



An ecocritical analysis of arundhati Roy's the god of small things

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Abstract

This paper offers an ecofeminism interpretation of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, emphasizing the novelist's use of backchannel communication themes and the muted group theory to signify different modalities of Nature's insurrection. The author also uses apostrophization to obfuscate dialectical pairings in Nature. This extends Cartesian dualism to the nature/culture divide. Roy's portrayal of the oppressed people includes the underclass of humanity, with the picture of the lady trapped in immanence serving as the main theme. In addition, the author alludes to plants and animals that needed a voice to convey the natural world's narrative or an intrinsic sense via people. This is similar to an apologue in reverse, where the narrative of humans is conveyed through the experiences of animals. As Roy foregrounds symbiotic ties in nature via linkages of metaphor and metonymy that demonstrate fundamental kinship principles, these interactions gain strength. The female characters' survival instinct is defined in terms of ecology and represents the breaking down of barriers in the dialectical dyad between society and nature.

Keywords: Curriculum, education, intersectional politics, cultural anthropology, anthropology

Introduction

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy is a widely read book because of its many interpretations, making it a polysemic literature. This essay offers an ecofeminist interpretation of the book, paying particular attention to the ways in which the author employs a variety of strategies that allude to natural forms of rebellion in terms of backchannel communication themes and muted group theory. The author also employs the technique of apostrophizing Nature and even the Earth at certain points in order to break down dichotomies and convey sympathy to the reader. Ammu is comparable to the river, which serves as a miniature version of the ecology. The ecological vocabulary used by female characters to describe their survival instinct against patriarchy symbolizes the breaking down of boundaries in the dialectical relationship between culture and environment.

Roy captures the underclass of humanity in the oppressed; the most common representation is that of a woman trapped in the immanence of her preconceptions, with the limits of civilization mirroring those placed on her by man. The dialectical dyad of culture and nature is included in Cartesian dualism. In a different context, the author speaks about plants and animals that needed a voice to convey the natural world's or instincts' tale via people. This is similar to an apologue in reverse, where the narrative of humans is conveyed through the experiences of animals. As Roy foregrounds symbiotic ties in nature via linkages of metaphor and metonymy that demonstrate fundamental kinship principles, these interactions gain strength. Ecofeminist concerns are emphasized in the book since women's enslavement and the destruction of nature occur together.

The idea of ecofeminism has been pushed widely: according to Salleh (1988, p. 138) ^[18], "the current global environmental crisis is a predictable outcome of patriarchal culture." Expanding its scope, the idea highlights the significance of the interdependencies between people and the natural world, which includes plants, animals, and the earth.

It is now seen from a wider angle as a movement against the interwoven oppressions of nature, race, gender, and class. The river in the book serves as an elegant metaphor for Ammu in its unexplored potential, possible undercurrents, and dormant state in a way that blends all these boundaries. According to Karen J. Warren's 1990 book "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism," any feminist, environmentalism, or environmental philosophy that ignores the significance of the relationships between women and nature is woefully insufficient.

Despite being a neutral term in English, rivers have traditionally been associated with femininity in India because of their attributes of fertility, inventiveness, and nourishment. The theme, represented by the creative pen-penis, seems to challenge the idea that man is the only creator in the likeness of the transcendent God. According to Luce Irigaray's theory, the fluidity and variety of possibilities present in female genitalia are symbolized by the kinetic principle of the river. The writer quotes several examples to demonstrate the connection between Ammu and the river. The writer claims that once Ammu passed away, it was no longer possible to view the river outside the window.

You could, up until Mammachi installed Ayemenem's first sliding-folding door to seal off the rear verandah. The Ayemenem home still retained a river sensation even if you could no longer see the river from it. This is similar to how a seashell always has a sea sense. Rahel inherits Ammu's untamed tendencies from her forebears, which have flourished in her DNA (Roy, 1997, p. 31) ^[14]. The author claims that Aleyooty Amma found it difficult to leave the river. "You could see the dark trees that bent to the hot river through the holes in her ears" (Roy, 1997, p. 30) ^[14]. Even the Plymouth that they drove had qualities similar to a fish.

Additional evidence suggests that the river represents Ammu, the wronged woman: the river had transformed into nothing more than an oversized sewer. (p. 124) A succulent plant smothered it, its brown, hairy roots wriggling under the surface like slender tentacles. With caution, bronze-winged lilytrotters strode over it with splayed feet. (p. 124) Thus, rather of having one crop year, they now have two. For the price of a river, more rice. (p. 44) When Rahel comes across the river many years later, she is reminded of Ammu's death by suffocation at the hands of the heartless patriarchal society: Both events had occurred. She had grown, and it had shrunk. (p. 124) Roy emphasizes symbiotic ties by highlighting metonymy and metaphor, which exposes the fundamentals of kinship.

