

**FROM AN UGLY DUCKLING TO A SWAN: THE BRITISH  
INFLUENCE ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE CASTE SYSTEM AND  
REVOLT IN INDIA AS REFLECTED BY PHOOLAN DEVI &  
ARUNDATHI ROY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The aim of this article is to examine Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" and Mala Sen's "India's Bandit Queen" in terms of developing an understanding about the evolution of caste system in India and the role of British influence throughout this evolution process. First of all, an overview of the caste system in India is presented. Roy's "The God of Small Things" and Sen's work, in other words, the biography of Phoolan Devi are implemented to illustrate the instances of caste system in India. An undeniable contradiction emerges in behavioural norms due to the different expectancies from the present system. The changing behaviours of the characters against the traditional caste system which lead to a certain revolt, are associated with the role of the British influence in the article. The outcome of British influence for individuals in Indian society is described based on Phoolan Devi and the major characters in "The God of Small Things".*

**Keywords:** Caste, revolt, postcolonial literature, Arundhati Roy, Mala Sen, Phoolan Devi.

**ÇIRKIN ÖRDEKTEN KUĞUYA: PHOOLAN DEVI VE ARUNDATHI ROY  
TARAFINDAN YANSITILAN HINDİSTAN'DAKİ KAST SİSTEMİ VE TEPKİ  
GELİŞTİRMEDE İNGİLİZ ETKİSİ**

**ÖZET**

*Bu makalenin amacı Hindistan'daki kast sisteminin evrimi ve evrim süreci boyunca İngiliz etkisinin rolü hakkında bir anlayış geliştirmek açısından Arundhati Roy'un "The God of Small Things" adlı eseri ile Mala Sen'in "India's Bandit Queen" adlı eserlerini incelemektir. Öncelikle Hindistan'daki kast sisteminin özeti sunulmuştur. Roy'un "The God of Small Things" adlı eseri ile Sen'in eseri, diğer bir deyişle, Phoolan Devi'nin biyografisi Hindistan'daki kast sistemi örneklemelerine işaret etmek*

*için kullanılmıştır. Makalede, karakterlerin ayaklanmaya yol açan, geleneksel kast sistemine aykırı olan değişen davranışları İngiliz etkisinin rolüyle ilişkilendirilmiştir. Phoolan Devi'yi ve "The God of Small Things" adlı eserdeki ana karakterleri göz önünde bulundurarak Hint toplumundaki bireyler için İngiliz etkisinin sonuçları tanımlanmıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kast, ayaklanma, sömürge sonrası edebiyatı, Arundhati Roy, Mala Sen, Phoolan Devi.

### Introduction

The prevalent caste system in India has undergone a series of phases through the role model created by the British. Before dealing with the changes in the caste system and the British influence, one should address what the words the caste and the caste system refer to, with their dictionary definitions. The word "caste" stands for each of the hereditary classes of Hindu society, distinguished by relative degrees of ritual purity or pollution and of social status (Longman, 1996: 87). Webster definition points out a further characteristic "the endogamy", and says that the system forms a social stratification even for marriages with social barriers sanctioned by custom, law or religion (Webster, 1983: 171). The caste system, which was an important part of ancient Hindu tradition, is still an inevitable part of the Indian society today. Although the origins of the caste system are not known with certainty, it is claimed that there roughly exist 3000 castes and 25000 sub-castes. Various castes are grouped under four "varna"s, namely Brahmins, Kshatryas, Vaishyas and Shudras. These four original varnas include priests, warriors, farmers, traders and the servants of upper castes. In both *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy and *India's Bandit Queen* by Mala Sen, certain characters are marked as outcasts since they do not occupy a place within the caste system and are considered as "untouchables". While any class distinction should not be welcomed eagerly, in the present system the problem lies with the Untouchables or the Pariahs, who have been regarded outside the caste system and whose rights are debatable when they claim to raise their voice in today's world, seemingly due to the British influence.

