

Literature and the Postcolonial Context: A Postcolonial Appraisal of J.M Coetzee's *Disgrace*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

Germaine A. Ajeagah

English Department, St. Jerome Catholic University Institute- Douala Cameroon

Email: ajeagahgermaine@gmail.com

Abstract: The idea of achieving a blissful and egalitarian postcolonial society propagated during the anti-colonial discourse seems to provide a clear focus for anti-colonial activism in British colonies and elsewhere. These ideologies seem to have come to an abrupt halt once the goal of that activism was reached, and the realities of post-independence life began to set in. The postcolonial nation, a once anticipated utopian ideology is now represented in literature by writers who are arrantly disenchanted by the postcolonial setup. These writers' acute sense of frustration and disillusionment is directed to the postcolonial leaders and the ruling classes who wear very unprincipled behaviour and glistening mask and often use their positions to subject the masses through all forms of dehumanising torture. This paper, from the postcolonial perspective, examines the predicaments of the subalterns in the postcolonial society of India as represented in the novels *A Fine Balance* and *The God of Small Things* by Rohinton Mistry and Arundhati Roy respectively and South Africa as reflected in the novel *Disgrace* by J.M Coetzee. The paper equally revisits the frustration, anguish and despair of the subalterns in these societies as reflected in the novels. The novels represent bewildered and demented people living in perpetual and brutal torture in the hands of the upper-castes or the ruling class in their various postcolonial societies.

I. Introduction

Many critical opinions on the burning issues plaguing the postcolonial world highlight the idea that there are myriad forms of discrimination visible in the postcolonial world. These forms of segregation stand as an obstacle to achieving an egalitarian postcolonial society. They yearn for a society where people from different races, caste and sexual orientation are treated on equal bases.. Their sense of judgment is highly influenced by the apartheid regime in South Africa which has been represented by writers including Athol Fugard in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, Doris Lessing in *The Grass is Singing*, Nadine Gordimer in *None to Accompany Me*, J.M Coetzee in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Bessie Head in *A Question of Power*. These authors present authoritarian regimes which propagate discrimination between the black and the white races. Critics have therefore pointed accusing finger at the colonial masters as the architects of the discrimination that was topical during the colonial epoch and is still prevalent in the postcolonial era.

Writers decry the fact that the colonialists did not only deprive the colonized of their sovereignty but as Chinua Achebe puts it in *Things Fall Apart*, "the Whiteman is very clever. He came peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan no longer acts like one. He has put a knife in the things that held us together and we have fallen apart (26). This means that the postcolonial writers give a gloomy appraisal of colonialism and have therefore offered portraits of grievances against the colonial masters. Critics such as Achille Mbembe strongly believe that the anarchy that is visible in postcolonial societies was imported from the West during the colonial era. He explains that "the forms of governance which African regimes adopt, are not the innovations of its new leaders, but are partly a product of the colonial rationality" (25).

Despite the numerous accusations and counter-accusations as to the cause of the anarchy that has eaten deep into the fabric of the postcolonial world, a significant improvement hasn't been observed. Although the postcolonial writers have lambasted and continued to depict the horrendous and despicable predicaments of the downtrodden in the postcolonial world, the problem of discrimination seems to be indelible. This is probably because the causes and solutions to this quagmire have not been effectively evoked in the postcolonial context.

J.M Coetzee, Bessie Head, Arundhati Roy and Rohinton Mistry reduplicate the horrendous and despicable situation of the subalterns in their various postcolonial setups from a realistic perspective.

A critical examination of the works of Coetzee, Roy, and Mistry give us sufficient claims to the fact that humanity no matter the race, takes delight in subjecting people from the lower strata of life through traumatizing situations. Coetzee paints a gloomy picture of insecurity and racial victimisation in South Africa during the post apartheid regime in his narrative. Coetzee revisits the post-Apartheid era in South Africa with a lot of dissatisfaction. In *Disgrace*, we are made to understand that power has changed hands from the Whites to the Blacks, yet the problem of discrimination and victimization remain very topical in the society. Roy and Mistry do not only write about the macabre treatment Blacks are subjected to go through at the hands of the colonial masters but they are equally quick to observe the inhuman treatment the low caste or the untouchables go through at the hands of the upper caste in the postcolonial society of India, with a lot of disdain and frustration.