The activity of ecofeminism is inherently anti hierarchical. It teaches that there is no order in life on Earth, but rather a linked network. Human hierarchy is imposed upon nature and then exploited to legitimize societal dominance; there is no natural hierarchy (King cited in Vakoch, 2011) ^[20]. Ammu plays the river in the book, and the twins are frogs, therefore the twins' connection with their mother and the river operates on a parallel level. Ammu's description of the twins as frogs is noteworthy since frogs are prone to dehydration due to their semipermeable skin, which is why they either dwell in damp environments or have evolved unique adaptations to withstand dry environments. Similar to how the twins, despite their fragility, learned to exist without Ammu (the river).

It's noteworthy that Estha naturally yearns for the river after the Orange drink Man incident, just as he would for his mother's protection. The way that Roy compares Ammu to a

river during the Velutha-Ammu union further emphasizes the relationship between rivers and women. She was as deep and broad as a river in space, according to Roy. He navigated her seas (Roy, 1997, p. 337) ^[14]. These pictures really highlight nature's role as a source of joy and nurturing. The twins are so infatuated with the river that, as they sleep snugly together in Hotel Sea Queen, they dream about "their river" at the same time (p. 122).

As a sentimental memory of their prenatal life, swimming through "their mother's cunt" (Roy, 1997, p. 93) ^[14] is evoked by the event. Roy amply demonstrates the kids' acquaintance with and proximity to the river: "They knew the afternoon weed that flowed inwards from the backwaters of Komarakom." They studied "Silence (like the children of the Fisher Peoples), and learn (ed) the bright language of dragonflies" at this place because "they knew the smaller fish" (Roy, 1997, p. 203) ^[14]. In this way, the river feeds and teaches the twins on a different level, acting as a substitute mother. The river theme appears throughout Roy's paintings as a microcosm of the ecosystem, reflecting the moon, the heavens, and the trees, among other elements of the natural world.

According to Vance (1993) ^[21], ecofeminism is seen as a sisterhood that rejects all kinds of dominance and is based on the idea that variety, not duality, is the ultimate objective. The river, which once mirrored the variety and flawless beauty of all of nature, is now described as a slow-moving green ribbon lawn that carried foul-smelling trash to the ocean. It is a bleak sight. Rahel comes to the river many years later and is greeted with a "ghastly skull's smile, with holes where teeth had been, and a limp hand raised from a hospital bed." The rivers' spiritual essence has been replaced with a feeling of nihilism. Like sub-tropical flying flowers, bright plastic bags flew over its sticky, weedy surface. (p. 124) The river seems to have lost some of its fluidity and had some of its limpidity tampered with. The river "smelled of shit, and pesticides bought with World Bank loans," according to another account (p. 13). Later, it will be seen that her nonfiction writings, which extensively address her dedication to the River Narmada and its people, are characterized by her care for the river and the underprivileged. The Chaliyar river in Kerala, which has similarly been contaminated by the effluents from Gwalior Ryons, is where Arundhati Roy began her march toward the Narmada mission, according to renowned Indian critic Prof. I. Shanmugha Das (2011) ^[2] (p. 24). He determines that her urgent cry to preserve the Narmada may be an attempt to prevent the Meenachal of her youth from being destroyed by the toxic pollution released by the process of development (Das cited in Kunhi, 2014, p. 151). Roy (2002b) ^[16] highlights the damage that big dams on rivers inflict in her article "The Greater Common Good," saying that "ecologically, they're in the doghouse." They despoil the planet.

They propagate illness, create salinity, floods, and waterlogging. Growing research indicates that large dams and earthquakes are related (pp. 57–58). The ecosystem that functions to erase borders in the culture/nature duality is used to highlight the survival drive of other female characters against patriarchy. Gruen contends that these conventional viewpoints encourage and prolong needless and unsustainable dichotomies (between nature and civilization, between reason and emotion), placing dichotomies against the backdrop of feminist and animal liberation beliefs. She emphasizes how ecofeminist philosophy might provide a

different, more inclusive framework for movements for liberation. (Gruen, 1993, p. 7) ^[6], moving away from a detached, linear, and fragmented mindset and toward a more straightforward, comprehensive understanding of subjective knowledge (Gruen, 1993, p. 61) ^[6]. Although the occurrence of etiolation would be a more appropriate parallel in this context, Margaret Kochamma's affection for Chacko is described in terms of phototropism: "she found herself drawn towards him like a plant in a dark room towards a wedge of light" (Roy, 1997, p. 248) ^[14].

