



<https://doi.org/10.53032/tvcr/2025.v7n4.29>

---

## Fiction as Resistance: Arundhati Roy's Vision of an Unjust India

---

**Mangala Lokhande**

Research Scholar,  
R.T.M Nagpur University  
[mangalalokhande4@gmail.com](mailto:mangalalokhande4@gmail.com)

**Dr. Usha Sakure**

Professor in Manoharrao Kamdi Mahavidyalaya,  
Nagpur, Maharashtra

### Abstract

Arundhati Roy's novels exemplify the transformative potential of literature as political resistance. Through *The God of Small Things* (1997) and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), Arundhati constructs fiction that questions the moral failures of contemporary India, where caste hierarchy, gendered oppression, religious fundamentalism and persecution, and state violence perpetuate structural injustice and oppression. Roy's fiction refuses to isolate the aesthetic from the ethical; instead, they transform storytelling into an act of defiance. This paper analyzes Roy's novels through a postcolonial and feminist lens to expose how narrative form, language, and character embodiment become tools of dissent. The analysis elaborates that Roy's fiction destabilizes hegemonic discourses and reclaims the silenced voices of India's marginalized communities. Ultimately, the study concludes that Roy's work establishes fiction as an ethical space of resistance, where empathy, love, and imagination become powerful tools against systemic injustice.

**Keywords:** Arundhati Roy, resistance, postcolonial fiction, injustice, caste, gender, subaltern, nationalism, ecofeminism

### 1. Introduction:

Arundhati Roy occupies a unique position within contemporary Indian English literature as both a novelist and an activist whose creative imagination is closely linked with her political

# The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 7 & Issue 4 (October 2025)

convictions. Her first novel, *The God of Small Things*, which won the Booker Prize in 1997, challenges popular ideas about Indian modernity by revealing the intersections of caste, gender, and class oppression and inequality. Twenty years later, her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, expanded Roy's moral geography, encompassing the voices of hijras, Dalits, Kashmiris, and the forgotten people who inhabit the peripheries of India. Roy herself once remarked, "Fiction is the truest thing there ever was" (*The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile* 28), meaning that storytelling can reveal moral truths that are hidden by official and political histories. Roy's fiction thus resists the compartmentalization of art and activism. Her narratives represent not merely social critique but a sustained attempt to imagine alternative ways of living. The emotional, political, and ecological dimensions of her work constitute a radical re-examination of India as both a postcolonial and postmodern entity. *The God of Small Things* represents the personal as political through the pathetic love story of Ammu and Velutha, where the transgression of caste lines becomes an act of rebellion against centuries of social stratification. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy expands her criticism from domestic and regional spaces to the national and global, challenging militarism, religious nationalism and politics, and the global platform. Arundhati's oeuvre, therefore, emerges as an ethical counter-story to the state's rhetoric of progress. Her fiction works as Edward Said describes "the effort to restore the human dimension to the political struggle" (*Culture and Imperialism* 57). The present paper explores how Arundhati reclaims fiction as a tool of resistance where language becomes rebellious and narrative form becomes political'

## 2. Research Objectives:

The main goal of this study is to analyze how Arundhati Roy's fiction functions as a literary form of resistance against the sociopolitical and cultural hierarchies that structure contemporary India. Roy's work challenges the ideologies that support caste dominance, patriarchy, nationalism, and capitalist exploitation, and reimagines her novels as ethical and political narratives.

Specifically, the research seeks to:

1. Examine the elaboration of oppression and resistance in *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, focusing on the interconnectivity of caste, gender, religion, and government dominance.
2. Investigate how novelists' storytelling strategies, such as fragmentation, hybridity, and non-linear narrative, operate as forms of subversion against hegemonic modes.
3. Evaluate how Roy's narratives embody postcolonial and feminist theories of resistance through their language, imagery, and characters.
4. Assess Roy's contribution to resistance literature in the bigger framework of postcolonial thought and feminist perspectives.
5. Explore how Roy's active and creative voices converge to make an alternative moral and political vision for an independent nation.

# The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 7 & Issue 4 (October 2025)

Through these aims, the paper proposes to demonstrate that Roy's fiction constitutes a sustained literary resistance that redefines both the political function of the novel and the ethical notion of the novelist.

### 3. Research Method:

This article employs a qualitative, interpretive, and deep textual analytical method, hidden in literary hermeneutics and cultural theory. The approach connects focused close reading with contextual interpretation, allowing for a multidimensional understanding of Roy's fiction as a site of political and ethical insights.

