
**Ecofeminist Consciousness and Resilient Spirit of Women in Arundhati Roy's
*The God of Small Things***

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Abstract:

The *God of Small Things* (1997), by Arundhati Roy, is one of the most influential contemporary Indian novels not only for its narrative structure and political commentary but also for its exploration of human and environment relations. This paper examines the ecofeminist consciousness embedded within the text and analyses how resilient spirit of women respond to violent acts committed by patriarchal, casteist and ecological forces. Ecofeminism considers that the subjugation of women is linked to the exploitation of the environment, through the hierarchical, patriarchal worldviews that devalue both. The study focuses on representations of women such as Ammu, Rahel, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma in the novel and their relationship with ecologies such as the river, vegetation, domestic spaces and sensory environments. The ecosystem of Ayemenem presented in the novel is not only a setting but an active participant in gendered experiences and a mirror of trauma, resistance and memory. By relating domestic and ecological textures, Roy reveals how individual and social struggles of women are inseparable from the degradation of the environment, social stratification and forms of oppression based on caste as well as sexuality. Through a close reading of the text and an ecofeminist approach, the paper demonstrates how the women in the novel show resilience through various acts of care, such as embodied resistance, emotional endurance etc. They do not reveal their resilience through spectacular rebellion but through quiet and everyday defiance, strategies of survival and ethical engagement with the "small things" that sustain life.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Environmental Justice, Gender and Environment, Postcolonial Ecology, Women's Resilience.

Introduction

Arundhati Roy (born in 1961), one of the most renowned Indian authors of contemporary times, is internationally recognised for her distinctive narrative voice, her

commitment to social causes, and her unique literary style. Roy was born in Shillong and grew up partly in Kerala in southern India. The sensibility of being both an outsider and a native simultaneously influenced her perspective on issues of caste, ecology, gender, and social inequality. These concerns became central to her fiction and nonfiction writings. She earned a degree in architecture at the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi but turned to a writing career soon after that. She gained international recognition early on for her sharp critiques of the power of the state and developmental policies. With her first novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997), Roy became famous globally and received the Man Booker Prize. This novel is noteworthy because it has a beautiful lyrical language, non-linear structure and a complex integration of family history and the social and political reality of post-colonial India. Roy's nonfictional works, such as *The Cost of Living*, *War Talk* and *Field Notes on Democracy*, are also well known for their critique of militarism, neo-liberalism, ecological destruction and human rights violations. She is an ardent critic of state violence and corporate power in India. She has a strong commitment to social justice and is closely involved with ecological justice movements in India. In particular, she has been involved with movements against big dams and displacement. Her literary and political works are characterised by a deep commitment to marginalised people and the ecology in which they live. Her novels, especially *The God of Small Things*, have a sensory and intimate relationship with the environment. This makes her work a prime subject for an ecofeminist interpretation. Her portrayal of women, Dalit people and non-human environments is unique to her post-colonial perspective. This has made her an important figure in ecofeminist writing and social activism.

Ecofeminist consciousness and Women

As a theoretical and activist framework critiquing patriarchal domination alongside other systems of domination that work to keep women and nature captive, ecofeminism seeks to illustrate why women and the environment are marginalized together. Within the hierarchical and androcentric frameworks of our worldview, both are seen as passively receiving whatever happens in the present, as though there is no history at all except what has just happened. As a field of study, ecofeminism means that we read not only gender and ecology symbolically but also consider them materially, through embodied and political expressions of power, even when those expressions are found in narratives. *The God of Small Things* is a novel that is ripe for this kind of analysis because it devotes considerable attention to representing people's lives and describes the ecology of the place where the story takes place with great care. This gives us a lot to explore in terms of how the characters and their setting overlap and intersect. The story unfolds in the lush but troubled land around Ayemenem in Kerala and asks, what does the natural world look like? It looks like something intertwined with human history and with the social differences between people, including among men and with the ways that the past stays in people's memories. It isn't passive. It's active and reactive. It gets hurt and works to hurt the lives of human beings. In this case, the once-clear river becomes thick and foul and deadly, mirroring how the social relationships have turned corrupt. Vegetation climbs up unused buildings and insects go inside. Monsoons

