

Conceptualization of Reality in Roy's *The God of Small Things*: A Baudrillardian Analysis

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the concepts of reality through Baudrillardian analysis of Ammu and Velutha, two major characters of Roy's (1997) The God of Small things. Important facts, events and their concepts of reality were taken as signs. These signs were analyzed in the light of Baudrillard's theory of simulacra, hyper-reality and the end of dialectics. The Baudrillardian analysis found that the self-image and concepts of reality of these characters is evident from the structure of the novel. These simulacra are institutionalized and nourished by the powerful ones to legitimize and perpetuate their hegemony. Ammu and Velutha's wrong conceptualization of reality through these simulacra stands for hyper-reality. Resultantly in spite of resenting and resisting against the injustices committed to them, they unwittingly kept serving the interests of their exploiters. This validates Baudrillard's idea of the end of dialectics in which there is no possibility of revolution in the society as the actions of the all opposing factions are amounting to the strengthening of the same system of exploitation. The findings conclude that for any revolution or positive change in life we must question our beliefs to see if they are simulacra and must never let simulacra set the course of our struggles. For this the development of a pragmatic mind and positive self-image is vitally important as from these sources spring the real clarity of perception and independency of actions that is so necessary for success and self-reliance in life.

Keywords: Hyper-reality, culture, lifestyle, end of dialectics, Pragmatic mind and positive self-image

Introduction

Jean Baudrillard (1997, 1983), points out that the present era is the era of exploitation of humans through manipulation and distortion of their concept of reality. His theory is one of the unique revealing techniques that postmodernism furnishes to unearth such aspects of literature that a superficial criticism of literature cannot reach. Baudrillardian analysis raises questions regarding the way we perceive reality through signs in our different social experiences and asks if this perception of reality is reliable (Borgmann, 1999). The main thesis of Baudrillard's works has been that more than often in different social phenomena people do not perceive reality and often the powerful people around us



tactfully cause us to believe in those concepts of reality that actually never exists. Thus they control and manipulate us mentally so that we may behave the way they want us to behave and keep serving their ends unconsciously (Best, 1994; Lauro, 2012). The present study also aims to make the Baudrillardian analysis of the concept of reality held by two major characters of Roy's (1997) the Man Booker Prize winner novel *The God of Small things* namely Ammu and Velutha. The purpose of this study is to find out answers to the following questions:

1. What factors caused these characters to perceive reality wrongly and serve the interests of their exploiters consciously or unconsciously?
2. How hyper-reality resulting from this wrong perception of reality shaped their lives?
3. How the simulacra and hyper-reality brought about the end of dialectics in their lives?

The purpose of finding the answers to these questions is to deduce the principles of a really happy, meaningful and self-reliant lifestyle that are essentially important in these postmodern times to prevent us from becoming the instruments of the exploitative forces around us.

Background to Baudrillard's theory

Barry (2002) points out that Baudrillard's theory has its roots in Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of linguistic Structuralism that later on was extended to other branches of epistemology as a surety to decipher the exact meaning and reality of things (Cahoone, 2003).

Saussure, in fact, discusses the role of language in the perception and communication of reality (Cuddon, 1991). According to Saussure's structuralism reality is something that can be perceived through the observation of material and immaterial signs around us in the form of a thought or sensation, but to express this thought we need language (Culler, 1985; Dryfus, 1983; Elliot, 2010). Language according to him consists of signs that represent the thoughts that spring in our mind when we experience the reality. Thus first we experience reality through our sense, as a result of this experience a thought springs in our mind and then we use a sign (a word or some image) to represent that thought. Though we believe that our sign actually represents the reality that we have experienced but as a matter of fact it only represents the thought that came to our mind when we experienced the reality that too arbitrarily as even the thought and the sign does not have any intrinsic relation. This is why the same thought in different languages is expressed with different words. In fact, by expressing thoughts in the sound form (signs) language indirectly (rather remotely) represents the reality. Hence the reality that we perceive and the linguistic signs, that we use to communicate that perception to others, have no intrinsic relation. Linguistic sign is one thing and the reality is another thing. Linguistic sign only, arbitrarily, represents the thought or sensation that we experience during our encounter with reality (Charles & Albert, 1959). This element of arbitrariness does not imply that we are completely free in the selection of a sign to represent our