**Textual Analysis:** Important episodes and motifs from *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* are exposed to connect how personal histories intersect with collective trauma. Special attention is paid to narrative form, symbolism, linguistic experimentation, and the representation of marginalized voices and giving a voice to them.

**Contextual Reading:** Roy's fiction is set within the socio-political context of modern India, marked by caste discrimination, gender inequality, environmental exploitation, and religious violence. Roy's fiction is read as a response to these historical and structural societal norms

**Theoretical Framework:** The study uses the insights of postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, and feminist thinkers like bell hooks, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and Hélène Cixous. These perspectives illuminate how Roy's narratives destabilize dominant discourses while articulating subaltern agency, especially for women.

This methodological framework underscores that Roy's fiction is not just a simple copy of reality, but an active force that aims to criticize society and change people's minds using powerful storytelling and clear moral thoughts.

### 4. Research Methodology:

The present research adopts an interdisciplinary methodology that integrates textual, theoretical, and the real -words contextual approaches to examine how Arundhati Roy's fiction acts as a strong form of protest. The methodology is structured around three main angles: textual analysis, theoretical application, and contextual integration each of which is important in understanding how Roy's fiction engages with India's complex socio-political scenario.

**a. Textual Analysis:** At the core of this methodology is close textual reading, emphasizing the internal mechanics of Roy's fiction, its structure, imagery, and stylistic innovations. Her use of non-linear chronology, fragmented temporality, and code-switching between English and vernacular languages (particularly Malayalam and Urdu) is analyzed as a conscious aesthetic of disruption. In a nutshell, the study looks closely at her style, like jumping time and mixing languages to show it's a deliberate way to break traditional narrative rules. This narrative fragmentation reflects the broken lives of her characters and symbolically resists the linear logic of colonial and patriarchal narratives. As Homi Bhabha argues, the "disruptive temporality of postcolonial narration" opens the door for new meanings. (The Location of Culture 219). Roy's

# The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 7 & Issue 4 (October 2025)

manipulation of story time and language blending is a political statement, thus becoming a rebellion against both colonial linguistic hegemony and realist narrative.

**b. Theoretical Application:** This research employs postcolonial theory as its main framework. Concepts such as hybridity (Bhabha), subaltern agency (Spivak), and cultural resistance (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin) inform the reading of Roy's fiction as a counter-discourse, meaning her writing speaks back against or challenges the dominant historical and political contexts. Feminist theory; particularly the works of bell hooks, Cixous, and Mohanty- is used to show how Roy's women characters resist patriarchal violence using their emotional resilience, their sexuality, and by telling their own life stories. Combining Postcolonial and Feminist theories lets the research analyze how Roy resists multiple, overlapping forms of oppression like class, gender, and caste (intersectional resistance). It also uses Ecofeminism to link her critique of environmental degradation and its relationship with social inequality. Vandana Shiva's ecofeminism is also relevant, as it parallels Roy's critique of environmental degradation and its relationship to social inequity (*Staying Alive* 54). Roy's fiction must be read alongside her public intellectual persona and political engagement. Her non-fiction essays, such as *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014) and *Listening to Grasshoppers* (2009), are used as supplementary texts to help understand the ideas and themes in her literary world. Arundhati's non-fiction and fiction articulate the same ethical anxieties; about democracy, militarization, and corporate exploitation; that animate her novels. The research, therefore, uses a dialogic method, treating Roy's fiction and non-fiction as intertextual commentaries on the moral problems of society.

The combination of textual evidence from the books, theoretical frameworks (academic ideas, and contextual insights (real-world information) ensures methodological rigor while acknowledging the inseparability of art and politics in Roy's oeuvre. Through this methodology, the paper sees Roy's fiction as more than just a reflection of reality (representation); it's a performative resistance. This means her writing itself is the action of disagreement and the reimagining of justice through the narrative act itself.

## 5. Literature Review:

Critical discourse on Arundhati Roy's fiction uses many different analytical frameworks and approaches, like postcolonial, feminist criticism, cultural studies and eco-political critique. Her work continues to inspire debate about literature's moral responsibility and how art connects with activism in postcolonial nations.