An understanding of the postcolonial theory will necessitate an easy comprehension of the issues raised in this paper. Elleke Boehmer points out in *Colonial and Post-colonial Literature* that "Imperialistic texts are undoubtedly the genesis of postcolonial theory (136). He notes that, "postcolonial theory all began with the various representations awarded to the colonized by the colonizers in their paintings, sculptures, travelogues and letters on various expeditions carried out by the European explorers" (136). Therefore, this theory is concerned with the socio-economic, political and religious problems resulting from colonization as seen in the quotation above. Bill Ashcroft et al. in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature* uses postcolonial theory to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization until the present day. More so, they assert that literatures are made distinctively postcolonial by the fact that "They emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power and by emphasizing their difference from the assumption of imperialism" (2). From the above quotation, it remains glaring that, postcolonial writers are out to represent the tensions that exist in their societies from a perspective that is different from the way they were represented by their colonial masters. In the same light, Gerald Moore, in *Twelve African Writers* posits; "postcolonial criticism can be seen as a more or less distinct set of reading practices, if it is understood as preoccupied principally with analysis of cultural forms which mediate, challenge or reflect upon relations of domination and subordination-economic, cultural, political-between (and often within) nations, races or cultures, which characteristically continue to be apparent in the present era of neo-colonialism" (12).

Thus, postcolonial writers seek to represent the plight of the downtrodden, who are subordinated socially, economically, culturally and politically in the postcolonial context as reflected in the above extract. It should be noted that the contact between two or more cultures breeds economic, cultural and political domination and subordination between nations and within nations as opined in the extract above. This subordination witnessed during the colonial era is still apparent in the present era of neo-colonialism.

Subalternity is necessary for an easy interpretation of the issues raised in this paper. Antonio Gramsci in the *Modern Prince and The Prison Notebooks* defines the term subaltern classes as those excluded from any meaningful role in a regime of power that subjugates them. In the context of this study, subalterns are those living in marginal positions in the postcolonial societies represented in the novels under study. Through consent, these subalterns participate in the hegemony created and controlled by dominant groups but yet have no independent space from which to articulate their voices because hegemony conditions them to believe in the dominant values. Gramsci believes that the intellectual has the responsibility to "search out signs of subaltern initiative and class consciousness and effect political actions" (*Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* 2).

II. Political Hypocrisy

In these novels, Mistry and Roy portray the postcolonial era of India as an era replete with disillusionment and despair to the down-trodden. Roy and Mistry's novels just as Coetzee's novel reflect their acute sense of frustration and agony on the postcolonial reality of India which is characterized by corruption, tyranny, exploitation, violence and bloodshed. An appraisal of the postcolonial condition of the subalterns in India as portrayed by Mistry and Roy reveal the shabby treatment subalterns suffer in the hands of the upper class in the postcolonial context. Therefore the novelists portrayed the postcolonial era as an era that has failed to achieve national liberation to all its citizens as they display characters in their novels that are wanting in all aspects and live in perpetual torment in the hands of the ruling class or the upper-caste. Mistry and Roy see postcolonial India as a country with bad government policies, unclear objectives, lack of will, corruption and many other problems that are not conducive to the subalterns. Although J.M Coetzee, Rohinton Mistry and Arundhati Roy come from different ethnocultural and religious backgrounds, they are significantly unanimous

when it comes to depicting the situation of the subalterns in their various postcolonial societies. The narrative in *A Fine Balance* and *The God of Small Things* is centred on the postcolonial society of India in both rural and urban setups while the narrative in *Disgrace* is centred on the post-apartheid era in South Africa.

Mistry, Coetzee and Roy in their novels juxtapose history with the personal lives of the characters to highlight the conditions of the down-trodden in the postcolonial context. While dealing with the lives of ordinary people in African and Asian postcolonial societies, Mistry and the other writers portray its socio-political and cultural turbulence in the postcolonial context. Roy and Mistry's novels reflect the postcolonial reality of India and the predatory politics of corruption, tyranny, exploitation, violence and blood-shed which characterized the Indian postcolonial society. An insight into rural India as reflected in the novels, illustrates the injustice, the cruelty, the horror of deprivation and portrays the trauma of India along communal, religious and linguistic lines. Mistry and Roy see postcolonial India as a country with bad government policies, unclear objectives, lack of will, corruption and many other problems that are not conducive to an individual's aspirations in the postcolonial context. The postcolonial Indian society as projected in *A Fine Balance* and *The God of Small Things* by Mistry and Roy respectively is filled with despair, brutality, discrimination, injustice and lack of opportunity for its people. To quote the words of Kumar; "A Fine Balance looks at contemporary India in which caste, class, ignorance, poverty, discrimination and exploitation of the common man by a cruel system, being manned by self-serving people whose only objective is to enhance their power and wealth with total insensitivity to those around them, is the only reality. Over population, man's greed, man's inhumanity to other men is one of the basic concerns of *A Fine Balance*" (46).