In this study, the evolution of this strict and strong system in Indian culture will be traced in two contemporaneous literary texts, namely Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Mala Sen's *India's Bandit Queen* respectively. The question of 'Is it possible to attain objective truth through literary texts?' is debatable. Christopher Nash, for instance, emphasizes the necessity of probability as a premise of realism and says:

Just as in the "actual" world at any one moment we may not have access to all the information we may seek on a given subject and consequently must strive to assess the probable truth based on the most exhaustive collection of information possible- fiction too should direct its attention towards an exhaustive disclosure of the "facts" ("the whole truth") and the presentation, finally, of what is most probable according

to our past experience of the actual world, particularly as exemplified by the procedures of history and science. (Nash, 1987: 8-9)

Keeping Nash's warnings in mind, we can say that Sen's biographical *India's Bandit Queen* and Roy's *The God of Small Things* are quite representative texts since both authors' stances and concerns are for a truthful representation of contemporary life and society. Their methods rely on a great amount of observation and deduction, which is faithful to the outside conditions in India.

### ***The God of Small Things***

Arundhati Roy, the winner of "the Booker Prize", has produced a striking work to indicate the significant caste problems of India. The book portrays incidents of inequality resulting from the present system remarkably. The major conflict emerges only after the loss of the young girl Sophie Mol. It leads to the discovery of an unacceptable love affair between Ammu and Velutha; unacceptable because Velutha is an outcast and untouchable. At the beginning of the book, Ammu, the mother of the protagonists Estha and Rahel, has been accepted back into her family following her divorce since her husband was a heavy drinker. However, she is banished after her love affair with an untouchable paravan has been revealed. Compared to the violation of general norms of society such as disapproved marriages, violating the necessities of the caste system is a much graver subject, is not tolerable and requires strict punishment. An unfavourable marriage regardless of the caste conflicts may be forgiven as in the case of Ammu's first marriage, but love affairs including the caste problems are in no way welcomed in Indian society. Ammu and Velutha know that the acceptance or the recognition of their relationship does not hold any possibility from the very first time. However, they are both ignorant of to what horrible end the outcome can mount. In the last chapter, while the author refers to the beginning of their love affair, she states Velutha's lack of recognition with the words: "Had he known that he was about to enter a tunnel whose only egress was his own annihilation, would he have turned away? Perhaps. Perhaps not. Who can tell?" (Roy, 1998: 333)

Roy depicts their love with the tunnel metaphor, which has no light or a way out other than the death in the end. Once their love affair is revealed, the flow of events gain impetus till they result in the death of Velutha. Velutha is so insignificant for the society that Roy says "[he] left no footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no image in mirrors" (Roy, 1998: 216) and he disappeared for the good because to love a woman of a higher caste was beyond the boundaries for an untouchable paravan like him.

In the novel, the Velutha character is marked for the obvious victim of the caste system. He is an Untouchable Paravan who serves for the family of fraternal twins, Estha and Rahel as a handyman. His relationship to the family is appreciated by the children who are in need of the missing father figure and love. However, he is beaten to death by the police after Baby Kochamma, aunt

of the twins, asserts false accusations saying that he kidnapped the kids, caused the death of Sophie and raped Ammu. Contrary to this corporal punishment given by the police, the author drops hints that Velutha is now indisputably a part of the family; the red nail polish on Velutha's fingers is seen as the symbol of metaphorical family tie between twins and him. Velutha spends time with twins and loves them regardless of any benefit. However, all important values for individuals such as having a relationship, a personality and in its simplest term, the value of existence are disregarded by the present caste system.

Velutha struggles to exist with his political views. However, he is discriminated by Comrade Pillai once more, due to the caste system. Comrade Pillai is the leader of the Communist Party in Ayemenem and he is leading the group of people in alliance to keep their rights including the workers in Pickle factory, which belonged to the family of twins. Velutha joins them while they are marching as a group in the Ayemenem as a member of the communist party but they do not want him. Comrade Pillai tries to get rid of Velutha when Chacko, uncle of the twins, comes to talk of the future decisions about their pickle factory. Comrade Pillai expresses that:

That paravan is going to cause trouble for you, take it from me ... get him a job somewhere else. Send him off... He may be very well okay as a person. But other workers are not happy with him. Already they are coming to me with complaints... You see, comrade, from local standpoint, these caste issues are very deep-rooted. (Roy, 1998: 278)

Although the group members support equality of the rights, they do not accept Velutha's equality and they do not want him to take part in their group since he is less than a human, an untouchable in the caste system. It is strikingly strange and hard to accept this mentality for a group, which fight for the human rights and equality. The lone explanation comes from the fact that the caste system is obviously an invisible wall beyond the universal human rights. The caste system is different compared to the race discrimination considerably. Susan Bayly compares the caste system to the racial discrimination and finds considerable differences. She claims that many writers do not sense the depth of caste discrimination correctly, and define it with similar terms to racial discrimination, which is a mistake. Her words are as follows:

Writers who are thought of now as compilers of caste data often treated values and ideology of "caste" as a subsidiary issue... They were much more concerned with a wider body of speculative scholarship in which the biological and moral qualities of "race" were perceived as universal human endowments. (Bayly, 1995: 168)

Hence, it presumably is more difficult to overcome a discrimination which comes out due to the caste groups. Comrade Pillai discriminates Velutha although he shares the same ideology, and thus makes the chance of solution almost impossible. If people share the same national background, the same way of thinking, the same ethnic group and still perform discrimination against each

other only because of conventional social clustering, to overcome such discrimination is almost equal to come to a dead end.

John Briggs propounds a simple thesis about the caste system and the discrimination. In his words: “No one seems to have entertained the idea that the numerous communities which have been found spread over the surface of India were the inhabitants of the country before the Hindus, or that those communities had one common origin (Briggs, 1852: 275). The caste system categorizes people into groups by their importance and power. In this grouping, the untouchables are thought to have been expelled for their misdemeanour and they are regarded as unclean but nobody, in the meantime, is likely to acknowledge the fact that all people belong to one common origin on this land.

Comrade Pillai is the last person that sees Velutha before the police beat him to death. Velutha’s father comes and reveals the love affair between his son and Ammu when he is drunk, to Mammachi, mother of Ammu. He even suggests killing his own son with his bare hands uncontrollably. Later on, Mammachi reflects her enormous anger to Velutha for what he has done and she asserts to get him killed. Velutha pays a visit to Comrade Pillai for some advice, but Comrade Pillai does not provide the necessary support. Roy depicts Velutha’s despair with the words:

He tried to explain what had happened, but he could hear himself slipping into incoherence. The man he was talking to was small and far away, behind a wall of glass... Once again Velutha heard himself say something which made no difference to the man he spoke to. His own voice coiled around him like a snake... And there it was again. Another religion turned against itself. Another edifice constructed by the human mind, decimated by human nature. (Roy, 1998: 287)

Velutha has asked for the support of his party but he recognizes that the present indestructible wall is waving up in the air due to the caste system. He realizes that all his contribution to the party is in vain because ideals of communism are largely decimated by the caste system.

Further damage stems from Baby Kochamma, who has an unending jealousy towards her sister and has already heard the love affair between Ammu and “the trivial paravan” whom she never likes. Enraged by her hatred towards Velutha and her jealousy towards sister, Baby Kochamma locks her sister, declares unreal testimony about Velutha and causes the death of innocent Velutha in the end. She has mentioned before that “his particular paravan smell disgusted her.” (Roy, 1998: 335) Evidently, on one hand her jealousy and her vindictive and manipulative personality play a part in her acts, on the other she is thrown into convulsions due to her prejudices towards someone inferior in the caste system.

As the maternal figure, Mammachi, the mother of Ammu, Baby Kochamma and Chacko, is a submissive woman. She has been exposed to

constant violence by her husband, but she never finds enough courage to complain about the violence she has to endure. Despite the meanness and banality of her life, she continues playing her violin until the time when she learns the love affair between Ammu and Velutha. The message given to the reader with this scene is that any negative attitude including violence is acceptable; however, exceeding the boundaries of the caste system in this society is not.

### **Phoolan Devi, “India’s Bandit Queen”**

The second text, Mala Sen’s *India’s Bandit Queen*, presents the life of Phoolan Devi, an Indian dacoit (bandit) and a politician, who is popularly known as the bandit queen of India after killing twenty-two upper-caste villagers due to the injustices she has been exposed to. Unlike *The God of Small Things*, which is considered as pure fiction, *India’s Bandit Queen* is a biographical work and it is more significant to introduce the harshness and inequality of the caste system in India in this generic. Mala Sen depicts the tragic and complex life story of Phoolan, following a chronology, beginning from her childhood and we witness the inequality and merciless torture that she has to put up with throughout her life.