**5.1 Roy as Novelist and Activist:** Arundhati Roy's outstanding position as both novelist and political essayist has drawn important scholarly attention. John Thieme observes that Roy's "creative and political energies coalesce into an idiom of resistance that bridges art and activism" (*Postcolonial Con-texts* 112). Meenakshi Mukherjee similarly emphasizes her stylistic innovation, saying that Roy's unique style of using the English language "liberates it from the colonial yoke by infusing it with Indian cadence and rhythm" (*The Perishable Empire* 217). This use of language

# *The Voice of Creative Research*

Vol. 7 & Issue 4 (October 2025)

as an act of resistance aligns with postcolonial theorist Bill Ashcroft's concept of "writing back to the empire," which positions language as a site of decolonization (The Empire Writes Back 5). Aijaz Ahmad, though often critical of Roy's political romanticism, concedes that *The God of Small Things* exposes the contradictions of Kerala's progressive left, highlighting the decay of Marxist idealism in postcolonial India (In Theory 56). For Ahmad, Roy's fiction dramatizes how ideology, when detached from moral conscience, replicates structures of domination. Aijaz Ahmad, despite criticizing Roy's political romanticism, acknowledges that *The God of Small Things* exposes the contradictions of Kerala's progressive left, highlighting the decay of Marxist idealism in postcolonial India. For Ahmad, Roy's fiction dramatizes how ideology, when detached from moral conscience, replicates structures of injustice.

**5.2 Postcolonial Hybridity and Subaltern Voice:** Homi K. Bhabha's theorization of hybridity provides an important framework for understanding Roy's narrative practice. Roy's practice of interweaving English with Malayalam or Urdu is an example of hybridity. This linguistic mixing operates in the "third space," which is a liminal or in-between cultural space where: It resists the dominance and strict rules of single languages (like English). It breaks down linguistic hierarchies and creates new, complex cultural meanings that go beyond what a single language could do. Through this hybridity, Roy's fiction challenges the epistemic authority of colonial discourse and questions the historical authority and control of the colonizer's language and worldview (specifically English). And reclaims linguistic agency for the subaltern and gives voice and control over language back to the subaltern, allowing them to express their own cultural reality without being confined by the colonial language's rules or limits. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's question "Can the subaltern speak?" echoes through Roy's fictional universe. Through her marginalized characters like Velutha, Ammu, Anjum, and Tilo, she articulates profound moral and emotional truths that the dominant order suppresses; she has given voice to them. In essence, Roy uses her narrative to make the unheard voices of the margins heard and to validate their experiences. Arundhati's work illustrates James C. Scott's concept of "hidden transcripts of resistance." Roy's fiction works as a "hidden transcript" where the subversive or resistant voices of the marginalized (the subaltern characters) are preserved and expressed. These voices survive and operate beneath the surface of the hegemonic silence (the enforced quiet or silence imposed by the dominant power structure).

**5.3 Feminist and Intersectional Readings:** Roy's fiction also operates at the intersection of feminist, postcolonial, and Dalit discourses. Bell hooks' assertion that "the personal is political" (Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center 24) resonates with Arundhati's depiction of women's lives as microcosms of structural inequality and she uses Ammu's defiance of caste and gender taboos in *The God of Small Things* embodies hooks' call for intersectional consciousness where gender oppression and humiliation cannot be separated from caste. Roy uses the personal stories

## *The Voice of Creative Research*

Vol. 7 & Issue 4 (October 2025)

of her female characters to expose and challenge the interlocking systems of oppression (gender, caste, and class).

Chandra Talpade Mohanty's critique of "universalist Western feminism" (Feminism Without Borders 21) underscores the significance of Roy's localized, context-specific portrayal of women's struggles. Roy does not idealize resistance; rather, she presents it as fragile, embodied, and deeply personal, and Roy rejects the idea of a single, universal female experience and instead shows the complex, personal reality of women's localized struggles.

Hélène Cixous's idea of *écriture féminine* ("writing the body") finds resonance in Roy's lyrical, sensuous prose that transforms female experience into language itself ("The Laugh of the Medusa" 883). Her writing style is highly lyrical and sensuous, making the female experience central. *Écriture Féminine*: This theory posits that women should write from their bodies and experiences, essentially transforming personal, lived female experience into language itself.

Nivedita Menon views Roy's feminist politics within a larger conversation of dissent in India, observing that Roy's narratives "redefine citizenship by foregrounding affect and vulnerability as political virtues" (Seeing Like a Feminist 146).

This perspective bridges feminist ethics with democratic critique, aligning with Elleke Boehmer's idea of postcolonial writing as "an act of moral re-inscription" (Colonial and Postcolonial Literature 23). In essence, Roy's fiction acts as an ethical and moral project that uses feminist perspectives to critique power and rewrite the moral terms of citizenship.

