Chapter- 2

A general study of the language and style of Arundhati Roy
... it is somewhat an expression of the author’s own personality.
It is a pale reflexion of the haunts of Roy’s own childhood on the
limpid backwaters of Kerala and the society she lived with caste
prejudices, discriminations against women.¹

The novelist herself also declares that she is a person who lives on her own,
and that writing about what she lives interests her.² *The God of Small Things* is also a
political novel, protesting against caste discrimination, the Communist Party of
Kerala for its hierarchical structure, child abuse, the patriarchal repressions of women
and children among the Syrian Christian Community of Aymanam and environmental
degradation inflicted by the pro-development projects and waves.

The language and style used in the novel is also quite appropriate for its
subversive tone; the novelist employs an extraordinary language and a unique style
quite different from that of other Indian English writers though Arundhati Roy has
been influenced by many writers such as Salman Rushdie, Gabriel Garcia Marquez
and Henry James. Her innovativeness in many aspects of the English language, for
instance, in grammar and other lexical items makes her to be a post-colonial writer. In
her venture to find a language and style, she mixes all means available to express
appropriately for the story that is in her imagination. She also adopts the confessional
style in the novel; Rahel and Estha try to overcome their traumatic memory of their
agonizing past experiences which remained haunting and they desperately face it; and
they confess it out. Arundhati Roy, the author, is represented in a way by Rahel and
Estha. The narrative style is not unilinear; the story having been told from many
points of view, it is multilinear. Ammu and Velutha are ‘the colonial other,’ who also
represent the author’s feelings and the mind.
Another vivid feature found in her use of language and style is the mark of the woman in the writer; the woman in Arundhati Roy is very forcefully stamped in her language and style which differ even from that of male authors who have influenced her in many ways. She employs anti-capitalist and feminist-interventions in the narrative by being vocal against the capitalist forces and by bringing forth the importance of women's perspective in her novel and essays. In using feminist interventions, she follows the model of the third-world countries which deal with subordination of women in the context of racial, caste and religious discriminations. A prominent critic, Aida Balvannandhan has also pointed out the dynamics of a narrative told from a woman’s point of view through the female protagonist, Rahel in the novel. It is so because of the semi-autobiographical texture of the novel. The novelist herself asserts this texture in her own words:

My mother says that some of the incidents in the book are based on things that happened when I was two years old. I have no recollection of them. But obviously, they were trapped in some part of my brain.\(^3\)

Creativity in a woman demands a higher form of flexibility in both language and style. Arundhati Roy also said elsewhere that language was a very reflexive thing to her and also it was a skin on her thought. She says:

... for me language is a skin on my thought and I was thinking about it as a story, and was thinking of a way of telling it ... how I wrote it was the way an architect designs a building.\(^4\)

Her mother, who is also a rebel, encouraged her to write fearlessly. She was also a strong woman who influenced Arundhati Roy in her childhood. For Arundhati
Roy, writing is a procreative experience because it is both painful and creative to her. The force is an outburst out of a bizarre, churning action full of chaos and anarchy, likely to break all prescribed norms and forms as in a battlefield; all rules and codes hold no ground there; Arundhati Roy breaks many rules of language and narrative style in her outbursts in order to acquire an adequate language and style to bring out all that has been conceived in her mind. As a woman writer, the novelist finds the existing language, which has been constructed by the age-old institutions of civilization, inadequate. Breaking the rules of English language is also a way of giving a blow to most of the human institutions—religious, social, cultural and political. *The God of Small Things* is a woman’s narrative in both language and style.

The language employed in the novel purposefully creates a surrealistic impact on the mind; it is a language of revolt; the shock and horror depicted by the scenes in Chapter 4 (Abhilash Talkies) and Chapter 19 (Saving Ammu) leave an indelible, agonizing mark on the mind of the twins as well as on the minds of the readers. The novelist amalgamates various narrative styles by mixing the styles of magic realism, stream of consciousness and confessional expression altogether into a unique style of her own in unfolding the plot of her novel. For the psychologically disturbed characters, to express the complicated psychic state of the mind, she has introduced a new kind of subversive language.

Arundhati Roy’s principal themes in the novel are satirical portrayal of the repressive regimes of the Indian Government and Corporate Establishment which deprive the most vulnerable section of the human society—people of low caste, women and children from all the basic human needs. Another major concern in the
nove|e|l is the author's lamentation over environmental degradation in a sarcastic tone. She deals with the same themes in her essays also.

Her major concerns in her essays are articulating the deprived and environmental pollution, question of conservation, genocide and failure of democracy. She speaks in the same discourse as that of a radical dissenter in her essays. The postcolonial style of hybridity is still practised in the essays also. Her essays are full of emotional force using register language which is not an official language. Though her hostile critics such as B. G. Varghese has branded Arundhati Roy as driven by anti-development dreams, many more critics appreciate her essays as thought provoking and incisive. She elaborates her case with facts, figures and data, whether it is the impact of the hydro-electric-dam project or of nuclearisation or of global corporate sectors on the people or on ecology.

Arundhati Roy's political journalism in the essays is found to be expressed through an underlying artistic process. She still attempts to raise the subversive voice of many Veluthas in real life in her essays. This is how she has become a committed writer for a cause—the cause of the deprived—a presentation of the subaltern in her post-colonial novel and essays by keeping a concurrent communication between the two forms of literature. But the genres represent a forceful voice in the hands of Arundhati Roy who is passionately in love with the poor—the deprived—the marginalized of India and of the world. It is her peculiar language and unique style—the most essential element for a writer who writes for a committed cause to put forth the voice in the medium of fictional narrative and essays that enables her to attain an international recognition.
II

As mentioned earlier, *The God of Small Things* (1997), is the only novel of Arundhati Roy. The novel is based on the story of caste exploitation at the centre of which is the sub-text of forbidden love between Ammu and the untouchable Velutha. The community reacts against their relationship and is adamant to protect the decadent moral codes leaving no room for such an inter-caste relationship. The Kochamma family business, Paradise Pickles and Preserves, is a symbolic expression of the theme. Ayemenem is practically pickled in history. The novelist purposefully uses words, phrases and syntactical construction in her own way to express the appropriate meaning, ideas, images and symbols that she has in her mind. The suggested meaning associated with the ideas in her mind expressed by a word or phrase is found forceful as one reads her novel.

Arundhati Roy is an eternal rebel who is always vocal in an expressive language and suggestive style often producing the nightmarish impact caused by any form of repression. Despite some contradictory remarks on Arundhati Roy’s creative genius when she exposes the naked reality of caste discrimination and child abuse, many more critics cannot but applaud her uncommon linguistic innovativeness using ungrammatical structures and her unique language and narrative style.

*The God of Small Things* is replete with images, symbols, antithesis, balanced rhyme and rhythm, onomatopoeia, history, oxymoron, irony, pun and hyperbole though her major concern is found to be the similes. The whole book is a belligerent display of some powerful images. Roy is fiercely original and impressive
in her use of similes and metaphors. She comes very close to the stalwarts like James Joyce, Salman Rushdie, William Faulkner, T.S Eliot and Virginia Woolf in her handling of image and symbol.

From the very beginning of the novel, the narrative has been developed as in the novels of Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner; images symbolical of the main ideas have been used one after another in a disorderly manner keeping no sense of time, the present moving back to the past unconsciously as actually what is happening in mental aberrations. At the beginning of the story, time is set in the present tense but the scene moves unconsciously to the incidents which took place before twenty three years or beyond, that is, before thirty one years.

The story begins with Rahel’s coming back to Ayemenem after twenty three years of separation from Estha. Though the story is that of the past that the narrator-writer tells, the opening three paragraphs are set in the present time. The overlapping of time present with the past is the intentional device grasped by the writer which emphasizes the realistic appeal of the story.

The writer’s vision covers a timeless scope when she reports a persistently real condition of human suffering of an extensive magnitude. The scene of Sophie Mol’s funeral and the incident of the twin’s birth anticipate many things in the story. The deprivation, the wretched life of Ammu and her children, is already predicted in these scenes. As the use of imagery, symbols, sound, rhythm and rhyme is absolutely necessary to impart fineness to the work of literature, Arundhati Roy also uses these
elements extensively in her novel. Her narrative exhibits an exquisite artistic wholeness though the novel is a political novel.

