

A Study Of Cultural Tradition Deracination In Novels Of Arundhati Roy

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ABSTRACT: *The origins of Indian literature in English may be traced back to the introduction of the English language in India by the British. Basically, it was an intentional, political and colonial action of the British rulers. These colonizers introduced English and its literature in India to inculcate western taste and culture in their colonial subjects. Their intention was to impose the superiority of western culture on the Indian mind. Indian fiction in English is rich in tradition and variety. The contribution by women writers to Indian fiction in English has its own place and significance. The processes of colonization and decolonization are both related to the introduction of the English language and literature in India. The colonial experience contributed to the change in women's position in Indian society, which is reflected in women's literature. Therefore, it would be interesting to see the postcolonial response of women writers to the life and experience of the modern Indian women. This dissertation seeks to find out the post-colonial features in the fiction of five Indian women writers in English of the post 1980s. The writers are Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri, Gita Mehta, Arundhati Roy and Jai Nimbkar.*

KEYWORDS: Cultural Deracination, Indian English Novels, Arundhati Roy, English language.

INTRODUCTION:

Arundhati Roy is one of the few writers who is keenly interested in the socio-political issues. Her novels are globally acknowledged and she is the second Indian novelist to have bagged the prestigious Booker Prize. Her novel, *The God of Small Things* captures many social values of Indian society. Set in a small town Ayemenem near Kottayam in Kerala, the novel describes clearly the culture of Indian society and it is a story of caste exploitation at the centre of which is the forbidden love between Ammu and the untouchable Velutha. The caste and the gender bias are the cultural values seen reflecting through this novel. My paper focuses on these cultural values of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. One of the major themes of this novel is based on caste as the main protagonist is suppressed as he is from a low caste and is referred as an untouchable. They are considered polluted and not to be touched. Velutha is the titanic figure that stands out as the representative of the untouchables in the novel. „Velutha“ which signifies „whiteness“ in Malayalam, is represented as one with black complexion. Many of the untouchables are talented and brilliant. They can do all works as good as the touchable do. But because the identity of „untouchable“ labeled them, they can not develop or actualize their selves. Likewise, here Velutha works like a little magician. He could do wonderful things like making tiny windmills and minute jewel boxes out of dried palm reeds. Velaya Paapan, Velutha's father a toddy tapper by profession was a paravan. Velutha, the untouchable boy had been in the habit of going to Ayemenem House with his father for work. It was Mammachi who first noticed Velutha's remarkable ability as a carpenter. Despite his untouchability and poor background, Velutha is of a great help to Ammu's family. Among Velutha's contribution to Ammu's family are, he is the best operator of machine in their factory besides he also has great carpentry skills. But, like Mammachi said, if Velutha has not been a Paravan, he might have become an engineer. Unlike the scholarly Oxford-training Chacko, it is Velutha who maintains the new canning machine and the automatic pineapple slicer. It is also Velutha who oils the water pump and the small diesel generator, and so on. So, it is clearly notable that the whole family of Mammachi depends more and more on Velutha. But, Velutha's identity as the untouchable has made Mamachi's family cannot appreciate him properly.

The evolution of Indian literature in English is a direct consequence of the adoption of English and its literature by Indian society. Indians have produced a considerable amount of literature in the English language. Recently, many Indian writers have achieved fame and have claimed international recognition for their literature in English. Much has been said and written about the development of Indian literature in English. Especially, the recurrence of east-west encounter in Indian English literature has been frequently discussed by critics. The postcolonial positions of Indian writers in English and writers in the regional vernacular literatures are also a widely discussed issue. The contribution of women writers to Indian literature in English is certainly too prominent to escape the attention of scholarly critics. Since women writers present "the doubly colonized" section of society in the Indian literature in English, the attempt to read their novels in the light of postcolonial theory is logical. Values are the internal precepts by which we make our decisions. When we are confronted by choices, opinions or moral dilemmas, the decisions we make will indicate what values we hold. The five human and moral values are righteousness, peace, truth, love and non-violence. Human Values give worthiness and respect to life. The world should realise that when Gandhi talked of non-violence, self-suffering, consideration for others, honesty, he had only fear of value erosion and wanted to save the humanity from self-destruction. For him the ideal human being was one who was concerned about others their needs, desires, miseries in which he could be of help to them. There is indeed a global need to project Gandhi's ways before the whole world that there is no other way than to adopting the human and moral values.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Toni Cade Bambara said that literature being the appropriate one to attack on the social evils creates awareness among the readers and make them to uphold their protest. Here I quote, "A writer, like another socio-cultural worker, like any other member of the community, ought to try to put her/his skills in the service of the community". Arundhati Roy, who emerged as a figure head in the contemporary literature while reflecting the social issues in her writings and bagged the acclaimed Booker award for her debut novel — *The God of Small Things* (1997), had not only employed the description of how the small things in life affect people's behaviour and their lives but also upheld the other conflicting issues of the society which still persisted in the modern society, after that she focused towards the socio political issues and wrote many essays, short stories etc. where she had employed the socio political conflicts that our country is facing till today, for she was known more or less as an activist rather than a mere novelist. Arundhati Roy acclaimed to be one of them who reflected those issues without any hesitation and had to undergo a troublesome state. On the other hand she had won many awards for upholding such realistic themes in her writings, for instance she bagged Sydney peace award in May 2004 for her social work.