**5.4 Ecofeminism and Environmental Justice:** Roy's work also resonates with ecofeminist thought, especially in its critique of environmental destruction and capitalist modernity. Vandana Shiva argues that "the logic of capitalist patriarchy reduces nature and women to instruments of exploitation" (Staying Alive 67). Roy's work critiques how the same destructive mindset (capitalist patriarchy) that exploits the environment also oppresses women.

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy extends this critique through characters who live amidst ecological and social decay, transforming ruins into sites of renewal. Her environmental vision echoes Shiva's call for "a politics of care and interdependence." Roy portrays marginalized communities finding hope and creating a model for ecological and social healing within destruction, prioritizing care and connection over capitalist exploitation.)

Priyamvada Gopal observes that Roy's fiction envisions "a community of the excluded" that transcends identity boundaries (The Indian English Novel 89). Similarly, Sharmila Rege highlights that Roy's representation of caste violence and Dalit suffering forms part of "a feminist archive of resistance" (Writing Caste/Writing Gender 134.)

These interpretations locate Roy within a continuum of subaltern and feminist thought that challenges the moral indifference of neoliberal India. Critics view Roy as a writer who uses the voices of the marginalized (subaltern) and women (feminist thought) to expose and fight the lack of ethics and compassion in India's current capitalist-driven society.

## *The Voice of Creative Research*

Vol. 7 & Issue 4 (October 2025)

**5.5 Roy's Narrative Ethics and Moral Vision:** Roy's aesthetics of resistance, as critics have noted, is inseparable from her ethical stance. Susie Tharu and K. Lalita assert that representing Dalit experience and desire in fiction is itself a political act (Women Writing in India 289). Roy's choice to write about marginalized Dalit lives is not just a creative decision but a fundamental political and moral challenge to the status quo. By extending empathy toward the most marginalized, Roy reclaims literature as moral inquiry. Edward Said's claim that the role of the intellectual is "to speak truth to power" (Culture and Imperialism 57) aptly describes Roy's literary and public persona. Roy is a writer and public figure who uses truth and empathy to challenge authority and fight for the oppressed.) As Thieme concludes, "Roy writes from the interstices of anger and love, transforming fiction into a space of ethical rebellion" (Postcolonial Con-texts 118). Collectively, the scholarship converges on a shared understanding: Roy's fiction is not a retreat into aestheticism but a continuous confrontation with structures of domination. Roy uses her stories to angrily and lovingly challenge powerful, oppressive systems.

### **6. Analysis and Discussion:**

Roy's novels resist not merely through their thematic content but also through their narrative architecture and linguistic experimentation. Her novels enact what Edward Said calls "the insurgent energies of the narrative imagination" (Culture and Imperialism 71), challenging the authority of dominant histories and ideologies. Roy's books use an unusual writing style and structure to actively rebel against mainstream history and ideas.

Both *The God of Small Things* (1997) and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) stage the contest between state-sanctioned power and human vulnerability, transforming the novel into a moral and political battleground. By doing this, the novels become more than just stories; they are a moral and political battleground a space where she directly confronts issues of right and wrong, and challenges political authority. In the shortest terms, Roy's two novels show the fight between powerful governments and vulnerable people, turning the stories into moral and political backgrounds.

**6.1 *The God of Small Things: The Politics of the Intimate:*** Roy's debut novel dramatizes how private transgressions reveal the violence of public systems. Set in Kerala, it chronicles the tragic love between Ammu, a Syrian Christian woman, and Velutha, an untouchable carpenter. The novel shows that private mistakes and forbidden love (transgressions) end up exposing the cruelty and oppression (violence) embedded in larger social and public systems, especially India's caste system.

Their forbidden relationship violates what Arundhati calls "the Love Laws; laws that lay down who should be loved, and how, and how much" (*The God of Small Things* 33). This seemingly personal rebellion exposes the pervasive tyranny of caste and patriarchy embedded in Indian society. This private act of rebellion exposes the widespread cruelty of the caste system and male dominance (patriarchy) that control and oppress Indian society.

## *The Voice of Creative Research*

Vol. 7 & Issue 4 (October 2025)

Meenakshi Mukherjee identifies Roy's "politics of intimacy" as a strategy that transforms domestic space into a political arena (*The Perishable Empire* 219). The novel's domestic conflicts; family honor, sexual repression, and generational trauma; mirror the broader moral decay of a society obsessed with purity and hierarchy. Roy makes the family home a political battlefield where personal struggles reflect society's moral decay and obsession with hierarchy.

