Chapter – Two

Commodification of Woman’s Body and Rights of the Underprivileged in Post-colonial India
Arundhati Roy’s concern for and protests against the oppression, suppression, exploitation and dislocation of the adivasi people, low-caste people, the poor and women through her writings and through her physical presence include her in the “Art for Life’s Sake” school. According to Roy, a writer is a member of a society, and they should concern themselves for the well-being of their society in all aspects. No other Indian writer except Arundhati Roy uses writing as a vehicle so strongly and successfully for making the people aware about the injustices done to them and unmask the exploitative and oppressive nature of the economically, socially, culturally and politically powerful persons and governments. She focuses special attention on the emancipation of women from the clutches of patriarchal dominance. She learnt a lot from her mother, Mary Roy, who fought for the women regarding the inheritance of father’s property. In her debut and only novel *The God of Small Things*, she attacks patriarchy that relegates women to a subsidiary position and suppresses, oppresses and displaces them to serve its own petty interests. Roy has always been critical of treating women as “commodity”. Before *The God of Small Things*, she attracted media attention by ‘The Great Indian Rape Trick’ written in two parts.

These essays show Roy’s passionate intervention in local feminist debates. These also display her concern for anti-capitalist, transnational feminist practice. Actually these essays are reviews of Shekhar Kapur’s film, “Bandit Queen”, which he claimed to be based on Mala Sen’s book, *India’s Bandit Queen: The True Story of Phoolan Devi* (1991). This film is based on the legendary dacoit Phoolan Devi’s life experiences. Roy lashes out against Shekhar Kapur for his exploiting, misrepresenting and undermining the real life experiences of Phoolan Devi. She thinks “the production, commodification and
distribution of Phoolan Devi’s life-history through film” undermines Phoolan Devi’s agency in representing her own society and relocating it within trans/national material, historical and political relations of inequality. (Fernandes 130). Roy questions the right to restage the rape of a living woman without her permission.

Shekhar Kapur provided the film with all the ingredients of the Hindi masala movies — rape and gang rape, bloodthirsty revenge and gore, to allure the public only to serve his own commercial interest. Roy proves Shekhar Kapur a hypocrite in his using the word “Truth” for the story of ‘Bandit Queen’. Her strong objection is to Kapur’s emphasis on Phoolan Devi’s revenge for her rape and gang rape to be the main motive. In the first instance, Roy thinks that to claim the story of Bandit Queen as “True” has “the utmost commercial (and critical) importance to him” (The Great Indian I). This word is used simply to save the film from the familiar accusation that it does not show India in a proper light, and to rescue the film straight from the jaws of distasteful public embarrassment. Shekhar Kapur and his producer Bobby Bedi never felt that they needed to meet Phoolan Devi before filming the true (!) story of her life. Like Roy, anyone who reads the book of Mala Sen and watches the film will say without thinking that Phoolan Devi as a woman ceased to be important, but Phooan Devi as a raped woman had a paramount importance to the director-producer duo.