Phoolan and her family belong to the Mallah (boatman) caste, which is known as a lower caste group in Indian caste system. Phoolan family lives in poverty, and it is difficult for her father to raise four daughters and one son, and paying dowry for the daughters when they are ready to marry seems improbable. Her father, Devidin, makes an agreement with quite an old man to give his daughter as his wife. Puttilal is twenty years older than Phoolan and they organize “gauna”, an agreement that claims to keep “the young wife” with her parents until she reaches her puberty because she is only eleven at the time of the agreement. However, Puttilal comes back to take her only three months after the arrangement and promises the family not to harm Phoolan. Arriving at husband’s premises, she learns that his first wife has died while giving birth at the age of fourteen. She cannot put up with his sexual harassment and falls sick. Her father takes Phoolan back reluctantly but then their problems due to their caste start.

Suresh Chand, son of “the sarpanch” starts to follow her everywhere. Sarpanch, head of major four castes is a powerful person in India. Sen explains Phoolan’s troubles in her caste from her mouth with the following:

I tried to ignore him but he started visiting my mother, always polite and respectful, saying he was on our side. She was taken in by him and always gave her a warm welcome, making him tea and so on. When she was not around, he would make obscene gestures, winking me and showing me money. When I went to the well, he would whistle and flirt with me in public, throwing pebbles at my pitcher in fun. I told my mother but she said it was just part of his nature because he was young, and I should not take too much notice. On the whole she considered him

quite harmless... My father also welcomed his visits, thinking that at least one of the sarpanch's sons was on our side. (Sen, 1991: 49)

Although Suresh Chand disturbs Phoolan, her family does not accept it as a potential danger because he belongs to a higher caste so he is axiomatically good, he is unquestionably supposed to be good and whatever he does should be regarded as normal.

Since the family and the caste members do not react to Suresh's insults seriously, it results in Suresh's rape attempt to Phoolan in the village. Phoolan manages to protect herself and runs to the village centre but Suresh does not accept rejection and follows her and beats her in front of everybody shouting: "You Sudra-Mallah, low-caste whore! I will show you how to behave!" (Sen, 1991: 51)

In this way, not Phoolan herself, but the whole caste group Phoolan belongs to is humiliated. He blames her publicly for offering him improper things and reversing the truth claims that she has attacked him since he has turned down her inappropriate offers. As a young married woman without her husband, she is accused of bringing shame to her family by villagers and her family.

Maiyadin, the rich and evil-minded uncle, sends Phoolan back to her husband Puttilal. Although she does not want to go, her father is unable to back her up. This time Puttilal does not want to keep her with himself since he has married again after Phoolan. This second wife tortures Phoolan and demands that Puttilal should turn her back. Phoolan fears for the possibility of being returned to her family and expresses this fear with the words: "I could not return to my parents' home unaccompanied, since they had sent me back to my husband at Maiyadin's insistence." (Sen, 1991: 53)

Although life is not easy or tolerable with Puttilal, she has experienced the harassments of a married woman without her husband. Due to the sense of shame that society attributes to her and her family, she does not want to return. The lone reason is their cast, the family lack power. Despite her pleas, Puttilal drives her back to her village and abandons her near the village.

Phoolan Devi faces the sharper side of people after she is officially abandoned. Although she does not attack any people, young men of higher castes, Thakurs, blame her for attacking them and she is imprisoned. When a good person who is also a Thakur pays her atonement, the villagers accuse her of being the mistress of this good person.

The assaults lead to her abduction by a group of bandits who are paid for kidnapping and killing her. The caste hierarchy of the society runs within the bandit gang, too. The gang has got two leaders with different castes, one of Mallah and the other of Thakur. The thakur leader Babu Singh tortures and rapes Phoolan Devi insulting her caste together with her. This causes a fight between Vikram, the mallah leader and him. They make a deal for not to torture

Phoolan but Babu Singh breaks the agreement and insults Vikram and all mallahs:

Without me you would be nothing! Don't forget, you used to carry our baggage like a coolie and run our errands for us like a boy, before I put you where you are...I will show you Mallahs... I will teach you to remember that this is a gang made up of Thakur men... not fishermen! (Sen, 1991: 74)

Even in a bandit gang, the existing caste system is so powerful that the caste hierarchy is inevitable and does not let one forget the superiority over the other, putting the unity of the group into jeopardy.