The struggle for survival and empowerment on the one hand and poverty and exploitation on the other is another basic concern of the writers in the study. In *A Fine Balance*, the four protagonists represent the commonest of the common in India who exist on its periphery by either belonging to a minority community or by being outcasts. Against this backdrop, the novel is primarily a study about human endeavour for dignity and the endless struggle for human beings to strike a fine balance between their desire for a dignified and meaningful existence by combating the pressures, deprivations, injustices and indignities of a hostile milieu.

Just as Mistry and Roy, Coetzee reveals the agony and despair that characterises the post-apartheid South African society, the plot of Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* unfolds in actual places in South Africa like Cape Town, Grahamstown, Salem and George; and depicts an identifiable historical milieu; the post-apartheid period of the late nineties. This period can be classified as the postcolonial period where Blacks were at the helm of power. In *Disgrace*, the narrative is wholly focalized through the consciousness of the white, middle-aged Professor of literature, David Lurie, who lives with a sense of being out-of-place "these days" (*Disgrace* 3), which have been marked by unprecedented social flux ever since the abolition of apartheid. A department secretary, whom he takes out for lunch, notes that "I mean, whatever the rights and wrongs of the situation, at least you knew where you were ... Now people just pick and choose which laws they want to obey. It's anarchy" (*Disgrace* 8).

In *Disgrace*, 52-years-old professor David Lurie falls in disgrace and disrepute after a sexual indiscretion with one of his students which generates a scandal that makes it impossible for him to keep teaching, disrupting a life he regards as satisfactory in cosmopolitan Cape Town. The white professor is then taken to a trial at the Cape Technical University over his abuse of power, but he refuses to cooperate since he believes that he is being expected to show repentance, which he does not believe in. His reformation comes later, as a result of suffering. The trail he is submitted to at the university greatly mirrors the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Coetzee presents Lurie as a disgrace to postcolonial academics as he uses his position as a lecturer to sexually harass his students.

Just as the other novels, *A Fine Balance* captures the atrocities committed during the state of emergency in India. During this era, the fundamental rights of the down-trodden are curtailed. During this era, the press is thoroughly censored and with the new law MISA anybody can be imprisoned without trial. Valmik, the poet - reader says, I am inspired by the poet Yeats. I find his words relevant during this shameful Emergency - "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold, Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" (*A Fine Balance* 556). Under the City Beautification Scheme, hutment colonies are demolished and millions are rendered homeless. Mistry captures the most brutal aspect of the Emergency which is that anyone, young or old, married or unmarried is compelled to undergo a Family Planning Operation. Ration cards are issued only to those who have a Family Planning Certificate and people have to choose between food and manhood. Ishvar and Om too, become victims of Emergency and the writer gives a heart-wrecking account of their vasectomy, the removal of Om's testicles just before his wedding and the amputation of Ishvar's legs, turning them into crippled beggars. The condition of the common man as reflected in *A Fine Balance*, especially those who oppose the anti-democratic postcolonial period is a very pathetic one. It is during this period that every Indian is under surveillance. As Mistry, describes it, the gaze is everywhere now. Everyone is a suspect, everyone has to be

investigated and suddenly new Student Unions sprang up which expects total submission to their demands and their codes of conduct. Students and teachers who voiced their honest opinion are promptly arrested and never heard of again. One of the many horrendous atrocities unleashed during the Emergency is under the name of the Beautification Campaign of the cities. Entire slums are demolished and reduced to rubble in areas like Turkman Gate. Mistry describes how Om and Ishvar learn from Rajaram that the hutment dwellers have been tricked into leaving their huts. The poor are rendered homeless in this new insistence on the Beautification of the City. In this period, one arm of the law - the police - is actively involved in the process of discipline in several ways. The accumulation of capital needs a labour force. In the totalitarian regime that existed during the period of Emergency (1974 - 77), a workforce was organized - created - very much on the lines of slave workers. Beggars, pavement dwellers, tailors, carpenters, rag pickers, scrap dealers and hair collectors are all herded into trucks to be driven to work sites because "In a huge city like this there is work even for a corpse." (p 404).