The novel is set in a small town, Ayemenem in Kerala. The family living in the Ayemenem house are Syrian Christian converts with the two old women, Mammachi, wife of the late Pappachi, an ambitious entomologist and his spinster sister, Baby Kochamma. Pappachi dies heartbroken because his discovery of an unknown species of tufted moth has been stolen by a worthless scientist and named after him. Ammu, his daughter, runs away from her parents’ home, goes to Calcutta, meets and marries a Bengali assistant manager in a tea-estate in Assam. Soon disillusioned, she divorces him and returns to the Ayemenem household with her twin children, Rahel and Estha. She faces neglect, sour reception and depthless loneliness, sees Velutha, a Paravan and establishes sexual liaison with him. Her brother, Chacko, is an undergraduate from Delhi University, who goes to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, meets a café waitress, Margaret Kochamma and marries her. But Margaret finds him despicable, divorces and marries Joe, a biologist. Margaret Kochamma’s marriage with Chacko produces Sophie Mol, a daughter whom Chacko loves greatly. Dejected he returns home to take over the Paradise Pickles and Preserves factory initially started by Mammachi. Chacko is a Marxist and in touch with K. N. M. Pillai, the local communist leader.

Velutha is a young man, a Paravan who is an untouchable. He is very enterprising and intelligent master of many trades, but chiefly a carpenter. He is also a labourer in the Paradise Pickles and Preserve factory. Meanwhile Joe dies in an accident. Margaret comes to Kerala with Sophie Mol on a visit. Sophie dies in the
river Meenachal while rowing on a night with Estha and Rahel. At that time, Sophie was nine years old and Rahel and Estha seven years old. Velutha is implicated in the tragic incident. But, before that, Ammu’s liaison with him horrifies the Ayemenem family whose fury breaks on the heads of both Ammu and Velutha. Velutha is hunted down in the History House by a posse of Kottayam policemen and tortured to death. Ammu is expelled from her home while Estha is sent away to Calcutta to his father. The Paradise Pickles business collapses and is finished. Ammu dies a miserable and lonely death in a room in Bharat lodge and cremated unconventionally in an electric crematorium at the age of thirty one.

After Ammu’s death, Rahel loses all tracks of normal life and drifts from one school to another. During college life she meets and gets married with Larry Mc Caslin from Boston who has come to Delhi to collect his material for doctoral thesis. And she goes to Boston with him. She keeps on writing occasionally to Chacko and Mammachi but she never goes to Ayemenem. Her marriage too, like her mother’s ends up in a divorce. After the divorce Rahel does not return to India, her home country but works at an Indian restaurant as a waitress in New York. Later she works as a night clerk in a bullet proof cabin at a gas station outside Washington. The narrative begins and ends as Rahel returns to her family home in India when she hears that Estha is re-returned to Ayemenem, twenty-three years after they separated in the hope that their love for each other and memories recollected from a distance will heal their deep wound.

*The God of Small Things* is, thus, a story of forbidden class-caste love and what community will do to protect the old way. The Kochamma family business is a
microcosmic representation of the rotten, discriminatory and patriarchal institution of Aymanam or Kerala or any such place or society. What the novelist tries to express in the novel is how the old decadent system crushes some of her characters and distorts their lives and spares none.

III

In delineating a society crushed asunder by a hierarchical system in which man and upper class held the reign of supremacy forcing others to lead a life of depravity, Arundhati Roy in her novel, *The God of Small Things*, has ventured in search of a proper language and an appropriate narrative style. She successfully employs many new effective elements of language and style in this venture. Her language in the novel is replete with verbal innovations, nonconformity to language rules, repetitions, child language, and single word expressions in addition to similes, metaphors, irony, humour, satire and highly suggestive terminology. In matters of narrative style also, she employs many innovative and unconventional techniques such as autobiographical narrative style, a narrative technique telling a story from many points of view which is an amalgamation of the points of view, a new architectural method, stream of consciousness technique, highly epigrammatic and poetic style, interior monologue, other dramatic elements and magic realism. The novelist has shown that she is a master of the English language and also a master of style and technique.
Arundhati Roy is, as mentioned earlier, a writer who has been influenced by the contemporary thinker—Avram Noam Chomsky. Not only Chomsky’s social and political ideas but also his theory of language has influenced the novelist. Studies of her language used in the novel particularly the language of the children in the novel and also her language used in her essays reflect Chomsky’s ideas on language—his ideas on human language as biologically determined. Chomsky is a person whose theory of language affirms the inseparable link with his political philosophy. So it is very important to look analytically how far the novelist is influenced by him upon her language and style through which she seeks a medium of expression of her political and social criticism about the system in India in her sole novel, *The God of Small Things*. Arundhati Roy might have read Chomsky’s ideas on language besides his political writings. She might be influenced by his philosophy of language and mind on which Chomsky lectured in 1969 in the University of Oxford. According to Noam Chomsky:

the principles underlying the structures of language are too specific and are highly articulate that they must be as being biologically determined; that is to say, as constituting part of what we call ‘human nature’ and as being genetically transmitted from parents to their children.\(^5\)

His theory of language is connected with his political philosophy for which he became widely known as one of the most outspoken and most articulate critics of American policy in Vietnam—a hero of the ‘New Left.’ His political writings which have attracted the attention of many including Arundhati Roy are *American Power and New Mandarins, For Reasons of State, The Backroom Boys, At War at Asia,*
and *Peace in the Middle East*. Arundhati Roy is influenced both in her novel and essays by Noam Chomsky who is "still an active supporter of radical social change in the United States."6

Chomsky's views on language particularly his opposition of the extreme form of behaviourist psychology that is radical behaviourism according to which all human knowledge and belief, and all 'patterns' of thought and action, characteristic of man, can be explained as 'habits' built up by a process of 'conditioning,' lengthier and more complex and no doubt in its details, but not qualitatively different from the process by which rats in a psychological laboratory "learned to obtain food by pressing a bar in a cage in which they are housed." Though Chomsky has been groomed by the Bloomfieldian school of linguistics in America, he holds Edward Sapire's refusal to neglect any of the multifarious aspect of language as acceptable. Chomsky holds many of the attitudes towards language that Sapire held. He agrees with the idea that language simply is not a habit and is radically different from animal communication. His ideas of universal grammar developed from various scientific views which refer to the whole of the systematic description of language including both phonology and semantics, as well as syntax is also found very helpful in the analysis of the language used by Arundhati Roy in her novel.

Creativity or open-endedness, the second general property of language, (the first being the grammar) is considered by Chomsky as a very important aspect of a human language. The creative command of language is unique to human beings; it is species-specific. Chomsky gives much emphasis on this part of a language in his linguistic theory. So, he says that metaphorical language is ungrammatical; in order to
express very clearly commanded by the imagination and the mind, one is likely to break the grammatical rules because creativity operates in a free manner. Chomsky admits this condition of language also in his theory of language. In other words:

Chomsky considers that creativity of language is one of its characteristic features and one that poses particularly challenging problem for the development of a psychological theory of language use and language acquisition.  

IV

Arundhati Roy breaks many rules of grammar in her highly creative expressions. It is because of the creative urge in the novelist which commands her expression. The full charge of emotion and feelings of her characters and of the writer herself need an appropriate form of expression. It is one of the most important aspects of study in the language of her novel. Her sentences lack grammaticality in many instances though there are many passages in the novel which observe the perfect grammatical structures. Examples are given in the following paragraphs.

Arundhati Roy deliberately adopts the ungrammatical structure of sentences despite her knowledge about the skillful use of modern grammar for the fact that a prescribed pattern of language cannot reveal the inner complexities of the human mind and emotions which generate a pattern of its own. Engrossed in revealing psychic depth of human emotion, the novelist deliberately breaks many rules of grammar. Following a pattern of non-verbal language to analytically reveal the
complicated emotions of the unconscious mind and to dispose impulsive and
effectual tendencies of her characters—Ammu, Velutha, Rahel and Estha, she
makes use of sentences which do not have subjects going to the extent of using just a
word in place of a full-fledged sentence. She takes a lot of liberty in her use of
English which is her own variety.

In her ungrammaticalness, Arundhati Roy uses one-word and two-word
sentences, incomplete and subject-less sentences, faulty spelling, capitalization,
syntactical deviation and nonce words which deviate from the general rule of word
formation or neologism. She purposefully breaks the rule of grammar. Her use of one-
word and two-word sentences, which sprinkle many of the pages of *The God of
Small Things*, is for the purpose of laying emphasis on the word and its meaning and
the importance of its meaning in the story. Such words used in her text are, “Ever,”
her,” “Waiting” and “Know.”