experience of reality. No, our selection of sign must be in accordance with the norms and standards or conventions already set by the society for the use of these sign. According to Saussure first society arbitrarily assigns meanings to these signs that then these signs acquire an arbitrariness of their own which means we become bound to use these signs exactly in those meanings that the society has given to them. Such view of arbitrariness, in the relation between the reality and the sign to reflect that reality, necessitates that signs should also be in accordance with the conventions that the society agrees upon. If they are not in accordance with the norms, established by society for communicating ideas then we can never communicate our perception of reality (Charles & Albert, 1959). This leads to the conclusion, that understanding and using these conventions set by society, is a must for an individual to perceive and communication the reality. Here the idea that is of major significance for us is that according to Saussure reality is perceived and communicated through signs but the value and meaning of these signs is set by the society in which we live. This means we value and give meaning to things around us in accordance with the conventions and norms set by society (cited by Lodge, 2003, p. 8).

Derrida (1997) one of the founders of post structuralism points out that according to Saussure the sign does not have any metonymic or direct relation with the reality, it only represents the thought that springs in our mind as a result of experiencing some reality that means the sign only has metaphorical relation with reality and different people interpret metaphors in different meanings. Moreover different people come up with different thoughts in spite of going through the same experience. Thus a same experience and even a same sign may connote different kinds of realities to different people. This indicates that there is not any fixed concept of reality and most importantly language is not a reliable means of expressing and communicating reality as Saussure seems to claim.

Formulation of Baudrillard's theory

Baudrillard took the work of the poststructuralist to the extreme of skepticism, rather nihilism, theorizing that in these postmodern times all signs have become simulacra as they only simulate reality erroneously and always keep people disconnected with reality. Mostly they are created and manipulated by the powerful ones in the society to misrepresent or distort reality. To bring his theory home he describes the four states in which we may encounter a sign:

- In the first state sign is a true representation of the reality for which it stands for. In this state sign cannot be termed as simulacrum for it is representing reality truthfully.
- In the second state sign may represent a reality in a distorted form or instead of revealing some reality it may function to hide it. This second state can be taken as the first kind of simulacra in which instead of representing reality, it is simulated with dishonest intentions to misguide people.
- In the third state sign may represent some reality that has long died but the sign makes us believed that it still exists. Or it may simulate a reality that we desire to see so the sign tactfully convinces about the existence of reality.

- In the fourth state, not only the sign but also the reality that it represents are nonexistent but the presentation of the false sign is so convincing that that no one dares to challenge the veracity of the sign and the reality that it is falsely representing.

Hyper-reality the logical result of simulacra

Baudrillard's categorization of the sign in four states points out that the last three states of signs are the three different kinds of simulacra in which reality is only simulated in a dishonest way to alienate people from the facts. He further formulates that Hyper-reality is the logical consequence of being influenced by simulacra. His writings elucidate that Hyper-reality is psychological state in which a person believes that he knows the reality but actually he does not, as his perception of reality is based upon simulacra that are simulating or presenting reality erroneously. Baudrillard also presents hyper-reality as a mental state in which we neither are connected with the reality nor with imagination. We erroneously believe that we are living our dreams or we are getting what we desire but actually we are only being deluded by the signs to get trapped into this sort of thinking.

Hyper-reality and Simulacra the hallmarks of our postmodern existence

Baudrillard (1997, 1983) points out that hyper-reality and simulacra are the hallmarks of our postmodern times. We are always consuming simulacra on the name of reality and are trapped into hyper-reality being deluded that our existence is in harmony with on ground facts. Whether it be a social or political phenomenon or historical or religious aspect of life, in every domain of our existence we are surrounded by simulacra. These simulacra keep affecting our mentality and condition us to view reality in a specific way. Since these simulacra are mostly the contrivances of the dominant strata of the society so the down-trodden ones perceive the reality in such a way that suits the interests of these dominant one and thus they unconsciously keep strengthening the system of their own exploitation and oppression. According to Baudrillard, since the oppressed ones see the reality the way their masters present it to them so no change can come in society. This causes Baudrillard to pronounce the end of dialectics, a situation in which, consciously or unconsciously, all factions of the society are striving to strengthen the same system of exploitation and oppression so no revolution is possible in the society.

Literature Review

Best (1994), Lauro (2012) and Leonardo (2003) point out that in these postmodern times such signs are being insinuated into the schema of thinking of people that often have no connection with reality but they engender a specific kind of world view that suits the corporate interests of the capitalistic forces in the world. Lauro (2012) terms this strategy as the "technological colonization" of the world in which pseudo-events are staged to corrupt peoples concepts of reality to control and manipulate them. Wolfardt (1996) and Woolley (1994) maintain that mass media and technology are the main weapons that exploitative forces use to engender the false consciousness among people. Leonardo's (2003, pp.211-236) and Lauro (2012) maintain that Baudrillard theory furnishes best

tools to lay bare these fatal strategies and now more and more social research should be conducted in the light of his ideas to understand the causes of the end of dialectics.