The authors in the study show a great deal of artistic insight into human nature in the caricatures of their postcolonial leaders. Their anger is directed against postcolonial political hypocrisy. This hypocrisy is so deeply ingrained in the politicians in particular and the ruling class in general. They always wear unprincipled behaviour and glittering mask. The authors in the study question the social setup which encourages the inhuman debasement and the cruel caste-ridden structure in their respective postcolonial set-up.

Mistry, Coetzee and Roy in the study juxtapose history with the personal lives of the characters to highlight the conditions of the downtrodden in the postcolonial context. While dealing with the lives of ordinary people in African and Asian postcolonial societies, Mistry and the other writers portray its socio-political and cultural turbulence in the postcolonial context. We can note that the writers are frustrated and shocked by the reality of their postcolonial societies. They suggest that despite many years after independence the traits and shades of oppression remains indelible. The writers see the postcolonial setup as an era with bad government policies, unclear objectives, lack of will, corruption and many other problems that are not conducive to an individual's aspirations in the postcolonial context.

Mistry in *A Fine Balance* equally reveals the manipulations and undemocratic principles that are highly implanted in the postcolonial society of India. The Thakurs are indulged in a perennial caste war against the "Untouchables" of the village. This stranglehold is achieved through recurrent violence - beatings, torture, rape etc. Various episodes in the novel reveal Mistry's sympathy and concern for the oppressed and the dejected of the Indian society. During the course of the narrative, Mistry makes some revealing political insights. A major instance is a violence perpetrated by Thakur Dharamsi and his henchmen against Narayan's family during the week of the parliamentary elections. The generation gap is shown in the aspiration of the lower castes. Narayan's father tells his son, "You changed from Chamar to tailor. Be satisfied with that." (143). However, Narayan who is educated wants to exercise his right to vote and insists on voting by himself rather than letting the blank ballots be filled by the landlords' men. Mistry in succinct prose shows the cynical manipulation of elections in rural India. Two years later when elections take place, Narayan tries to assert his democratic right and cast his vote instead of abetting the process of rigged elections. For his defiance, Narayan and two other 'Chamars' are forcibly gagged, flogged and tortured. Narayan's family for defying the existing social order pays an extreme price. It is very shocking and despicable that the lower castes are not given the right to vote in the postcolonial society of India. The killing of Narayan for rebelling against the undemocratic electoral process intensifies the level of political hypocrisy that is visible the society.

In *The God of Small Things*, Roy implies that the Marxist party in Kerala worked from within the communal divides. They never challenge the status quo but instead perpetuate the vicious cycle of discrimination. Velutha is a member of the party, yet he does not get help from the party leader Comrade Pillai because he is untouchable. Pillai's double standard nature makes him distance himself from Velutha to get support from the factory owner and other workers who hate Paravans. In the end, Velutha is betrayed by his party men. He is mercilessly beaten to death. Here, Pillai and the police inspector Thomas Mathew according to Fewzia Badjaoui are the "mechanics who serviced different parts of the same machine" (262). Arundhati Roy introduces us to the local political heavyweight comrade K.N.M. Pillai. She creates a cruel caricature of him. Pillai like Thakur in *A Fine Balance* is indeed, an epitome of all the unpleasant deceptive aspects of degenerating postcolonial political tradition. The local practitioners of local politics and the ill-concealed brute forces of evil are easily seen in men like Pillai. He represents a party that evokes workers' interests and exists on the strength of its pledge to protect them from all kinds of socio-economic exploitation. Their leadership survives on the slogan-raising and noisy marches challenging such a society that is based on all forms of inequality. Ironically he doesn't listen to Velutha's plight because he is an Untouchable.

Indeed, the postcolonial era witnessed and has continued to witness discrimination as seen in the novels under study. In effect, independence achieved nationhood and not national liberation. Ngugi in the article "The Writer in a Neo-Colonial State" in *Moving the Centre* sees the postcolonial setting as bleeding. He notes that; "The age of Independence had produced a new class and a new leadership that often was not very different from

the old one" (16). The writers in the study make a similar appraisal of Ngugi's ideology. What we observe after a critical study of the novels in the study is that after independence, the hopes and aspirations of the masses were shattered as independence failed to achieve national unity; rather it led to discrimination and victimization. Thus, during the postcolonial era in South Africa and Indian societies, colonial ills such as racism and casteism still stretch to the postcolonial era. The postcolonial era which is supposed to offer solace to all classes of people fails to achieve its objective as seen in the novels in the study.