The most significant one-word sentences in the novel are those which are
important upon the incidents that lead to the main tragedy. Such words are related to
the socially condemnable sexual relation between a high caste woman and an
‘untouchable’. Velutha’s making love with Ammu is represented as filthy and
polluting in Vellya Paapen’s feelings and in the visualization of Mammachi.
Velutha’s father is struck by terror at this thought. What is important is that in order to
represent this emotional implication, the novelist employs one-word sentences in the
following lines:
At least not until the Terror took hold of him. Not until he saw, night after night, a little boat being rowed across the river. Not until he saw it return at dawn. Not until he saw what his Untouchable son had touched. More than touched.

Entered.

Loved.¹⁵

This terror-stricken feeling may be compared with the feelings of Mammachi in her visualization of the same in the following lines: “His particular Paravan smell. Like animals. . . . Like a dog with a bitch on heat.”¹⁶ In both the descriptions about the state of social condemnation, the author is found lost in her voyage of seeking a proper language and stumbles upon one-word or two-word and incomplete sentences in order to lay emphasis on the implied meaning of the words in that form of expression.

Among many examples, a very important one-word sentence in the novel is “Tomorrow.”¹⁷ The word which is mentioned as a one-word sentence three times in Chapter 21, “The Cost of Living,” “stretches the criminality of the caste system and the tragedy that resulted from it” and “hope in a change concerning the situation of the Dalits, by pushing back with a single word in this novel’s non-linear narration.”¹⁸ Her use of capitalization is another breach of grammatical rules. Many of her pages in the novel are strewn with words beginning with capital letters at the wrong places. She practices this technique to warn or underline the danger of something. The following are some of her use of capitalization in the novel:
Edges, Borders, Boundaries, Brinks and Limits have appeared like a team of trolls on their separate horizons. Short creatures with long shadows, patrolling the Blurry End.\(^{19}\)

In these lines, the capitalization of words like “Borders, Boundaries, Brinks, Limits” and “Blurry End” are significant suggesting the abnormal life of Rahel and Estha who are forced to encounter prematurely harshness of discrimination, abuse and depravity. Here are a number of such uses of capitalization in the novel. Some examples are, “Unsafe Edge”\(^{20}\) and “The Unmixable Mix”\(^{21}\)signifying the fears of the family and also the fears of a community of an unmarried woman in Indian society.

Incomplete or subject-less sentences are found profusely in the novel with the purpose of conveying unsaid but shared knowledge between the reader and the narrator on social or moral values. In other words, this practice of the novelist is used as a comment on the upturning of the social values by the upper class society. In Chapter 20, “The Madras Mail,” the beginning sentence, “And so, at the Cochin Harbour Terminus, Estha alone at barred train window,” tells us how society’s man-made rigid laws and perverted values have thrown Estha out grief-stricken, separated from his mother to an unknown destination. This incomplete sentence shares all the untold miseries of Estha who will not be able to come out of it along with the reader. In like manner, “As for Rahel,”\(^{22}\) and “Not when Mammachi died. Not when Chacko immigrated to Canada,”\(^{23}\) also are obviously incomplete sentences seeming to convey the moral condemnation Rahel would have faced had it been a morally righteous person who related her past and the latter quotation conveying about the emotional bond that links the twins.
There are many more ungrammatical deviations—in syntax, in spelling and in coining of new words. Arundhati Roy deliberately uses these deviations for satirical purpose. Using these forms, she is trying to make a sarcastic comment on the attitudes of certain characters. The word ‘divorced’ is spelled as ‘Die-voiced’ which implies the condemning attitude of good society towards a divorced woman. The first syllable, ‘di’ means that Rahel is not only a divorced woman but also a childless woman, and that such a woman is taken as useless in the eyes of the society. Similarly, the word “Later” is disintegrated into “Lay Ter.” In order to satirize this attitude of society, Arundhati Roy purposefully uses many such faulty spellings.

Her use of these ungrammatical compositions suggest “the tragic theme of loveless lives” of Rahel and Estha, and also the criminal brutalities of caste-discriminations. The language in this construction resembles a musical composition. This non-conformity to the conventional genre demarcation is because of the influence to some extent by the deconstructionist fad; the boundaries of genre in literature are no longer strictly conformed too. As a result of which, there are works which overlapped into more than one genre. The observations made by critics clearly explain the power and suggestiveness of the new language which possesses the force of a feminist and post-colonial discourse “where the anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal impulses intersect.” Her language is profoundly subversive. An aspect of this subversive language with faulty grammatical structure which manifests the perspective of the children is taking a word apart or disintegration of a word as in the following:
Another manifestation of the child’s view is reading backwards which exposes the wrong-doing of the established order and insensitivity of the adult world. Estha and Rahel, after having been administered Coca-Cola, read the mottoes of the police force backwards as:

‘ssetilop’ he said. ‘ssetilop, ecneidebO,’
‘ytlayoL’,ecnegilletnI,’ Rahel said
‘ysetruoC,’
‘ycneiciffE.’

And their reading backwards of the book, “The Adventure of Susie Squirrel,” given by Miss Mitten as a present when she visited Ayemenem is also suggestive of the children’s perspective in opposition to the perspective of the adults which under the influence of Western Christian values, was quite insensitive to the original, indigenous values. This act of reading backward is the defiance of the established order infested with cruelties by illuminating all who challenge it. The novelist has chosen a language through the children’s reading backward, which is the only gesture of revolt available to the children as a form of creative expression against repressive apparatuses of the social system to the writer.
Formation of nonce words and joined words are also the writer’s suggestive manipulation of the language at her hand to express the same subversive mode. To cite examples of these words are “offity,” “Bar Nowl,” “Straightforwardly,” “Whatisit,” “Whatthappen,” “Furrywhirring,” and “Sariflapping.” Besides, she also uses many untranslated Malayalam words with which she has attempted to deconstruct the power structure of colonialism and patriarchy. In relation to this aspect of her language, C. Gopinath Pillai observes:

Roy appropriates the English language by bringing it under the influence of the vernacular. Appropriation is part of her attempt to abrogate the aesthetic assumptions of the centre . . . Malayalam words embedded in the English text seem to carry the oppressed culture, just as the English words, that surround them may be seen to be tainted by its colonial origin. The process of decentering of male domination is achieved through a dislocated and deviant style that often resists a mimetic reading.29

As the postmodern aesthetics is bound up with a critique of domination, Arundhati Roy’s novel, The God of Small Things, is a postmodern novel which is a critique of patriarchal and Western dominance. The representation of the subaltern and the marginal in the novel is therefore politically grounded. Besides the ungrammatical feature of the language of Arundhati Roy, there are other features such as the use of repetition, italicization and topicalisation. All these linguistic devices are meant for intensification, for rhetorical effect as well as for reflecting the mental state of Estha and Rahel specifically. Her main concern in this linguistic experiment is to go deeper into the psyche of her central characters—Estha and Rahel.
Other stylistic device of her language is the use of many figures of speech such as simile and metaphor, rhyme and rhythm, symbol, image, irony, pun, hyperbole, oxymoron, mythology, anti-thesis, chiasmus, pathetic fallacy, palindrome, cliché, synaesthesia, onomatopoeia and alliteration. These devices make her English very forceful and "capable of independent existence by subverting the master narrator's communication." The figures of speech used by the novelist play the same role of invigorating the language for the purpose of subverting the oppressive system encountered by her central characters.

Figures of speech in literary expression play a major role in enhancing the expression. They have been an integral part of creative literature. For example, metaphors and similes are an inevitable device employed by the creative writers timelessly. It is the power of language which makes a work of literature effective and appealing. Many well known authors are known for their power of language specially their use of metaphors and similes which are the main agents for supplying local habitations to the readers. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is replete with a large number of metaphors and similes. Most of her similes are selected from modern lives and their objects. Fresh, graphic, precise, poetic and subtle, her similes are very forceful and effective. With the help of these similes, she can render what she describes in minute details in a picturesque manner. Darshana Trivedi in her essay, ("Arundhati's Similes," *Explorations: Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things*, Eds. Indira Bhatt and Indira Nityanandam. New Delhi: Creative Books, 1997.130-135.) compares Arundhati Roy with the legendary ancient Indian poet, Kalidasa, in her use of similes. She even calls her the modern master of simile. From close reading
of her *The God of Small Things*, one notices that Roy, with the help of her similes, narrates the inner-workings of the mind of her characters. In truth her similes are an integral part of the novel. Arundhati Roy is a keen and an ideal observer of life and tells her stories from her personal experience not from a universalising stance.