Ammu's defiance of caste norms represents a gendered act of resistance that, while ending tragically, reveals the hypocrisies of both religion and progressivism. Her personal rebellion reveals that the institutions and ideas that claim to be moral or forward-thinking are actually full of prejudice and double standards. Ammu's tragic female resistance exposes the hypocrisy of religious and modern social beliefs regarding caste.

Velutha's brutal death at the hands of the police signifies what Spivak terms "the silencing of the subaltern" ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 294). His body becomes a site upon which social order is reasserted, illustrating that the caste system's violence is sustained through both state machinery and collective complicity. Velutha's brutal death proves that the oppressed are silenced, and that the caste system's violence is supported by both the state and the people. Yet, in depicting Velutha's humanity and tenderness, Roy resurrects his voice through fiction; transforming narrative itself into an act of remembrance and protest. By doing this, the act of telling his story (narrative) becomes a way to remember him and a powerful protest against the injustice of his killing. Roy's manipulation of language in this novel is also an act of resistance. She breaks syntactic conventions, capitalizes random words, and reorders phonetic rhythms to reproduce the musicality of Malayalam-inflected English. This linguistic subversion dismantles colonial hierarchies of English grammar and its rigid structures.

Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity clarifies this approach: language becomes "the site of negotiation between colonizer and colonized" (*The Location of Culture* 114). Roy's "child-eye" narration; fragmented, circular, and non-linear; further destabilizes narrative realism, suggesting that trauma can only be expressed through fractured form. This unusual structure destroys traditional, realistic storytelling, suggesting that deep, lasting pain (trauma) can only be properly shown using a fractured (broken) style.

Politically, *The God of Small Things* also critiques leftist hypocrisy. This fiction critiques the Communist Party (leftist hypocrisy) by showing how the political party became corrupt. The character of Comrade Pillai, a self-serving communist, symbolizes the moral decay of ideological purity. Aijaz Ahmad notes that Roy's portrayal of Kerala's left reflects her "deep ambivalence toward political idealism divorced from empathy" (*In Theory* 57). Through this, Roy asserts that true resistance arises not from dogma but from compassion and moral courage and not just political ideologies.

In essence, Ammu and Velutha's love, though crushed, becomes a subversive act that redefines dignity and human worth.

# *The Voice of Creative Research*

Vol. 7 & Issue 4 (October 2025)

The novel's resistance operates through the politics of smallness; the quiet defiance of those who love, remember, and grieve in a world that demands conformity. The forbidden love between Ammu and Velutha, even though it was destroyed, becomes a subversive (rebellious) act that redefines human dignity and worth.

**6.2 *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness: The Politics of the Collective:*** In her second fiction, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy moves her focus from the personal to the collective, creating a multi-voiced epic that traverses India's most contested spaces from Delhi's graveyards to the militarized valleys of Kashmir. The novel's protagonist, Anjum, a Hijra, transforms an abandoned graveyard into a sanctuary for society's outcasts.

This symbolic transformation life flourishing amidst death embodies Roy's ethics of radical inclusivity, accepting absolutely everyone, especially the rejected. The graveyard sanctuary embodies Roy's belief that a beautiful, inclusive community can grow among society's outcasts.

As Priyamvada Gopal notes, Roy envisions "a utopian enclave of the rejected, where new forms of solidarity are imagined" (*The Indian English Novel* 91).

Anjum's character destabilizes binaries of gender, religion, and belonging. Her life creates a "third space" of existence a new, complex identity that is neither one thing nor the other, but something entirely new, beyond established social norms. Her identity defies the categories that define social normalcy, creating what Bhabha would call a "third space" of existence (*The Location of Culture* 113).

Through Anjum's life, Roy foregrounds the struggles of India's transgender and Muslim communities, both of which are subjected to exclusion under dominant nationalist discourses. Anjum's conversion of the graveyard into a "Jannat Guest House" epitomizes the reclamation of marginal spaces as sites of hope and resistance. In a nutshell, Anjum's story highlights the exclusion of transgender and Muslim people; her guest house in the graveyard symbolizes turning abandoned spaces into places of hope.

Tilo's narrative shifts Roy's focus from general social exclusion to the brutality of the government (state violence). Parallel to Anjum's narrative runs that of Tilo, an architect and political dissident involved with Kashmiri insurgents. The novel shows Kashmir as a place of immense oppression where democracy has failed and been replaced by the military.