III. Fear and Insecurities

In *Disgrace*, Coetzee just as the other writers in the study reduplicates the chaotic and unstable situation of the post-apartheid era in South Africa. An era that is supposed to offer solace and security to all classes of people is instead characterised by insecurity in all spheres. This idea of insecurity is visible in the novels under study as Coetzee paints the postcolonial South African society as one that has failed to ensure security to its citizens. After David's dismissal from the university; he escapes to his daughter's place. While David is in Eastern Cape, Lucy is raped by a gang of black hooligans and when David tries to defend Lucy and himself, he is exposed to the worst violence he has ever experienced in his life. The narrator tells us that "As he lies sprawled he is splashed from head to foot with liquid. His eyes burn, he tries to wipe them. He recognises the smell; methylated spirits, struggling to get up, he is pushed back into the laboratory. The scrape of the match and at once he bathed in cool blue flame" (96). It is worthy to mention that, this violence seems to be some kind of divine retribution for David's crimes. David has come here to seek a sanctuary but paradoxically, he receives the worst treatment. This equally demonstrates the insecurity that surrounds the new South African society.

Just as *Disgrace*, the second chapter of *A Fine Balance* introduces us to Mrs. Gupta the manager of Au Revoir Exports. Through Mrs. Gupta's approval of Mrs Gandhi's actions, we are confronted with the complicity of the Indian business house with the outrages committed during the period of the 70s. Dina's assumption that the emergency is irrelevant from the point of view of the common people turns out to be woefully misguided. As she struggles to eke out a living for herself, events conspire to strip each character of dignity and humanity in the postcolonial Indian society. The acrimony that characterizes the relationship between Dina and the tailors at the beginning of the novel transforms itself during the course of the narrative to mutual respect and compassion. Dina and Maneck, like Mistry, are members of the Parsi faith and are ostensibly outside the Hindu caste system. They are confronted by, and with touching subtlety. For example, "And as he mastered the skills-Dukhi's skin became impregnated with the odour that was part of his father's smell" (*A Fine Balance* 98). The novel highlights specific rural experiences of frustration and exploitation of the common man in postcolonial Indian society. Besides narrating certain living experiences, the author depicts his concern for the neglected regions of this vast country. Mistry portrays both the simplicity of rural life and the complexities of city life. Mistry attempts to understand postcolonial Indian reality in terms of his experience and tradition. Ishvar's readymade formula of optimism "the human face has limited space If you fill your face with laughing there will be no room for crying" (4) is very crucial to the theme and the title of the novel itself.

In *A Fine Balance* Mistry is frustrated and shocked by the reality of the postcolonial Indian society. All events and images, divine and bestial, are brought together skillfully in the depiction of the two tailors and their lives. Mistry seems to suggest that twenty years after Indian independence the traits and shades of oppression remains indelible. Narayan opines "the upper caste bastards, still treat us worse than animals. Those kinds of things take time to change. More than twenty years have passed since Independence. How much longer? I want to be able to drink from the village well, worship in the temple, walk where I like" (*A Fine Balance* 263). From the above quotations, Mistry paints postcolonial India's politics as a surreal menace.

In one memorable chapter, the two tailors are forced to join a crowd of 25,000 in a Bombay slum. As the helicopters hover and campaign speeches go on, the tailors and their fellow conscripts pass the time under the gaze of the garish 80 feet cut out of the reach of the Prime Minister. Mistry can make his characters articulate their thoughts or popular versions of their societal realities. The narrator reports that "See? said Rajaram. I told you it's going to be a day in the circus ... we have clowns, monkeys, acrobats, everything" (*A Fine Balance* 263). Mistry exposes the pretentious and egoistic attributes of postcolonial Indian leaders through the prime minister's speech "lots of lies have been spread about the emergency which had been declared especially for the people's benefit ... Whenever the Prime Minister goes, thousands gather from niches around to see her and hear her. Surely this is the mark of a truly great leader" (*A Fine Balance* 212). For Ishvar and Omprakash the huge cutouts of the Prime Minister with inspiring slogans for hard work and sincerity are mere markers in the confusing labyrinth of the city streets. However, they realise the implication when they are forcibly bundled away to the Prime Minister's meeting to fill in the number with neither the promised tea nor the free bus ride. Ishvar and Om return thirsty and tired "We could have stitched six dresses, thirty rupees lost," worries Ishvar (*A Fine Balance* 207).