There are lots of discrepancies between the incidents presented in the film and the incidents found in Mala Sen’s book on Phoolan Devi. It needs to be stated here that Mala Sen’s book reconstructs the story of Phoolan’s life, taking information from interviews, newspaper reports, meetings with Phoolan and extracts from her written account, smuggled out of prison by her visitors. So this book can be taken as authentic. Shekhar
Kapur starts off the movie with the words “This is a true story”, and then proceeds to create his own interpretation of what he thinks Phoolan Devi was like and takes total liberties with the sequence of events that happened to the real Phoolan Devi. The whole film is based on cause-effect equation. Here, rape, gang rape and re-rape of Phoolan Devi are ‘causes’, and the revenge is ‘effect’. Shekhar Kapur fails to show that the rape of any woman is an offensive crime, not only the rape of a “nice Woman (saucy, headstrong, foul-mouthed perhaps, but basically moral, sexually moral)” is bad, and “the rape of a nasty/perceived-to-be-immoral woman” is not so offensive (The Great Indian I). Phoolan Devi is portrayed as the first sort of woman who is able to snatch pity and sympathy from the audience, and in this case she is shown to be indebted to Shekhar Kapur. He is successful in raising “the Emotional Graph” of the audience. Roy says that in Shekhar Kapur’s film, “every landmark—every decision, every turning-point in Phoolan Devi’s life, starting with how she became a dacoit in the first place, has to do with having been raped, or avenging rape” (The Great Indian I). Roy states that Shekhar Kapur uses Phoolan Devi’s rape as the “main dish” and caste as the “sauce that it swings in” (The Great Indian I). The movie shows her first rape at the age of eleven by her husband who is thirty-four year old then. Eventually she flees to her village where she is sexually abused by the Thakur louts, and when she protests, she is publicly humiliated and driven out of the village. When she returns to the village, she is taken to local police station where she is raped and beaten by the policemen. And when she is released on bail, she is carried away by dacoits to the ravine where she is repeatedly raped by Babu Singh Gujar, the Thakur leader of the gang. The scene shows Babu Singh Gujar “lying on top of her, his naked bottoms jerking” (The Great Indian I). The scenes of rape picturised in the film
are objectionable. In reaction to this, Phoolan’s lover Vikram Malla, the second-in-command, being disgusted with his behaviour, shoots him dead. But the book reveals “the killing happens as a drunken Babu Gujar is threatening to assault Phoolan” (The Great Indian I). Here Shekhar Kapur mixes his imagination with the real incident to make the dish tastier to the audience so that the movie becomes a block-buster in commercial market. The main attraction of the movie is yet to come. In the book Phoolan Devi mentions that the Thakur killers captured and transported her to Behmai where she was beaten, humiliated and paraded from village to village. This incident is coloured by the director, and ignoring the fact, he films the scene based on the juicy account in “Esquire” by Jon Bradshaw, an American journalist. Arundhati Roy quotes the extract:

... Phoolan screamed, striking out at him, but he was too strong. Holding her down, the stranger raped her. They came in one by one after that. Tall, silent Thakur men -- and raped her until Phoolan lost consciousness. For the next three weeks Phoolan was raped several times a night, and she submitted silently turning her face to the wall... she lost all sense of time... a loud voice summoned her outside. Sri Ram ordered Phoolan to fetch water from the well. When she refused, he ripped off her clothes and kicked her savagely...at last she limped to the well while her tormentors laughed and spat at her. The naked girl was dragged back to the hut and raped again. (The Great Indian I)

Roy comments that this is the scene by which the film is judged.

Roy dismisses the theme of the movie that the revenge for her rape is the sole aim of Phoolan’s life. She tells another story different from Shekar Kapur’s film version and
based on Mala Sen’s book in a very comprehensive way. The book portrays her as a rebellious spirit since her childhood. She first protested at the age of ten against the illegal and forceful occupation of her father’s lands and her father’s getting out of his house by her father’s brusher Biharilal and his son Maiyadeen who forced them to live in a little hut on the outskirts of the village. This was the reason to get her married off so early just to keep her out of trouble. The film shows that her sexual abuse by the Tahkur louts in her village ends up in her humiliation publicly by the village panchayat and her expulsion from the village. After residing in her distant cousin’s house for a few days, she is shown imprisoned. Shekar Kapur skips as to why she is imprisoned. The book reveals the cause. It was her second protest for her own territory. Phoolan made an appeal to the village panchayat for her right to her father’s lands, and the case was re-opened and transferred to the Allhabad High Court. This enraged Maiyadeen who destroyed her father’s crop. When Phoolan intervened and threw a stone at Maiyadeen, he attacked her and handed her over to the police. It was Maiyadeen’s conspiracy to get her into jail in order to grab the lands of her father. The film does not leave a trace of Maiyadeen.