Roy writes: "In Kashmir, the old laws of gravity have been repealed. The dead no longer stay underground" (*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* 220). This haunting imagery evokes what Edward Said terms "the moral memory of the oppressed" (*Culture and Imperialism* 59), where the dead persist as witnesses against the silence of empire means that the people who were killed and oppressed don't simply vanish; they persist as witnesses whose existence and memory constantly testify against the silence and injustice of the powerful state ("empire"). Tilo's love for Musa, a freedom fighter, is a symbol of empathy across political boundaries. Her refusal to conform to the roles of wife, citizen, or patriot aligns with bell hooks' notion of "feminist resistance as self-

# The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 7 & Issue 4 (October 2025)

assertion” (Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center 54). Roy’s female characters are not passive victims but moral agents whose defiance redefines political statements. The novel's broken structure uses many different forms of writing (letters, poems) to represent the coexistence of many different voices and worldviews (heteroglossia).

Sharmila Rege observes that such polyphony “mirrors the cacophony of Indian democracy itself” (Writing Caste/Writing Gender 136). This formal openness resists the homogenizing voice of nationalism and allows marginalized voices to co-author the nation’s true story. The novel’s many voices reflect India’s noisy democracy, resisting the single nationalistic voice and letting the marginalized co-author the story.

Environmental degradation forms another layer of resistance in the novel. Through references to toxic rivers, vanished forests, and displaced communities, Roy connects ecological devastation with social inequality. Damage to nature is another form of resistance in the novel. Through references to polluted rivers, lost forests, and displaced people, Roy shows that ecological harm is directly tied to social inequality and injustice. Vandana Shiva's insight that exploiting nature is like exploiting the poor helps explain Roy's focus on the environment. The graveyard-turned-refuge (the "Jannat Guest House") is an ecological metaphor; a tiny example (microcosm) of renewal and life growing out of destruction and devastation.

Both novels, despite being different in scope, converge in their moral vision: to expose how love, empathy, and storytelling challenge the machinery of oppression. Roy transforms the novel into what Elleke Boehmer describes as “a moral imagination that contests empire’s silence” (Colonial and Postcolonial Literature 24). Both novels prove that love and storytelling are powerful moral forces that break the silence and fight against oppression.

## 7. Findings:

The comparative analysis of *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* reveals that Arundhati Roy’s fiction constitutes a sustained literary intervention into India’s moral and political problems. Roy's books aren't just stories; they are a sustained literary intervention; a constant, active move to challenge and engage with the deep ethical and political issues facing India. Her novels are not passive reflections of oppression but active instruments of resistance, where language, form, and emotion converge to challenge hegemonic narratives. The key findings may be organized under the following thematic axes: This final passage means that Roy's novels don't just reflect oppression; they actively fight against it. Her books are active instruments of resistance because they use: Language, Form (structure) and Emotion. These elements all work together (converge) to challenge the dominant, controlling stories (hegemonic narratives) told by those who are oppressed.

**7.1 Narrative as Resistance:** Roy’s narrative form itself functions as resistance. By rejecting linear storytelling and realist conventions, she subverts the aesthetic norms inherited from colonial modernity. The fragmentation, repetition, and child-like syntax of *The God of Small*

# The Voice of Creative Research

Vol. 7 & Issue 4 (October 2025)

*Things* or the polyphonic, collage-like structure of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* undermine the illusion of order and coherence that sustains the rhetoric of nationalism. In *The God of Small Things*, the broken, repetitive, and child-like language challenges old writing norms. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, the mixing of many different voices (polyphonic, collage-like structure) breaks down the false idea of order and unity that supports nationalistic propaganda. This experimentation aligns with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's call for "decolonizing the imagination" (Decolonising the Mind 88). For Roy, narrative fragmentation becomes both a mirror of historical rupture and a mode of ethical witnessing. This means that Roy's experimental writing style matches Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's call to free our way of thinking from colonial influence ("decolonizing the imagination").