Similes of many kinds are found in her novel. Though she picks up this figure of speech from modern life, she also uses mythical elements for metaphorical expressions. For example, in Chapter 12, the story of Karna and Kunti is referred to and Velutha is compared with Karna. Some of her metaphorical expressions deal with characters and some with incidents, and some with minute observations of life. Besides, she uses various kinds of similes and metaphors—dehumanising, animistic and many other unusual ones. Among her similes and metaphors—the dehumanising one, where inanimate characters are attributed to animate objects, are found in large numbers. For example, “Rahel . . . had ravelled herself like a sausage into the dirty airport curtain,”31 “Blue veins like lumpy knitting running up her translucent shins”32 and “Nuns walked across it. Like slow cigars.”33 She has selected many animistic metaphors also from unusual context. To cite examples, they are, “Christianity arrived in a boat and seeped into Kerala like tea from a teabag,”34 and “A pale daymoon hung hugely . . . As big as the belly of a beer-drinking man.”35 In the use of such metaphorical expressions, she may be compared with the metaphysical poets. To cite more examples from her text about such kind of expressions are, “Twin seals, slick with their mother’s juices,”36 “Rahel was like an excited mosquito on a leash,”37 “His nipples peeped at Rahel over the top of the boundary wall like a sad St. Bernard’s
eyes,"\textsuperscript{38} and "He drove the thought away angrily. It returned and sat outside his skull. Like a dog."\textsuperscript{39}

In her similes which deal with characters, Arundhati Roy compares the characters either with nature or an object of the modern life. Rahel imagines Velutha as a star: "She imagined him dropping like a dark star out of the sky that he had made. Lying broken on the hot church floor, dark bloods spilling from his skull like a secret."\textsuperscript{40} The adjective "dark" signifies Velutha’s dark colour and his untouchability both. And the phrase, "out of the sky" means an out-caste. Again, "dark" in the second line means his colour and the word "secret" means the secret of his pains and his own sufferings. Such a kind of simile unfolds the secret working of the mind of the characters and his or her condition in the society. She uses contrast similes in describing a character, for example, Ammu is compared with a stone and is juxtaposed against tears in the following simile: "Her face was set like a stone but the tears welled up in her eyes and ran down her rigid cheeks."\textsuperscript{41} Here are a number of such similes in the description of the big god and the small god, for example, in Chapter 1:

\begin{quote}
That Big God howled like a hot wind, and demanded obeisance. Then Small God . . . . came away cauterized, laughing numbly at his own temerity. . . . So small God laughed a hollow laugh, and skipped away cheerfully. Like a rich boy in shorts.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

This simile makes a contrast between the ordinary man’s god and rich man’s god. One very significant simile of this kind is the description of the incident of the tragic death of Sophie Mol in the following lines: "... slowly faded, the Loss of
Sophie Mol grew robust and alive. It was always there. Like a fruit in season. Every season. As permanent as a Government job.\textsuperscript{43}

Arundhati Roy’s observation of modern life and objects is revealed in similes and metaphors. They are used as a linguistic device for a literary and picturesque effect. A beautiful such expression is, “The silence sat between grand-niece and baby grand aunt like a third person.”\textsuperscript{44} The linguistic device is mainly used by poets. Modern poets use modern life and objects for the purpose of comparison in their observations of life. So does Arundhati Roy in the simile: “Ridges of muscles on his stomach rose under his skin like divisions on a slab of chocolate,”\textsuperscript{45} and “Inspector Thomas Mathew’s moustaches bustled like a friendly Air India Maharaja’s.”\textsuperscript{46}

After having discussed the major constituents of the language used by Arundhati Roy in her novel, her use of other devices such as alliterative, rhythmic use of language very extensively, deserves one’s attention in the study of her language and style. Such alliteration, “. . . wind and water with short spells of sharp, glittering sunshine. . .” “Slanting silver ropes slammed . . .”, “gently clinging curled claws” and “The sad singing started . . . they sang the same sad . . .”,\textsuperscript{47} are meant for creating an evocative lyrical effect. Another aspect of her language is the subtle use of oxymoron such as “beautiful ugly toads,” “absurdly beautiful,” “noisy television silence” and “Love is a sweet poison” which add a poetic dimension to the novel.

Use of irony, a literary device both for poetry and prose is another aspect of her language in the novel. Besides, the all pervasive structural irony in the plots—the story of Velutha and Ammu, Ammu and a Bengali Brahman and that story of Rahel
and Estha, there are many individual examples of irony in the novel. A magnificent example of the use of irony in the incident when Inspector Thomas Mathew violates all the qualities of being a policeman by abusing Ammu is implied in the following:

‘If I were you,’ he said, ‘I’d go home quietly.’ Then he tapped her breasts with his baton. Gently. Tap, tap. . . .

Behind him a red and blue board said:

Politeness
Obedience
Loyalty
Intelligence
Courtesy
Efficiency. ⁴⁹

Another instance of irony in the novel is the act of reading backwards by the children. The novelist goes on experimenting on the genre with many more stylistic devices by using antithesis such as “As a young woman, she had renounced the material world, and now, as an old one, she seemed to embrace it”⁵⁰ which is used to portray the character of Baby Kochamma.

Chiasmus, which is also a traditional linguistic device for both prose and poetry, is found to be effectively used in the novel; for example, the lines “And he waited. And waiting he wiped. And wiping he waited”⁵¹ are an effective use of chiasmus. Tragic intensity of the plot is deeply and forcefully expressed by using pathetic fallacy as in the line, “fear sank and settled at the bottom of the deep water.”⁵²
Synaesthesia, a blending or confusion of different kinds of sense impression is another stylistic device of her language as in “she smelled the river on him... Ammu put out her tongue and touched it, in the hollow of his throat”53 and “When the gurgling, bubbling sound came, she listened with her eyes.”54 Arundhati Roy, out of an intensive urge in search of an effective expression also, uses the technique of forming new words by imitating the natural sound. This technique has been used by mankind since time immemorial. She makes new words such as, “Tap, tap,” and “Wraark, Waark, Wraark”. In short, Arundhati Roy has been experimenting on many kinds of linguistic and stylistic devices in the novel. Symbols and imagery are also profusely used in her expression. The “History House” and the “Meenachal River” in the novel are used as symbols.

V

Arundhati Roy’s language in her novel, The God of Small Things, is dominated by a style which engages the service of other figures of speech such as imagery and symbols. A language impregnated with images and symbols is indeed the style of Roy as a writer. This stylistic capacity makes her a remarkable author. Imagery is a:

critical term covering those use of language in a literary work that evokes sense-impressions by literal or figurative reference to perceptible or concrete ‘objects’, scenes, actions or states, as distinct from the language of abstract argument or exposition.55
M. H. Abrams clearly mentions: “Commonly in the recent usage, imagery signifies *figurative language*, specially the *vehicles* of metaphors and similes.”

Using of imagery in a literary work is to render meanings in concrete terms or more clearly and to avoid abstractions. Arundhati Roy shows her expertise in the use of imagery in abundance in her novels. Her symbols and metaphors are replete with images which suggest further meanings and associated ideas rather than simply supplying a literal meaning. They are meant for the purpose of furnishing clear and concrete significance associated with the words beyond its literal meaning:

*A symbol is specifically an evocative kind of image; that is, a word or phrase referring to a concrete object, scene or action which also has some further significances associated with it.*

Arundhati Roy shows extraordinary talent in the use of similes and images in her novels. In the words of R. S. Sharma and Shashi Bala Talwar; “........a brilliant display of the most appropriate and striking images is a crowning achievement of Arundhati Roy as writer.”

She may be compared with writers such as James Joyce and Salman Rushdie in this aspect. Evocativeness of her language is because of the images and symbols which abound throughout her expressions. The very beginning paragraph of the novel is replete with this kind of evocativeness:

*May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month. The days are long and humid. The river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees. Red bananas ripen. Jackfruits burst. Dissolute bluebottles hum vacuously in the fruity air. Then they stun themselves against clear windowpanes and die, fatly baffled in the sun.*
The words in the above lines evoke vivid images in terms of colour, sound and movement which probably arise from the author’s personal experience. This power of words which evokes vivid images is most active in the areas of the novel where the narrator fully invests herself with the twins’ consciousness. It is noteworthy that such images are very colourfully and aptly chosen in *The God of Small Things*. Though the imagery that is found in the novel is often complicated, a deeper probe into them shows that the images employed are vivid, forceful and economically arranged. The novelist is skilled in bringing out the most ordinary and familiar material. The images always oscillate back and forth and are totally representative of the character, situation and environment where the plot is set in. She is an expert in integrating things of different, complex and obscure materials into a whole dramatic sequence.

Images and symbols are an integral part of a great work of art. Great poets such as William Shakespeare, William Wordsworth and T. S. Eliot had masterfully used various kinds of images in their masterpieces. Romantic poets believe in the existence of only those powerful images which are richly rooted to the core of heart and modern poets oppose those images that are nothing but an overflow of emotions.

