

Confluence of Arundhati Roy's Fiction and Non-Fiction: An Analytical Study**Dr K J SIBI**IQAC Coordinator, Department of English
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Maharashtra, India**ABSTRACT**

This research paper focuses on the intellectual thread between the fiction and non-fiction of Arundhati Roy. Both fiction and non-fiction deals with the same theme, power politics. However, fiction presents with artistic sense but non-fiction presents the plain truth. Her mission is to open the eyes of the common masses towards truth, which always twisted as per the convenience of the powerful class. Powerless class becomes non-citizens and melting like Mombattis and disappears without ripples on the history. The state and its apparatus are always against its own subject and instead of delivering justice; it delivers injustice in the name of justice. Both fiction and non-fiction deals with the power struggle between powerful and powerless classes. Arundhati Roy always raises the most fundamental questions about democracy and its hollowness in India and abroad.

KEYWORDS: big things, small things, powerful, non-citizens, human rights

INTRODUCTION

Arundhati Roy is the recipient of Booker Prize in 1997 for her novel, *The God of Small Things*. Many volumes of her non-fiction writings have published until now. The researchers have not yet explored the golden thread between the fiction and non-fiction. However, Arundhati Roy herself acknowledges that her theme of fiction and non-fiction is the same. Fiction presents like moonlight with certain aesthetic art in telling the story and non-fiction wrenched out of her with an ache. She knows very well that the world is divided into those who a comfortable relationship with power and those who have a naturally adversarial relationship with power. She analyses her theme in fiction as well as in non-fiction based on this understanding.

In her conversation with David Barsamian, titled, *The colonization of knowledge* Arundhati Roy makes out the relation between her fiction and non-fiction. She says, "I have been doing this kind of work since twenty-one. It's only to the outside world, those who came to know me after the *The God of Small Things*, that it seems like transition." (**The Shape of the Beast**, p.36) She had written three essays before the publication of her novel. They are *The Great Indian Rape Trick* (in two parts) *The Naughty Lady of Shady Lane* about the way the film *Bandit Queen* exploited Phoolen Devi and whether or not somebody should have the right to re-stage the rape of the living woman without her consent. She continues to say:

I don't see a great difference between *The God of Small Things* and my non-fiction...*The God of Small Things* is a book which connects the very smallest things to the very biggest. Whether it's the dent that a baby spider makes on the surface of water in a pond or the quality of the moonlight on a river or how history and politics intrude into your life, your house, your bedroom, your bed, into the most intimate relationships between people-parents and children, siblings and so on. (**The Shape of the Beast**, p. 36)

She stresses that one must understand her works, both fiction and non-fiction as something completely and not separated from each other. Her novel contains the theoretical formation of her philosophy and her political writings, speeches and interviews constitute the practical application of that philosophy for the upliftment of the powerless class in the world, undeterred by threats and bribes of the powerful. *The God of Small Things* is a novel, which tells about the human nature and the nature of society in large understanding. It deals with the power structure in the society and its different divisions in different denominations like religion, caste, rich and poor. It is a rebellious novel with an intentional mission of empowering the powerless and silenced class in the society. In fact, in Arundhati Roy's views, Ayemenem is a microcosm of the world and contains a number of social evils that are present in any society.

Arundhati Roy, in her political article, *Come September* opens her mind about her fiction and non-fiction; "Fiction and non-fiction are only different techniques of storytelling. For reasons I do not fully understand, fiction dances out of me. Non-fiction is wrenched out by the aching, broken world I wake up to every morning." (**An Ordinary Person Guide to Empire**, p.13)

There are two Gods overloading the events in Ayemenem-the God of the Big and the powerful and the God of Small Things. It is the big patriarchal God, who dominates the society but it is the God of Small Things, who plays the very foundation of the society and provides the entire wherewithal for the continued existence of the society. These small people are referred to in the novel as things. The small people of this world are not respected or treated as human beings in the society. Anything or anyone that we don't respect is a thing. Hence, the small people in Ayemenem are small things in the eyes of the powerful.

However, these small people too have a God-controlling power. This God of Small Things raises no barriers or walls between human beings, establishes no tradition or dead customs. It is the God that stimulates the flowering of the human spirit and human love. On the other hand, the God of the Big people is the God who limits the human spirits and all human actions, erecting walls and planting dead customs in the society. Therefore, the two Gods stand in conflict in Ayemenem and Arundhati Roy stands by the God of Small of Things.

In contrasted with the God of Big Things, the God of Small Things accounts of the life and suffering, even tragic hope and triumph, of the downtrodden like Vellya Paapen and his sons, Velutha and Kuttapen or the ostracized like Ammu. *The God of Small Things* represents all those people who are victimized by the forces of history, dead conventions, false pride and respectability, the tyranny of the state and the politics of opportunism and andocentric order. Even the title of the novel suggests the universal nature of the theme. Just as in any society, the forces of the powerful and the powerless battle out a saga of human pain where some characters are ranged at the two extremes and others at some point in between, with their

natures undergoing transformations during the course of history. In the novel, the God of Small Things appears vanquished. In her non-fiction, Arundhati Roy joins cause with the God of small things. According to R.S Sharma and Shashi Bala Talwar:

So, The God of Small Things stands for the life of the weak and the helpless, whether they are small creatures like bluebottles, frogs and ants or human beings such as the victims of Hollick's lust or the women who supply Chacko's 'man's needs' or children like Estha and Rahel. Contrasted with The God of Big Things, The God of Small Things accounts for the life and suffering, even, tragic hope and triumph, of the downtrodden like Vellya Paapen and his sons, Velutha and Kuttapen or the ostracized like Ammu. The God of Small Things represents all those people who are victimized by the forces of history, dead conventions, false pride and respectability, the tyranny of the state and the politics of opportunism and andocentric order. The God of Small Things is also the simple, natural life of children and innocent creatures. (Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things: Critique and Commentary*, p.43)

Arundhati Roy finds this dichotomy of God reflected in various divisions in the microcosmic world of Ayemenem as well as the macrocosmic world of her non-fiction. There is a Meenachal River, dividing the world-the powerful world of citizens and the powerless world of non-citizens. Consequently, there are two gods-the god of the big and the god of the small. According to R.S Sharma and Shashi Bala Talwar:

The life in the novel is divided into two sects of forces locked into a grim mortal fight. The upper world consists of the burden of history, the limbs of tradition, family culture and pride, patriarchy, and political opportunism-the God of Big Things. The other layer comprises children, insecure women, untouchables, and working people with their struggle for identity and independence, and natural urges and desires-The God of Small Things.(Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things: Critique and Commentary*, p.46-47)

In this conflict, it is the God of Small Things, who suffers. According to Arundhati Roy's perception, she presents these two worlds and the consequent two lives in her non-fiction. In conversation with David Barsamian in February 2001, she has drawn the picture of the plight of the God of Small Things:

In distance between power and powerlessness between those who take decisions and those who have to suffer decisions, has increased enormously. It's a perilous journey for the poor-it's a pitfall filled to overflowing with lies, brutality and injustice. Sitting in Washington or in Geneva in the offices of the World Bank or the WTO, bureaucrats have the power to decide the fate of millions. It's not only their decisions that we are contesting. It's the fact that they have the power to make those decisions. No one elected them; no one said they control our lives. Even they made great decisions, it's politically unacceptable. (*The Shape of the Beast*, p.58)

Thus, in her non-fiction she identifies two kinds of lives-the Small lives and the Big lives. The small lives of Vellya Paapen, Velutha, Kuttappan, Ammu and Rahel and Estha are in contrast with the big lives of Pappachi, Chacko and K N M Pillai and to lesser extend, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma who are both victims and victimizers. The big lives are bounded and controlled by tradition and custom as long as they benefit them or feel that they benefit them. Nevertheless, paradoxically they are free to break them at their will and convenience and clothe such transgression with nice arguments. That is why, Chacko's man's needs are met easily and tolerated by others. On the other hand, the small lives of Velutha, Vellya Paapen, Kuttapen, Ammu, Estha and Rahel natural and free. They follow their natural urges and inspiration. They neither find walls nor erect them. However, unlike the lives of the big ones, small lives are crushed, once they transgress the solemn codes of the big. They are made to bear dire consequences of transgressions as a lesson not only for them but also for their prosperity and for future generation. Comrade, K N M Pillai and Baby Kochamma had more access to the Police Station and influence the Inspector; Thomas Mathew had manipulated the things in favour of the powerful class. It remembers the imperial forces in the world which operate all over the world in the name of prosperity and development. Velutha, the untouchable became a martyr Ammu was ostracized from the community and children suffer psychologically forever in their life and lived with childhood trauma.

In her non-fiction, Arundhati Roy has been voicing for these powerless class in various parts of the world. She has taken up cudgels against the powerful class and their ambiguous propaganda. She has found Chackos and Pillais, Mammachis and Baby Kochammas among politicians, bureaucrats, fascists, communists, and many Thomas Mathews in various governments' institutions. She has become the voice of these silenced classes. In many of her political writings, speeches and interviews, she has given vent to her thoughts. In the essay, *The End of Imagination* she attacks the nuclear weaponization of the right wing politicians. In Gujarat, she has fought for the displaced Muslims who have become aliens, strangely in their own land. She identifies the cultural nationalism and fascism with the destructive forces in the world. In Narmada, the Dalits and the Adivasies are the Mombattis, for whom she is standing up against the dictatorial establishment in a democratic country.

All state machineries are always aware about the fact but they deliberately ignore them for the favour of the powerful. The court was aware about the displacement of the Adivasis and their status of rehabilitation and knew the Tribunal Award with regard to the height of the Sardar Sarovar Dam but Supreme Court ultimately endorsed the violation of the human rights of the poor people in the valley. It remembers us the tiger in the Belgrade zoo eats its own limbs. Arundhati Roy states, "With this single statement, the Supreme Court of India is abdicating its supreme responsibility. If the court has no role to play in arbitrating between the state and its citizens in the matter of violations of human rights, then what is it here for? If justice isn't a court's business, then what is?" (**The Shape of the Beast**, p.4-5)

CONCLUSION

Arundhati Roy, in her non-fiction calls her Mombattis non-citizens and the Laltains, citizens. In the real world around her, she finds the powerful citizens strangling the powerless non-citizens, who are the silent majority in any society. The citizens always make decision on behalf of non-citizens by claiming that they are acting for their welfare only. However, unfortunately, despite all the decisions and actions taken by the citizens of the world for the

non-citizens, since the first society was set up, has not changed the condition of the non-citizens. The citizens appear before the non-citizens from time to time, like the different incarnations of god, in the guise of new isms and these citizens eventually become decision makers but no good for the non-citizens. Arundhati tries to open the eyes of the common masses through her fiction and non-fiction. She deals with the same theme but the way of presenting the things only different.

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