In the field of literary criticism the studies of Erlingur (2006), Osmundsen (2012) and that of Nizamdoost and Amjad's (2011, pp.1-11) establish that hyper-reality affects the cognitive faculties of characters and paralyzes their power to make daring decisions. But mostly such studies are made upon science fictions and the impact of TV and theater upon their viewers. *The God of small things* is a panorama of heart breaking social realities (Das, 2012). This contains data recoded after deep observation of society. Probing this data, with the intellectual tools of Baudrillard, affords yet another opportunity to understand the operation of hyper-reality and simulacra in our actual day to day existence.

Research Methodology

The study falls in the purview of qualitative research as the theory-based critical reading and objective observation of facts, related to Ammu and Velutha, will be the major tools of data collection in it. Being a theory-based analysis of the cultural and social settings of the two characters as depicted by Roy (1997) the study is ethnographic in nature. Data analysis and interpretation procedure

The procedure of data analysis and interpretation will be as follows:

- 1) First all the major events and facts that relate to these characters will be enlisted.
- 2) Then the wrong concepts of reality that these characters believe in will be presented. We believe these concepts to be wrong because they are not letting these characters live a successful and happy life.
- 3) Finally the important events, facts and concepts of reality held by these characters will be treated as signs and these signs will be compared and contrasted with Baudrillard's concepts of simulacra and hyper-reality to determine how these signs are functioning as simulacra and how they are causing hyper-reality that stands for erroneous perception of reality.

It is hoped that this procedure of data analysis and interpretation will clarify the causes that engender such simulacra and will also point out how the resulting hyper-reality is leading to the end of dialectics, i.e. the possibility of any revolutionary or positive change in their lives.

This method is derived from Barthes' (2002) method of analyzing and interpreting literature that he used in the analysis of Balzac's short story *Sarasin*. As exemplified by Barry (2002) the method involves close reading of the text and taking the important facts in it as signs that have to be paralleled, compared and contrasted to reach the deeper implications of story. The only variance that the present study involves is that the signs, gleaned in the form of facts regarding these characters, will be compared and contrasted with the concepts of simulacra presented by Baudrillard and the quality of life led by these characters will be observed in the backdrop of the concept of hyper-reality that according to Baudrillard's is the essential outcome of these simulacra.

The synopsis of the story from the perspective of Ammu and Velutha

To comprehend data analysis and interpretation it is important to have a synoptic view the story of the novel with particular reference to the three characters in question. This synoptic view of the story will make data analysis and interpretation process more meaningful to a reader who does not know anything about the story. It is important to note that the actual story of the novel has many dimensions but our synopsis will only summarize the story with special reference to the two characters chosen as the sites of data collection for our study.

Ammu is the sister of Chacko. Chacko is a foreign returned self-proclaimed Marxist landlord who on return took over the factory of jams and pickle set by her mother much against her will. When Ammu was a little child her father used to treat her and her mother very brutally. After getting young Ammu wanted to get rid of this soul crushing atmosphere as soon as possible. As soon as she felt that she had found a man who would give her security and all the joys of life she married him. But the man proved an incorrigible drunkard and finally when he proposed Ammu to sleep with his boss to save his job, Ammu got divorce from him and came back to her father's home with her twin children. Now his brother was the master of that house. To prove her worth Ammu started helping her brother in the affairs of the factory. The life at her brother's house now was very suffocating and insulting for her and her children as every member of the house used to make her feel that she and her two children are a burden upon them. But in that male dominant society Ammu felt that she had no way out but to tolerate all this for the safety of her children. She was twenty seven, young and attractive. She needed love and respect. The suffocating and inhuman atmosphere of the house caused her to incline towards Velutha who was a servant in the factory of her brother. Velutha belonged to a Pravan family that was considered untouchable in the society being extremely abject according to the cultural standards of the society. Velutha also fell in love her and they established premarital relations realizing that the society will never accept their marriage. Velutha was also a member of communist party of the area that was led by Mr. Pillai. Mr. Pillai was very clever politician who was afraid of Velutha as Velutha was a very talented and sincere party worker. He wanted to remove Velutha from his way. When Ammu's family came to know of the love affair an illicit relations of Velutha and Ammu they launched an against the fact FIR in the police station accusing Velutha of assaulting Ammu and kidnapping the children who happened to be missing that day. The children including the daughter of Ammu had fled from home being disheartened of the behavior of their elders. Unfortunately when they were crossing the river near to their house in a boat, their boat capsized and Sophie the daughter of Chacko drowned. On finding that the Family of Ammu has turned against him Velutha went to Mr. Pillai for political support but Mr. Pillai left him in the lurch as himself was looking for an opportunity like this to get him removed from his way. Velutha planned to hide for the night in the bungalow across the river where children also had gone. Later by when police found Velutha in that very bungalow where the remaining two children were hiding they believed that the accusations alleged upon Velutha must be true so they beat Velutha so ruthlessly that he