Arundhati Roy employs images of the latter kind. Most of the images, words and phrases of the novelist are deliberately distorted to create images arousing a unique sensation in the readers’ mind. Lines or passages where Arundhati Roy uses words evoking images reveal the author’s penetrating sense of discrimination as regards to colour, sound and movement. She forges words which differentiate the various shade, nuances, intensities and aptitudes of which the readers were not
conscious earlier. The colour ‘green’ gives us multiple images of greenness in the words, such as ‘dustgreen,’ ‘wetgreen’ and ‘mossgreen’. Similarly, in varying meditations, the white light is depicted as follows; “Then the sunlight was fractured by thin trunks of tilting trees,”68 “edges of light,”61 and “bright parallelogram of barred sunlight on the floor.”62

Arundhati Roy’s acute sensitivity to sense perception is unrivalled in the spectrum of modern writers. Her sensitivity to smell shows an astounding degree which an ordinary writer cannot attain. The multiple levels of sensitivity to smell is expressed in an unending list of phrases which are found in the novel suggesting to the several kinds of smell as found in the following phrases: “sourmetal smell,” “a magical sound of music smell,” “Irish- Jesuit smell,” “dinner smells,” “Paravan smell,” “sicksweet smell,” “old blood smell,” “sour farty smell of red ants,” “cloying smell of incenses” and “sickled smell.” Her sensitivity to sense perception is as clean and clear as that of children having a “sensuous glory.” Not only her use of similes and metaphors, but also the coinage of new words, compound words and adjectives used by the novelist indicate various nuances of smell.

In order to bring out the contextual events and effects of a person and thing, event, movement, activity or process in respect of internal and external reality, Arundhati Roy makes use of similes and metaphors. This demands the employment of complex images because the comparison made in similes and metaphors calls for meaning involving more than one sense. Arundhati Roy’s novel, *The God of Small Things*, has many images scattered with various kinds of imagery—visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, kinetic, kinesthetic and static with several cases in which the
focus falls on one of the senses. To cite examples of similes in which we find images evoking an auditory, a visual and a kinetic sense-perception respectively are:

i. And how at night the bush crickets had sounded like creaking stairs and amplified the fear........

ii. A man with a red flag and a face like a knot ..... 

iii. The silence gathered its skirts and slid, like Spider woman, up the slippery bathroom wall.

Over and above these images which evoke sense-perception, there are a number of other images created by her similes and metaphors in the novel which compare two objects in terms of concept, function or connotation. They may be called conceptual images. Some examples of this kind of images are:

i. A captured spy in enemy territory, plotting her spectacular escape.

ii. The silence sat between grand-niece and baby grand aunt like a third person. A stranger. Swollen. Noxious.

She also employs synaesthetic images which produce a remarkable effect when "He would touch it, listening with his eyes," eyes are set to listen like ears. Similarly in another description, smells are set to hold music which is auditory. To cite another example, the teeth of the orangedrink lemondrink man in the simile of this sentence, "His teeth, like yellow piano keys, watched little Elvis the Pelvis" are compared with yellow piano keys. But their action is described in terms of watching. The yellow teeth are metaphorically denoted as magnets in the lines that follow suggesting the sinister attraction exercising on the child’s mind.
In a highly epigrammatic and poetic style, Arundhati Roy employs abstract images. She shows her expertise in the use of such an image when Rahel imagined a man like Velutha to have fallen from a great height, “dark blood spilling from his skull like a secret.” Another fine example of using abstract image is found in the following metaphorical description: “Strange insects appeared like ideas in the evenings and burned themselves on Baby Kochamma’s dim 40-watt bulbs.” The comparison in the simile creates a very apt image because transitory ideas, like the strange insects which appeared in the evenings in the rainy seasons, also arise in the mind in the evenings and fade away quickly.

The images that Arundhati Roy employs in her novel are those which call for several sense impressions that are related to a complex or composite manner. In the portrayal of Comrade Pillai, the novelist uses the following similes, “He walked through the world like a chameleon. Never revealing himself, never appearing not to.” In this simile, the visual quality of camouflage and changeability is combined with kinetic property to provide an image for the way Pillai conducted himself through the affairs of the world. Here are a number of such similes creating several sense impressions at a time. Such images involve visual, gustatory and olfactory senses. A remarkable example is, “Ammu was repelled by the medicinal smell of stale alcohol that seeped through his skin, and the dry, caked vomit that incrustied his mouth like a pie every morning.” There are cases of multiple similes which focus on a single object, the comparison being multi dimensional as in the following passage:
She touched him lightly with her fingers and left a trail of goosebumps on his skin. Like flat chalk on a blackboard. Like breeze in a paddyfield. Like jet-streaks in a blue church sky.\textsuperscript{74}

In most cases, drawn from natural and rural life, Arundhati Roy's images are however, applied in a new manner. She also draws figurative materials from modern urban life. A good example of this kind of image is the description of mud in the simile; "slow mud that oozed through toes like toothpaste."\textsuperscript{75} The novelist uses the word 'hole' many times providing an image based on an ontological notion which regards individual existence as some kind of tragic itching into space or universe. There are some other words which are also used for specific images, for example; "eyes" and "silence." From close scrutiny, it is found that the entire range of imagery used in \textit{The God of Small Things} evokes a sense of illness, filth, sickness and injury. This sense is in tune with the unified theme of the novel as a whole. The pessimistic tone evoked by the images is aligned with the personal tragedy of her characters—Rahel, Estha, Ammu and Velutha in the novel.

According to Marjorie Boulton, "the best rhetorical language may be communicating more intensely, more, so far as we can judge, truthfully, than any literal, objective statements."\textsuperscript{76} Further she says:

\textbf{Rhetoric is often needed, because language is not adequate for expressing emotion. Metaphor, simile, association, personification, imagery, symbols, analogy etc. can indeed mislead when used dishonestly. But they can also be used honestly in an attempt to communicate. Indeed one of the criteria of good rhetoric is that it should be sincere; inflated rhetoric is essentially insincere.}\textsuperscript{77}
In the light of this idea about rhetorical language, the rhetorical quality of Arundhati Roy’s language and style may be analysed. Here, language used in the novel is of highly rhetorical in style for which many critics have expressed that she has overdone with language. After having analysed her use of imagery, it has been discovered that her capacity to use them sincerely makes her expression to be able to achieve its goal of communication of the best kind. The popularity of the novel is a testimony to this. Her proper use of various kinds of imagery, evocative of various sense-perceptions can clearly build a concrete representation of the complicated web of emotions and thoughts.

Along with imagery, symbols are also found profusely used in the novel. This makes her language a living entity, ever changing its pattern, ever modifying its content to suit the demands of the one who manipulates it. Symbolism is also a lebensraum for the growth and vitality of her language and style. Words in a language have a semantic structure, as well as a symbolic structure, each word possessing different levels of meaning depending upon the content in which it is used. The evocative power of symbol spells out the totality of meaning. The aesthetic quality of literature is dependent on the symbolic and evocative power of words. The God of Small Things has been commended for its linguistic innovativeness and for its dazzling command of language. It is because of the aesthetic effects created by the writer for whom “language is a skin” on her thought; thought is at the very source of her creativity. She speaks in the very language of thoughts and she does it through the use of profound imagery and symbols.
Arundhati Roy creates the real world of transgression and brutality and the ideal of love and commitment juxtaposed with each other in her novel *The God of Small Things*. These two worlds are linked by a language which possesses an extraordinary symbolic power. The ‘Rose’ and the ‘River’ make a recurring motive in the novel; the writer in Chapter 1 informs us that, “. . . Estha and Rahel had learned that the world had other ways of breaking men. They were already familiar with the smell. Sicksweet. Like old roses on a breeze.” Again, when Estha was returned to his father at Calcutta after the tragedy of the murder of Velutha and throwing out of his mother from Ayemenem house, he had a terrible picture in his head as juxtaposed symbolically in this line, “Rain. Rushing, inky water. And a smell. Sicksweet. Like old roses on a breeze” and again, the same idea is expressed in the following lines:

While other children of their age learned other things, Estha and Rahel learned how history negotiates its terms and collects its dues from those who break its laws. They heard its sickening thud. They smelled its smell and never forgot it.

History’s smell.

Like old roses on a breeze.

It would lurk for ever in ordinary things.

