

Article

Social Justice and National Consciousness in the Select Works of Arundhati Roy

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Abstract: This study examines how literature, activism, and social justice interact dynamically within the framework of Arundhati Roy's work with underprivileged and marginalised groups in India. Renowned Indian author and activist Arundhati Roy has regularly written about India's most marginalised communities in both her fiction and non-fiction writings. This study presents a thorough examination of Roy's literary and social justice, exploring how underprivileged classes are portrayed in her books and her fervent support for their rights. The paper focuses on how Roy's fictional stories, particularly "The God of Small Things" and "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness," provide moving representations of underprivileged groups in India. Roy's works portray the difficulties, aspirations, and concerns of these communities through theme investigation and strong character development. Roy's nonfiction writings and speeches provide an outlet for her strong support of social justice. Her involvement in campaigns and social movements demonstrates her dedication to pursuing justice and empowering underrepresented groups. Additionally, in the context of India's diverse society, this study emphasises the intricate intersections of identity, such as caste, gender, class, and religion. It examines how characters from underrepresented groups demonstrate their resilience and resistance to injustice, as well as the agency and empowerment reflected in Roy's stories. The study also assesses the practical impact of Arundhati Roy's advocacy work, acknowledging the challenges and critiques she has faced in her role as a social change activist. To sum up, Arundhati Roy's activism and body of work provide a framework for understanding the challenges and empowerment of India's underprivileged divisions. As a powerful illustration of the ability of writing and activism to advance social justice, her literary and advocacy achievements continue to increase awareness and encourage constructive change for underprivileged

communities in India, highlighting the role of literature in shaping National Consciousness.

Keywords: gender; identity; empowerment; social justice; national consciousness

Introduction

The ongoing study depicts social justice in India as a complex issue. Renowned author and activist Arundhati Roy has become a prominent voice for National Consciousness by highlighting the struggles endured by underprivileged groups in pursuit of social justice. She explores deeply into the lives of those who are frequently suppressed by social structures through her stirring writings and uncompromising activism. Assessing the historical, societal, and economic elements that have contributed to the isolation of oppressed groups in India is necessary to comprehend the challenges that they face. The complex interactions between different groups, cultures, and faiths characterise India's history. Certain groups have historically faced social injustice because of things like gender, caste, and race. Social stratification has resulted from the caste system, which has defined Indian civilisation for ages. Socioeconomic inequities further maintain many groups of people in an oppressed position. Women and transgender people experience systemic discrimination and unequal opportunities due to gender-based marginalisation. Tribal groups in isolated regions of India face particular challenges, including limited access to education and issues with social justice.

A well-known author and activist in modern Indian literature, Arundhati Roy is renowned for her passionate advocacy of social justice and her powerful writing style. Her 1997 debut novel, "The God of Small Things," which examined caste inequality, love, and family in Kerala, was a significant turning point in her literary career and was much praised. As her writing career took off, Arundhati Roy turned to activism, focusing on issues such as environmental preservation, human rights, and the rights of underprivileged groups. She advocates against globalisation and nuclear weapons, supports the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada Movement), and runs campaigns against dam construction projects. India's intellectual and social environment has been profoundly influenced by Roy's diverse literary and activist endeavours. Public debate in India has been significantly influenced by Arundhati Roy's strong and unreserved support for human rights, environmental preservation, and marginalised communities. Her unique storytelling approach and examination of marginalised voices as a writer continue to inspire emerging authors and add to the changing tradition of Indian literature. Arundhati Roy's influence extends far beyond India's borders. She is positioned as a global advocate for social justice and human rights due to the resonance of her advocacy and work with audiences worldwide. The

influence of Arundhati Roy is still felt today, and even more literary and activist works are anticipated in the future. It is crucial to consider the enduring impact she has on India's sociopolitical landscape as her work progresses.

Social Challenges: "The God of Small Things" and "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness"

The stories in "The God of Small Things" and "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" by Arundhati Roy eloquently depict the problematic lives of India's marginalised populations. She shares the experiences of people who struggle to make enough to survive and deal with discrimination throughout these works. Roy focuses on the experiences of Ammu and Velutha in "The God of Small Things," as they belong to the Paravan group and are deemed "Untouchable" by the caste system. Roy illustrates how society restricts rule-breakers through their love story. She depicts the challenging lives of the Paravan people, who are treated harshly and have little authority. "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" focuses on the lives of individuals who do not conform to the expectations of society. In a society that frequently drives people to the margins, characters like the hijra community and transgender lady Anjum demonstrate how difficult identification can be for individuals. The book delves deeply into the situation in Kashmir as well, highlighting the hardships faced by people who are harmed by the bloodshed. Roy's literature demands justice and reform in addition to illustrating the suffering of the oppressed. She allows you to explore the lives of those who are frequently disregarded. However, she also demonstrates their determination, affection, and decision-making skills. However, a detailed examination of Roy's work is necessary. However, she depicts the hardships of marginalised individuals; some claim that she may make them appear overly unique or unusual. Telling these stories without making them appear like symbols of misery is challenging. The works "The God of Small Things" and "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" by Arundhati Roy ultimately provide insight into the lives of India's underprivileged classes. Her tales challenge the laws that keep these people down while demonstrating their resilience and self-determination. However, as we read, we should also consider the narrative style and any shortcomings of these stories.