died in the police station. Later that police got seven years old son Ammu convinced to witness that they were really kidnapped by Velutha who killed the daughter of Chacko as well. Ammu tried to tell the truth in the police station but now the police authorities, being themselves accomplice in the crime hushed up her voice. Later on the instigation of her Aunt Baby Kochamma, Chacko expelled Ammu from the house considering her responsible for the entire predicament that fell upon their family. Ammu tried to find some job so that she might live peacefully with her two children but gradually the extremely tough exiled life broke her completely and she died in an office while she was waiting to be interviewed for a job.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Facts and events related to Ammu

- Ammu's bringing up in a very oppressive and asphyxiating environment.
- Coercive and brutal behavior of her father to her and her mother
- Her mother's quiet toleration of all the cruelties of her father
- Ammu's getting married with a hope to find security and happiness in life
- Her choice for a husband
- Charming, pleasant and promising personality of her husband before marriage and his shameful conduct after marriage
- Her husband's proposal to her to sleep with his boss to save his job
- Divorce from her husband
- Her return to home with her seven years' twins
- Her reception as a burden upon family
- Her reliance upon her brother after divorce.
- Her role as free of cost labor to her brother in managing the accounts of the factory.
- Mortifications as a divorcee
- Disparaging of her children
- Her irresistible physical charms and her physical passions
- Her falling in love with Velutha, a servant in their factory and a man from the class of untouchables of society
- Sexual aberrations with Velutha
- Her strange carefree behavior during her relations with Velutha
- Murder of Velutha because of her
- Her efforts to expose the reality of Velutha's murder and insulting response of police
- Her expulsion from the house by Chacko
- Separation of children
- Her way of thinking after being expelled from the house
- Her preference to believe her daughter to be of seven years even though she turned eleven

- Her hopeful and self-reliance oriented way of thinking after being expelled from
- Efforts to find a job
- Death while waiting to be interviewed

Wrong Concepts of Reality held by Ammu

- Her self-image as a helpless and choice less lady
- The world-view about divorced ladies received from the society and blindly accepted
- Her belief that there is no way but to tolerate the injustices of her brother
- Dissonance between the internal thoughts and external conduct
- Her awareness of the falsehood of opinions imposed upon her by society
- Her faith that she must have the shelter of some man for security and happiness of life
- Change in viewing society after falling in love with Velutha
- Change in self-belief after being expelled from the house

Baudrillardian Analysis and Interpretation of Ammu's Perception of Reality

Now when we make Baudrillardian analysis of the realities that Ammu believed in, we find that Ammu's way of thinking and behaving was exactly in harmony with Baudrillard's idea of hyper-reality in which a person mistakenly believes that his/her perception of reality and his/her conduct is based on the correct understanding of facts. But the notable thing is that in every case she interpreted facts and events in accordance with the cultural norms and influences of the society that she was conditioned to accept unquestioningly since her birth. Resultantly the events and facts worked as simulacra in her pursuit of happiness and security as she could never recognize their proper implications.

Baudrillard's (1983, 1997) theory posits that Living with a wrong self-image, indoctrinated to you by society, is also an example of hyper-real existence. Ammu's estimation about herself as a helpless and choice-less lady was also a perception that she passively received from society without questioning its worth.

[Particularly after divorce] For her she knew that there would be no more chances. There was only Ayemenem now. Front verandah and a back verandah. Hot river and pickle factory.