Chacko informs Rahel and Estha that Ammu did not inherit any Locusts Stand I because of her wild inclinations, which have led to her wandering from place to place and being compared as a gregarious, nomadic locust. The similes used to describe women demonstrate the similarities between the dichotomies of man and woman and society and nature. The flower that Baby Kochamma adored the most was the "anthurium," commonly known as the "boy flower" due to its phallic appearance, which symbolizes her lifelong sexual desire to Father Mulligan. Male and female flowers on the spadix are often separated by a sterile band, which indicates the sex of the flowers. Gender difference theories also highlight how human existence has been split into "the external world" and "the domestic world," with women enjoying speech rights in one but not the other. This is similar to how gender is divided into two domains.

The novel's themes and the breaking down of barriers in the culture/nature dialectical pair work in tandem. Through her connection with Velutha, Ammu aims to undermine caste, gender norms, and the idea of an eternal life. At the confluence of the Meenachal River, Velutha and Ammu merge as a man and woman, transcending all artificial boundaries of caste and class. Since Roy's language "guides us to those who are often excluded from our vision," it also conveys an intention to blur boundaries. Her tactics to emphasize her vision include her use of short phrases, metaphors that allude to smallness, and her concentration on single, pregnant words (Ch'ien, 2004, p. 156).

As Roy said in an interview, "I Don't Believe There Are Only Two Genders," the terminology seems to be used with the intention of subverting the sexism that is inherent in language. Roy (2015) ^[17] states, "I view gender as a spectrum." Renowned ecocritic Susan Griffin calls for a "nurturing femaleness to speak, chant and sing so that people might live." Ecofeminists demand gender-sensitive language, theory, and practices that rebel against the exploitative experiences and insensitive patriarchal culture that thwart women and nature (quoted in Elliott, 1988, p. 1067). The theory known as the muted group, which is commonly applied to ethnology and the study of cultures, states that marginalized groups: (a) do not have a voice in the culture; in fact, they are silenced and do not have the right to speak; and (b) these groups often adopt alternative forms of communication, sometimes referred to as "back-channel" communication.

According to Robin Lakoff, men and women who speak from disadvantaged situations—the impoverished and the powerless—also employ backchannel communication with specific styles of speaking. According to this idea, repression appears in the narrative as rebellion against the unnatural or as quiet. In his book *The God of Small Things*, Roy describes odd insects that burned themselves before dusk and looked like thoughts. These revolutionary ideas were stifled and

never allowed to emerge because of the strict communist regulations that required everyone to adhere to political correctness. The individual was demoted. The rejection of ideas that were non-Western is epistemic violence.

Thus, indigenous concepts that sprang from innate instinct burned themselves out, much like firefly, rather than surviving on borrowed light from a surface-level English culture. The Subaltern is conceptually related to epistemic violence because of the colonial power's destruction of her culture and marginalization of her way of understanding and knowing the world (Spivak qtd in Briggs and Sharp, 2008, p. 664); of particular significance is the idea that colonialism is always seen as a male phenomenon. As a result, the Subaltern "must always be caught in translation, never truly expressing herself." This kind of denial reveals the quiet voice of nature. The second element, insurrection serving as a theme for covert communication, is present in the twins' abnormal relationship.

The twins voice their disapproval at their artificial split. In his article "Civilization's Fear of Nature," Mortensen makes the case that *The God of Small Things* highlights the negative effects of using nature for human gain. In keeping with Usha Jesudasan's retribution of the suppressed, he writes, "Nature, is not so much absent as simply repressed, and the brilliance of Roy's approach consists precisely in showing that the postmodern denial of nature produces a threatening return of the repressed" (Mortensen, 2003, p. 188) ^[12].

The term "repressed elements, preserved in the unconscious, tend to reappear, in consciousness or in behavior, in the shape of secondary and more or less unrecognizable 'derivatives of the unconscious,'" was coined by Freud and first used by Jean-François Rabain in 2005 (Kunhi, 2014, pp. 159-160) ^[9]. The unnatural union of the twins towards the conclusion of the book seems to be an effort by the twins to fuse back into their zygotic form. Even though they are not identical twins, the word "zygotic" here refers to their spiritual oneness at birth. The author argues that the twins' separation was definitely abnormal since they were inseparable. According to Roy, they were a unique kind of Siamese twins who had a same identity while being physically distinct.