In *A Fine Balance*, Mistry draws a vivid picture of the reign of terror that is unleashed in the name of national security and welfare in the postcolonial Indian Society. Protests are met with bullets and all

fundamental rights of liberty and freedom of expression are nullified by the regime. Emergency, a defence of an insecure leader, fragments the coherence of routine of the average lives of Ishwar Darjee and his youthful nephew, Omprakash Darjee and their employer Dina Dalal, middle-aged widow and her paying guest, Maneck Kohlah. Dina and Maneck are only the indirect victims of Emergency as their lives are dependent on the lives of the tailors, Ishvar and Om.

The second blow of the Emergency is when the tailor's shack is bulldozed to the ground as part of the slum evacuation programme. The hutment dwellers are massed on the road fighting to return to their shacks, their cries mingling with the sirens of ambulances that couldn't get through. Then the police rally and beat them back "People fell, were trampled, and the ambulances supplemented their siren skirls with blaring horns while children screamed, terrified at being separated from their parents. Ishvar says: 'Heartless animals! For the poor, there is no justice, ever! We had next to nothing, now it's less than nothing! What is our crime, where are we to go?' " (*A Fine Balance* 295). The above quotation reveals the despicable and horrendous situation of those living at the margin or the subalterns in the postcolonial Indian society. The final and fatal blow to the lives of these subalterns is an unwarranted police raid at the marketplace on their return to the small town near their ancestral village. Ishvar and Om are forcibly taken by Thakur to a sterilization camp of the town near their ancestral village.

Another gruesome aspect of the emergency reflected in *A Fine Balance* is seen in forced sterilisation perpetrated by the regime. Operations are conducted with partially sterile equipment due to the harsh reprimands of the bureaucrats who are only interested in achieving targets rather than demolishing human sufferings. The euphemism of 'efficiency' and 'the sense of duty' is used to ensure that the Sterilization Operations are performed even under unhygienic conditions but the planned target of sterilization is achieved. Thakur Dharamsi, the upper caste ring leader, achieves respectability as a political leader during the Emergency because he organizes many sterilization camps. He uses his superior position to see that Omprakash is castrated, his testicles are removed. In this way, Thakur Dharamsi takes revenge on the lower castes in his village whose only crime was to achieve some social mobility by getting their children educated and sending them to be trained as tailors instead of working with leather as 'Chamars', their traditional occupation. Thakur Dharamsi's cruel misuse of authority as Pillai in *The God of Small Things* shows that the trend of criminalization of politics and the politicization of crime has been rampant in India in the last decade of the twentieth century. It started in the period of Internal Emergency. Mistry also hints in his novel that constant oppression by the upper castes would lead to violence and an uprising by the lower castes. When Ishvar goes to register a complaint at the Police Station about his nephew's castration, the constable on duty is perturbed. So, in a way, Mistry is being quite clairvoyant and hints at the rise of the numerous Dalit Senas in several states in India, as retaliation against the upper caste oppression they had to suffer.

The postcolonial era as represented in the novels is characterised by fear and insecurities. Just as the chaotic and turbulent nature of the postcolonial Indian society is revealed in *The God of Small Things* and *A Fine Balance*, the apartheid and the post-apartheid period is characterised by fear and insecurity as reflected in *Disgrace* and *A Question of Power*. The whites are in a deep plight as they cannot wield power as before. They live in perpetual fear and insecurity. In *Disgrace*, Coetzee presents a practical problem he witnessed during the post-apartheid regime. Melanie's boyfriend boldly walks up and confronts Lurie when he discovers that Lurie has an affair with Melanie. He says that "So you are the professor ... You think you are smart. A real lady's man. You think you still look smart when your wife hears what you are up to? Don't think you can just walk into people's lives and walk out again when it suits you". (31). The above confrontation ends in the destruction of Lurie's car by Melanie's boyfriend and his gang. This is glaring when the narrator tells us, "His car, parked in the street is vandalized. The tyres are deflated, glue is injected into the door locks, and newspaper is pasted over the windscreen. The paintwork is pasted over the windscreen, and the paintwork is scratched. The locks have to be replaced; the bill comes up to six hundred rands" (31). The above lines demonstrate the level of insecurity that is visible in this postcolonial society. Lurie decides to bend low to having a relationship with Melanie who is young enough to be his daughter or grandchild without taking into account Melanie's opinion. He, therefore, earns his pay when he is vandalized by Melanie's boyfriend and his gang. Pollux and his gang members are not in any position to do something helpful to ameliorate their living conditions.