And the background, the constant, high, whining mewl of local disapproval. (Roy, 1997, p. 43)

Pointing out this powerful impact of society Baudrillard (1983, 1997) also theorizes that our concepts of reality about social phenomena are the results of the influences that we receive from society. Certainly her mother's quiet toleration of her father's brutalities also conditioned her (Ammu) to accept this worldview. She (Ammu) was brought up in a male-dominated society where men were regarded as the only source of happiness and security for women. In spite of all the talents and great qualities they

must be under the putative shelter of some man to live respectably in that society. Hence in spite of all the belittling and inhuman behavior of her husband Ammu's mother established a profitable Pickle and Jam factory but she could not stop her son Chacko from usurping that factory as after her husband now it was he who gave her a false sense of protection and security. Baudrillard (1983, 1997) posits that commonly held social norms and ways of thinking are often the simulacra, fashioned and established by the powerful ones in the society just to control people. He calls this process "the worldly and spectacular manipulation of consciences" (1983, p.16). This manipulation of conscience, in case of Ammu, is evident everywhere. Everywhere she is duped to accept a reality that has no presence. It was this belief that caused her to hastily marry a person merely on the basis of his apparently charming and promising personality. Promising in the sense that Ammu hoped that this man would get her all those happiness that she had yearned for at her father's home. Clearly by describing the personality traits of her husband before marriage Roy (1997) hints at the simulacral aspects of her would-be husband:

"He was a small man, but well-built. Pleasant-looking. He wore Old-fashioned spectacles that made him look earnest and completely belied his easy-going charm and juvenile but totally disarming sense of humor. He was twenty-five and had already been working on the tea estates for six years. He hadn't been to college, which accounted for his schoolboy humor. He proposed to Ammu five days after they first met. ...She thought that *anything*, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem". [to her father's home] (Roy, 1997, p. 39)

The spell of this simulacrum broke after marriage when Ammu found her husband to be utterly ruthless and irresponsible drunkard who even insisted her to sleep with his boss to save his job. This made Ammu divorce him.

Later [after divorce] looking back on the day, Ammu realized that the slightly feverish glitter in her bridegroom's eyes had not been love, or even excitement at the prospect of carnal bliss, but approximately eight large pegs of whisky. Straight. (Roy, 1997, p. 39)

Baudrillard's (1983) idea of the precession of simulacra points out that when all concepts of reality are based upon a false, baseless rather meaningless belief then all realities that we believe in are mere simulacra that have no truth behind them. Our faith in these simulacra never lets us perceive the truth and even if we listen to that truth in the depths of our heart, the power of these simulacra paralyze us and never let us act in accordance with that truth (p. 10-11). Precession of simulacra also stands for getting entangled into one simulacrum after the other. This is exactly what happens to Ammu. After getting rid of the simulacrum of her husband she succumbed to the simulacrum of her brother as her way of thinking was never letting her to perceive the fact that she must learn to rely upon her own self to secure real peace and happiness for her and her

children. Her brother kept using her as a free of cost labor in the affairs of factory and always made her believe that she and her children were millstones round his neck. The way she and her children were being humiliated and mortified at her brother's house was convincing enough to make her realize that she and her children had no future there, but her opinion about herself as a helpless and choice-less lady blocked her mind and never let her explore her possibilities. She must have decided to go for self-reliance by relying upon her own potentials.

Another simulacrum that the culture indoctrinated to her as an unbreakable rule was her belief that at the age of 27 and in spite of being so attractive and full of passions she must live a stoic life, curbing her physical passions. A person can only simulate this sort of life otherwise to live with complete equanimity of heart and mind in such conditions is an illusion but Ammu believed in this illusion. In his essay *The Strategy of the Real* Baudrillard (1983) explains that simulation is a process of creating an illusion in which we interfere with the very principle of reality that always leads to disastrous outcomes (p.38). Her belief in this illusion was a real reason of her succumbing to sexual aberrations with Velutha, for the purpose of this simulacrum was to suppress an undeniable reality of her natural passions. Baudrillard (1983) philosophizes that whenever reality is suppressed by a simulacrum it takes its revenge in the form of disastrous consequences (p.17).