When Vikram Mallah kills Babu and takes over the gang leadership, Phoolan Devi becomes his mistress as a woman of lower caste. She does not regret it, for she has fallen in love with the man who protected her but she is provided with no chance to choose and to clarify her position, she says that she feels like a commodity. She claims that: "A piece of property has no choice." (Sen, 1991: 76)

She is helpless and has no right to determine her fate with her free will. It is her good luck when she meets someone like Vikram who shares the same caste with her. All she can do is to be thankful to Vikram Mallah. Being a member of a lower caste is not different from being a piece of property. Mala Sen, the author of Phoolan Devi's life, at an interview reveals that "[she] has made it her mission to investigate the oppression of women in rural India" (Pinch 1149) and she decided that Phoolan Devi would make a worthy subject since she managed to become the leader of a gang of murderous male dacoits until she surrendered to the authorities in 1983. The true story of Phoolan Devi attracted so much attention that, it later turned into an acclaimed feature film by Channel 4 in 1994 (*Phoolan Devi*, Encyclopaedia Britannica Online).

Leela Fernandes points out that:

The production and extraction of value through the commodification of Phoolan Devi's life story in the postcolonial period departs from the ways in which colonial discourses constructed the Other... In the postcolonial period the native subaltern woman must not only speak her own voice but also be seen speaking in her voice. (Fernandes, 1999: 132)

The film version of Phoolan's life can be said to be born from the need Fernandes explains in this excerpt. Kapur's own modification of Phoolan's life into the screen is still a colonial attitude since he disregards Phoolan's self-expression. The appreciated form of expression should include major contribution of the woman with her dominance, however, on the screen too, Phoolan stays the same; muted and as a lone property deprived of making choices.

Arundhati Roy, the writer of "The God of Small Things" also criticizes Kapur and the movie for reflecting woman's sexual side focusing on the rape



scenes and she blames Kapur for being biased since he has not screened the cruelty of state officers and doctors. Roy's words are as follows:

It didn't matter to Shekhar Kapur who Phoolan Devi really was. What kind of person she was. She was a woman, wasn't she? She was raped wasn't she? So what did that make her? A Raped Woman! He was in business. What the hell would he need to meet her for? ... One last terrifying thing. While she was in jail, Phoolan was rushed to the hospital bleeding heavily because of an ovarian cyst. Her womb was removed. When Mala Sen asked why this had been necessary, the prison doctor laughed and said 'We don't want her breeding any more Phoolan Devi's.' The State removed a woman's uterus! Without asking her. Without her knowing... Was this even mentioned in the film? No. Not even in the rolling titles at the end. When it comes to getting bums on seats, hysterectomy just doesn't measure up to rape." (Roy, "The Great Indian Rape Trick I")

Roy states her projection of biased attitude clearly. Kapur completes his movie with a total colonial perspective which puts aside woman as a human regarding the financial priority.

Another unfortunate event occurs after the murder of Vikram, Phoolan's protector. Phoolan and Vikram are cheated, Vikram is killed and Phoolan is alone and weak again. She is exposed to gang rape of a group of thakurs. She decides to create her own gang in order to survive because it is the only way to maintain protection of herself and her family.

She leads her gang for long years and becomes a threat for thakurs, unfair people and biased police eventually. When it is her turn, Phoolan makes discrimination towards thakurs directly by killing many of them who has used their power against her before.

Her revengeful murderous acts come to an end with the agreement between her gang and the government. She imposes conditions for her family, her gang and herself in return for surrender. She states that she wants to complete her prison period in Uttar since the place is not influenced by the thakurs and she obtains her freedom after eight years of imprisonment. Her peaceful period lasts until her assassination in 2001.

### **The Existing Conflict in Norms of Behaviours in Indian Society**

The conflict in *The God of Small Things* and *India's Bandit Queen* emerges because of the opposition in norms of behaviours in Indian society. The contradiction between the appreciated behaviours regarding the caste system and the type of behaviours regarding the British influence, in other words, Westernization creates the problem in both works. Characters do not present the traditional behaviours that their caste system demands. They are women of substance. They can boldly comment on any subject, including the caste system.

In *The God of Small Things*, Roy indicates the essentiality of the obedience for the characters in terms of love affairs. Velutha and Ammu are obliged to the traditional rules imposed upon them by their society and Indian caste system. They do not have the right to have a love affair because they do not belong to same caste group. Panini defines the caste system: “The membership of a caste implies that a person becomes part of a person-based social network which controls insiders’ information about economic opportunities, transmits skills, and provides varied types of human and material support.” (Panini, 1996: 39)

Velutha and Ammu are not in the same social network and they are not expected to be together as the Indian society imposes its individuals to protect their identities and traditions.

