



Research Paper

Structure and Language Techniques in Arundhati Roy's 'The God of Small Things'

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The present paper aims to focus on the significance of the technical aspects and stylistic features of the fiction 'The God of Small Things' by Arundhati Roy. The peculiar dilemma of the Indian writer of fiction is that the very choice of his medium places him at a disadvantage since he has to express Indian sensibility in a foreign language. So for an Indian writer, what to write is as important as how to write.

It is in the area of style and language that the 'The God of Small Things' excels that Roy is in her best in the manipulation of English language. She says "Language is a very reflective thing for me. My language is mine. It's the way I think and the way I write" (qtd in the Week 46).

Roy has startled the reader by telescoping the words together, reading them backward, splitting them apart and coining new words in this novel. In Roy's Language there is no element of exoticism or estrangement. She has stated that language is a skin on her thoughts and she never rewrites and it's only a lot of arranging. In 'The God of Small Things' the language speaks through images and symbols which is used widely and repetitively. Roy has a style of her own. Though it conventionally means the use of language but it is her feminine way of perceiving the world – it is the way of seeing.

A consistent feature of Indian writing in English is that it anticipates an unfamiliar audience with India and so the author feels obliged to explain Indian terms and aspects of culture to its audience. Roy frequently explains to her audience that 'Baba' is father and 'Ammamma' is mother and that in Malayalam 'Mol' is little girl and 'Mon' is little boy.

Another peculiar feature of Roy's novel is the straddling of different cultures, Indian and English using the language cleverly. She makes this a crucial element in the identities of the seven-year-old twins who are her main protagonists. The language of the novel does not merely narrate a story; but it assembles picture from picture and image after image through the "persistent addition of unwarranted details and massing of colours". (Narasimhaiah 3). Sometimes the language appears to have been designed to create an effect and the excessive attention to felicitous expression appears to be a 'short hand for thinking and mouthing beautiful thoughts', (Geetha Doctor 4). It brings in the feel of colour, touch, and smell and almost feels the whisper and scurry of small lives that inhabit the sludgy, rain-drenched Kerala landscape.

The novel is lavish with all sorts of linguistic and textual expedients. Roy frequently coins words or compounds, plays with pronunciations and capitalisation, and makes up colourful nouns to describe her Indian environment – like 'The green-for-the day seeped from trees'. (187) She employs a great amount of arch modifiers - 'dinner-plate-eyed' (308)- or unexpected adjectives as 'old-Boat eyes, sky blue sky.(204) Even verbs are brilliantly manipulated to convey the characters' vivid stress on them, as in 'Margaret Kochamma told her to stop it so she stoppited' (141) which is repeated as a riff and scattered in the novel from character to character, generation to generation, a general sense of inhibition.

Roy's words in fact do not simply render a meaning or a description or a message. Their first presence on the page seems to create visions for the reader to brood on, stop reading and slide into them; as in "strange insects appeared like ideas in the evenings" (9) or "Rahel"drifted into marriage like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge, with a sitting Down sense". (18) In fact at times Roy becomes the indicator of prose twisting and tormenting the words. However ungrammatical she may be, her language glitters with spectacular imagery. Her imagination runs like this: The grey sky curdled and the clouds resolved themselves into little lumps. Like substandard mattress-stuffing... (90)

Roy has presented the worldview of a child's. So no one minds a child breaking words as in "Bar Bowl" or reading reverse as in "sseneliop" for polieness as violating rules of grammar. This she has the ability

to redress an old object with a new language and make sorrow more pure and human, and to turn everyday experiences into poetry. These are the highest artistic achievements of the author.

Her training in architecture has immensely helped her in designing the novel. The first significant subversion created in the novel is its own textuality. The novel begins with Rahel coming to meet her twin brother after twenty three years of separation. This reunion after a long separation is superimposed on the structure not less than thirteen times. As the story ends with this beginning, the zigzag movement renders the structure to be one of beyond ending.

Actually the novel starts from all over the text affected by the interplay of theme with image, fire grounded capitals, bilingualism, reverse reading, sentences without verbs and italics of small things. We have ammoomas, appopans.kudmpuli tree, koojah vallom, kuthamblam, etc in the novel, while a company of small things make their Big presence felt singing aloud in italicised "koo- koo kokum theevandi".(285)

There are many sentences without verbs in the novel. For example, "An alarm clock. A red car with musical horn. A red mug for the bathroom. A wife with a diamond. A briefcase with important papers" (163) or an unpunctuated "I love you I love you", (298). The reverse order as in "NAIDNI YUB, NAIDNI EB".(58)

In a sense the novel is a difficult reading not because it is post modernist but the novel illumines its own textual economy with innumerable frames of references and one has to read them in order to know what *The God of Small Things*' is.

Structurally this novel is very complex. Alok Rai describes, overwhelmed by the structure in these words: I think of it as a sort of spiral structure, a brooding around a central event whose essential contours are made known fairly early in the novel. But each turn of the spiral one had been to a new more places known other feelings and persons.

Rightly so the structure of the novel is like a maze in which the reader gets more and more engrossed until he solves the puzzle which is possible only at the end of the story. She seems to have taken a lot of pains to create such a complex structure.

A careful look at the narrative structure of this novel shows that the narrative keeps on drifting in the sense it corresponds to the manifestations of the unconscious in women. A woman does not write like a man because he speaks with with body. So viewed from the angles of the gynocritics the narrative of *The God of Small Things* is feminine narrative.

The aspect fundamental to novelistic technique involving plots, characterization, setting, dialogue etc is the method of the narration employed or the point of view from which novelist tell their stories. Point of view has received much critical attention in recent years. There are two basic ways of story telling. The novelist can tell his story from the inside – that is he can make one of the characters do it or he can tell it from outside as an omniscient author.

But in choosing between these two methods, the novelist must consider the focus of his story, number and relations of his of his characters, the complexity of his plot and structure, the meaning of his story in all parts as a whole. The ultimate objective of narration in these two methods is to achieve verisimilitude.

A deeper reading of the novel reveals that the story is told through multiple points of view at the back of which is the authorial presence. The story moves back and forth in time. We are offered a child's view of an adult world. The authorial voice when the twins are not present. Roy has done it deftly weave the saga of a family of three generations living in the Ayemenem house in Kottayam. Thus the narration is by the omniscient author which the point of view is moving freely from character to character.

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