Most interestingly Roy (1997) suggests that most of the ideas that we believe in under the influence of history are also simulacra. Our blind acceptance of these ideas without questioning their logic also prevents us from creating an amiable society. The social history of Ayemenem was based upon class and caste system in which people of some castes were by birth respectable and sacred and some, by birth filthy and untouchable. Velutha belonged to the caste of Pravans that were regarded untouchable and filthy by birth. Since childhood Ammu believed in this age old tradition as this is how her parents taught her to think. But after divorce she when she fell in love with Velutha she realized the worthlessness of this simulacrum that blinded society to the reality that all humans are equally respectable. She realized that she never taught her children such hate-invoking history; resultantly there was a genuine bond of love and affection between Velutha and her children. They loved and respected each other like true humans who are not affected by the friends of history. Narrating the moment when they first fell in love with Roy writes:

“[Velutha] standing in the shade of the rubber trees with coins of sunshine dancing on his body, holding her daughter [Rahel] in his arms glanced up and caught Ammu's gaze. Centuries Telescoped into one evanescent moment. History was Wrong-footed. Caught off guard. Sloughed off like an old snakeskin [Sic]...In that brief moment Velutha looked up and saw things that he hadn't seen before. Things that had been out of bounds so far, obscured by history's blinkers. [Sic]

Simple things.

For instance, he saw that Rahel's mother was a woman. That she had deep dimples when she smiled and that they stayed on, long after her smile left her eyes. He saw that her brown arms were round and firm and perfect. That her shoulders shone, but her eyes were somewhere else... Ammu [also] saw that he saw. She looked away. He did too. History's fiends returned to claim them. To wrap them in its old scarred pelt and drag them back to where they really lived where the Love Laws lay down [that] who should be loved. And how. And how much. (Roy, 1997, p. 176-177) [Sic]

Here Roy is establishing an idea that for the most part history is purposefully concocted by the powerful ones to keep people live with false conventions and beliefs. Such false beliefs and conventions are the simulacra that distort reality and help the powerful ones to control and exploit other people and make them behave the way they want.

It is only after you get out of the spell of a simulacrum that you see things in their proper reality and make proper decisions. Ammu got rid of the simulacrum of men as an ultimate surety to women's happiness and security when finally Chacko expelled her from the house. Now she realized that that she must get some job somewhere to create a happy life for her and her children. Earlier on, all the social simulacra had paralyzed her thoughts and were not letting them allow understanding that ultimately she would have to realize upon her own self to live respectfully in that society.

Accepting realities of the present when they are very grim and painful is also a difficult thing. This is why as life moves forward, the past seems more charming to us. This is also a state of hyper-reality as now being overpowered by nostalgia we feel our past realer and more beautiful than the present. According to Baudrillard (1997, 1983) in these postmodern times when the whole life experience of people is fraught with simulacra and hyper-reality people love to live in their past just to falsely give themselves a sense of being in touch with reality as he writes, "When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning" (1983, p.12). When Ammu was expelled from the house and she occasionally used to come to meet her daughter, she always brought gifts for her according to the age of seven even though her daughter had turned eleven and was quite a precocious young girl. She always treated her as though she was of the same age when she left her. On such occasions he used to do most of the talking and rarely let her talk:

"She seemed terrified of what adult things her daughter might say and thaw frozen time. Fear made her garrulous. She kept it at Bay with her Babble." [Sic] (Roy, 1997, p.160)

Baudrillard (1983) points out that in a hyper-real state of mind often a person senses that what he believes in is not true but the power of simulacra paralyzes his judgment and never let him shatter the concept of reality that actually is a simulacrum. He calls this ambivalent state of mind as the strategy of deterrence and peaceful coexistence in which the exploited ones live with their exploiters without revolting to their exploitations. Ammu also understands it inwardly that that her brother is not sincere with her, she also understands that the values and norms that her family upholds and love laws that it has chalked out that who should be loved and how and how much are totally inhuman and against the principles of liberty equality and justice but still she kept abiding by these love laws and hypocritical values of the society. Her sexual involvement with Velutha was in fact her refuge from these hypocritical values that she kept following in spite of not following them that made her resistance against the system useless.

Facts and events related to Velutha

- Belongs to a class despised and considered untouchable by society
- A very talented, engineer type carpenter who can set right all the technical problems of the factory
- Considered inevitable by Chacko
- Permitted to mingle freely in the touchable workers of the factory due to his extraordinary talents
- Inherent contempt of the touchable factory workers for him
- His hatred and resistance against the unjust caste-based social system as a communist under the leadership of Comrade K.N.M. Pillai
- The only card-holding activist of the communist party along with Comrade Pillai that equates him to Comrade Pillai in the affairs of the party.
- Comrade Pillai's latent hatred for him for being a potential threat to his leadership in the locality
- Charming and affable deeply loved by Ammu's twins
- His genuine love for Ammu's children
- Ammu's falling in love with him due to his physical charms
- His sexual aberrations with Ammu
- Ammu's family's secret hatred for him on knowing that he is an official activist of the communist party
- Their contrivance to get him murdered by the police on knowing his love affair with Ammu
- Their allegations that he assaulted Ammu to rap her and kidnapped their children
- His request to Comrade Pillai for help
- Comrade Pillai's refusal to help him on the name of party discipline
- His escape and being caught by the police
- Children's fleeing from the house and their incidental recovery by police at that very place where he was hiding

