Chapter - 5

Conclusion
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1

Arundhati Roy has produced only one novel and three books of essays so far. She has become an internationally recognized writer and social activist. She is better known as a novelist than an essayist though she has written only one novel, *The God of Small Things*, which won the most prestigious literary award, the Booker Prize in 1997. The tenet of her writing is satire and criticism of social, cultural and political institutions of India and the capitalist country like America. Her novel is a criticism of the oppressive Indian social, cultural and political institutions along with a criticism of domineering British influence in post-independent India. Her essays also belong to the postcolonial school of writing which is as offensive against the neo-liberal, neo-colonial and neo-imperial systems of the first world assaulting the third world countries and also against the same policy of the Indian democracy suppressing the poor and displaced tribes of India. Her dissenting voice criticizing the colonial institutions is vocal enough to appeal to the big shots at the national and international levels and also to inspire a
clarion call to the repressed lot of India and also of the world. She has become an influential celebrity as a writer of international recognition and powerful social activist of the Indian nation who represents the poor and the marginalized section of the Indian society.

Arundhati Roy can attain the stature of national and international recognition as a writer as well as a social activist because of her commitment to the two causes—the artistic and the political—the one is the will for self-fulfillment as an activist and the other is bringing changes for the betterment of mankind. She is successful because of her giftedness with a unique creative sensibility and also because of her exposure to progressive intellectual thoughts, and because of her unique sensibility which enables her to use a highly effective language and style with maxims as an orator of extraordinary caliber and rhetorician whom the history of creative writing has come across very rarely.

After having analysed the extraordinary features of the language and style of Arundhati Roy used in The God of Small Things and in a number of essays selected from her two published books for analysis in detail, it has been discovered that the writer uses this tool of writing as part and parcel of her causes of writing and of her thought. She once made an observation that “language is a skin on my thought” and one of her close friends, Shomit Miller, says about The God of Small Things that the book “uses a language in a way that is rare. . . . . . . very rarely do you get someone who can tear apart the rules and give you something that is fresh and not pretentious.” Many critics have given the same opinion regarding the power of her language and style. R.K.Dhawan, Amarnath Prasad, Gajendra Kumar, Tickell Alex, Cynthia Vanden Drieson, Alessandro
Monti, D.K. Pabby, Novy Kapadia, Nishi Chawla, M. Mani Meitei, Madhu Benoit, Julie Mullaney, Murari Prasad, Bishnupriya Ghose, Meena Sodhi, Aida Balhannandhan, Jacob George C, Reena Kothari, Asha Choubey, Pier Paolo Piciucco, C.J. Davees, P. Haripadma Rani, R.S. Sharma, Shashi Bala Talwar, A.G. Khan, Rama Kundu, Suresh Shukla and K.V. Surendran along with some of her negative critics have appreciated the effectiveness of her language and style. The present thesis has made an attempt in the preceding chapters to analyse these aspects of the language and style of Arundhati Roy used in her novel and essays.

II

At the very beginning of the present analysis that is in chapter-I, a brief history of essay and novel as literary genres is presented both in Indo-English and Western literatures in order to trace the place of Arundhati Roy as a writer in the spectrum of this landscape. In this chapter, her biographical sketch and intellectual and social background have been studied so that an exhaustive analysis inclusive of other personal factors may also be incorporated in the study. It has been found out that Arundhati Roy is an unconventional woman writer who belongs to the contemporary era of women writing which makes a difference from the works of women writers of the older generation such as Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Meenakshi Mukherji and Nayantara Sahgal by becoming bolder and experimental in style and language. She is a
prolific writer who writes fiction and essays both. Her genre-shift to essay writing at present brings forth a question to the readers and to the literary critics as well.

Arundhati Roy made personal answers to this question saying that the happenings of the present violence compel her to write in the essay form which is a proper medium for presenting reality directly and setting a direct communication with her readers. She feels the need for a more vocal voice to be raised in the present situation. This personal experience that Arundhati Roy has come across in her career of writing is the same experience of political necessity that the father of essays, Eyquem Montaigne had many centuries ago. This is the proposition made in the beginning chapter. In the history of women writing also, Arundhati Roy is found to be representing the tradition of unconventional women writers who entered into this highly male-dominated arena of writing occupying a room of their own with a new female sensibility and intellectual capability.