In *India’s Bandit Queen*, the expectations of the society are not quite different. The commoners in Phoolan’s village symbolize the traditional Indian society. The people of higher caste have a right to raise their voice, to blame the weaker one and to impose their own ideas. On the other hand, the protests of the weaker people of lower castes against the injustices in the society are reason for condemnation and result in further punishment for the weak ones.

#### **British Influence in *The God of Small Things***

As for the British influence against the injustices created by the caste system, it is our contention that the British are present with their language, with the role models they create in both texts. In other words, British influence seems to be the main reason for the change of behaviour in Indian society. The characters put forth in the text achieve an international status spanning cultures, themes and ideologies from the sub continent to the international. Hence, it is possible to call them ‘doubled’ and ‘hybrid’. In *The God of Small Things*, Velutha is a talented person but he cannot be anything further than a handyman because of the caste-handicap and he raises his voice to address his rights in the book. He joins the Communist group in the Ayemenem and he does his best to justify his struggle for equality somehow. The same notion of equality encourages him and Ammu to start a love affair despite the fact that they know it is a taboo.

When the British model is displayed as the only valid universal model, this is again rejected in the text. The incident is observed within the family of Estha and Rahel when their cousin Sophie Mol arrives in Ayemenem with her mother Margaret Kochamma to visit her father Chacko and the rest of the family. Sophie Mol is a product of Indian and English societies since her mother is an English woman. Roy emphasizes on the exaggerated preparation that is organized merely for Sophie Mol and her mother. Baby Kochamma prepares “Welcome Home Our Sophie Mol Cake”, Mammachi plays “Welcome Home, Our Sophie Mol” melodies on her violin, the twins are dressed with their new clothes and they are told to speak in English in order to impress Sophie Mol and Margaret. The young Rahel feels the strange effort and feels

uncomfortable. Her discomfort is expressed in *The God of Small Things* with the words:

Rahel put on her sunglasses and looked back into the Play. Everything was Angry-coloured. Sophie Mol, standing between Margaret Kochamma and Chacko, looked as though she ought to be slapped. Rahel found a whole column of juicy ants. They were on their way to church. All dressed in red. They had to be killed before they got there. Squished and squashed with a stone. You can't have smell ants in church. The ants made a faint crunchy sound as life left them. Like an elf eating toast, or a crisp biscuit... Sophie Mol, hated, bellbottomed and Loved from the Beginning, walked out of the Play to see what Rahel was doing behind the well. But the Play went with her. Walked when she walked, stopped when she stopped. Fond smiles followed her. (Roy, 1998: 185-186)

Rahel uses projection as a defense mechanism, she projects her jealousy towards Sophie Mol and she squashes a group of ants which symbolize the group of people celebrating Sophie Mol's arrival. She can control the ants but she cannot control her family members who are impressed by the young English family member apparently.

The language shifting from the local ones into English is a commonly used implication in *The God of Small Things*. Comrade Pillai insists on using English in communication when he talks to Chacko. When Estha is sent to live with his father, he tries to learn whether Ammu will take him back soon or not, they communicate in English and the woman sitting next to him in the train appreciates him and indicates his talent in speaking English to her children saying "See how nicely he speaks English." (Roy, 1998: 325)

#### **British Influence in India's Bandit Queen**

In *India's Bandit Queen*, the British influence is not presented as clearly as in *The God of Small Things* but it shows that British influence enables a person, especially a woman of a lower caste, to judge the ongoing system. While English language and justice system appear to control Indian society for the benefit of people, in most cases both the language use and the justice system stay ineffective. In one incident, Phoolan and her brother-in-law need to fill a form in English in order to visit her sister in the hospital. When the Police blame her for so-called assaults, she puts forward the legally filled in papers in English to prove that she has been in hospital at the time of the assaults but the justice system is so crippled that they do not accept her evidence as valid. Years later, Phoolan needs the help of British justice once more. This time, the improvements the system has undergone enables her to implement negotiation for conditional surrender before she is sentenced to imprisonment. In this way, she escapes execution, she surrenders in 1983 and is released in 1994, upon which she joins a leftist political party.

