RESEARCH REVIEW JOURNALS
Volume-04
Issue-02
February-2019

ISSN: 2455-3085 (Online)
RESEARCH REVIEW International Journal of Multidisciplinary
www.rrjournals.com[UGC Listed Journal]

Arundhati Roy as a Writer in the Light of Post-Modernism: A View

Kuldeep Singh

Research Scholar, Sant Baba Bhag Singh University, Jalandhar

ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History
Published Online: 20 February 2019

Keywords
Post-Modernism, economical inventions, fictional

ABSTRACT

Post – modernism is the period that began after the modernism time in the late 20th century. To understand this period one has to know about the characteristics of modernism. Modernism era is connected to the European enlightenment age that started in the eighteenth century. It refers to the social – economical inventions that are the result of technical and scientific discoveries. Thus post – modernism is the next step of its process which has been recognized since the 1960s. The Writings of this time explore the meaning of life. Writers get freedom to write their own ideas and thoughts. The fictional work is like a cover for the actual facts. Although there are fictional characters in the novel, but the emotions, feelings, and situations they faced are not a part of only imagination, it exists in all around the world. Writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao beautifully depicted the circumstances of their time period in the works. They noted down their first-hand experiences about life. Other Indian novelists is Bhavani Bhattacharya, Manohar Mulgaoankar, Arjun Joshi, Khushwant Singh, B. Rajan, Kamala Markandya, Ruth Jhabwala, Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy. Their great contribution to the fiction has taken the Indian English literature to the highest peak.

Arundhati Roy is placed in the list of renowned Indian novelists Her works bear the evidence of her commitment to the subject. Roy writes with a great strength about the lives of the oppressed people who are the victims of inhuman cruelty, poorness and exploitation. For her, art is the means to serve the mankind. Her novels cannot be read without knowing her society or subjects. She is the first Indian woman who won the honourable Booker Prize for writings. She became a well-known figure and literary lioness personality.

Her first work as a fiction *The God of Small Things* in 1996 is based on the Indian broken family and the exploitation of adultery. Many critics compare this fiction with *The Sound and the Fury* or *Absolam, Absolam* by William Faulkner. Several Indians said that it is an attack on discrimination, sexuality, caste – system and gender bias. Some critics proclaim that it is just a cheap imitation of Western fiction or other literary style. The novel became the issues of debate after its publication. But Roy never bothered about the rumors and focused on her writing. She launched her novel in Delhi on 4th April 1997, and won the Booker prize on 14 October 1997 in London. She also got $ 500, 000 in advance and the permission to sell the book in 21 countries. After this prize Arundhati Roy went on a tour for interviews and enjoyed the reading books and went on to write on a number of social – political issues in India:

- The effects of Nuclear Weapons.
- The advancement of equal rights.
- The Narmada Dam Project.

It seemed that Arundhati Roy was making a place for herself in the political field as she was busy in writing another fiction work that could be published at any time. Roy's second work is non – fiction *The Cost of Living* that published in 1999. There are two critical essays that have been written about the activities of the Governments criticizing the nuclear testing system of India and Pakistan in 1998 or the Narmada Dam project that constructed in the Narmada Valley in the central India. The title of this essay is taken from the last chapter of the novel. In May 1998 and 1999 these two essays were originally published in the Indian News Magazines. Arundhati in these essays addressing the Indian Government for the dangerous impact on the citizens of this kind of weak steps. Next she argues that the democracy is like a struggle that people are doing against the forces such as money and power. She donated all the prize money of the book to those who struggled against the Government. This book did not get much attention in the West because it is like a firestorm of the controversy. Some people even burnt her book publicly as they wanted to build dams in the India.

The experience that she felt, heard or saw in her village remain in an unconscious state in a part of her mind. This helps her to give a shape or name in the chronological order to her novel, especially the first chapter that presents the essence of the story, but the years mentioned in the novel are not in a chronological signpost. The novel starts with the coming of Rahel to Ayemanem in June. Now she was 31 years old. Readers also informed that at the same age Ammu died. Many points are already described in the first chapter, but it is difficult to understand due to the lack of a certain date. It is found in the second chapter when Roy writes that the December' 1969, Ammu, Chacko and other family going to receive Sophie Mol and her mother. With the help of this chapter some chronological points has been found.

Indian novelists after the 1950's turned their interest from public to private subject. They started writing about the individual search for their own self in a varied problems. Writers searched new themes that captured the attention of the critics as well reader of the worldwide.

RRIJM 2015, All Rights Reserved

In this context, *The God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy provides a potent picture of people who found themselves entrapped in the shackles of history, norms, and caste – system. The imaginative plot stands for an impossible relationship. Roy herself claims that in the novel, there is an uneasy relation between the two opposition groups of people. She adopts the style and content of Rushdie. She follows the Rushdieque style in a great extent. But Rushdie remarks, "Most encouragingly, yet another talented generation has begun to emerge. The Keralan writer Arundhati Roy has arrived to the accompaniment of a loud fanfare. Her novel *The God of Small Things* is full of ambition and sparkle, and written in a highly wrought and utterly personal style."

