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Role of Indian Women in Arundhati Roy's the God of Small Things

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ABSTRACT

Arundhati Roy's feminism is a trend setter for the new generation of feministic writers of India. Without losing the gentleness of a female she gives a strong call for the awakening of not only women but in general the entire human kind from its long sleep of ignorance. She dreams of a fragrant world full of beautiful flowers, where the polluted air of hatred and violence would have no entry. Indian women are studied in depth along with the plight of untouchables, lower class people, and racial subaltern's vis-à-vis global, capitalism and neo-imperialism masquerading as globalization.

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Introduction

Arundhati Roy was born on 24th 1961, the child of a marriage between a Christian woman from Kerala and a Bengali Hindu tea planter. It was an unhappy marriage. She also does not like to discuss her father.

In novel 'The God of Small Things' the predicament of Indian women is studied in depth along with the plight of untouchables, lower class people, and racism, capitalism and neo-imperialism masquerading as globalization. Roy's treatment of the issues of women in her fiction is different from her examination of the state of women in her no-fictional writings very clearly.

Arundhati Roy has been described as: charming, humorous, strong willed, independent, energetic, creative, with a great sense of fun, 1.55 m of doe-eyed delicateness, a down to earth 'girl next door', a towering intellect with a poetic fluency with words delivered in a soft modulated voice, a dog lover. She is 40 years old and describes her two favourite past times as writing and running. (Http://website, line one. net/~jon.simmons/roy/tghost2.htm.)

Arundhati spent her crucial childhood years in Ayemenem. Her mother Mary Roy ran an informal school named Corpus Christi where she developed her literary and intellectual abilities unconstrained by the set rules of formal education. The novel is set in the sixties but now Ayemenem is no longer the old-fashioned village but a bustling extension of Kottayam town, with 7,000 houses and a rash of dish antennae. Paradise Pickled still exists.

Arundhati says:

I grew up in very similar circumstances to the children in the book. My mother was divorced. I lived on the edge of the community in a very vulnerable fashion. Then when I was 16 I left home and lived on my own, sort of...you know it wasn't awful, it was just sort of precarious... living in a squatter's colony in Delhi. (Ibid)

Eventually, she joined the Delhi school of architecture, moon lighting as an architect's artist. She married a fellow architecture student, Gerard Da Cunha. Their marriage lasted for

4 years. At this stage, neither had a great love for architecture and so they quit.

She acted in a small role in Pradeep Krishen's movie Massey Saab. Then she got a scholarship to go to Italy for eight months to study the restoration of monuments. Her stay in Italy made her to realise that she was a writer. She linked up with Krishen, now her husband and wrote some tele-serials. They were not commercial success. Her next piece of writing was to result in considerable controversy - being a criticism of Shekar Kapur's celebrated film 'Bandit Queen', about Phoolan Devi

The controversy escalated into a court case, after which she retired to private life to concentrate on her writing she kept shifting from one job to another. Architecture, movies, Tele-serials, criticisms were some of the regions she made an entry into search for identity continued. Eventually she understood that it was writing.

However he did not rate to please anybody or getting herself recognised in this vast world but it was for herself satisfaction. After winning the Booker prize she spent a year on a whirlwind tour of interviews and book readings. It was an artificial environment to her to be in the posh hotel room and it made her to laugh because of being so ridiculously posh. She had written that book only because she had an urge to write but not to change her life by rating. She does not want to trade her life in for another. So, the prize would make no difference to her.

Though she loves the entire world she prefers only India. After the whirlwind of tour she settled back to life in New Delhi. She remains an Indian woman. She feels that the prize is about her past and not her future. Having written a great book she is not sure whether she would write again. Still she is haunted by the noises of her novel. She is waiting for those noises in her head to stop. To her fiction is nothing but a way of trying to make sense of the world as she knows it.

As a woman she is one of the fighting spirited individuals in the contemporary world. She does not expect to make an unnecessary walk in the smooth surface of life. Even on the rough surface she is ready to march and pave the way for many others by being a good source of inspiration. For the new generation of feministic writers of India, her feministic search for

identity is a trend setter. Without affecting against the gentleness of a female, she gives a strong call for the awakening of not only women but in general the entire human kind from its long sleep of ignorance. She dreams of a fragrant world full of beautiful flowers, where the polluted air of hatred and violence would have no entry to come forward.

Arundhati Roy - as an Indian Writer

The God of Small Things has received a great welcome throughout the world and one of the critics says:

The joy of *The God of Small Things* is that it appeals equally to the head and to the heart. It is clever and complex, yet it makes one laugh, and finally, moves one to tears. A master piece, utterly exceptional. (-William Darlymple, Harpers and Queen Praise For The God of Small Things, TGST)

Arundhati Roy's first novel "*The God of Small Things*" was published on 4 April 1997 in Delhi and won the Booker Prize in London, on 14th Oct. 1997. In the intervening period, she received a reported \$500,000 in advance and the rights to her book were sold in 21 countries.