The film skips many essential facts needed to be displayed in order to know Phoolan’s original living experiences. ‘Bandit Queen’ depicts her as a “One Man Woman” whose only lover is Vikram Mallah, but the book reveals that her own distant cousin Kailash, and Man Singh, who is shown in the film as a Rakhi-brother, were her other lovers (The Great Indian I). Roy thinks that the sole purpose of Shekhar Kapur in this case is to gain pity and sympathy for her from the audience, as in Indian ethics, traditions and cultures, a woman having more than one lover is despised as immoral and bad one.
Shekhar Kapur’s endeavour to show woman as victim at the hands of man only distorts the “Truth” of Phoolan’s life. When with the help of her lover Vikram Mallah, Phoolan takes revenge against her husband Puttilal for submitting her to physical and sexual torture by gagging and beating with the buts of her gun, the director keeps one character under the veil, that is, her husband Puttilal’s second wife Vidya who “harassed and humiliated Phoolan and eventually forced Puttilal to send her away” (The Great Indian I). On that day she gave severe punishment to both of them. The objective of Kapur in this case also is to snatch pity and sympathy from the audience, as a woman torturing another woman is taken to be unethical and unacceptable by Indian sensibility. Kapur kicks out another woman character, namely, Kusuma, a woman dacoit who “disliked her, and taunted and abused her” (The Great Indian I). Kapur cannot rise above the notion that a woman cannot be a torturer. Like an age-old tradition, he surrenders to the formula of woman-as-a-victim. Here he misses the mark. It is really pathetic when Kapur says that there is “no pain in a gang-rape, no physical pain after a while” and he puts it “as dirty as the abject humiliation of a human being and the complete domination of its soul” (The Great Indian I). In actual instance, Phoolan Devi came to the lime light and became legendary after the Behmai massacre. The next two years that she led the gang, she made the entire UP police force restless. She snatched their sleep at night. And finally she made up her mind to surrender to the government of Madhya Pradesh, and in this case she took Rajendra Chaturvedi, the SP of Bhind, as the middleman for negotiation. These facts are totally ignored in the film. The way the film depicts Phoolan’s character just before her surrender, raises a question about the authenticity of her true character. Roy observes, in the film, “Man Singh seems concerned, practical and
stoical. Phoolan is crying and asking for her mother!!” (The Great Indian I). Roy also skips a vital incident that is shown in the final scene of the film. It shows Phoolan at the time of her surrender touching the feet of the Chief Minister, but in reality she had surrendered to a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi. Phoolan did not want to show any servitude to a living, ordinary person.

Roy exposes another terrifying, brutal and inhuman incident which Kapur does not think to be important to show in the film. When she was bleeding heavily because of an ovarian cyst, the prison doctor removed her womb without her awareness and permission. They did it because “We don’t want her breeding any more Phoolan Devi’s” (The Great Indian I). Actually this fact has nothing to do with enticing the audience.

Roy rightly points out that if the film were a work of fiction, there would have been no necessity for commenting on it, but the problem lies in claiming the film’s story as “Truth” based on the life experience of a living woman. She says that the director has no right to present a distorted life story of a person without her permission. The director uses a living woman only to save himself from the “accusation of incompetence, exaggeration, even ignorance” (The Great Indian II). The film raises a question about the violation of truth, justice and liberty of a woman. In a nutshell, it ignores the civil rights of a living woman. When the film is released and Phoolan Devi comes to know the distortion of her life in the film, she protests. Her main objection is to show her “[R]aped and re-raped and re-re-raped until she takes to crime and guns down twenty-two Thakur rapists” (The Great Indian II). Suddenly the director turns against her, though he has presented her in the film in such a way as to gain sympathy from the audience. Now she is depicted as “Manipulative, cunning, trying to hit them for more money. (Look at the
“greedy bitch!” (The Great Indian II). The newspaper shows her as “Ex-jailbird. Flirting with politics. Trying to adjust to married life, manipulated by her husband and French Biographer” (The Great Indian II). And these are only fragmented pieces of many sarcastic comments.