Finally the symbol of old roses reappears when the twins saw the man they loved smashed and broken. Estha and Rahel had learned “two new things” at this incidence:

**Lesson Number One:**

*Blood barely shows on a black man. (Dum dum)*

And

**Lesson Number Two:**

*It smells, though.*

*Sicksweet.*

*Like old roses on a breeze. (Dum dum)*
Arundhati Roy repeatedly uses the smell of old roses with symbolic overtones. The smell is not a favourable smell. It is sickly sweet smell which symbolizes guilt, fear and a terrible grief. These associated ideas of grief and fear cannot be communicated in ordinary terms because it is associated with pain and grief that the two children had encountered in their lives. The grief and pain are beyond words that their terrible experience of life has brought to them: “Not death. Just the end of living.” Their entire life permits these deadly smells, the sickly odour, Estha having “Stopped talking altogether” and Rahel drifting in an indifferent world. The rose in the novel symbolises another kind of fear. At their first meeting, the fear of Velutha and Ammu is beautifully described again in the symbol of a rose again in the line, “He folded his fear into a perfect rose. He held it out in the palm of his hand. She took it from him and put it in her hair.” Thus, rose is repeatedly used to symbolise fear in the conceptualization of the author. Words, thus, have become a means by which an ordinary experience transcends the level of the phenomenal world, and becomes the basis of a traumatic experience expressed aesthetically.

The Meenachal river in the novel is the other dominant motif which takes forward the course of the tragic incident that has taken place in the lives of her characters—Estha, Rahel, Sophie Mol, Ammu and Velutha. The river itself is the epitome of the tragedy which had taken place in the lives of these characters. When Rahel returns to Ayemenem after twenty three years, Estha in the wind and rain, walking on the banks of the river knows that Rahel has come. The river also symbolises their transgression. It was on the other side of the river that twenty three years ago:
They all broke the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much.  

Meenachal River is associated with the life of Ammu who spent hours on the banks of the river with her transistor and who had midnight swims in it. She crossed this river to love by night the man her children love by day and “To use by night the boat that her children used by day.” The forbidden History House was also at the other side of the river. The house fascinated the twins who crossed the river to visit their forbidden territory:

_They didn’t know then, that soon they would go in. That they would cross the river and be where they weren’t supposed to be, with a man they weren’t supposed to love._

In a way, the river is an analogy of the lives of the central characters in the novel. Like these characters, the water of the river before the tragic climax, was warm in their dream:

_It was warm, the water. Greygreen. Like rippled silk._

_With fish in it._

_With the sky and trees in it._

_And at night, the broken yellow moon in it._

But after twenty three years when Rahel returned to it, the river was so changed:

_. . . it greeted her with a ghastly skull’s smile, with holes where teeth had been, and a limp hand raised from a hospital bed._

_Both things had happened._

_It had shrunk. And she had grown._
Like her, Estha, Ammu and Velutha, the river is now devastated. Despite the June rain, it was now no more than a swollen drain: “once it had had the power to evoke fear. To change lives. But now its teeth were drawn, its spirit spent.”90 The contrast between the two images of the same river is symbolically used by the author to depict the decadence in the life of the people. Thus, the Meenachal River in *The God of Small Things* symbolically represents the lives of the people in Ayemenem.

The river plays a symbolic role in the novel. It takes the twins to the History House, and it drowns Sophie Mol. It is instrumental in exposing the scandal of an untouchable loving a high-class Christian. It is dark and uncertain in its behaviour. It is again the river that the policemen crossed in search of Velutha. It is also the river that carried Ammu to her beloved Velutha for fourteen nights and who always left with the word ‘naaley’ which means ‘tomorrow.’ And when she left him to cross the river, “She had a dry rose in her hair.”91 The ‘river’ and ‘rose’ evoking the fragile world of “their Love, their Madness, their Hope, their Infinnate Joy,”92 becomes symbolical of the foreboding of the tragedy that would soon follow. Thus, the thematic symbolism of rose and river interrelate the episodic structures of the novel into an entity. Here lies the capability of the author as an artist in building a complicated design into a complete whole by using symbols honestly. The unpredictable nature of the river evokes complicated and paradoxical human emotions, thus enriching its symbolic interpretation and association.

The river which is now decayed, becomes symbolic of a society where every meaningful value is being imperceptibly eroded by “Man’s subliminal urge to destroy what he could neither subdue nor deify.”93 The unreal and real, thus, intermingle to
create a world where *The God of Small Things* becomes ‘the god of loss’ by using many symbols such as the ‘river’ and the ‘rose.’ The title of the novel also symbolises Velutha and his life at the cruel hands of hypocrisy and double standard of the powerful which are symbolised by the ‘laltain.’ This rupture breaking the monopoly of established reality is an achievement of the artistic form; the fictitious world in the narrative of Arundhati Roy is indeed a remarkable artistic achievement.

Arundhati Roy, in her novel, uses a language which is associated with the unconscious mind of her characters. This kind of language is often expressed in the imaginative and symbolic use of language. Her unconscious discourse calls for a play of words in *The God of Small Things*. Images and symbols are part and parcel of this kind of discourse. The use of paradox, repetition, allusion, and every other device in language including image and symbol is exploited by Arundhati Roy to create a world where the sense of the self is subverted. Alternative worlds of experience that were formerly repressed or unimagined are explored to produce a pluridimensionality of meaning. The poetics of the unconscious employs all linguistic deviations. Rama Nair, a critic observes, “The play of multiple meanings negates all ego-formation. *The God of Small Things*, through the use of thematic symbolism, constructs a poetics of the possible by positing that things can be changed.”

The central episode in the novel is a suggestion of this. It can be taken as a symbol of archetypal love—love that transcends the man-made barrier of caste, religion and politics. The novel ends with the poignant farewell to Velutha from Ammu. The word ‘Naaley’ symbolises the redemptive quality of love which breaks free from the mesh of tradition and convention.
Another symbolism that Arundhati Roy employs very effectively is found in the use of the phrase “the heart of darkness” in the novel. This phrase recurs in the novel. It symbolises the dark forces operating in human life and most of them are the situations of the social structure identified with the various social institutions such as that of social class, gender, religion and politics. The phrase approximately sums up symbolically the nightmarish quality of life delineated in the novel. It suggests that hypocrisy of human nature lies at the very root of social evils. The life in Ayemenem, as presented by the novelist, is inextricably caught up to octopus-like clutches of social evil such as male chauvinism, age-old discriminations, caste considerations of touchable and untouchable, police brutality, double standard of morality, chicanery of political idealism practiced in the euphemistic name of communism and taboos that wrongly suppressed natural urges of human origin in the name of sin ordained by religion.

Arundhati Roy, thus, uses images and symbols for the purpose of criticizing satirically the political, social and religious establishment in order to find out a discourse on such repressive institutions. Her novel is a poetry of revolt which with the use of imagery and symbols illuminates the cannibalistic nature of repressive social evils. Her language and style offers new insights into the consequences of repression and a model for dreaming a way out of our postcolonial predicament. Her symbols evoke surrealistic images. Surrealism, it seems, helps her to summon up powerful unconscious forces.
VI

This section is an attempt at a brief and general examination of the language and style of Arundhati Roy's essays. The study will focus on the essays selected from her two books so far published, as also mentioned in Chapter 1. It will also investigate if there is any common feature in the language and style used by the author in the two different genres of literature and also thereby finding out the stylistic problems that the author has faced. From the study in the previous sections, it has been found out that Arundhati Roy has followed a genre-mixing trend in style and language in her novel which precedes her essays. The language of poetry has been intensely used in her novel. The study will find out if she continues this trend in writing essays also or if she has invented any other novel techniques.

After the successful achievement of The God of Small Things, Arundhati Roy has started to write essays consistently. She now turns herself from novelist to an essayist. It seems she picks up this genre of literature because through this medium she can express her ideas and feelings directly to the readers not through the characters. She wants to assert more strongly the voices of the deprived and the marginalized through her essays. Her essays serve a kind of powerful intervention during difficult times of the violence-prone political environment of India and of the world. She now seems to be more interested in this literary genre which is even older than fiction in its history. Her first collection of essays—The Algebra of Infinite Justice was published in 2001 and the second collection, An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire in 2005. Thematically her essays have resemblances with her novel;
the essays speak the same tone that she has chosen for her novel—that of sharp criticism of political, social and cultural institutions.

Arundhati Roy’s essays are political writings. The voice of a political activist is dominant in all her essays, the themes of which cover as wide as nuclearization, corporate globalization, religious intolerance, war on terror, democracy, Hindu nationalism, neoliberal economic reforms, neoliberal capitalism, concepts of empire, state terrorism, power projects and displaced people, free media, effects of privatization, fascism and environmental degradation. Such essays are “The End of Imagination,” “The Greater Common Good,” “Power Politics,” “The Ladies Have Feelings, so . . . ,” “The Algebra of Infinite Justice,” “War is peace,” “Democracy (Who is She when She is at Home?),” “War Talk,” “Ahimsa,” “Come September,” “The Loneliness of Noam Chomsky,” “Confronting Empire,” “Peace is War,” “An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire,” “Instant-Mix Imperial Democracy (buy one, get one free)” and “Peace and the New Corporate Liberation Theology.”

