

Stylistic Aspects of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Abstract- *The God of Small Things* is written in a different style. The quality of writing is totally unlike from other Indian writers. Sometimes the reader feel very difficult to understand her style of writings. The novel is not written in a chronological order. The structure of the work is full of fact and reality faced by the characters. Non- sequential narrative style contains two aspects, one is dramatic or scenic presentation of thoughts one after the other without any break. Story telling quality tells about the whole work. Medium of story telling reveals the entire personality of the authors in this novel.

Index Terms- Structure, Non-Sequential, Storytelling and Focalization.

I. ARUNDHATI ROY AND HER NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

Arundhati Roy is one of the gifted Indian novelists in the art of writing and her novel *The God of Small Things* bears testimony to her God's gift. This is the only novel to her credit as on date and yet it is considered to be one of the most accomplished novels technically in recent years in Indian Writing in English. It is a beautiful amalgamation of fact and fiction, and so it is full of something new and original embellishments and linguistic experiments. Any reader who happens to read this novel cannot but go through new and novel experiences and feel indelibly impressed.

Arundhati Roy is a novelist of a different taste and it is seen in the way of her writing. Her difference lies in her experimentation with the English language and its poetic attributes, in the frequent but speedy change of her point of view of life as and when situations warrant and in the mingling of the events of life both the past and the present during the narration of her story. Hence, her different but original taste makes the reader feel very difficult to understand her mental makeup. Besides, her writing is full of descriptions and the readers are tempted to entertain the feeling that her descriptions, which come one after another, slow down the narrative. Sometimes, they also feel forced to skip certain descriptions in order not to lose their interest in reading or to give up reading.

The most prominent aspect of Arundhati Roy's entire fiction is its structure. She has included a lot of incidents and episodes and they are either given opposite to each other or mixed together. Such eventful episodes create an impression on the minds of the readers that they are all unusual and unique in nature. Though there are many angles of narration for the story to take a concrete and final shape, the major angle of it is presented through the point of view of the fraternal twins Rehel and Estha.

In the process, the thematic pattern of the novel gets improved. Since the events described in the novel have not been presented in a chronological order, the readers get confused and in their confusion, they fail to understand the deeper meaning of the narrative. Such is the way of Arundhati Roy's narration of the story and it needs the hard labour and very strong patience on the part of the readers to find the real meaning behind the layers of her subtle and sophisticated narrative pattern.

Arundhati Roy's narrative design adopted in this novel is a cross cultural conflict of a society, which has been deeply rooted to tradition from time immemorial. Reading of this novel does not provide any delight but it creates social awareness in the readers and brings to surface societal injustice meted out to the have-nots and downtrodden. Its reading also makes the readers realize the prevalent social evils such as lack of parental love for children, intolerable consequences of unconventional marriages, the betrayal of married ones through extra marital relationship, violence against women and those belonging to the lower strata of society, sexual abuse et cetera (etc.). All such things are narrated in the third person, through flashbacks and a stream consciousness technique.

Ayemenem as its locale:

Arundhati Roy has used Ayemenem as its setting because she is of the belief that one can never find a better location anywhere in the world. She has considered it as the only place in the entire world where the people of different religions such as Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Marxism coexist with all their differences but with certain amount of amicability among themselves. Moreover, this is the place where she has grown up and so she has been aware of the prevalence of different cultural habits of the people from her childhood. As she has ingrained understanding of this place, which is full of diversity and cultural paradoxes. Therefore, she has chosen this place as the background, made her imagination run riot to describe the human life seen in various colours in existence, and woven an enthralling story in her own way.

Her Non-sequential Narrative Style:

As far as Arundhati Roy is concerned, she has followed two types of narrative technique in this novel. She presents her dramatic or scenic presentation of thoughts one after the other without any break. In the process, she has created the feeling in the readers that they are either taking part in the events described or entertaining the feeling that they become one with the characters portrayed. As a result, she has made use of two types of narratives called mimetic and diegetic and these two types

make the readers lose interest in continuing the reading of the novel at one sitting.

As Arundhati Roy has herself said, the beginning of the story need not be the real beginning but it can begin with the incidents happened in the past. Ricoeur says: "Looking back from the conclusion to the episodes leading up to it, we have to be able to say that this ending required these sort of events, and this chain of actions" (170). The beginning of this novel begins with the description of the reunion of both Rahel and Estha after the separation from each other for nearly twenty three years. It has not started with their birth and brought up, their family and the problems and their separation. Both are thirty one years old and they are fraternal twins. It is made known that their mother died when she was thirty one years old. It is also revealed through their talk that when they were kids, the girl who attained death by drowning is Sophie Mol, their cousin.

Then the chapter with the details about the educational life of Rahel and her marriage with Larry McCasline, an American, come later. The line describing her marriage, "Rahel drifted into marriage like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge" (18) brings out the real situation in which Rahel found herself isolated and helpless. Through this sentence, Arundhati Roy explains that Rahel had no other option except marrying Larry McCasline, An American for her security and safety as she was left alone. However, she has vividly portrayed Rahel's life at Ayemenem later since her childhood till her separation from her brother and mother.

Her Art of Story Telling:

Every novelist should be artistically skilful not only at the narration of a story but also at the revelation of his point of view. Gerard Genette considers the novelist's point of view as focalization. What he means by focalization is "a restriction of 'field,' that is, a selection of narrative information with respect to what has been traditionally known as omniscience" (1980. 74). He has also divided focalization into three types. One is external focalization, the next is internal focalization and the third and the last is zero focalization. External focalization refers to the physical appearance of the characters and their words and deeds. The internal focalization is mainly concerned with the thoughts and feelings of the characters. The third type, which is zero focalization, refers to the traditional method of narration through a narrator who remains omniscient through out. Arundhati Roy has followed the external focalization in the narration of the story. From the narrator of the story, important aspects in the life of the past of each character are brought to light.