hit and fall everywhere in the novel. They come and go, always reminding the reader of the pain of losing something, the pain of things decomposing and getting destroyed. But against that backdrop, you see the women of the family, all of whom suffer as well from being held down by male oppression, by having to live their lives according to the rules of their families and by having had to accept the fact that the social group system called caste assigns certain lower-class roles they have to perform. Nonetheless, they find their own ways of fighting back, of defying, of making sense of their worlds emotionally and politically and finding meaning in what they've experienced. I'm going to argue here that the way Roy puts the story of the women alongside the ecological forces surrounding them is an example of one of the most important insights that has come out of the theory of ecofeminism. She lays bare the idea that the experience of women follows some of the same rhythms and patterns of the cycles of ecosystems. The life of the river mirrors the suffocating effects of male patriarchy on Ammu. The awful dampness and mould, that infest the Ayemenem houses, reflect that Mammachi is equally silent suffering under patriarchal norms. Baby Kochamma's frenetic tending of the garden reflects her attempt to exercise control over the space she lives in - or rather, her need to exercise control since she couldn't accomplish anything else to make herself feel better because she felt so guilty and bad and didn't succeed at the things she was supposed to do. When Rahel begins returning her attention to Ayemenem, we get an ecofeminist critique of memory that sees ecological collapse serving as a metaphor for inter-generational trauma. Ecofeminists writing about the work of Indian writers insist that it cannot be assumed that the environment has been oppressed independently of whether or not people are discriminated against by their caste status or economic situation. Instead, they insist, environmental exploitation is usually deeply connected with those types of hierarchies. There are many scenes in this book that show the ways that the relationship between the sexes, the social separation based on caste, as well as the regional policies and labour dynamics that were built into the landscape of the region of Kerala where the novel took place, all came together to shape the forbidden romance between Ammu and Velutha. Moreover, while women are victims of those kinds of systems, they're not the only ones who are victims. They bear witness to the ecological history, to the environmental crimes and violations that take place and they document everything. So the paper tries to analyse the book in the larger tradition of work coming out of post-colonial feminist thinking about what has become known as ecofeminism in India. It draws on the work of scholars like Vandana Shiva and Bina Agarwal, who argue that ecofeminism differs from what occurs in the West. So-called Western eco-feminism is focused almost entirely on the way in which symbolic connections between gender and the natural world reflect real-world inequalities between humans and the environment. By contrast, Indian ecofeminists have concentrated on the material reality. When the West talks about "ecofeminism," it talks more about the symbolic associations between nature and females and whether or not those symbolic links serve to legitimate (or not) the current relations of inequality between males and females and between humans and non-humans. In contrast, Indian writers talk about the practical effects of the exploitation of women, the impact of development on indigenous communities, the violence

faced by people living in poverty as a result of environmental disasters, food insecurity, and the costs that society bears when women spend all their time doing unpaid household chores and other drudge jobs. In this context it helps to explain why the world in which Roy writes feels familiar and why the way the women attempt to navigate their lives and understand the world in which they reside feels so relevant to this moment in history. To summarize, this paper seeks to highlight three main points as it sets out to explore the character of the relationship between the females and the natural setting where they exist: 1) The way that the domestic and the environment become feminine according to the ideology of patriarchy, 2) The way that environmental damage is mirrored in the life stories of the women in the narrative and vice versa, 3) Women resist domination of patriarchy through multiple acts of defiance. The text of novel is ecological itself. In the novel, Arundhati Roy conveys a compelling ecofeminist message by celebrating the resilience of women who endure under patriarchy and by uncovering revolutionary beauty in the smallest details of the natural world.

Gender, Environment and Postcolonial Ecology

The material struggles involved in land displacement, agricultural dependence, caste-based labour and women's role in conserving natural resources in India give rise to ecofeminism in the Indian context in contrast to Western formulations. Ecofeminism refers a dynamic political theory that explores how oppressions of nature and women are interconnected. This theory justifies the dominance of patriarchal power over both women and environment. It was a French writer, Françoise d'Eaubonne, who used the term "ecofeminism" first time in her book, *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*, in 1974. She conveys a thought that the oppression of less privileged classes, such as women, and oppression of nature by human are interconnected with each other. Ecofeminism and its offshoot feminist movements emphasize on how we think about both the environment and rights of women. Many critics analyse point to "value-hierarchical thinking," where qualities associated with men, like reason, production, and control, are valued over qualities associated with women, like embodiment, reproduction, and care. This makes both women and nature seem unimportant in the drive for profit and power. Critics show how this regional ecofeminism challenges not only sexism but also oppression based on caste, religious division, and global capitalism. They argue that any lasting ecological approach must confront these interconnected systems. Similarly, ecofeminist readings of Indian English novel demonstrate how stories reflected in the novels present exploitation of both marginalised groups like women and the environment. These readings also rediscover ways in which gender influences environmental knowledge and resistance. Within this larger history, *The God of Small Things* can be viewed as a postcolonial ecofeminist work. In it, the hidden defiance, care for others, and remembering. Ecofeminist views suggest women's resilience often arises from connecting with nature and relationships, rather than open protest. Ammu shows strong ecofeminist resilience by defying patriarchal rules through her relationship with Velutha, which happened in nature and represented equality. While she suffered for breaking norms, her memory lives on, showing resilience can be passed down.