The essays of Arundhati are highly polemical. Her essays have proved that she is not only an accomplished novelist, but also an equally gifted essayist in unraveling the politics of globalization, the power and ideology of corporate culture, fundamentalism, terrorism, and other issues gripping the world. The essays show her creative activism and struggles in both the national and global politics in polemical style with lucid reasoning, surrealist imagery. In the words of Phil Shannon: “Roy is an exceptionally talented writer and her political essays are beautifully crafted, stingingly polemical and achingly compassionate.”95
"The End of Imagination," the first essay of *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* addresses India’s public announcement of nuclear capability in May 1998 which was quickly followed by Pakistan. In the essay, she notes that India has confused raw military might with genuine empowerment and has fallen prey to the corruption of international power games. Reading like science fiction at the beginning, it is a well-researched prose work in which the writer speaks from her heart. The tone is highly passionate and emotive. As in her novel, the essay also presents a harsh and rugged satire on the snobbery and hypocrisy of politics in India. The author expresses her deeply felt anguish against the rise of totalitarian tendencies in India. The essay is an emotional outburst of overwhelming thought and emotion. It is an ideological statement lucidly presented with an abundance of parody, irony and at times biting sarcasm. Like her novel, it is written in her beguiling, captivating prose, her mellifluous language and vivid imagination evoking a trance-like quality and making the whole essay an inspiring reading. Her lines in the essay, “My world has died. And I write to mourn its passing,” speak volumes as an emotional appeal to the world to look at what had been happening in India and to consider its repercussions for the rest of the world.

The second essay, "The Greater Common Good," concerns India’s dam construction efforts. Inspired by Jawaharlal Nehru’s words praising dams as “The Temples of Modern India,” India has become the world’s third largest dam-builder. Despite the construction of 3,300 dams (with 1,000 more in progress), 200 million Indians still lack clean drinking water and 600 million people lack basic sanitation, she paints clearly with her vivid imagination that Nehru’s vision fails. While looking
at these issues of power projects, she never takes her eyes away from the struggles of ordinary people against the privileged few. Her perspective has been developed from her personal contact with the common people of the Narmada Valley. She has pointed out how these people will lose their only means of sustenance—the river, their homes, and their farms. They are making this sacrifice for the greater common good of India or so they are told. This is the irony that the writer has suggested in the most heated words. It is another thought-provoking and revolutionary essay. The essay provides an alternative perspective on India's dam projects that is available in the conventional press, particularly concerning a grass-root resistance movement called the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA). It is another exquisite piece of satire written in the rhetorical language.

The third essay, "Power Politics," is a strong criticism of American policy. She describes America in an ironical language, "His realm is raw capital, his conquests emerging markets, his prayers profits, his borders limitless, his weapons nuclear."97 "Powerful, pitiless and armed to the teeth,"98 America is a demon 'Rumpelstiltskin' to Arundhati Roy. America is the most belligerent power on earth. A sharp criticism against America's privatization policy on water resources is put forth with sarcasm in the essay.

"The ladies have feelings, so..." is different from the three essays discussed. It is based on a talk given at the third Annual Eqbal Ahmed Lecture on the 15th February 2001, at Hampshire College, Amherst Street, Massachusetts. In this essay, Arundhati Roy writes about the place of a writer specially women writers like herself. She briefly points out the problems faced by a writer. She wonders why she is called a
writer-activist’ and she affirms that after winning the Booker Prize for *The God of Small Things*, she started writing non-fiction and political essays. She expresses her wonder when she is called just a writer for writing a novel but is called an activist for writing political essays.

In expressing her feelings and thought, Arundhati Roy is very free and independent in this essay also. She believes that the writers, the poets, the artists, the singers and the film makers can find ways of bringing connections into the realm of common understanding. Irony dominates this essay also.


The 11 September attack was a monstrous calling card from a world gone horribly wrong. The message may have been written by bin Laden (who knows?) and delivered by his couriers, but it could well have been signed by the ghosts of the victims of America’s old wars.99

In this essay also, she uses the same pattern as in the other essays such as *verbatim* sentences with satirical overtone as in the following lines, “The fireball and the ice pick. The bludgeon and the axe.”100

The essay, “War is Peace,” is about the U.S air raid and bombing on Afghanistan on 7th October 2001. Arundhati Roy says that the bombing of Afghanistan is not revenge for New York and Washington. But it is another act of terror against the people of the world. After announcing the air strikes, U.S President
George Bush and U.K Prime Minister said that they were a peaceful nation and people. In this context Arundhati Roy reacts sarcastically in the following words: “So now we know. Pigs are horses. Girls are boys. War is peace.”\textsuperscript{101} Just like anybody Arundhati Roy is also against the terrorism and war. She is with the view that in order to track and book the terrorists, war is not the best way.

The essay, “Democracy: Who’s She When She Is at Home?” is about the Hindu Muslim clash which followed after the burning incident of Sabarmati Express in Godhra on 28\textsuperscript{th} February 2002 and as a part of the retaliation by outraged Hindus, many Muslims were killed brutally.

Arundhati Roy expresses the incidents in a sharp tone and vivid language. Ironically she expresses her feelings as, “Right now we’re sipping from a poisoned chalice—a flawed democracy laced with religious fascism. Pure arsenic.”\textsuperscript{102} At that time the BJP ruled Gujarat and the Congress was in the opposition. Her language is filled with irony. She writes:

\textbf{In every case, the Congress sowed the seed and the BJP has swept in to reap the hideous harvest. . . .But it has done by night what the BJP does by day.\textsuperscript{103}}

The essay, “War Talk: Summer Games with Nuclear Bombs,” is about the war and terror of war. When India and Pakistan conducted their nuclear tests in 1998, Arundhati Roy condemned at the hypocrisy of Western nuclear powers. When Journalists use to ask Arundhati Roy whether she is going to write another book, instead of giving a plain reply, she asks what kind of book she should write because the talk of nuclear war had contempt for everything else that defines civilization. She
concludes her essay by asking questions: "Why do we tolerate them? Why do we tolerate the men who use nuclear weapons to blackmail the entire human race?"\textsuperscript{104}


“Ahimsa” is about the indefinite hunger strike of four activists of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) protesting against the Madhya Pradesh government’s forcible eviction of more than 1000 adivasi families to make way for the Maan Dam. Arundhati Roy says that the NBA is not just fighting Big Dams. It is fighting for the survival of India’s greatest gift to the world—Non-Violent resistance. One can call it the Ahimsa Bachao Andolan or the Save Non-violence Movement.

Purposefully Arundhati Roy names the title of her essay as ‘Ahimsa’ or the non-violence movement. Mahatma Gandhi adopted the non-violent movement or ahimsa andolan by fasting unto death for nearly one month during the Indian national freedom struggle. She expresses her opinion with sharp tone using repetition of words. She says: “It is demanding more modernity, not less. It is demanding more democracy, not less.”\textsuperscript{105}

In “Come September,” Arundhati Roy reminds us of four incidents which fall on 11 September in different years. The first one happened on 11 September 1922. On this day the British government proclaimed a mandate in Palestine, a follow-up to the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which imperial Britain issued with its army massed outside the gates of the city of Gaza. The second incident happened on
11 September 1973 when General Pinochet overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in CIA backed coup.

The third one was the speech made by George W. Bush Sr., the then President of the United States on 11 September 1990 to a joint session of Congress announcing his government’s decision to go to wars against Iraq.

And the last one was the lethal terrorists attack on Pentagon and the World Trade Centre in the U.S.A on September 11, 2001 killing more than three thousand civilians. Arundhati Roy expresses her feelings and emotions poetically and as in her novel and other essays, she breaks the conventional grammatical rules using verbless and incomplete sentences as in the following lines: “But just to share the grief of history. To thin the mist a little. To say to the citizens of America, in the gentlest, most humane way: Welcome to the World.”