The post-apartheid period recorded failure nearly in all sectors even in the judicial system. The narrator tells us, "Drugs peddlers hang around the playing fields and the police do nothing" (8). This is evident of lawlessness as people choose to obey any law they want to obey; this shows the chaotic nature of the postcolonial South African society. Therefore, the end of apartheid has given rise to more acute and complicated problems. Adrian Guelke, in *South Africa in Transition* attributes this to extreme inequalities and unemployment when he stipulates that, "Causes of crime wave can be found in the country's extreme inequalities, the conspicuous consumption of a new elite, widespread unemployment in the urban areas and the ready availability of guns as a legacy of past conflicts" (175).

Worthy to mention is the fact that Lucy has dogs which act as a source of comfort to her. When Lurie visits Lucy, she takes him for a stroll together with her dog. Even though they have a dog which normally has to

act as an agent of security in case of danger, they rather feel insecure in the countryside. The environment indeed is insecure. That explains why people have resorted to keeping dogs to cope with this chaotic environment. Lurie uses these dogs against blacks and even sends a dog to attack Pollux. Lurie equally abuses Pollux as "you swine, you filthy swine" and commands Katy (Lucy's dog) "to teach him a lesson, to show him his place". Pollux in turn replies that "I will kill you, we will kill you" (207). The use of the phrase "I" which is later rephrased to "we" in the above lines suggests the fact that both races have waged a war against each other. The general atmosphere in the postcolonial South African society is characterized by insecurity as one race wants to dominate the other visible in *Disgrace* and *A Question of Power*.

In *Disgrace*, Melanie's boyfriend enters Lurie's office with a lot of courage and strength. He walks into Lurie's office and threatens him as if they are of the same class. Lurie's social position as a professor means nothing to him and Lurie does not succeed in sending him out of his office. When Lurie asks him to go out of his office he becomes very furious. David receives humiliation from this young black boy and students at the opera, coupled with the fact that a group of young blacks burn his house and promises him hell, influencing Lurie to transform himself from his old self to a new person. Left with nothing, he then decides to go to his daughter in the countryside where he learns humility despite his status.

In the postcolonial South African society, there is a continuous generational conflict whose seeds were sown in the colonial invasion and the institutionalization of the apartheid regime. The blacks are bent on putting an end to white domination and marginalization. The post-apartheid generation no doubt is infested with hatred for each other as was the case of the apartheid generation. Lucy believes that what happens to her is so personal and is done with hatred. This she says that "it was so personal. It was done with personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was...expected. But why did they hate me so? I have never set eyes on them" (156). Indeed, Lucy in *Disgrace* stands for the minority white race while Pollux and his friends represent the majority-black race. Lucy is not happy with the insecurity that is very topical in her society. Due to this insecurity, she believes she is not incorporated in the South African society and she feels out of place and sees herself as a replica of discrimination and an epitome of a race from which stemmed the problems of the blacks and the Whites. She sees the black thugs as those who have come to collect debts that were ceased by the colonial masters on the black soil. Lucy is not happy due to the rate of insecurity that is in her society. That explains why she keeps dogs for protection. On a contrary note, the blacks are not afraid of dogs that explains why black boys decide to take the life out of Lucy's dogs.

IV. Discrimination and Victimisation

The story in Roy's *The God of Small Things* is set in the postcolonial society of India, at a time when members of the Untouchable, Paravan, Dalits or Paryan caste were not permitted to touch members of higher castes or enter their houses. The Untouchables just as the blacks in South Africa were considered polluted beings and relegated to the margin. They had the lowliest jobs and lived in subhuman conditions. In India, the caste system is considered a way to organize and restructure their society. Roy's novel shows how cruel such a system can be especially in the postcolonial context. Roy's depiction of the miserable lives of women in the postcolonial context in this novel critiques in unmistakable terms the perpetuation of the exploitative forces.

The postcolonial societies represented in the novels are characterised by discrimination and victimisation. The Blacks in South Africa just as the Dalits in India are treated with a lot of disdain by the whites and the upper-caste respectively. The untouchable characters in *The God of Small Things* are presented as 'types'. The device proves useful for giving a realistic view of the varying responses to the grim reality of the Dalits in the postcolonial context. The Dalits are subjected to horrendous treatment by the upper castes. This fact cannot be disputed as we come across three characters in *The God of Small Things* who belong to the category of the downtrodden. They are Vellya Pappen and his two sons Kuttapan and Velutha. They belong to an untouchable caste called Paapen. They are today trappers according to the tradition. Arundhati Roy gives a lot of information about the untouchables of Kerala in this connection. She also gives a generally perfect picture of Dalits with their oaring responses to the caste oppression through the device of the trio. According to Das, "Vellya Paapen, Kuttape and Velutha constitute the trio which depicts the three types of the Dalits in the Indian society. They are the docile conformist, the discontented paralytic and the rebels who move for equality and stakes his life" (23). The novel mentions only the names of three untouchable castes namely Paravans, Palayyas and Pulayyas.