Rahel knows what occurred to Estha in the Orange drink Lemon drink incident even though he didn't tell her (Roy, 1997, p. 2) ^[14]. In addition, Rahel recalls laughing when he woke up one night at Estha's humorous dream. (p. 2) She recalls the flavor of the tomato sandwiches—Estha's sandwiches, that is—that Estha consumed while traveling to Madras by Madras Mail. She failed to detect the lone Siamese soul (p. 3). Prior to their separation, the twins were conceived of as Me collectively and as Us or We individually. (p. 41). (p. 2) The twins' abnormal sexual connection, which began while they were still youngsters, seems to be another instance of Nature rebelling against what was considered abnormal. The deed seems to be an emotional response to the Orange drink Lemon drink man's sexual assault of Estha.

Authors have long compared the early removal of a child sexual abuse victim's blossom from a plant. The twins indulge in a sexual act when they are still young as a protest against this early, abnormal behavior. Rahel and Estha are seen engaging in sexual activity in this vivid picture, which includes allusions to sperm floating on the water and the vagina rupturing. The scenario depicts two joyful hearts soaring like colorful kites in a sky blue sky, but the river suddenly appears in a quiet, green whisper.

.....Two egg-shaped twin hearts descended and landed on the step that was above the sixth.

....The fish, which were swimming in deep water, covered their lips with their fins and chuckled sarcastically at the sight.

....After a short battle, the white boat spider drowned. One hundred young spiders were released when her prematurely burst white egg sac.

....The green water's smooth surface was stippled. (Roy, 1997, p. 204) ^[14]

The author adds, "Perhaps Ammu, Estha, and she were the worst transgressors," to further support this claim before they transgress as adults. It wasn't just them, however. It was also the others. They disregarded every regulation. All of them ventured into uncharted area. All of them interfered with the guidelines that specify who and how should be loved and the quantity. The same rules that make moms mothers cousins cousins, grandparents grandmothers, uncles uncles, jam jam, and jelly jelly. (p. 31) The author also says, "Only that once again they broke the Love Laws," right after they violate as adults. that outlined who and how to love. As well as the amount (Roy, 1997, p. 328) ^[14]. Readers need to be aware of the again and they that allude to a previous act of misconduct. The breaking down of archetypal civilizational boundaries is another example of backchannel communication. It is stated that the landscape becomes an unmistakably green as it prepares for impending disaster. Desperate to assert itself, nature "blurs boundaries as tapioca fences take root and bloom." Brick walls get green with moss. Pepper vines cling to power poles. The flooded road was crossed by wild creepers that broke through the laterite embankment (p. 1). People tend to forget that modernity is never completely impervious to the forces of nature. The God of Small Things, according to Mortensen's argument in his article "Civilization's Fear of Nature," speaks to more than only the negative effects of abusing nature for the sake of development. It also portends nature's uprising.

The survival instinct of the oppressed serves as a theme for backchannel communication and is emphasized by analogies with nature, since both operate on the subaltern level. It is thought that Estha has a unique defensive system that allows it to live, much like a lungfish that isolates itself during dry seasons. Just as Estha stayed abnormally quiet and navigated circumstances, the lungfish stays exceptionally quiescent and endures harsh conditions. It is also believed that he seems lifeless by blending into the backdrop of every area he is in, including streets, entrances, gardens, bookcases, and drapes. His survival instinct is a reference to his chameleon-like nature.

The author also mentions that Estha is home to an octopus. The principal (primary) defense of an octopus is to conceal so that it cannot be identified as an octopus or be seen at all. Certain unique skin cells that alter the epidermis's apparent color, opacity, and reflectiveness help octopuses blend in with their surroundings. Similar to how an octopus has three hearts, Estha battled his own contradictory feelings. He squirted inky tranquilizers on his past to escape his harsh past and became acclimated to the octopus that grew within him. Because Rahel had a propensity to go into exile, we discover numerous occasions in which Estha referred to her during their battles as a Refugee Stick Insect. Later on, when lizards move in, the historical home turns into a haven. Lizards exhibited autonomy by abandoning or amputating their tails

as a means of protection. As Rahel grew emotionally distant from Estha, the readers eventually discover the lizard on Rahel's adult t-shirt as well. "Amputees experience discomfort, cramping, and itching in the amputated limb "She experienced his presence where he was not," writes in Love in the Time of Cholera "That is how she felt without him." This is a clever move on the novelist's side to establish correspondences with nature. Especially in opposition to the claims made by ecocritics that treating the environment as a standalone entity will revive human sovereignty over nature and the associated injustices (Johnson, 2009) ^[8].