Roy says that Phoolan Devi is cheated and misled in signing the contracts for the film, which was promised to be based on Phoolan’s writings. The first contact was signed in 1988 between Phoolan Devi and Jalal Agha’s company called ANANCY FILMS. Mala Sen’s book on Phoolan did not exist then. It was stated in the contract that “it was to be a Documentary film “relating to Indian banditry and your role therein” (The Great Indian II). In another agreement signed in 1989, the right to her writings was given to Channel Four. In the third and the latest agreement which was issued in 1992 by S.S.Bedi’s company B.V.Videographics, Phoolan gave rights to Channel Four to make a film on the story of her life. And in return she was paid a “sum of little over five thousand pounds. Less than one percent of the six hundred and fifty thousand pound budget of the film.” (The Great Indian II). The most devastating thing is that in the last clause of the agreement(s), they managed to take the liberty to “cut, alter, and adapt the writing and we use alone or with other material and /or accompanied by editorial comment” (The Great Indian II). This was accomplished keeping Phoolan Devi in ignorance. Roy comments that this is a kind of disdain of the educated for the illiterate; of the rich for the poor; of the free for the incarcerated. That something wrong and terrible injustice have been done to her is evident in the director-producer duo’s refusal to show her the original version of the film. But by cutting, altering and adapting her life experiences, they re-invents her life – her lover, her rapes, and even they impose the allegation of murder of twenty-two men
that she denied having committed. Phoolan Devi expressed her disgust and bitterness against the director and the producer who, she thought, are “no better than (sic) the men who raped her” (The Great Indian I). Phoolan Devi was restrained from speaking of her humiliation, whether sexual or physical, at the hands of Thakurs after Vikram Mallah’s murder. She only said “Un logo ne mujhse bahut mazak ki” (The Great Indian II). The director makes use of the word ‘mazak’ as a synonym with rape. When Phoolan Devi herself was shy (or reluctant) to disclose her physical torture and sexual abuse or rape, how does Shekhar Kapur dare to restage her rape and show it to the world? The American journalist’s account is taken as much more reliable and truthful than that of Phoolan Devi. Like all the sensible men and women, Arundhati Roy does not accept the fact of “using the identity of a living woman, re-creating her degradation and humiliation for public consumption” (The Great Indian II). And she thinks it a criminal offence to restage her humiliation without her consent and knowledge. The film’s only message that rape is degrading and humiliating bears the commercial interest as “Dwelling on the Degradation and the Humiliation is absolutely essential for the commercial success of the film” (The Great Indian II). As pointed out earlier, the director and the producer claim the film’s story as “Truth” only to fulfill their own vested business interest, but actually they themselves do not believe in her existence as a real woman with feelings, emotions, a mind and opinions. Roy quotes Alexander Walker: “Kapur’s film is not the story of one extraordinary woman: it is a manifesto about Indian womanhood” (The Great Indian II). She comments: “When a woman becomes womanhood, she ceases to be real.” (The Great Indian II)
In a statement published in *Sunday* on August 28th, 1994, S.S.Bedi unwittingly admitted that they distorted the “Truth” for the story of the film to safeguard Phoolan from further jeopardizing her interests in the court case filed against her. Roy quotes Bedi: “The case against Phoolan was sub-judice and so we took her statements about the Behmai massacre where she said she had shot a few people. (?) But in the film we have not shown her killing anybody as we did not want it to affect her case.” (The Great Indian II). Here they have done terrible injustice to both sides. Firstly, Phoolan Devi repeatedly denies in front of police, journalists, and Mala Sen the allegation of committing the massacre of twenty-two Thakurs. Despite that they show her supervising the killing. The two people who were shot on that day, but did not die said that Phoolan was not present there. Others said she was there. Actually what happened there is still unknown. On the other hand, the film makers committed injustice to the murdered men and their families by showing her innocent in killing them. If she is a criminal in killing Thakurs, she should deserve poetic justice.