**7.2 Intersectionality of Oppression:** Roy's vision of injustice is profoundly intersectional. She portrays caste, class, gender, religion, and sexuality not as isolated hierarchies but as interlocking systems of power. Ammu's transgressive love in *The God of Small Things* and Anjum's marginalized identity in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* illustrate that social violence operates simultaneously across multiple axes. Ammu's forbidden love and Anjum's marginalized identity prove that social violence happens across multiple axes (categories) at the same time. Roy's vision of injustice as intersectional means she shows how different forms of oppression, like caste, class, gender, and religion, are not separate but are interconnected systems of society. Roy's fiction thus humanizes abstract theories of oppression by embodying them in lived This echoes Kimberlé Crenshaw's insight that intersectionality "captures the overlapping vulnerabilities that single-axis frameworks overlook" ("Mapping the Margins" 1241). Roy's fiction thus humanizes abstract theories of oppression by embodying them in lived experience. By showing these overlapping oppressions through the lived experiences of her characters (like Ammu and Anjum), Roy's novels humanize and make real these abstract theories of oppression

**7.3 The Political Ethics of Compassion:** Both novels argue that the foundation of resistance is compassion and empathy. Roy's main protagonists (Ammu, Velutha, Tilo, Anjum) challenge authority using empathy and moral imagination, not rigid political beliefs. Their defiance takes human feeling and dignity (the human) back from being controlled by cold politics (the political). This is consistent with Martha Nussbaum's argument that literature can foster "the narrative imagination essential to ethical life" (Poetic Justice 11). Roy's humanism rejects both capitalist utilitarianism and religious nationalism, proposing instead a moral politics grounded in care, grief, and solidarity. In a nutshell, Roy's novels foster the moral imagination (like Nussbaum suggests) by rejecting greedy politics and religious extremism, advocating instead for a politics based on care and solidarity.

**7.4 Representation of the Subaltern Voice:** Roy's fiction amplifies the silenced voices of the marginalized the Dalit, the Hijra, the Muslim, and the insurgent. Through lyrical narration and emotional interiority, she reclaims narrative space for those historically excluded from it. Using

# *The Voice of Creative Research*

Vol. 7 & Issue 4 (October 2025)

beautiful, emotional storytelling, she reclaims the space in literature for these groups who have historically been kept out of opportunities and freedom. This practice aligns with Gayatri Spivak's assertion that the subaltern "cannot speak" within hegemonic structures unless language itself is transformed ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 308). Roy's linguistic playfulness her mixture of idioms, songs, and vernacular words serves precisely that function: it breaks open English to accommodate the rhythms of Indian reality. Roy changes the English language by mixing in Indian idioms so the voices of the oppressed can finally be heard within the dominant structure.

**7.5 The Collapse of the Ideal Nation:** Her portrayal of caste oppression, communal violence, and militarization dismantles the myth of India as a harmonious democracy. Roy reveals the contradictions of India's postcolonial modernity the widening gap between constitutional ideals and lived realities. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, the state's complicity in suppressing dissent and erasing minorities demonstrates what Partha Chatterjee calls "the double bind of postcolonial nationalism," wherein the state reproduces colonial hierarchies under a national guise (*The Nation and Its Fragments* 102). Roy's fiction thus reimagines the nation not as a territory of power but as a community of compassion among the dispossessed. In the shortest terms: The government's oppression shows how new nations repeat colonial cruelty; Roy imagines the true nation as a community of compassion among the dispossessed.

**7.6 Environmental and Ethical Consciousness:** Roy's critique includes the environment, showing that damage to nature (polluted rivers, deforestation) reflects moral decay in society. The graveyard in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* becomes a living metaphor where decay and death actively nurture renewal and sustenance. Roy's fiction, therefore, integrates ecological awareness into its political vision, suggesting that justice must encompass both human and environmental survival. As Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence" explains, environmental destruction often unfolds invisibly, harming the poor most severely (*Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* 7). In summary, Roy's fiction transforms resistance into both a beautiful art form (aesthetic) and a moral commitment (ethical principle). Her novels exemplify what Elleke Boehmer describes as "the moral urgency of postcolonial storytelling, where the act of narration becomes a gesture of survival" (*Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* 25). Her novels demonstrate the moral urgency of postcolonial storytelling, where the very act of telling the story becomes a crucial gesture of survival for the oppressed and marginalized. In the shortest terms: Roy's fiction makes resistance a moral and artistic goal, where storytelling itself is an urgent act of survival.