Chapter-2 is a general study on the language and style of Arundhati Roy used in her works. It is found out that her language and style being one of revolt creates a surrealistc impact on the mind evoking shock and horror. The narrative style is that of an amalgamation of many styles; the novelist uses a postmodern strategy of time-shift conceptualizing time as a circular structure, a writing technique fused with remembering and told in various points of views.

The study finds that Arundhati Roy has introduced a new kind of subversive language in the novel and essays. She employs images, symbols, antithesis, balanced rhyme and rhythm, onomatoepia, oxymoron, irony, pun and
hyperbole in the novel. It is discovered that she uses many ungrammatical structures such as one-word and two-word sentences, incomplete and subject-less sentences, faulty spelling, capitalization, syntactic deviations and nonce words in telling the story of a forbidden class-caste love in a Syrian Christian convert family of Ayemenem in Kerala. In deconstructing the patriarchal values of Syrian Christian community of Ayemenem, Arundhati Roy deliberately breaks the conventional rules of English language. She has adopted an apt language for her satirical novel.

It is also explored that the writer shows a feminist aptitude in her use of language and style which is naturally a subversion of the prevailing masculine language and style. The same language and style which advocates plurality, multiplicity, anarchy and a total change are the very power of her rhetoric in her essays also which are her satirical outbursts against the repressive institutions of the government of India and of America. In the novel and essays both, Arundhati Roy speaks in a language which bear the mark of an environmentalist using many imagery and symbols which are associated with the natural phenomena invoking a consciousness against the devastation of nature.

Then, Chapter-3 is an in-depth analysis of the language and style of Arundhati Roy used in The God of Small Things. The examination has discovered that her language and style are fiercely original and that "the novel is actually felt in English," and her major concern is the use of metaphor and similes. This chapter centres mainly on the study of its narrative style that is the structure of the novel. The study finds as an autobiographical narrative though told from many points of view but laying emphasis on the points of view of Rahel, the central character of the novel. It is also discovered that in its structural design Arundhati Roy has utilized knowledge of architecture. The
novelist is found to be a master of design. To quote the words of Murari Prasad: “Roy’s remarkable narrative strategies are spliced with her clean and unhampered prose peppered with a rich range of registers.” Though the main action of the story is the accidental drowning of Rahel’s half English cousin, Sophie Mol, the novelist is skilled enough to trigger a series of tragic incidents arranged as in a collage in order to uncover the whole of the tragedy. The plot of the novel moves along different planes of sensation; the main drama of which is the brutal murder of Velutha by the posse of police in the haunted “History House” of which the twins, Rahel and her brother, Estha, witnessed in silent horror which remains a haunting memory throughout their lives.

The novelist employs a modern style, the stream of consciousness technique, in order to weave a new kind of surrealistic experience. A very significant part of her style is the projection of the tone of satire through characterization very impressively. Using many kinds of irony, she portrays ridiculous characters like comrade Pillai, Pappachi, Baby Kochamma, Chacko, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and the Kottayam policemen. She satirizes the complicated power structures of the caste system, the Christian community, the communist party of Kerala and patriarchy by the use of irony. Her satire is found operating on different planes, for example, language, characters, situation and incident.

The novel as a severe criticism of social and political institutions is expressed in sarcasm and bitter indignation through her use of many figures of speech and innovativeness in language compressed and concise; and her deeply discomforting ironic descriptions are found to be effectively employed as a narrative style. Arundhati Roy is found not devoid of humour which is also tinged with irony, exaggeration, sarcasm and wit. She employs humour in describing a scene, portraying a character and depicting a
situation. It can be concluded that Arundhati Roy is realist because the innovativeness in her style and language is to depict the realities of the Syrian Christian community in Aymanam. Another stylistic technique that Arundhati Roy successfully uses is that of magic realism as an effective means to explore into the inner life of her characters. Remarkable use of magic realism in the novel is found in the description of the ‘History House’ as a living thing allowing imagination to take over the essence of the reality.