It cannot be denied that ‘Bandit Queen’ accelerated the risk to her life, since it was tagged as “Truth”. The perception, opinions and judgment of the ordinary people, lawyers, judges, journalists and relatives of the murdered men in Behmai might directly influence the Court of Law, thereby jeopardizing her life. In a sense the director actually helped to prepare a noose around her neck.

Although the director is a little bit successful in showing the status of women in rural areas and their suffering at the hands of male-dominated society, he totally neglects Phoolan’s character, and focuses more on the violence faced by her. Roy expresses her concern about the feminist message the film conveys to the masses. The only message the
movie has is the mindless violence perpetrated by the upper castes on the lower castes, especially on the lower caste women, and the cruelty and inhumanity of marrying off an eleven-year old girl to a 34 year old man. So Phoolan Devi becomes just an excuse, and is dehumanized, for focusing upon the commodification of women’s bodies for sexual, reproductive and entertainment purposes. This is a largely Marxist feminist perspective.

Roy grew up to be unique and rebellious. Her literary and intellectual abilities unencumbered by the set rules of formal education developed in Corpus Christi, an informal school run by her mother, Mary Roy, a well-known social activist who fought for the rights of women. “Growing up in a little village in Kerala was a nightmare for me. All I wanted to do was to escape, to get out, to never have to marry somebody there”, says Arundhati in an interview with David Barsamian (The Shape). She escapes from the age-old practice of suppression of women only to be a rebel whose aesthetic position is one of eternal confrontation. A close study of her writings—both fictions and non-fictions, makes it obvious that her central preoccupation is the conflict between power and powerlessness, and she as a social activist unmask the brutal face of power in its attitude towards the powerless. She acts as the advocate and judge for the marginalized.

To Roy, an architectural thesis, a film script, a novel and a political essay are diverse ways of expressing an evolving political vision. She says, “while I was a student at my extremely mediocre architecture school that I began to think politically in the way that I do now” (Annie xi). Her activism and her commitment to the marginal and the underprivileged during her early years get a better position in the screenplay In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones. It was written in 1988, and was directed by her husband Pradip Krishen for a TV show. Set in 1974 at the National Institute of Architecture (a
fictional institute based on the actual School of Architecture and Planning in Delhi where Roy herself studied), it depicts the life of architecture students preparing to submit their theses in their final year of education. Annie (Anand Grover played by Arjun Raina), who is doing his ninth year in college, repeating his fifth year thesis for the fourth time, and Radha (played by Arundhati herself) are the main characters who stray from the mind map of normalcy, a Bell curve created by the custodians of the world. They dare to deviate from the oft trodden path and defy the order of leading a good respectable life. Radha acts as a spokesperson of Arundhati Roy and refutes the regressive social system. Roy has always lived in the character, beyond the allotted screen time. Y.D. Billimoria called as Yamdoot, the Head of the Department (played by Roshan Seth), represents the system, with its materialistic and dogmatic attitude. This super cool sadistic professor hardly dares to break the age-old set rules and formulae.

Aesthetic and realistic concerns are fused together in this screenplay. Through a humorous and entertaining presentation of the story, Roy brings forth the harsh reality of the Indian society not only of 1970s, but of the present time as well when the corporate globalization with the governmental support widens the gap between power and powerlessness, between the rich and the poor, between urban elites and rural folks. This screenplay makes us familiar with her political bent of mind and it is present in whatever she wrote later, irrespective of fiction and non-fiction. What she believes and thinks are reflected in the screenplay. Her social and political concerns for the powerless which she pens down in the script are the issues for which she stands up even now. She says in the forward to the book:
It was as a student of architecture that I began to see that in India we have citizens and ‘non-citizens’, those who matter and those who don’t. Those who are visible and those who are not. Those who are included in our planners’ plans and those who are reflexively excluded from them. It was as a student of architecture that I began to ask questions of my mediocre professors about why I was being brainwashed into becoming yet another mediocre manufacturer of concrete boxes who unquestioningly served the interests of the privileged. It was there that I began to try and understand the endless conflict between power and powerlessness — the conflict that is the central pre-occupation of much of my work now. (xi)

Roy expresses her social concerns through the characters of Annie and Radha. The plot of the script clearly indicates the disparity between different segments of society: rural and urban, rich and poor.