#### **British Influence in India**

Considering its impact on Indian society, it is vital to scrutinize how the British influence has emerged in India. As it is already known, although the British arrived in India in the early 1600s only for trade, soon they shifted their aim from trade to colonialism and they controlled India by all means within the period that was called the Raj between 1765 and 1947 (*The Raj*, British Library). However, the British impact has lasted in Indian society even after their Independence War and today it continues to flag its existence in various fields of India. The adoption of English as their associate language is the clear-cut evidence of the British influence. Moreover, the roots of parliamentary system and civil services in today's India are based on British regulations. Reddy, in her essay, claims that "caste" and "race" have come to serve as key metaphors of socio-political struggle, "illuminating one-another and emerging as potent rhetorical strategies of social critique" particularly in India, but increasingly also in more global contexts (Reddy, 2005: 543). Reddy shows the efforts of Dalit groups to prove her claims since in contemporary India these groups are well-organized enough to move their concerns into global forums such as the 2001 UN World Conference.

#### **Is There An Evolution of Caste System At All?**

The adaptation of new regulations for India makes one address the presence and consistency of actual change as a process if there is really one to talk about. The evolution of change and adaptation of new regulations breaking free from the traditions require a considerable amount of time to achieve. In *The God of Small Things* and *India's Bandit Queen*, there is clearly an evolution of the Caste system. Although *The God of Small Things* is a novel and not a biography like Mala Sen's text, it would not be correct to separate them distinctively since Roy attempts to reflect an undeniable fact of India with her novel just as Mala Sen does in her biography.

Both works revolve around the same period. The biography of Phoolan Devi includes the years between 1963 and 2001 while *The God of Small Things* narrates the period between 1966 and 1993. The places in both works include Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, which are not very far from each other. The proximity of time and place in both works enables us to perform a sound comparison and make assessment on the evolution of the Caste system in Indian society.

The flow of actions points out the gradual change which lets individuals ask for more and raise their voice to obtain their rights regardless of their caste groups. In *The God of Small Things* Velutha and Ammu are pioneers of their society being not afraid of having an affair in spite of the limitations of the caste. Velutha does not keep away from addressing his rights and equality within the communist group in Ayemenem. In *India's Bandit Queen*, the picture is not quite different from what Roy narrates. In spite of the thorny ways of cruelty, Phoolan has been imprisoned only by the society, she has never been a prisoner of her own mind. Her courage has led her to revolt against people of

upper caste groups. Both Velutha and Phoolan are the brave rebels of their own time who have protested against the limitations of their time. They are the swans of their time, rejecting to the identity imposed upon them by caste groups. In other words, their attempts to react the present system have turned them into swans from being ugly ducklings.

### **Conclusive Remarks**

Consciously or unconsciously, there is an evolution of the caste system given impetus by the outspoken protagonists of both texts, following the British influence. The existing equality among the British can be considered a role model for Indians. Once they are outspoken, it is possible to claim that people in Indian society are ready for counter-acts against the ongoing inequalities of the present system. The outcome of Westernization reveals itself as protesting and reacting in *The God of Small Things* and *India's Bandit Queen*. It should also be kept in mind that these texts belong to the Indian women writers' 'Adept' phase as Barry (195) calls them. In this phase, the writers no longer need the European standards in form; but in content, with their in-depth psychological analyses of their characters they stress on cross-cultural interactions. In other words, at least the protagonists are no longer pure Indian but they are doubled and hybrid. The British influence does not justify or provide complete freedom in the end but it has triggered Velutha, Phoolan and the rise of rebellion in terms of self-expression and self-defense. Although it ends up with the death of both Velutha and Phoolan, which is heart-wrenching, it strictly does not refer to the failure of these people. The evolution of change should be regarded as a strict process in which even the slightest attempts or acquired rights should not be disregarded.

Ann Margaret's *Elucidating the Feminist Work of Post Colonial Literary Independence* (2008) provides a penetrating, wide scope analysis of today's Indian female world and comes to the conclusion that Indian women writers are highly interested in betting the world know about their opinions with regards to the social factors in life. This is because of "interlacing of foreign culture in India" (301) as she emphasizes, and using English gives Indian literature "an unmistakable cutting edge" in this new phase. As for this newly emerging hybrid woman, Margaret says they are "alternative resources of New History and Culture (303). To violate the boundaries of class and caste and to propose a world of equality is the prerequisite of "the ultimate world" (17). In our opinion, addressing rights and rejecting the inequality of caste system will turn out well as long as the outcasts in societies keep raising their voices.

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