The essay, “The loneliness of Noam Chomsky,” is Arundhati Roy’s tribute to one of the world’s greatest and most radical intellectuals, Noam Chomsky, who shows us that nothing is what it seems to be in the free world. He shows us how phrases like ‘free speech,’ ‘free market’ and ‘free world’ have little, if anything, to do with freedom. And he analyses the penchant of the United States to commit crimes against humanity in the name of ‘justice,’ in the name of ‘righteousness’ and in the name of ‘freedom’. It was written as an introduction for the new edition of Noam Chomsky’s *For Reasons of State* (2003). She calls the title as the loneliness of Noam Chomsky because in her conscience, she felt it might be very lonely for him when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. Then he was only sixteen years old,
and he “said that there wasn’t a single person with whom he could share his outrage.” And this struck Arundhati Roy as “a most extreme form of loneliness.”

“Confronting Empire” is Arundhati Roy’s speech at the World Social Forum, Brazil, 2003. She identifies the New American Empire—the U.S government, organizations like the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO, and the multinational corporations with the monster. She speaks about the Empire where there is no justice, where money, power and nuclear weapon are globalized and about her feelings how to confront or how to resist the Empire.

“Peace is war” deals with the importance of the ‘free media’ in the corporate globalization project. Arundhati Roy describes how neoliberal capitalists have managed to subvert democracy by infiltrating the judiciary, the press and the parliament, and moulding them to their purpose. She commends the efforts of new media in showing what old media is as an elaborate boardroom bulletin that reports and analyses the concerns of powerful people.

In the title essay, “An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire,” Arundhati Roy depicts the brutal and barbaric destruction of a civilization by the American army. Though Saddam Hussein was a dictator, the American and the British governments supported him during his military excesses against Iran and during the extermination of Kurds. It was only when he invaded Kuwait that he turned into a liability, a dog which wouldn’t obey its master. So, the American government thought that he deserved to be killed. The enormous level of double standards that the United States committed during the war is, thus, appalling. Bombing civilian areas is just one
example. Western ‘embedded’ journalists are called heroes for doing their duty from the frontlines of war but Iraqi viewpoints were denounced.

"Instant-mix Imperial Democracy" was first presented as a lecture in New York City in an event sponsored by the Centre for Economic and Social Rights and the Lannan Foundation which awarded Arundhati Roy the 2002 Lannan Prize for Cultural Freedom. It has a subtitle, 'Buy one, get one free.' In her speech, Arundhati Roy says that some of her listeners might think it "bad manners" for an Indian citizen to come to New York to criticize the U.S. government.

In provocative prose, Arundhati Roy argues that democracy "has become Empire’s euphemism for neo-liberal capitalism" and gives numerous examples from India, South Africa and the United States itself. Further, she asks Americans to engage in civil disobedience in resistance to the war in Iraq because "the only institution more powerful than the U.S government is American civil society."109

Her essay, "When the Saints Go Marching Out," which is also a speech, first broadcast on the BBC on 25th August 2003 reflects on what happened in the lands of Martin Luther King, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Nelson Mandela after their times had passed. These three public figures were the representatives of three different struggles, the only common feature being their reliance on the mode of non-violent resistance.

In India, religious fundamentalism is on the rise. South Africa is still festering with the pre-apartheid problems of extreme economic and social disparity. The United States has lost all manners of legitimate authority by the illegal invasion
and occupation of Iraq. It is to be noted that the African Americans for whom Martin Luther King gave his life make up nearly one fifth of America’s armed forces and nearly one third of the US army by way of the poverty draft. Arundhati Roy appeals to the African Americans to follow the teachings of King and to take to the streets in protest against the war in Iraq.

In her essay, “In Memory of Shankar Guha Niyogi,” Arundhati Roy praises the leader of Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM) for various contributions to the society. She looks at him as a pioneer in the struggle against the forces of neo-imperialism.

“Do Turkeys Enjoy Thanksgiving?” is another essay of Arundhati Roy which deals with the various elements of neo-imperialism. She says that unless countries surrender their resources willingly to the corporate, either civil unrest will be fomented, or war will be waged. She further explains the concept of new-racism, which is the cornerstone of New Imperialism.

In “How Deep Shall We Dig,” Arundhati Roy explores the scenes behind India’s glittering façade and uncovers some bitter truths. Some of the numerous problems facing us are terrorism in Kashmir and the Northeast, the rise of religious fundamentalism, POTA, targeting of minorities, and incidents of starving or malnutrition. It is increasingly difficult for people to confront their own government. She urges the poor and the minorities to take the lead in opposing the growing influence of Empire in India, since they are the most affected group by the dual assault of communal fascism and neoliberalism.
"The Road to Harshud" is another essay in which Arundhati Roy again deals with contentious topics of big dams. She has also highlighted the struggle by the poor, who have been displaced, to make themselves heard. She says that there is no use of a dam if the drawbacks outweigh the potential benefits. She further says that the dam will submerge more land than it will ever irrigate, will produce power that is even costlier than Enron, and will destroy a vast reservoir of biodiversity, wildlife, and medicinal plants. But the government of Madhya Pradesh relentlessly ploughs ahead with its disastrous plan and in the process, has rendered more than 30,000 families homeless. And worst of all, in spite of repeated assurances by the government, the displaced people have yet to receive guaranties of adequate housing.

"Public Power in the Age of Empire" is the essay in which Arundhati Roy analyses the power which ordinary people like us wield in today's world. The world today is a deeply skewed reality with both terrorism and the war on terror sharing the same result of forcing ordinary citizens pay for the actions of their governments. Further she suggests that if we are to successfully confront the Empire, then we have to channel our energies into 'concrete action.'

"Peace and the New Corporate Liberation Theology" is also a speech first delivered on 3rd November 2004, in Sydney, Australia on the occasion of Arundhati Roy winning the 2004 Sydney Peace Prize. In this essay, she says that war in Iraq is a sign of things to come to a logical conclusion to the corporate globalization project. It seems that history has turned full circle with the return of imperialism like a phoenix from the ashes. The corporate military cabal has been busy at work, dispensing its unique brand of 'justice' and 'freedom' to the world at large. Arundhati Roy
concludes by saying that it is our duty to join the ‘war against Empire’ now or it will be too late.

It may be concluded that all her essays are also severe criticism of the authority. Her tone in the essays also as in the novel sounds anti-foundational and anti-authoritarian. These brilliant prose pieces are dedoxification of the imperial, authoritarian and colonial establishment. She questions with reasonable and sensible doubts in a metaphorical language and statistical style about the validity of democracy itself, a political system considered to be the best.

The next chapter, that is, chapter 3, will investigate the language and style employed in her novel, *The God of Small Things*, in meticulous detail.
Notes:-


3 Vir Sangvi, "I think from a very early age I was determined to negotiate with the world on my own," *Rediff on the Net*, 5-4-1997 <http://www.rediff.com/news/apr/05 roy.htm>.


6 ibid., p.13.

7 ibid.,p.26.


9 Ibid.,p.4.

10 Ibid., p.159.

11 Ibid., p.285.


1997)189.

2* Ibid., p.313.


32 Ibid., p.95.

33 Ibid., p.99.

34 Ibid., p.33.

35 Ibid., p.87.

36 Ibid., p.40.

37 Ibid., p.98.

38 Ibid., p.129.

39 Ibid., p.212.

40 Ibid., p.6.

41 Ibid., p.8.

42 Ibid., p.19.

43 Ibid., p.16.

44 Ibid., p.21.

46 Ibid., p.7.
48 Ibid., p.6.
49 Ibid., p.8.
50 Ibid., p.22.
51 Ibid., p.101.
52 Ibid., p.212.
53 Ibid., p.335.
54 Ibid., p.95.
60 Ibid., p.306.
61 Ibid., p.219.
62 Ibid., p.268.
63 Ibid., p.263.
64 Ibid., p.79.
65 Ibid., p.93.
66 Ibid., p.238.
67 Ibid., p.21.
68 Ibid., p.19.
69 Ibid., p.102.
70 Ibid., p.6.
71 Ibid., p.9-10.
72 Ibid., p.14.
73 Ibid., p.42.
74 Ibid., p.339.
75 Ibid., p.203.
77 Ibid.,
79 Ibid., p. 32.
80 Ibid., p. 55.
81 Ibid., p. 310.
82 Ibid., p. 321.
83 Ibid., p. 10.
84 Ibid., p.338.
85 Ibid., p.31.
86 Ibid., p.44.
87 Ibid., p.55.
88 Ibid., p.123.
89 Ibid., p.124.

90 Ibid.,

91 Ibid., p.340.

92 Ibid., p.339.

93 Ibid., p.308.


97 Ibid., p. 146.

98 Ibid., p. 145.

99 Ibid., p.234.

100 Ibid., p.237.

101 Ibid., p.243.

102 Ibid., p.266.

103 Ibid., p.276.

104 Ibid., p. 303.


106 Ibid., p. 21.

108 Ibid.,


* * * * *