Although Annie’s plan appears to be eccentric, his whole endeavour to fulfill his dreams of reversing urbanization in order to change and uplift the society is essentially humanitarian and purposeful. He relentlessly gives them those ones, and as a consequence, fails year after year. The free-spirited Annie, in 1968, when he is in his third year, for a bet, sneaks into staff washroom while Yamdoot is taking a leak. He even peeps across the bogs as Yamdoot is obliging nature. He never comes out of the wrath of Yamdoot, to the extent that he has to repeat his fifth year thesis four times.

That India lives in its village is very true, as more than seventy percent of its population lives in rural areas. The welfare of a country means the well-being of its people both from villages and cities. The proper infrastructure and adequate facilities in
health, education, communication and employment should be provided to the rural folks as these are available to urban people. But it’s painful and unfortunate that even in the twenty-first century the rural people are totally deprived of these facilities. Thousands of farmers commit suicide every year; the frustrations and restlessness among the unemployed youth are an ascending curve; mortality rate in the rural areas is not decreasing as it should be. Consequently, hundreds of villagers migrate to cities and towns every day for earning bread and butter. Although Annie’s plan, no doubt, is not pragmatic, his humanitarian attitude does not allow one to laugh at him. Roy through this character actually wants to convey a message to the government that a parallel effort can be taken to uplift the rural folks. She wants the governments to focus on the development of the rural people, and also reminds it that the rural people are also citizens of the country and constitute the major part of society, and hence, can play a significant role in the development of the nation. Annie decides to present his “bloody revolutionary” idea to the jury that “could reverse the whole process of urbanization, persuade buggers to stay in their villages instead of screwing themselves up in cities” (13). Annie describes his whole plan to Arjun, Radha’s boy friend:

[T]he government plants fruit trees on either side of the railway track. Fine? All over India. General janta craps around the railway tracks anyway, right? So the soil is bloody fertile, haina? Now all you have to do is on every passenger train na, you attach a water carriage with two fountains that spray water on either side. What do you get? One hundred and twenty thousand running kilometers of fruit trees, man! (14)
If Annie’s plan materializes, both rural and urban people can be benefited, and rural people will not have to migrate to cities when they can get necessary livelihood in the villages themselves.

Arjun is realistic. He knows that Annie’s revolutionary, idealistic approach would never allow him to complete his studies. He advises him to leave his idealism and “just give them what they want . . . A five-star beach resort in Goa, a multi-storeyed office complex in CP, how does it matter? It’s just a bloody joke anyway. Just do it and get the hell out of here” (15). But Annie discards Arjun’s proposal and sticks firmly to his plan. He even presents it to Yamdoot before showing it to the jury. He explains the basic concept of his plan to Yamdoot:

So then, sir, once the influx into urban areas is contained, we have an urban, semi-urban rural hierarchy, with mandi towns for marketing of fruits and cash crops . . . So within this context, sir, I’m designing a model Mandi town. (32)

Yamdoot harasses him. Radha also suggests that he should change his thesis topic for which he may “topo someone’s design” (33).

Annie also explains his noble idea to his girl friend Bijli, a cabaret dancer in Hinglish:

Angrezi mein ‘pull-push factors’ kahte hain. Lekin urban planning aur development ka yeh sabse bada problem hai . . . Urban migration ki direction ko reverse kiss turrah se kiya jaye, logon ko shahr se vaapis gaon kaise bheja jaye. [In English it is called “the pull-push factor”. But the
main problem of urban planning development is how to reverse the
direction of urban migration, how to send the people back to villages from
the cities.]. (44)

He is totally devoted to his project, and desperate to implement it. So he writes to the
Prime Minister about his plan which can help to develop the country.