The novel's preservation theme also reflects the survival drive. In the elegant emblem of Paradise Pickle Preserves, nature cries out to be preserved for future generations. In a same vein, Ammu makes an effort to preserve her uniqueness. The demand for artificial preservation of nature stems from the fear of its disappearing in its purest form. The author claims that bleached bones, which again suggest artificial preservation, are a common representation of nature and history. Ammu detects the vinegary vapors that ascended from Paradise Pickles' cements in the chapter "The God of Small Things"—"fumes that wrinkled youth and preserved futures" (Roy, 1997, p. 224) ^[14].

In Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global, Ursula Heise (2008) ^[7] offers fresh ecocritical viewpoints, urging readers to see the Earth as "our place, our locus," a location deserving of devotion and protection, rather than focusing only on the immediate surroundings (p. 46). Roy's mental image of Earth as a woman giving birth to man challenges the notion that women were supposedly formed from man's ribs, as claimed by several Semitic faiths. With 4.6 billion years on its age, the world was about as old as Aleyamma Teacher, the Malayalam teacher, or forty-six years old.

The planet had not become what it was until the planet Woman had lived her whole life that the seas split apart want the mountains to erupt. On page 27, Chacko depicts an impersonal and objective Earth Woman, in contrast to Mother Earth, who deprives the planet of its humanitarian attributes. The renowned ecofeminist Carolyn Merchant (1993) ^[11] emphasizes that historically, "the image of the earth as a living organism and nurturing mother had served as a cultural constraint restricting the actions of human beings." She further notes that "carrying out destructive acts against the earth could be considered a breach of human ethical behavior as long as the earth was considered to be alive and sensitive" (p. 276). Similar to Chacko's situation, ecological degradation and the decline in man's respect for Mother Nature were also widespread effects of modernity.

"Positively she is completely insignificant; imaginatively she is of the utmost importance," writes in her novel A Room of One's Own. She is almost completely missing from history and permeates poetry from cover to cover. Roy's claim that "Man's subliminal urge to destroy what he could neither subdue nor deify" (Roy, 1997, p. 308) ^[14] operates in tandem with this. The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution by Carolyn Merchant (1990) ^[10] is a superb book that explores how the Renaissance moved away from female participation in an Aristotelian, God-permeated environment and toward patriarchal rule. Roy reduces all of (his)story to a single blink of the earth woman's eye when she writes, "The whole of contemporary history, the World Wars, the War of Dreams, the Man on the Moon, science, literature, philosophy, and the pursuit of knowledge was no more than

a Blink of the Earth Woman's eye" (p. 27).

This statement is consistent with Roy's subversive strategies. Since the earth is apostrophized as the mother, defiling anything is just as dishonest and deceptive as acting against your own mother. By humanizing nature in a manner that also speaks to our emotions, Roy is able to provide an ecocritical viewpoint and validates the novel's title. The decision to blur the lines between the natural and human worlds speaks to the readers' emotions and senses in addition to serving as a stylistic device that mirrors the topic. According to Gruen (1993) ^[6], p. 80, "the anthropocentric feminists, the 'other' is nonhuman animals and nature; for radical feminists, the 'other' is culture and man; for animal liberationists, the 'other' is human emotion and collectivity." The ecofeminist dilution of duality functions as a subversive strategy challenging the conceptualization of hierarchies.

It is successful to use the many themes in an anthropocene period in an effective way to signify insurrection. The author emphasizes that "literature participates in an incredibly complete global system, in which energy, matter, and ideas interact, rather than floating above the material world in some aesthetic ether" (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996, p. xix) ^[5]. Through intertextuality and activism in Roy's literary works, the novel's suppression of other natural components and the foregrounding of the personal despair of the oppressed, such as Velutha and Ammu, serve to spread the topic of rebellion beyond the boundaries of the text and the characters. Roy claims in her essay "The Greater Common Good" that the "Big Dams" are a brazen way to take water, land, and irrigation away from the poor and give it to the rich because "their reservoirs displace huge populations of people, leaving them homeless and destitute" (Roy, 2002b, p. 42) ^[16].

She extends this to the state of the dispossessed tribals and the displaced farmers affected by the "Big Dams." And when she expresses her fear over the accumulation of nuclear weapons, this "public turmoil of the nation" is further extended to the whole planet: "If there is a nuclear war, our foes will not be China or America or even each other." The ground herself will be our enemy. The sky, the air, the land, the wind, and the water the very elements will all turn against us. Thus, *The God of Small Things* speaks via extension (Roy, 2002a, p. 6) ^[15].

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