Al-Quaderi and Saiful Islam (2011) in "Complicity and Resistance: Women in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*" discuss the peculiar part played by the women characters in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. They point out that the resistance against gender oppression leads to resistance against caste, class oppression and spurring on anti-colonial thought and action. Such variants of resistant rebellion are articulated through the examination of the marital and inter-gender relations of Ammu, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma and Rahel.

Subhashini (2011) in her article "Feminine Sensitivity with reference to *The God of Small Things*" talks about evolution of feminism as a revolt against "conservative perception of women's issues". M. S. Nagarajan Arundhati Roy Critical Perspectives: Murari Prasad Editor; Pen craft International article in the Hindu 30th January 2010. Not to have known Arundhati Roy argues you unknown. That she revels in stirring up a hornet's nest is a mild understatement. Her article "The Great Indian Rape Trick" on the film 'Bandit Queen' in which she charged Shekar Kapoor that he had misrepresented Phoolan Devi is an instance in point. Besides her stunning debut novel *The God of Small Things* that won the Booker prize in 1997, she is the author of three screenplays, eight works of non-fiction and a dozen essays and articles. As journalist, social activist and intellectual, her impact on Indian public life cannot be easily disregarded. No wonder, then, that over the years, there has been an avalanche of articles on, and interviews with, her. Arundhati Roy: Critical Perspectives is a

choice collection of some of these items that deal with the recurrent themes that have animated the whole of Arundhati Roy's oeuvre.

Biography of Arundhati Roy

Arundhati Roy was born in 1961 in the Northeastern Indian region of Bengal, to a Christian mother and Hindu father. She spent her childhood in Aymanam in Kerala, which serves as the setting for her first novel, *The God of Small Things* (under the name "Ayemenem"). Roy's mother, Mary Roy, home-schooled her until the age of ten, when she began attending regular classes. She has been reluctant to discuss her father publicly, having spent very little time with him during her lifetime; Roy instead focuses on her mother's influence in her life. Mary Roy, a political activist, won an unprecedented victory for women's rights in Kerala. Through her persistence, the Supreme Court granted Christian women in Kerala the right to have an inheritance.

She spent her teenage years at boarding school in Southern India, after which she earned her degree from the School of Planning and Architecture in Delhi. After graduating, Roy supported her by teaching aerobics while honing her writing skills. She eventually wrote several film scripts, which are recognized for their complex structure and biting social commentary. Roy wrote and starred in the film *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones*, and she wrote the script for *Electric Moon*, directed by her second husband, Pradip Krishen. (Her first husband was Gerard Da Cunha, whom she met while in college. Their marriage lasted approximately four years.) Both films garnered a cult following, setting the stage for the fiction-writing side of Roy's career. Penguin published the script for *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones* as a book in 2004.

Even when she was a low-profile writer, Roy began to assert her political opinions loudly. She allied media support for Phoolan Devi, a politician and former criminal of Robin-Hood fame, whom she felt was being misrepresented by the film *Bandit Queen* (directed by Shekhar Kapur). After the controversy surrounding *Bandit Queen* subsided, Roy took time to write her first and only novel to date, *The God of Small Things*. She received an extraordinary advance of half a million pounds on the book, making its release high-profile well ahead of time. After the novel's publication in 1997, the book won the prestigious Booker Prize, making Roy its first Indian woman and non-expatriate Indian recipient.

In addition to her novelistic skills, Roy is widely known for political activism (perhaps along the lines of a Noam Chomsky). She has published many works of non-fiction including several essays as well as *The End of Imagination* (1998), *The Greater Common Good* (1999), *The Cost of Living* (1999), *Power Politics* (2002), *War Talk* (2003), *The Check book and the Cruise Missile* (2004, with David Barsamian), and *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* (2004). She also took part in the June 2005 World Tribunal on Iraq. In January 2006 she was awarded the Sahitya Akademi award for her collection of essays, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, but she declined to accept it.

Roy has faced accusations of being anti-American and was convicted of contempt of court by the New Delhi Supreme Court for her political activism. She remains relentless. For instance, she was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in 2004 for her efforts toward social justice and peaceful conflict resolution. Roy continues to write, engage in advocacy, and live with her husband in New Delhi.

Society Family and Values:

Family is the foundation stone of a society. Family system often determines the cohesion and disintegration of a society. It teaches us to be social. It teaches us to digest the fact that there is a common interest, which may be more important than individual interest. Thus it may require to be given up in favour of family interest. It modifies individual behaviour and cultivates tolerance, patience, respect for others, love and affection, dedication, care and sacrifices. It checks selfishness and restrains rigidity. In fact, a family is the first institution that cultivates social values and social behaviour among individuals. Social values are basically family values written at large. Had the family been absent, concepts like nationalism could never originate. Traditional Asian Societies have survived for thousands of years mainly because there has been a consistent emphasis on enforcing family values. Collapse of the family system simultaneously leads to social breakdown.