At last, though too late, he realizes his blunder of presenting his idealistic plan to
the traditional institute that does not allow to tread the path that goes contrary to the
traditions and norms. He decides to drop his idea to give it those ones. With the help of
Arjun, Radha and other fellow students he manages to exhibit an old thesis for “a beach
resort in Joshimath” (97). As an outcome Annie passes his final year examination with
good marks.

Like Annie, Radha also focuses on the polarization of power and the powerless.
But unlike Annie, who concentrates on the polarization of urban and rural folk, Radha’s
emphasis is on the disparity of benefits obtained by the rich and poor people of urban
areas. Her special emphasis is on the imbalance between the architect and the
construction labourer on the same site. She thinks an architect helps to widen the gap
between the rich and the poor living in urban areas.

Radha’s thesis showing “the disparity between the per capita earnings of the
architect and the construction labourer—on the same building” (34) cannot satisfy
Yamdoot who thinks Radha’s thesis unrealistic and says that far “from being the monster
you’ve portrayed, the architect poor fellow is actually generating employment for them . . .
. You can’t twist facts around to suit yourself” (35). Her thesis as read out by Yamdoot
highlights that “‘[t]he Architect as a professional, as a money-making institution, has no
commitment to community space in an urban area. His primary commitment is to “his” building and “his” building is usually designed as a means for those who already have money to make more money. This is not architecture—it’s construction. These are not buildings, they’re piggy-banks” (36). This logic sounds ‘claptrap’ to Yamdoot. Yamdoot is supposed to be a part of the bourgeois system that serves the interests of those who have enough already. His bourgeois attitude is reflected in his remark to Radha’s thesis:

A design thesis . . . is a design thesis. I know what you feel, we all feel the same . . . Guilt . . . But that’s separate from your professional skills as a designer, don’t confuse the two. The jury wants results—plans, sections, elevations . . . details. They want to know what you’ve been doing here for five years. The government has spent a lot of money on you, you know.

(36)

Radha, deviating from the traditional bourgeois system, wants to know “why what’s happening is happening” (37). She is reluctant to be a part of the money-making industry of architecture. She believes that an architect should have commitment to society.

Radha, being a conscientious student of architecture, takes first step to perform her duty. Her thesis based on the role of architects and their architecture in a third world city with Delhi as a specific case study is presented for the final jury. It displays the reality of dislocation of the poor people living in cities as second class citizens. In her thesis she says:

Every Indian city consists of a ‘City’ and a ‘Non-city’. And they are at war with one another. The city consists of a number of institutions, houses, offices, shops, roads, sewage systems . . . These institutions are
designed by the architect-engineer. The non-citizen has no institutions. He lives and works in the gaps between institutions, he sits on top of the sewage system. (91)

She lashes out against the so-called architect-engineers who, by displacing the powerless, design and build the institutions symbolizing political, administrative, commercial and individual power:

So in the way he designs these institutions . . . these symbols, the architect-engineer is telling the non-citizen ‘keep out’, ‘stay out of here’, ‘this does not belong to you’ . . . It’s a way of establishing territory . . . like animals . . . Bears leave scratch marks on trees, tigers have a spray, a mixture of urine and scent gland which says ‘This is my territory’. In human beings this urine and scent gland is replaced by the architect, who establishes territory by manipulating the built environment. (92)

The jurors, who are part of bourgeois system, hardly pay any attention to Radha’s presentation that talks about the rights of the proletariat. Mr.Goyal, one of the jurors, asks her not to get so carried away:

All this is all very well when you’re a student, but ultimately you must be realistic . . . You have to satisfy your client, whether he is a citizen or non-citizen or a person from Timbuctoo. If you want to be an architect you have to satisfy your client. (95)

When Mr. Goyal confronts Radha with a question about solving the problem of being an architect, she replies that she does not know if every problem has to have a solution. She
asserts that it is better not to be an architect than to satisfy the clients ignoring the suffering of the poor city-dwellers.