In Chapter-4, an attempt is made to examine the language and style used in the essays in detail. Nearly fourteen essays have been selected for detailed study. All of them have been written in the form of informal essays, personal, reflective, thought-provoking and radically incisive. Arundhati Roy deals with such topics like neoliberality, economic terrorism, privatization, state terrorism, democracy and nuclearization which are contemporary burning issues. Though she has been influenced by many writers, she writes in a unique language and style different from others. Though the informal essays are not new in the history of essays, Arundhati Roy's essays make a difference in that she employs impassioned or emotional responses in abundance in all her essays. Perhaps, Arundhati Roy being a woman writer, expresses her own self in her expression in this form also as she does it in the novel. The feminist sensibility in Arundhati Roy is a predominant factor in the study of her style in the essays also. Like other radical feminist authors, the personal is the only arena of the political to her also.

Many new innovative techniques such as coining of new words and ungrammatical structures are found abundantly as a ‘tour de force’ in her struggle to find an apt language and style deconstructing the phallocentric language. Many of her essays explore the tyranny, injustice, insult and abuse inflicted upon the poor and the
marginalized (symbolized by the "mombatti") by the powerful agents of the government and the society as she exposes the case of Velutha, the untouchable Paravan (symbolized by the God of Small Things) in her novel. The observation of Antonia Navarro-Tejero may be referred in passing. She rightly observes: "Roy investigates the oppressive conditions powerless people are pitted against in the three 'Big' power structures: Family, State, and Religion." In order to satirize the evil deeds of the powerful (symbolized by "laltain") and to propose a claim for the rights of the powerless, Arundhati Roy is in the journey of searching a volatile language and style. In a spectacular manner, she equates big dams with nuclear bombs in a vivid metaphor in an essay, "The End of Imagination."

Her essays are not dull and monotonous because of the exceptionally powerful language and spectacular style. Some of the characteristic features of her language used in the essays are ungrammatical construction, bizarre phrases, repetitions, incomplete sentences, capitalization, irony, metaphors, and binary opposites. She still uses magic realism in her essays too. She expresses her emotions and factual reports in a rhetorical and oratorical style in all the essays beginning from 'The End of Imagination' from her *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* to "Listening to Grasshoppers: Denial, Genocide and Celebration" from her latest published book, *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy.*
III

At the conclusion of the analysis, it is found that Arundhati Roy employs an innovative language and style in her novel, The God of Small Things and in the essays. It is an attempt of this analysis to explore new areas of examination in this regard. Many critics have observed their own views. Some hold similar opinions and some differ or vary. But the question is—what makes her to use such an innovative language and style? What is to be noted here is that she is found to be consistently using the same language throughout the two modes of writing with little variations. Some are of the opinion that her novel may be looked upon as a woman’s narrative though there is not sufficient number of critics for her essays.

The God of Small Things as a post-colonial, feminist text and the essays as post-colonial texts may be exhaustively examined in further research works in the finding of the present research. As a woman writer, Arundhati Roy finds the existing language and conventional style incapable of expressing her interventionist and radical thoughts. Language, at this juncture, has become problematic; similarly the narrative style also encounters a crossroad from which a new path is to be chosen.

The language that she uses in both the literary genres itself is a feminist and post-colonial critique of the existing language which has been built up from the basis of patriarchal, capitalist and other multi-faceted (caste, class, status, and religion-based structures) hierarchical structures. In her attempt to subvert the system, Arundhati Roy
has also to subvert the medium, that is, language and style of her discourse in both her fiction and the nonfictions through which she expresses her indignation, ridicule, and sarcasm against all the established political, social and economic systems and proposes for a total change. Arundhati Roy's language built up from a different rhetoric of broken sentences, nonce-words, capitalization, repetition, multi-dimensional sense perception, uncommon metaphors, profuse use of synaesthesia and onomatopoeia in quite a few cases in the novel shows her dissatisfaction with the prevailing language of literature. Her linguistic inventiveness shows her "quest for new metaphors and ways of writing which reflect female lives and bodies as conventional language cannot." She has selected a speech which will powerfully evoke the state of silence—the subaltern condition of the subjects she has chosen in the novel and the essays. Deborah Cameron’s reflection on this issue about the necessity of a female voice in culture may be referred. She brings forth the reality: "Writing is not an organic growth out of general linguistic capabilities, but a technology; like most technologies it has been monopolized by the powerful."

