ABSTRACT

The present thesis attempts to study Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* and some of her selected essays as multi-voiced narratives, using Bakhtin’s concepts of dialogism, where literary and extra literary concerns interact and inform to function as dialogues across cultures, literatures, themes, concepts, genders, genres and styles. It is posited that in Roy’s works, no voice, ideology or meaning is absolute or the only truth; truth is rather the outcome of the dialogue between various voices and that it is the dynamic and subversive nature of language that makes truth elusive.

The introductory chapter gives an insight into the literature on Roy’s works and a summary of Bakhtin’s important concepts. The second chapter illustrates polyphony of hybrid voices in *The God of Small Things*. These voices are analyzed mainly in terms of postcolonial theory. The concept of hybridity in relation to the characters and their place in history and how the theme of the colonized-colonizer can be extended to other power structures operating in the novel are discussed in this chapter. The voices of the various characters are located in the three phases of ‘Adopt’, ‘Adapt’ and ‘Adept’ and this establishes a dialogue with Sri Aurobindo’s three famous phases of Renaissance. Hybridity as an interstitial space of creativity and subversive force will be dealt with in detail.

The third chapter is an attempt to delineate the multiple feminist voices in the novel. The feminists we come across in the novel belong to different points in time and to a culture that is in constant flux. It is not a single story of the subjugated woman and her protest but rather we hear several voices reacting to the recurring theme of patriarchy and
providing insights into different perceptions of this age old phenomenon. The muted voice of the natural environment also exhibits solidarity with the feminist movement.

The dialogic study of multiple voices in Roy’s select non-fictional essays is carried out in the fourth chapter. The essays selected for study are: “Baby Bush Go Home,” “Animal Farm –II,” “Ladies Have Feelings, so…,” “The Most Cowardly War in History,” “Algebra of Infinite Justice” and “The End of Imagination.” Her short story “The Briefing,” which borders on fiction and nonfiction, is also included under this section. These texts are analyzed in terms of heteroglossia, parody and stylization to elicit the multiple voices buried in the seemingly monologic musings of the author.

Bakhtinian theoretical approach is applied with reference to its possible ramification when applied with reference to modern critical theories of feminism, post colonialism, eco-feminism, deconstruction, reader- response theory and stylistics to the study of Roy’s works. Such an approach promotes a dialogue of various external voices in the study of Roy’s fiction and non-fiction and leads to a better understanding of the writer’s genius. These multiple perspectives enter into a dialogue to establish Roy as a writer of extraordinary calibre.
The thesis has been framed by strictly following the guidelines given in the seventh edition of Joseph Gibaldi’s *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.

*Note: All the page numbers documented in the parenthetical references without specific mention of the author or text within or outside the parentheses refer to that of *The God of Small Things*. 