As far as *The God of Small Things* is concerned, Arundhati Roy has used Rahel as a zero focalization because Rahel becomes its omniscient narrator. It is she who talks about all the incidents and the characters of the entire story. The story begins with the appearance of Rahel and her arrival to Ayemenem to see her brother from whom she got separated some twenty three years earlier. She has come to her native place when she is a married woman of thirty one years. She is reminded of the past and unpleasant events that had happened at her native place Ayemenem.

When she and her brother were seven years old, whatever had happened was against tradition and caste. The uncles became fathers, the mothers turned illicit lovers, and cousins met

with unexpected and unnatural death . . . The unthinkable became thinkable and the impossible really happened. (31).

The unexpected death of Sophie Mal by drowning strained the relationship between Rahel's family and that of Sophie Mal. Ammu was forced to leave Ayemenem to look for employment. Rahel was left at Ayemenem under the care of her grand aunt. Estha had to join his father Baba at Calcutta in order to pursue his educational advancement. Their mother had to die of bad health at the age of thirty one in a hotel room all alone. The past events thus happened in the family are brought to the present to apprise the readers of the past life of Rahel and her family.

It is only from the description of Rahel, the personality of her grand aunt Baby Kochamma is also made known to the readers. Otherwise, the readers would have remained quite ignorant of the real nature of Kochamma. She was a traditionalist and status and class conscious. She was very cruel in her attitudes and behaviour towards Ammu, Rahel and Estha. It was she who made the children become a scapegoat for the death of Sophie Mal and all that had happened in her family. The following description of Rahel about her great aunt from the novel is an example for 'zero focalization':

She found Kochamma having applied make-up to her face. The things the aunt had used for her make-up were lipstick, kohl and a sly touch of rouge. As the house was locked and dark and she had only 40 watts bulb, her painted mouth with lipstick had shifted slightly off her real mouth. (12) Arundhati Roy has also made use of 'internal focalization in her narrative when Rahel has described the real situation in which Ammu had been placed in the house of her husband. Ammu's familial and marital predicament is thus made known to the readers only through Rahel.

Ammu suffered a lot as a married woman when she was with her husband Baba. As a wife, she faced indifferent and unfriendly attitudes from her husband. As a daughter-in-law, her predicament was greater. She was not at all treated with love and affection as the mother of twins. The rude attitude on the part of her husband made her appear delirious. As a traditional Indian wife and mother of two children, she should have remained patient in her embarrassing situations, reconciling herself to her fate. When her physical and mental suffering became severe, she decided what she should do to live a life of ease and comfort

One day Ammu left her house of suffering and merciless husband with her two children and found a haven in her native place Ayemenem. No sooner did she reach her native place than she felt greatly relieved and this relief was clearly visible in her appearance. Her comfort, both physical and mental, became the index of her mind. However, she felt sexually attracted towards Velutha, an untouchable and she found pleasure in her illicit and extra marital sexual relationship with him without minding the welfare of her children. The consequences of her act affected her greatly, her children and the family.

Her medium of Story Telling:

Arundhati Roy has followed the third person narrative in this novel and the entire story is narrated from the point of view of Rahel, one of the main characters of the novel. Everything that has happened in the lives of twins, to their family and in the life of Sophie Mal and to her family is brought to light only through

Rahel and she is none other than the novelist herself. It is she who begins and ends the story. Roy herself puts it:

... the novel ends in the middle of the story, and it ends with Ammu and Velutha making love and it ends on the on the word "tomorrow". And though you know that what tomorrow brings is terrible, the fact that the book ends there is to say that even though it's terrible, it is wonderful that it happened at all. (Simmons)

Through the character of Rahel, the personality of the novelist in all aspects is also revealed. Rahel narrates about how she had to study architecture.

Her narration actually brings out the educational background of Arundhati Roy herself and her unexpected study of architecture in a college after her entrance examination. Her study of architecture was not born out of any interest in this field. Arundhati Roy remains omniscient in the character of Rahel that she has created because she had to study architecture without any preference to a particular course of study. The novel progresses without any hitch from the first chapter to the last chapter through the narration of Rahel. Each chapter has been given a separate chapter heading and all the chapter headings bring out the real strength of the characters. Madhu Benoit explains the art of story telling as : " She is not telling a story, but she is using a story, raising reader expectancies" (85).

Her use of Parallelism:

Arundhati Roy's use of parallelism is one of her greatest literary achievement as a novelist. She has adopted it to give emphasis to the tragic effect of love relationship among the characters. She compares Rahel and Ammu with their noticeable and remarkable similarities in their characters. She also draws a parallel in the decision of Ammu and Rahel regarding their break of love relationship. Ammu had to give up her illicit relationship

with Velutha. Similarly, Rahel had to give up her love relationship with her childhood friend. Ammu had an abused tainted childhood and she returned to Ayemenem from Calcutta after a divorce from Baba. Rahel's life is nothing better than that of her mother. Rahel had to take care of herself from her childhood, grew up to become a divorcee and returned to her native place. Rahel came to her native place at the age of thirty one and at this age her mother died. Arundhati Roy brings out a lot of similarities between herself and her creation Rahel. Both of them spent their childhood only at Ayemenem. The mothers of both Arundhati Roy and her character Rahel lived in Ayemenem. They were Christians by birth but their fathers were Hindus.

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