy knowingly constructs him in opposition to caste stereotypes. His technical expertise at the pickle factory challenges the assumption that intelligence and creativity belong to upper castes. However, this apparent recognition of his ability does not translate into social dignity or political protection. Political deception operates here through what Aijaz Ahmad describes as symbolic inclusion without material transformation. Progressive ideologies, particularly the Communist movement in Kerala, publicly endorse the working class but remain evasive about caste-based inequality. Velutha is admired as a worker but never accepted as an equal human being. His activeness in leftist political discourse is conditional and instrumental, not emancipatory.

Roy exposes how political rhetoric masks caste violence by shifting focus from structural oppression to abstract class solidarity. Velutha's lived reality contradicts the promise of equality repeatedly invoked in political speeches. Thus, the novel dismantles the myth that ideology alone can dismantle centuries-old social hierarchies.

### Caste, Power, and the Mechanics of Deception

Caste in *The God of Small Things* operates not merely as a social system but as a political machine that regulates access to justice, dignity, and desire. Velutha's relationship with Ammu violates what Roy famously calls the "Love Laws." These laws are unwritten but more powerful than constitutional rights. They show how caste morality function outside formal governance yet is silently endorsed by it.

Literary critic Meenakshi Mukherjee observes that Roy's novel reveals how caste survives modernity by disguising itself within cultural and moral codes rather than legal frameworks. Velutha's punishment is not the result of a legal crime but a moral panic triggered by caste transgression. The police, as representatives of the state, act not as neutral enforcers of law but as protectors of social hierarchy.

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This convergence of social prejudice and institutional power illustrates political deception at its most brutal. The state pretends to uphold justice while actively participating in caste violence. Velutha's death, therefore, is not an accident or excess—it is the logical outcome of a system designed to preserve inequality.

### **The Failure of Leftist Politics**

One of Roy's most controversial critiques is directed at leftist politics. Kerala's Communist movement historically positioned itself as anti-caste and pro-worker. Yet in the novel, party leaders remain silent during Velutha's persecution. His father, Vellya Paapen, despite being a party supporter, betrays his own son to preserve social order.

Sociologist and political theorist Partha Chatterjee argues that postcolonial politics often create "zones of inclusion and exclusion," where marginalized groups are recognized only when they do not disrupt dominant norms. Velutha's labor is welcomed, but his love is not. His body is acceptable as a tool of production, not as a site of desire or autonomy.

Roy thus reveals a profound contradiction: political movements that fail to confront caste directly become complicit in its reproduction. Velutha's betrayal by both family and party underscores how ideology can deceive by promising liberation while reinforcing control.

### **State Violence and Moral Legitimacy**

The most harrowing exposure of political deception occurs in Velutha's custodial murder. The police assault him under false charges, fabricating evidence to justify violence. Their actions reveal how legality can be manipulated to serve social prejudice.

Legal scholar Upendra Baxi notes that in postcolonial societies, the law often becomes an instrument of moral enforcement rather than justice. Roy dramatizes this reality through Velutha's death. The police act with impunity because caste ideology provides moral legitimacy to their violence.

The state's claim to neutrality collapses here. Velutha's body becomes a site where political deception materializes—where law, morality, and power converge to destroy dissenting existence.

### **Conclusion**

Velutha's portrayal in *The God of Small Things* unveils the deep-seated political deception that underlies claims of equality, progress, and justice in postcolonial India. Through his life and death, Arundhati Roy exposes how caste survives within modern political systems, how ideology masks exclusion, and how the state legitimizes violence against the marginalized. Velutha is not merely a victim; he is a political truth-bearer whose silenced existence indicts the structures that destroy him. Roy's

novel thus stands as a profound critique of political hypocrisy and a reminder that without dismantling caste, no ideology can claim moral authority.

### **Keywords:**

Velutha, political deception, untouchables, caste ideology, subaltern studies, Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*, state violence, postcolonial politics

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