The social problems as untouchability, culture conflict, gender discrimination, hypocrisy and class system produce the fictional fact in *The God of Small Things.* Roy longs for that things which are considered as the basic needs of human beings by Mulk Raj Anand, "I hope for a world where men and women will awaken through the first elementary battles for bread, peace, fresh air and freedom, which they are fighting to see the slow fire that is rising from the grey, smouldering ashes...."

The End of Imagination (1998) is a critique of the Indian Nuclear testing in Pokhran, Rajasthan. The collection of essays Book entitled *The Cost of Living (1999),* in which this essay published. Her expedition against Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh also included in this book. *Instant – mix Imperial Democracy* is a speech that delivered by her at the Riverside Church, New York city. It discusses the U. S. War policies against the Iraq. She ironically describes that the United States have the right to bomb anywhere and at any time. Roy participates the World Tribunal on Iraq in June 2005. In the next year 2006, she has been criticised by the U. S. President George Walker Bush. During the same year, she also signed a letter in which Professor Steve Trevillion wrote about the attack by Israel on Lebanon and said that it is a war offence and state anxiety.

Power Politics (2001) is her another essay and was included in the previously published five essays in which she writes about the writer's role in the society, about the rights of civilian and about the harmful impact of corporation, blast on the World Trade Centre by terrorist September 11 and movement of the United States in Afghanistan. This book shows two kinds of development in her writing. The first one is that she changes her aspects from national to international and the second one is that she transfers her identity from novelist to activist. The book entitled *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* gives her a title as America – basher, Anti – American and demonizer of the U. S. but Roy believes in the fact that it is her duty to write about what is wrong and what is right. As a writer she writes about her purpose, "To never complicate what is simple, to never simplify what is complicated [and…..] to be able to communicate to ordinary people what is happening in the world."

In 2001*The Ladies Have Feelings, So…… Shall We Leave it to the Experts* is a more extensively discussed essay. It is about the critics' performance in the social group or the globalization in Indian context. The essay is based on the speech that was given by Roy at Hampshire College, 15 February 2001, Massachusetts. She claims that by writing political essays she does not remain a writer only, but becomes a writer – activist. Roy does not like this tag as it considered that she is not a true writer. She says that she is only on the side of the helpless people. At this point, Reeta Singh clearly said that Roy does not see her steps, including her challenging the Supreme Court, one night's imprisonment in jail, speaking and participating in political rallies etc. All these actions are the reason enough to name her as Activist.

Her 2003 Book entitled *War Talk* describes the relation between the power and the powerlessness. She plays an active part in demonstrations against the Government and Supreme Court that allows the construction of the Dam on the Narmada Valley in central India. This action of Arundhati Roy landed her a jail imprisonment and fine for disobeying the Court's order. Her essay was published in the Indian news magazine and later on published by the international publications like Christen Science Monitor, The Guardian and Elpair, Der Spiegel and Le Monde. She criticizes the global corporations, the Indian Government and the U.S. Government. Roy's essay protests against the Atomic bomb, Narmada Dam, unscrupulous power, and the War in Afghanistan. She is the prominent figure of the Anti – Globalization movement. Roy also plays her role as a representative of anti-globalization movement, judge the foreign policy of the U.S. and protest against Indian nuclear weapons, economic growth and industrialization. In 2008 by supporting the Kashmir she declares that the people of Jammu and Kashmir want to be a separate state and should not be forcefully included in India. Her experienced taught her to live and think independently and that is why she has been criticized by Indian National Congress for the support of the Independence of Kashmir. A Congress leader Satya Prakash Malaviya said Roy's statement is irresponsible and contrary to the historical facts,"It would do better to brush up her knowledge of history and know that the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir had acceded… has become as much an integral part of India as all the other erstwhile princely states have."

Arundhati Roy holds the second phase in the Post – colonial Literature. She describes that in the society divorced is considered as the evil and prohibited thing and there is not a better place for the divorced women. In contrast the divorced men enjoy all the happiness of their life. This is called the gender bias which Roy portrays as a feminist writer. This is also the relevant theme in the post – modernist literature. Roy explores that the women play the same role in every field as men and even they work better than men. Arundhati is the core feminist. She does not accept the traditional rule for marriage and divorced and wants to change the man-made laws. Her feminist aspects can be better recognized from her non – fiction works. Her non – fictional work *The Great Indian Rape Trick I* and *The Great -Indian Rape Trick II* explains the Shekhar Kapur'sfilm *BanditQueen* that based on the life situation of Phoolan Devi. She presents that the film does not interpret the true image of Phoolan Devi. Thus her feminist visualization is a significant part of her art. She expresses her explicit view about the Indian Rape Culture. On the Delhi Gang Rape case when all the people of the country were talking about the victim, she gives a shocking judgment that rape in

the country like Indian is not a new fact. With the 4 Channel, the British Media House, she points out in an interview, "We are having an unexceptional reaction to an event that isn't exceptional. It's really very sad, cause you know, it's a terrible thing to say to such a tragic event. But the problem is that… going to pay the price."