What Arundhati Roy expresses through Radha in *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones* in 1988, is very realistic to the present condition of Delhi. Forty percent of Delhi’s total population (about five million) dwells in slums and unauthorized colonies, and fifty thousands are homeless. They are deprived of all the municipal facilities like electricity, water, sewage systems. These people are treated by the government of India as non-citizens.

They are shadow people, who live in the cracks that run between schemes and institutions. They sleep on the streets, eat on the streets, make love on the streets, give birth on the streets, are raped on the streets, cut their vegetables, wash their clothes, raise their children, live and die on the streets. (The Trickledown Revolution)

On the wake of Commonwealth Games held in New Delhi from October 3, 2010, 4, 00,000 people should have had their homes demolished and been driven out of the city overnight. Or that hundreds of thousands of roadside vendors should have had their livelihoods snatched away by order of the Supreme Court so city malls could take over their share of business. And that tens of thousands of beggars should have been shipped out of the city while more than a hundred thousand galley slaves were shipped in to build the flyovers, metro tunnels, Olympic-size swimming pools, warm-up stadiums and luxury housing for athletes. (The Trickledown Revolution)
On the other hand, the government paid out about twenty eight thousand crore Indian rupees from the public funds to make the games successful. So it’s an endeavour aimed at making India shine in the eyes of beholders coming from other countries at the cost of pushing thousands of non-citizens into innumerable sufferings. Radha realizes that all the architects feel guilty about what they do in widening the gap between the rich and the poor, but their sense of professionalism overcomes the guilt, and they deviate from the path to social commitment. But Radha’s conscientious mind makes her restless, and she feels like a sham. She expresses her feelings and thoughts to Arjun:

Yamdoot was right about this whole guilt thing. I mean you eat and you know guys are starving. You dress and you know guys are walking around nanga. You speak a language that 90 per cent of your country doesn’t understand. Talk about it and you feel like a pseud . . . at least I feel like a pseud . . . I don’t want to talk about it, don’t want to write about it, don’t want to go to seminars about it, and I definitely don’t want to build. So what the hell do I do?” (Annie 105)

Radha’s unwillingness to be an architect is a protest against the roles and activities of architects as social beings.

The theme of power and powerlessness is also reflected in Roy’s concern for the right of women in this screenplay. In Indian society women are treated as powerless creatures dominated and controlled by males. Radha herself is an embodiment of Arundhati Roy. She is a modern girl who is conscious of her rights. Her relationship with Arjun is very open, and this relationship appears to be appalling to her hostel-mate Lekha Saxena. She thinks that men are “the ones who’re usually full of crap anyway” (8). On
the contrary, Lekha, a symbol of traditional woman, who submits herself to the patriarchal dominance, believes that “a girl’s reputation is like a crystal bowl. Once it breaks, it’s lost forever” (16). A woman’s dignity is never fragile for Radha, unlike Lekha. One morning on her way to class, she teaches a lesson to a cyclist who calls her “maal” by spraying him with black ink and dashing through the college gates. One day when her boy friend Arjun insists her to say “[a] woman’s place is in the kitchen”, she replies: “A woman’s place is on the top!” (67). Radha’s feminist concerns are unambiguously reflected in one instance. When Big Tate, one of the professors, asks “one of you ladies” to tell the basic design criteria to be kept in mind for disposal of kitchen waste, Radha objects by raising a question, whether it is bad for the gents’ virility to know about kitchen (55). That is really a daring question in the class. Big Tate is not satisfied with this question, and he insults Radha. He says: “This is a class on services and sewage disposal, not women’s rights” (55). Theories and practices never go together where women’s issues are concerned. Radha defies the practice that household works should be handled by women.

Finally, the screenplay of In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones presents a “dark gritty realism”, alluding to the plight of peripheral ‘non-citizens’. The script presages Roy’s ideological reflections that her later writings circulate.