The Value of culture for Family and Society:

In our present day society there is erosion of values and degeneration in every sphere of activity. The family has disintegrated in recent years significantly due to a number of changes in modern society and culture. As a cohesive unit with a singular purpose the family is no more replaced by a group of individuals with seemingly separate agendas. The contributing factors vary from a lack of parental involvement to changing cultural morality to personal indifference of the participants but they all have a negative impact in asserting and maintaining family values.

WOMEN IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS: Ammu is the most important female character in *The God of Small Things*. A middle class bourgeois woman, she is a divorcee with two children, Eshta and Rahel. Educated and articulate, Ammu is not welcome on her return to her father's house. A kind of an elite leftist, her brother Chacko marginalizes her. She is also cornered by the family structure and inheritance laws customarily prevalent among the Syrian Christian community in Kerala. Ammu is enamored of the untouchable labourer Velutha and violates the "Love Laws" which her community has inherited from, among other things, their Hindu past. Her transgression of the caste, class and religious boundaries mounts a rebellion of a kind against her marginalization as a woman. Aijaz Ahmad calls her "a woman of great grit" and Murari Prasad comments thus about her attempt at self-realization which is not unconnected with the fate of other subalterns: "Ammu's rebellion against maternal and marital conventionality, and finally, her liaison with dark-skinned and untouchable Velutha (ironically meaning white) constitutes a violation against a determinate social order, sponsoring the immutable „love laws". Her rebellion or her "quest for self-identity", as Tirthankar Chanda points out is "an attempt at repossessing, renaming, reknowing the world", but it "appears doomed from the very beginning because of the nature of the society where she has had to seek refuge with her twins after her divorce and also because of the incapacity of her kin (mother, great-aunt Kochamma) to provide an adequate model for redefining the Self" Ammu is a victim of a marriage that does not work out. Her being treated as an outcast in her own family clearly defines her position in the society.

Ammu's roles as a divorced woman, a single mother and as an educated woman denied of her rights of inheritance ["She, as a daughter, has no claim to any property, no locus standi.."(Navarro-Tejero, 2006, p. 104)], as a sexually sentient being who is deprived by the pre-colonial "Love laws" the freedom to choose her partner and is penalized for it, stands on different issues side by side with other subalterns, whether of caste, class or gender. She is emblematic of them all in the schema of things Arundhati Roy creates, more than Velutha, who is the protagonist or may be the "God" of *The God of Small Things* (Surendran, 2000, p. 7). Khurshid Alam in his article "Untouchables" in *The God of Small Things* situates Ammu vis-à-vis Velutha and clarifies the role of Ammu: "Roy expresses her disillusionment with the social conditions of the postcolonial world in which the untouchables of the past still face a hostile society that does not let them live as free and independent individuals. Velutha, the God of small things, the outcast can never co-exist peacefully with the "touchable" communities for as long as the stigma of untouchability is attached to him and countless others like him. Ammu, another "untouchable" within the "touchable" cannot pursue happiness because doing so threatens the existing order, and the society takes every possible step to stop change." Ammu, craving to take control of her life that is so much suppressed by a social order, is faced against a system where her "Marxist" brother Chacko exploits the poor women labourers in his factory, both financially and sexually, and goes unchecked. She sees characters like Mammachi, being appropriated by patriarchy and be asphyxiated and distorted by it. She sees Velutha being accused of the accidental drowning of Sophie Mol. Ammu's father is incredulous of the fact that her Bengali Hindu husband wanted to prostitute her in order to please his white boss. The colonial rulers' authority is challenged by a subaltern woman in the novel who is economically and socially marginalized. Smothered by social injustice, Ammu rebels against the very social norms that constitute the Syrian Christian community in Kerala. This rebellion is an act of resistance against the very foundations of this society. Her most significant act of becoming sexually involved with the "Untouchable", lower class Velutha, cannot be taken at its face value as an act of sexual transgression only.

CONCLUSION: Arundhati Roy's is rich in cultural values of India in the time after the colonialism. It includes the phenomena of caste and gender bias. The system of caste in India has big impact to the position of people in society. It becomes an important consideration when someone wants to make relationship with other people. My paper will focus on the cultural values regarding caste and gender bias depicted in this novel. Besides the caste, gender is also an important consideration in arranging the position of men and women in Indian society. The gender rule in India is influenced very much by the cultural teachings. The rule has made the possibilities for man to dominate the woman. And for the people who break this rule, there will be some negative consequences from the society like what has happened to Ammu. All of the changes mentioned in this paper traumatize the individual by changing his environment, society, and culture to fit the free market of a globalized world. Such variants of resistant rebellion are articulated through the examination of the marital and inter-gender relations of Ammu, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma and Rahel. Transgressions of these characters, openly subversive or outside the boundaries of the institution of marriage as practiced in post-colonial India, and the "Love laws" that predate Western colonialism lead to a scathing interrogation of the basic values and structures of the post-colonial Indian society.

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