Rahel's quieter resilience involves observing her home and surroundings, reclaiming ecological memory to resist forgetting. Her strength is in remembering, holding together past events, and reconnecting with Estha, with their final act seen as a way to heal through connection.

Mammachi's resilience is shown through her continued work and quiet endurance, maintaining the household with her food knowledge and labor, even under hardship. Kochamma's resilience is concerning as she aligns with patriarchal power, showing how oppressed individuals can adopt harmful structures. Her attempts to fill an emotional void through religion and controlling her garden lead to destructive actions, linking female oppression with dominating nature. Overall, the women demonstrate that resilience takes many forms—challenging, quiet, ethical, or even harmful. The novel presents resilience as a continuous effort to manage within difficult situations, offering a complex look at postcolonial struggles for women and the environment, enriching ecofeminist ideas. The River, monsoon, and the lushness of Ayemenem are places of joy, remembrance, and sorrow. The novel's focus on weather, seasons, and plant life links personal pain and societal violence to the changing qualities of the surroundings. This suggests that the impact of colonization, missionary efforts, and development schemes is as much a part of the land and water as it is of people's lives. Ecofeminism, therefore, provides an important means of understanding how Roy connects issues of gender, caste, and the environment. This critique targets the "Big Things" that harm women's lives and delicate ecosystems, while keeping alive the hope that "small things" might foster different possibilities for the future.

Resilient Spirit of Women — Defiance, Memory, and Ethical Care

Ecofeminism, a theoretical approach that explores the connection between women and nature, is aptly reflected in the plot of the novel. The novel analyses women's struggles in a patriarchal society while directly paying attention to the ecological richness of Kerala. The novelist tries to explore how women, marginalised by caste and gender, develop a resilient spirit that resists the domination of male centered society. The lush landscapes of Kerala are not mere backdrops but silent participants in the plot of the story. Rivers, rain, and vegetation convey the emotions of the characters, especially women like Ammu and Rahel. Their interconnectedness with nature reflects ecofeminist thoughts..

Just as the land is commoditised and degraded, women's bodies are subjected to patriarchal control. Ammu's ostracizing to transgress social norms parallels the exploitation of the environment by colonial and capitalist forces. The novel presents the facts thWomen's resistance is often expressed through their relatsymboliseith nature. Rahel's wandering by the river and Ammu's moments of freedom in natural places symbolize a reclaiming of agency.

Despite being trapped by caste, class, and gender restrictions, Ammu asserts her autonomy through her relationship with Velutha. Her resilience lies in her refusal to conform

to oppressive norms. Rahel's resilient spirit is found in her ability to face the challenges of life and her lifelong endurance. Her return to Ayemenem even after years signifies the persistence of nostalgia and the possibility of healing, even amidst trauma. Women characters in the novel, though silenced by societal structures, resist indirectly. Their resilience is evident in their ability to endure, narrate, and reclaim their stories.

Conclusion

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* offers a clear and nuanced exploration of ecofeminist themes intertwined with postcolonial realities, social hierarchies, and Emotional Ecology. Through its description of women's lives—Ammu, Rahel, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma—the novel conveys how ecological places and gendered experiences are linked with each other. Arundhati Roy's narrative relates that environmental degradation, patriarchal oppression, and caste violence are traditional forms of domination. Against these forces, the women in the novel adopt diverse forms of resilience. The novelist situates her narrative within the broader postcolonial reality of India, where ecological degradation and patriarchal oppression intersect each other. The novel exemplifies ecofeminist consciousness by portraying women's lives as deeply entwined with ecological realities. The resilient spirit of Ammu, Rahel, and other female characters challenges patriarchal and ecological exploitation, offering a vision of resistance and survival. Arundhati Roy's narrative thus contributes to ecofeminist discourse by affirming that the liberation of women and the preservation of nature are inseparable struggles. Ultimately, *The God of Small Things* stands as a literary work that extends ecofeminist discourse by showing how resilience survives not through grand rebellion but through small, meaningful acts of care, memory, and embodied connection. Arundhati Roy's novel urges readers to grasp the ethical significance of the small, the ordinary, and the marginalized things, suggesting us that transformation often occurs with the resilience of small things.

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