In the light of this observation, and from the analysis of the language used by Arundhati Roy, it may be concluded that the novelist has ventured to dedoxify the manipulation of language by the powerful in her fiction and non-fictions. Such an attempt is made by the author in chapter 21; entitled "The Cost of Living" in the novel and many of her essays of which "The End of Imagination" and "Peace is War" may be cited. In Chapter-21 of the novel, she employs closely selected words, phrases, imageries, symbols, metaphors, irony and broken sentences to suit her own design and to suit the feelings of Ammu. The chapter itself is a critique of the existing sexual conventions which the author satirizes. The treatment of her subjects in this section is a
A fine piece of sexual revolution which attacks the prevalent mode from many angles. The four-worded line: "Biology designed the dance" speaks volumes against the caste-based religious and misogynist attitude towards love, marriage and sex which has silenced women for many ages. The phallocentric portrayal of aggressive man and masochistic female is totally subverted; the laws of love and sex have been transgressed. The broken sentences are deliberately chosen to realistically depict the feelings of Ammu who is portrayed as a living person:

She sat there in the dark... .
To a voice from far away. Wafting through the night. Sailing over the lakes and rivers. Over dense heads of trees. Past the yellow church. Past the school. Bumping up the dirt road. Up the steps of the verandah. To her.7

The speeded-up broken, incomplete sentences crowded together creating a poetic effect tell the readers about the anxiety and desire that is living hidden in Ammu. The pace of her anxiety and desire is clearly depicted by the fast moving, incomplete bunch of sentences. The novelist uses this literary craft very successfully throughout the novel. Her language, as she emphatically and rightly observes, is the skin on her thought. Her extraordinary linguistic inventiveness, her satirical portrayal of the contemporary society, her psychological depth in the portrayal of her characters, her new and original style containing many new things as opposed to traditional rendering of things have certainly influenced upon the literary flavours of her readers.

The impassioned, personal tone of Arundhati Roy's language and style employed in the essays is also a critique of the language generally used in the genre. She
has continued the same venture of finding a fresh and original language and style for her non-fictional writing also in order to assert a postcolonial discourse in criticizing the neo-colonial, neo-imperial and neo-liberal establishment of the corporate globalization projects and policies of the governments of India and America; she exposes the realities of the process of thingifying the marginalized people into non-living beings displacing them, depriving them from their rights and murdering them in mass.

The highly rhetorical and surreal description about the impending devastation and holocaust of nuclearization is given in a peculiar impassioned language of Arundhati Roy in “The End of Imagination” in the following sentences:

Burned and blind and bold and ill, carrying the cancerous carcasses of our children in our arms, where shall we go? What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we breathe? \(^8\)

Use of alliteration and self-answered questions is her style of impassioned rhetoric. This style is definitely chosen in order to strike at the imaginative faculty and then to the rational faculty. This is very effective style—original and female. Again, she says charged with heated, revolutionary passions:

If protesting against having a nuclear bomb implanted in my brain is anti-Hindu and anti-national, then I secede. I hereby declare myself an independent, mobile republic. I am a citizen of the earth. I own no territory. I have no flag. I’m female, and have nothing against eunuchs . . . . \(^9\)

In this declaration, Arundhati Roy occupies a room of her own to be able to speak in this highly personal tone with all the ironical implications and of her large-
hearted humanism, independence, freedom and courage. It is a typical forceful Arundhati Roy language and style. She herself is the subject of her novel and non-fictions.

Her experiment with literary language and style, thus, conveys the message about the existence of a close relationship between “language and human mind” and also between “language and freedom.” Her linguistic innovativeness, her passionate expression and self-reflexive style or her highly creative use of language and style reflect the freedom of thought and conception as Noam Chomsky declares:

Language, in its essential properties and the manner of its use, provides the basic criterion for determining that another organism is a being with a human mind and the human capacity for free thought and self-expression, and with the essential human need for freedom from the external constraints of repressive authority.¹⁰

Arundhati Roy’s language and style of both her novel and essays remain a living entity having full freedom with the objective of a passionate as well as a thoughtful intervention against the repressive authority of the contemporary era and consequently of bringing changes for the betterment of humankind. Her language reminds one of Aimé Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955), which is a classic, polemical essay on the need of a Black revolution in the French colony of African countries and also an important document on the third world consciousness and Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), a classic text which has provided inspiration for anti-colonial movements in her critique of the contemporary neo-colonial establishment.
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