In *A Fine Balance*, the lower castes are exploited by the upper caste. In the village, the Thakurs connive with the Brahmins for the purpose. They defend their emphasis on purity and caste distinctions as being sanctioned by the scriptures. The "Divine Law" is invoked to reinforce the discriminatory system. The Brahmin Pandit Lalluram pacifies Dukhi by reiterating the "dharmic duty" of all castes. He enjoins Dukhi to preserve the status quo since the system was required to prevent universal chaos. In *A Fine Balance*, characters like Nusswan illustrates a high degree of exploitative power to victimise Dina. Nusswan runs the Shroff household after his father's death. From then on, he controls the other members of the family. Dina's young age and their mother's

approaching senility makes them depend on Nusswan. He regulates Dina's money, dresses, education and friendship and later induces Dina into marriage. This move however does not work. After some time, with widowhood and subsequent penury, she is forced to approach Nusswan for help. Nusswan's monetary assistance helps him retain his hold over her.

In *The God of Small Things*, along with the caste system, there is a description of an economic class struggle in the postcolonial setting. The Ipes are considered upper class. They are factory owners, the dominating class. Mammachi and Baby Kochamma would not deign to mix with people from the lower class. Even Kochu Maria, who has been with them for years, will always be a servant of a lower class. Much more is talked about the 'politics' in this novel. Society is reflected in the political, religious, cultural and historical activities of the people. The politics reflected in this novel reveal the social reality. *The God of Small Things* like the other novels in the study can be read as a potential political story in the sense that politics intervenes in the basic social issues. One of the major social issues is centrally concerned with the untouchables. Compulsions transcend the limits of the party, ideology. Roy in the novel engages with the political legacy of communism in Kerala. According to Das, "her satirical portrayal of E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the first Chief Minister and his party followers created many controversies" (34). Through its various agencies, this politics exercises decisive influence over the lives of the people of Ayemenem. Arundhati Roy like the other writers in the study presents politics in the postcolonial context as a very complex force that is visible at different levels.

In a nutshell, *A Fine Balance*, *The God of Small Things* and *Disgrace* portray the postcolonial era of India and South Africa as eras replete with disillusionment and despair among the subalterns. Roy's and Mistry's novels like Coetzee's reflect their acute sense of frustration and agony on the postcolonial societies of India and South Africa which are characterized by discrimination, insecurities and political hypocrisy. An appraisal of the postcolonial condition of the low caste in India as portrayed by Mistry and Roy reveal the appalling treatment subalterns suffer in the hands of the upper class in the postcolonial context. Therefore, the novelists portrayed the postcolonial era as an era that has failed to achieve national liberation to all its citizens as they display characters in their novels that are wanting in all aspects and live in perpetual torment in the hands of the ruling class or the upper-caste. Mistry and Roy see postcolonial India as a country characteried by bad government policies, corruption lack of a clear vision objectives, and lack of will while Coetzee sees post apartheid South Africa as characterise by violence, discrimination and insecurities.

References

- [1]. Ashcroft, Bill et al. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- [2]. Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995.
- [3]. Coetzee, J.m. *Disgrace*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1999.
- [4]. Gramsci, Antonio. *The Modern Prince and The Prison Notebooks*. London: ElecBook, 1999
- [5]. Guelke, Adrian. *South Africa in Transition: The Misunderstood Miracle*. London Tauris: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- [6]. Head, Bessie. *A Question of Power*. London: Heb Ltd, 1973.
- [7]. ————. *Woman Alone*. London: Heb Ltd, 1977.
- [8]. Kumar, Rajesh. "Treatment of Parsi Culture and Traditions in the Works of Rohinton Mistry." *Percraft International*, (2012): 11-16
- [9]. Mistry, Rohinton. *A Fine Balance*. London: Faber and Faber, 1997.
- [10]. Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. New York: Random House, 1997.
- [11]. Mbembe, Achille. *Critique of Black Reason*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.
- [12]. Rao, Anupama. *Introduction : Caste Gender and Indian Feminism*. *Gender and Caste*. London: Zed Books, 2005.