## **8. Conclusion:**

Roy redefines the political function of the novel, transforming it into a space where language, emotion, and ethics converge to confront systemic injustice. Arundhati Roy's fiction stands as one of the most eloquent articulations of moral resistance in contemporary world literature. Through *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, her narrative vision dismantles the binaries that separate the private from the political, the aesthetic from the ethical, and the

## *The Voice of Creative Research*

Vol. 7 & Issue 4 (October 2025)

personal from the collective. This means Roy's storytelling breaks down the traditional divisions between things that are usually kept separate. She shows that these pairs are actually connected: Private is connected to the political, and aesthetics are connected to the ethical. Personal experience is connected to collective efforts. Roy's resistance is not violent or aggressive; it is based on art, emotion, and morality. By portraying the ordinary lives of those silenced by history the Dalit lover, the abandoned mother, the transgender woman, the insurgent, the refugee she transforms vulnerability into defiance. In Roy's moral universe, compassion becomes an act of revolution. This aligns with Edward Said's belief that the writer's task is "to restore a sense of the human to the inhuman world of political power" (Representations of the Intellectual 23). In the shortest terms, Roy sees compassion as a revolution, and this matches Said's idea that writers should restore humanity to cold political power.

*The God of Small Things* exposes how the politics of caste and desire destroy individual lives, while *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* expands that critique to the scale of the nation. Both novels interrogate the contradictions of India's postcolonial democracy: its celebration of freedom alongside its perpetuation of casteism, patriarchy, and state violence. Together, they trace a moral continuum from the "small things" of private grief to the "utmost" concerns of collaboration.

Roy's prose is not ornamental but insurgent it bears witness to suffering while imagining alternative modes of coexistence, and her artistic method merges realism with allegory, lyricism with reportage, thereby bridging the gap between fiction and political testimony. Her prose is not ornamental but insurgent it bears witness to suffering while imagining alternative modes of coexistence. This quality situates her among global writers of conscience such as Toni Morrison, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Salman Rushdie who regard storytelling as an ethical act. These writers all share the belief that telling a story is fundamentally an ethical act a moral duty. Her quote, "To be trapped inside a story that was not yours was the greatest crime," means that being forced to live by a narrative, history, or identity created by others (like the powerful state) is the ultimate injustice. Roy insists that people must tell their own stories. In an era of rising authoritarianism, ecological crisis, and cultural homogenization, Roy's fiction insists on the sanctity of dissent. As she writes in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*: "To be trapped inside a story that was not yours was the greatest crime. To rewrite it was salvation" (Roy 254). This sentiment encapsulates her literary philosophy: that resistance begins with reclaiming the power to narrate. In the shortest terms: Resistance starts by reclaiming your own story, because being forced to live by someone else's story is the worst injustice. Her fiction, therefore, is not merely a mirror to India's injustices it is a moral intervention, a political aesthetic, and above all, a celebration of the human capacity to endure and to love. Ultimately, Roy's novels exemplify the potential of literature to imagine justice when law fails, to preserve memory when history erases, and to create meaning when life collapses under violence. Her fiction, therefore, is not merely a mirror to India's injustices it is a moral intervention, a political aesthetic, and above all, a celebration of the human capacity to

# *The Voice of Creative Research*

Vol. 7 & Issue 4 (October 2025)

endure. The essay, "Fiction as Resistance," concludes that Arundhati Roy's art is not just about India's problems, but speaks to a universal human struggle the constant effort to regain dignity by using imagination. Roy's fiction goes beyond its specific setting to address a global theme: using creativity and storytelling to stand up for human dignity.

## **Works Cited**

- Ahmad, Aijaz. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. Verso, 1992.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Routledge, 2002.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
- Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. Oxford UP, 2005.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *Signs*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1976, pp. 875–893.
- Gopal, Priyamvada. *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History and Narration*. Oxford UP, 2009.
- hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Pluto Press, 2000.
- Menon, Nivedita. *Seeing Like a Feminist*. Zubaan, 2012.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Duke UP, 2003.
- Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English*. Oxford UP, 2000.
- Rege, Sharmila. *Writing Caste/Writing Gender: Narrating Dalit Women's Testimonios*. Zubaan, 2006.
- Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. IndiaInk, 1997.
- Roy, Arundhati. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Penguin, 2017.
- Roy, Arundhati. *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*. Haymarket Books, 2014.
- Roy, Arundhati. *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*. Hamish Hamilton, 2009.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage, 1994.
- Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. Yale UP, 1990.
- Shiva, Vandana. *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development*. Zed Books, 1989.
- Tharu, Susie, and K. Lalita, editors. *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present*. Vol. 2, *The Feminist Press*, 1993.
- Thieme, John. *Postcolonial Con-texts: Writing Back to the Canon*. Continuum, 2001.