Advocacy of Social Justice in Roy's Non-Fiction:

As demonstrated by books like "Walking with the Comrades" and "The Algebra of Infinite Justice," Arundhati Roy's nonfiction advocacy is both provocative and challenging. She passionately critiques a range of political and social concerns in her works, frequently defying the prevailing situation and advocating for marginalised groups. Through "Walking with the Comrades," Roy immerses readers in the core of India's Naxalite-Maoist insurgency. She shares her personal story of living in the forests with guerrilla fighters, illuminating their goals, hardships, and the terrible reality they encounter. Through her story, Roy explores the underlying causes of the violence, including land rights, displacement, and injustice, challenging popular narratives that frequently depict the Maoists as only terrorists. Her sympathetic portrayal of the rebels is both powerful and divisive, as it lends a human face to a group that is frequently condemned in popular culture.

Another potent work of non-fiction in which Roy shifts her critical focus to international issues, especially in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, is "The Algebra of Infinite Justice." She challenges the American use of "infinite justice" to defend its war activities in this essay. Roy draws attention to the human cost of war and the degradation of civil liberties in the name of security by voicing worries about the collateral damage and civilian casualties brought on by these operations. This essay has become a topic of heated discussion due to her unreserved criticism of American foreign policy and her demands for accountability. Critics argue that Arundhati Roy's nonfiction advocacy, characterised by her combative tone and outspoken questioning of established power structures, can be polarising. However, her dedication to justice and human rights is demonstrated by her capacity to elevate the voices of the oppressed, whether they are those of indigenous tribes in "Walking with the Comrades" or the victims of international conflicts in "The Algebra of Infinite Justice." As a result, it is clear that Arundhati Roy's nonfiction advocacy is distinguished by her courage and steadfast dedication to social justice. Even if her essays could provoke controversy and discussion, they serve as an essential reminder of the value of challenging authority, amplifying underrepresented voices, and holding organisations and governments accountable for their actions.

Conclusion:

Renowned novelist and activist Arundhati Roy has a distinctive ability for writing novels that speak to readers' emotions and touch on issues of National consciousness. Her tales, either in non-fiction works like "Walking with the Comrades," "The Algebra of Infinite Justice," and "Azadi," or in fiction like "The God of Small Things" and "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness," are compelling investigations of how people find social consciousness, bravery, and make decisions despite hardship. "The God of Small Things," Roy shows us as people of the downtrodden Paravan community, such as Ammu and Velutha. Despite being treated as "Untouchables" by society, these characters' love transcends social expectations. Roy demonstrates to us throughout their experience that love can be both empowering and challenging. It emphasises how people have the power to put love ahead of discrimination, even in the face of overwhelming difficulties. "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" digs deeper into Roy's examination of empowerment and identity. Anjum, a transgender woman, makes a space for herself and people like her to live authentically by refusing to fit in with society's expectations. This illustrates the strength of self-identity and National consciousness to find one's own path in a society that frequently disregards individuality.

These concepts are further emphasised in Roy's nonfiction writings. She immerses us in the core of the Naxalite-Maoist insurgency in India in "Walking with the Comrades," exposing the hardships of those who are ostracised by both the state and society. By humanising the insurgents and illuminating their motivations, resiliency, and agency, Roy's story challenges stereotypes about them. She demonstrates that people may make decisions to oppose injustice even when faced with conflict. "Azadi" and "The Algebra of Infinite Justice" adopt a more comprehensive viewpoint, tackling

global concerns and the aftermath of war and power. Roy's critical analysis of the world after 9/11 and the ramifications of "infinite justice" demonstrate her dedication to challenging authority and promoting justice. Her outspoken style inspires readers to confront injustice and fosters critical thinking. Whether they are nonfiction or fiction, Arundhati Roy's stories consistently serve as a reminder that people can make decisions, rebel, and empower both themselves and others. Arundhati Roy honours social justice as a motivating factor that may encourage change despite immovable barriers. Her writings inspire us to discover our own agency and make a positive impact on a more just and equitable society, as they are not only narratives. Roy encourages people to have courage and make decisions that can result in National consciousness throughout her works in literature.

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