Arundhati is a contemporary writer who made the difference by choosing varied social and political subjects for writing. She has presented the stylistic concerns in which she can express her internal thoughts. She experiments with her own style of writing and breaks the grammar rule, sentence structure and narrative style and she uses a set of language structure in her text. Her writing is committed to the life of downtrodden or common people. She has been impressed by many writers, thinkers and activists. Mahatma Gandhi's non – violence movement influenced her. Amarnath Prasad, Indian critic writes, "She also conforms to the opinions of M. K. Gandhi and B. R. Ambedkar who, to their very core of heart, showed the sympathy to a large section of society devoid of humanity". Roy read the twentieth and twenty – first century philosopher Noam Chomsky who is known as the American political contestant, socialist academic and anarchist. He is a powerful critic who without any fear devoted to the powerless people. Like him Roy is also the voice of the exploited, oppressed and silent people. Roy was deeply affected by the lecture of language that Chomsky delivered at the University of Oxford in 1969,

Her essays *The Greater Common Good* and *The End of Imagination* make her a fighter who fights on the behalf of helpless people. She becomes the speaker for the sufferings of muted groups. The study of Arundhati Roy's work proves to be beneficial in the present days because the world is characteristics with the evils such as poverty, caste – conflicts, alienation, hybridity and religious bigotry. And Roy has well collected these topics in her writings. Through her works she wants to serve for the betterment and improvement of the world. Her work contributed to the cultural studies which are significant in the modern time period. In human society there is consistently struggle for power, wealth and position that divided people into rich and poor class. Arundhati highlights these things remarkably. By speaking about the subaltern she says that the problem is in the interpretations of the role of these people. Authority does not give any attention to the subaltern groups and that is why their circumstances remain the same after the seventy years of independence. She studies the GayatriSpivak's concept of subalternity in which subaltern people marginalized from the society by the powerful class. Her splendid insight and her excellent literary talent affect the reader from the very first reading of her fiction and non – fictional work. Her narrative technique makes her works as an outstanding piece of Indian English literature. Roy through her fictional characters paints the real life painting. As critics point out that any piece of literature should be analyzed in the light of its social background, historical aspects, political concepts and the environment in which it was created. Therefore, Roy keeps in mind all these concepts and then produces her works so that it can be appropriate in the eyes of the observer.

Thus, from the above details, it can be said that from fiction to non – fiction is the way in which Roy tells the story in different styles. Her political books have been praised by Salman Rushdie, Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky. Because of her essays the Indian people were able to focus the attention on social and political matters. Although her essays are emotionless as they expresse the human passion about the right things and helps the poor and hapless. On the other hand, her political work is not as accomplished as her fiction work. Arundhati Roy is promising writer who brings the dignity to the Indian writing in English. In the history of Indo – Anglian Literature her name will go down in golden letters. Her style of writing is the mixture of Indian and English vocabulary. The reader does not leave her work incomplete when they start reading. She has set up a safe position for herself not just in Indo – Anglian Literature but in the entire English Literature.

Reference

[1] Taisha, Abraham, "*A Interview with Arundhati Roy,"* ARIEL: A Review of InternaltionalEnglih Literature 29.1 (1998) P. 91.

[2] Allen, Waler, (1954) *The English Novel* (E.P. Dutton& Co., Inc., New York), P. 18.

[3] Dwivedi A.N., (2008),*"Setting* the *Scale Straight: Socio – Political Concerns in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things"*, Women Writers in the Twentieth Century Literature, ed. Monika Gupta (New Delhi: Atlanic) P. 55.

[4] Arundhati Roy in an Interview with the magazine, First City Delhi city Magazine 1602, SomVihar, New Delhi, 22 June 1997, P. 25.

[5] Roy, Mary. *"My Daughter and I*." *India Today*, 27 Oct. 1997. P. 26.

[6] Anand, Mulk Raj, (1949)*'Lines Written to an Indian Art',*Nalanda Publication, Bombay, 1949,P. 11.

[7] Pathak, R.S., ed. (2001), *"The Fictional World of Arundhati Roy."* Creative New Literature Series – 48. New Delhi: Creative Books. P. 10.

[8] Roy, Arundhati, "*The Chequebook and the Cruise Missil"*, P. 120.

[9] *"Cong asks Arundhati Roy to withdraw statement on J – K*". 25 Oct. 2010. Retrieved 26

, *'When You Have Written a Book You Lay Your Weapons Down'*, P. 106-7.

[10] *"Arundhati Roy and Her Comment on the Indian Rape Culture."* The Atheist Indian. 29th Dec. 2012, 7:10Am