The book was completed in May 1996 and passed to an agent in June. She was not particularly confident about the publishing of the book because she felt:

It is a very fragile, personal book and I have never had any perspective about it. I considered going to an Indian publisher but they tend to give advances of Rs.5, 000. However I wasn't sure about finding a foreign publisher. I mean, why would anyone abroad be interested in the book? I am not very well educated. I haven't lived abroad. So its not as though I am like Salman Rushdie or Vikram Seth. (<http://www.arundhati.roy.org.uk>)

Then she met Pankaj Mishra, an editor with Harper Collins in India, and author of the travel book '*Butter Chicken in Ludhiana*', Mishra was excited by what he read and he sent copies of the manuscript to three British publishers, with his comment "This is the biggest book since *Midnight's Children*" (Ibid).

Though two of the three were ready to make offers for the British rights, the third [recipient of the manuscript, David Godwin, a literary agent, caught a flight to India [explicitly to meet Roy and sign her up. Roy chose him because,

"Obviously, the book had touched him enough to get on a plane and come to a strange country".(Ibid) When talking about writing she says: Ever since as a child I knew that people had to do things when they grew up. I knew that I wanted to be a writer. (Ibid)

Some readers doubt whether this novel is autobiographical for which she answers:

It's very difficult question to answer because I think all fiction does spring from your experience, but it is also the melding of the imagination and your experience. It is the emotional texture of the book and the feelings which are real. (Ibid)

She wrote the novel as if an architect designs a particular building. To her it was like designing an intricately balanced structure of her surroundings and when it was finished. She strongly says:

When I write, I never re-write a sentence because for me my thought and my writing are one thing. It's like breathing; I don't re-breathe a breath..... Arranging the bones of the story took time, but it was never painful. Everything I have my intellect, my experience, my feelings have been used. If some one doesn't like it, it is like saying they don't like my all bladder. I can't do anything about it.(Ibid). Another critic feels that "A novel of real ambition must invent its own language, and this one does.....":

(John updike, the New Yorker-on the rear cover of the book TGST)

The words and expressions flows all through the novel. In some places the words are broken, and in some other context they are unusually fused together like -*Lay. Ter. A nowl, sourmeatalsmell*, which adds flavor of beauty to the usual words. She has repeated certain phrases with an effect of lullaby. In a way it helps to take away the shock of the plot.

She has written the novel in the way she thinks as usual. So there is a free flow of words and emotions in every part of it. While talking about the structure of the novel she says:

I think that one of the most important things about the structure is that in some way the structure of the book ambushes the story. You know, it tells a different story from the story the book is telling. In the first chapter I more or less tell you the story, but the novel ends in the middle of the story, and it ends with Ammu and Velutha making love and it ends on the word 'tomorrow'. And though you know that what tomorrow brings is terrible, the fact that the book ends there is to say that even though it's terrible it's wonderful that it happened at all. (<http://www.arundhati.roy.org.uk>)

She knows fame comes and goes, so, in spite of achieving the most prestigious Booker Prize she is not taken by pride. To her, the inspiration for the book was not an idea or a character but an image - the image of a sky blue Plymouth stuck at the rail road crossing with the twins inside and the Marxist procession raging around it. She treats fiction as a way of seeing, of making sense of the world and only a key is needed to begin to do that. This above mentioned image was just a key. She says, "For me (the novel) was five years of almost changing and mutating, and growing a new skin. It's almost like a part of me," (<http://www.arundhati.roy.org.uk>).

Her fiction is an inextricable mix of experience and imagination which is undergoing in and around Kerala. She tells that her book is a very sad book and somehow the sadness is what stays with her. The five years of writing the book made her to keep finding herself making an effort to be happy.

She asserts that she could not write until her search for identity ended her in becoming a writer. She could not write even a column like that. Even if somebody offers her a huge sum of money for writing a screen play based on a given theme her answer would be no to it. She firmly states that she could not be a writer for hire.

This strong determined, highly-spirited, indomitable individual expects the same amount of uncompromising rigidity for good sense in the souls of her fellow beings.

Conclusions

In the God of small things the conflict exists at individual and societal levels. The novel graphically shows that how people are helpless to solve these levels of friction. In an interview she says that

"I am a woman who is a granddaughter of a lady who used to be beaten on the head by her husband, of a mother who went through hell because she was divorced and had to bring up these kids. And I can take 10 men out to lunch and pay the bill, and nobody even thinks twice about it. So don't mess with me."(New York Times, Nov. 3, 2001)

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