- Estha's (the son of Ammu) one word statement against him a few moments before his death
- His death a source of strengthening the same system of oppression that he was fighting against
- Enlargement in the political stature of Comrade Pillai after his death

Wrong Concepts of Reality held by Velutha

- Ambivalence in his thoughts and feelings
- His faith in the struggle of the Communist party
- His faith in the leadership of Comrade Pillai
- His reliance upon Chacko as a sustainer of his family
- His unconscious acceptance of the caste system of the society
- His love for Ammu and her children and hatred for their family

Baudrillardian Analysis and Interpretation of Velutha's Perception of Reality

Velutha's thoughts and actions are marked by ambivalence that is a typical symptom of a man in hyper-reality. He was waging war against the caste-based social system but his conduct was strengthening the same cruel system. The local communist leader Comrade Pillai, Chacko and even Ammu__ all were simulacra to him that kept leading him astray and finally brought about his death. He used to believe that Chacko was the sustainer of his family who was generous enough to let him work in his factory but the fact was that his technical skills were inevitable for the operation of the factory. Chacko himself confessed it in one of his secret meetings with Comrade Pillai that he could not do without him as he (Velutha, being a man of all work) practically ran the factory (Roy, 1997, p. 279). So he was unaware of his central position in the factory that amounts to wrong perception of reality. We can say that like Ammu he also was living with a wrong self-image and the simulacra of Chacko and Comrade Pillai never let him make the proper estimation of his potentials. Comrade Pillai was always afraid of his genuine attachment to the cause of the party and wanted to get him off his way, as such sincere activists could daringly overthrow selfish leaders like him. As a matter of fact not only Comrade Pillai but the whole putative struggle of the Communist party for social equality and justice was also a simulacrum that caused him to serve shrewd leaders like Comrade Pillai blindly. He could never perceive that most of the communist leaders like Comrade Pillai are in league with the capitalists like Chacko and their entire struggle in the party is for their own vested interests and they have nothing to do with the misfortunes of the poor like him. All the so called protests and meetings of the party to exterminate this cruel system were simulacra that kept deluding simpletons like him that the party is sincerely waging war to get them their rightful place in the society. The party comprised of workers both from touchable and untouchable castes of the society and these workers themselves were not willing to end these baseless social divisions. They loathed Velutha for his being from an untouchable caste. This again proves that the whole struggle of the

party for social equality and justice was a simulacrum, as not only the leaders but also the party workers were not willing to establish this equality and justice among their own ranks that they ironically were trying to establish in the society. In spite of knowing these facts Velutha kept serving the party and its selfish leaders that amount to strengthen the same system of exploitation that he was fighting against. This reflects his emotional and intellectual dependence upon his exploiters who kept deluding him with fabricated reality. Baudrillard (1983, 1997) points out that often in our social system, first a reality is killed and then it is artificially resurrected through false signs, just to befool people that it still exists. Such an artificial resurrection of a dead reality is the simulacrum of the third order in which a sign makes you believe in the existence of a reality that actually has long died and does not exist behind the sign anymore (1983, pp. 13-15). The struggle of the communist party is also an example of this third order of simulacrum. The leaders like Comrade Pillai were using the power of the party to materialize their own vested interests but the simpletons like Velutha always believed that all the meetings, processions and public demonstrations of indignation of the party are to get them justice equality and liberty in the society.

The process of creating simulacrum is called simulation. According to Baudrillard (1983, 1997) only those people can carry on the process of simulation who know that there is no reality behind the sign. But since common people still believe that there is some reality behind the sign so they are duped and controlled by those who know that actually there is none (1983 p.11). Comrade Pillai knew this fact. He knew that struggle of party is a simulacrum as the leaders and workers of the party themselves despise each other on the bases of class and caste then how can they eradicate social inequality and injustice.

Baudrillard theorizes (1983, pp. 26-29) that morality is also a dead reality and whenever the concept of morality is revived in these postmodern times its purpose is to carry on yet another immoral enterprise. He points out that immorality needs the superstructure of morality to carry on its vicious operation (1983, pp. 26-30). Such resurrection of the false signs of dead morality again exemplifies third order of simulacrum. Comrade Pillai's vociferous protests over Velutha's death exactly illustrate this idea of Baudrillard. These protests were false and simulacral as they were being led by Comrade Pillai who in a way himself was an accomplice in Velutha's murder, for he knowingly let Velutha be murdered by police. But the simpleton party workers did not know this fact. Resultantly it heightened his political stature in the party and in his own locality. Baudrillard (1983, 1997) pinpoints that a system of exploitation, sometimes kills its own supporter to have a new lease of life from his blood. Velutha's death exactly served the same purpose as it paradoxically strengthened the same system of oppression and exploitation against which Velutha was struggling.

The axiom of Baudrillard's theory is that signs often present distorted reality or often make us believe in a false idea, thus the pursuit of reality through signs is a futile task (1983, 1997, Lane, 2001). The conditions in which Velutha was caught by the Police comprehensively exemplify this axiom. Ammu's family filed a false FIR against him that

he (Velutha) assaulted Ammu to rape her and have kidnapped the children. The children on that day had fled from the house as a protest against their elders' harsh and pathetic behavior. Coincidentally they took refuge in that very house where Velutha was hiding. Both Velutha and children were unaware of one another's presence in the house. But when police found them together under the same roof all the false allegations laid against Velutha seemed true to police. Thus the apparent signs led them to draw wrong conclusions that finally brought about Velutha's death.

Conclusion

Our first question was that what factors caused these characters to perceive reality wrongly and serve the interests of their exploiters consciously or unconsciously and our study found out that these characters perceived reality wrongly because they always looked at things according to the standards of society. Their upbringing and cultural influences had conditioned them to follow these yardsticks. This is why in spite of feeling these concepts of reality dissonant with the truths that their hearts perceived, they kept acting according to these concepts. Since these standards of truth and reality are determined by the exploitative forces to suit their selfish agenda so Ammu and Velutha kept serving the interests of exploiters consciously or unconsciously.

Our second question was that how hyper-reality resulting from this wrong perception of reality shaped their lives. Our study finds that being in a hyper-real state of mind, never addresses the crucial issues of their lives objectively. They always left things on the mercy of time considering them helpless and circumscribed. The decisions that they made were not decisions but instinctive reactions to injustices and brutalities committed to them. They never realized their real worth and this sense of helplessness never let them make conscious and daring decisions to break the spell of hyper-reality.

Our third question was that how these simulacra and hyper-reality led to the end of dialectics in their lives. And the study points out that the conduct and lifestyle of Velutha and Ammu was exactly according to the desires of their exploiters, hence there was no possibility of any positive change in their lives that amounts to the end of dialectics in Baudrillardian terminology. The case of Velutha exemplifies that being disconnected with reality even in their acts of revolt against the system of oppression they were controlled and guided by their oppressor and all their acts of resistance ironically strengthened and perpetuated the hegemony of their exploiters.

The data analysis and interpretation and the answers to the research questions lead to the conclusion that our life style is often the result of our self-image and the concepts of reality that usually people indoctrinate to us. We often view ourselves and the social realities around us according to the standards popular in society. Resultantly we behave the way society wants us to behave. This deprives us of our freedom of thought and action as all our actions are in accordance with the conventions of the society.

Meditating upon the social norms and standards of behavior Michel Foucault points out that such standards of truth are determined by the powerful elite class of the society (cited by Narang, p.27). Such standards and ways of thinking are often the

simulacra fashioned by the powerful ones in the society to establish their hegemony. These simulacra paralyze us mentally. They shape our lives. Unless we challenge and question these stereotyped ways of thinking we can never get rid of the procession of simulacra as Lyotard (1984) asserts that postmodernism is all about rejecting the prevalent concepts of reality to reach or discover the new ones. For this the pragmatic way of thinking is also an essential that demands that we must shun a belief or course of action if a fair amount of experience proves it worthless and unhelpful in the realization of our goals.

Simulacra and hyper-reality make us feel helpless and circumscribed and cause us to make hasty or wrong decisions that favor our exploiters. Covey (2005,2002) also believe that if things are the stimulus and our decisions are the responses to these things then there should be a reasonable distance between the stimulus and our response to it. This often helps us to discover the true reality behind the simulacra appearance of things. But still there is no guarantee as the only way to know reality is to observe signs that are the result of our experience and observation. Wrong observation or faulty experience may crop up wrong signs that will surely lead to the wrong perception of reality.

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