Arundhati Roy as an Environmentalist with Special Reference to the Context of Covid-19

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Reena Ranjith, et al. (2022); www.srinivaspublication.com

PAGE 788

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper examines the environmental concerns of Arundhati Roy as expressed in her fictional writings, assessing the impact of her thoughts and views on the human endeavour to curb environmental hazards.

Methodology: The primary sources of information are the texts' The God of Small Things and The Ministry of Utmost Happiness'. The secondary sources, scholarly articles in journals are taken from internet resources. Qualitative research is done based on the available literature.

Findings: This study attempts to show that environmental issues need a lot of attention in order to gradually tackle the main problems and the effects of COVID-19 on the environment and society. Roy is of the opinion that everyone in the world ought to have access to basic necessities including food, housing, and medical care.

Originality: This paper analyses how Arundhati Roy has played a significant role in being an environmentalist, analysing the issues in the environment and trying to find solutions for them.

Paper Type: Analytical Research Paper.

Keywords: Arundhati Roy, Environment, COVID19, Environmental Projects, Portal, Pandemic, SWOC Analysis

1. INTRODUCTION :

Roy as an Environmentalist:

Arundhati Roy is a stalwart environmentalist and political activist who is passionate about human rights No matter where she is, she handles problems and makes every effort to find the best solution possible in order to protect the environment. She has contributed her Booker prize money and royalties to the Narmada Bachao Andolan, so in a sense, her deeds have spoken louder than her words. This demonstrates her concern and love for the environment.

In the opening lines of her book '*The God of Small Things*', "May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month. The days are long and humid. The river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dust green trees. Red bananas ripen. Jackfruits burst. Dissolute bluebottles hum vacuously in the fruity air. Then they stun themselves against clear windowpanes and die, fatly baffled in the sun" (Roy,1). Roy discusses the abundance of the summer season; its colours and sounds. Everything around is so beautiful and in contradiction, she talks about the inefficiency of the government and its departments like PWD which are causing the roads to be flooded because of the potholes. Roy describes the captivating beauty of the environment in the summer of Ayemenem but as it starts to rain the roads are so bad that the potholes are so wide and deep that small fishes are found in them (Tickell, A. (2007)) [1].

In the opening lines of her novel,'*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness', "*She lived in the graveyard like a tree. At dawn, she saw the crows off and welcomed the bats home. At dusk, she did the opposite. Between shifts, she conferred with the ghosts of vultures that loomed in her high branches. She felt the gentle grip of their talons like an ache in an amputated limb. She gathered they weren't altogether unhappy at having excused themselves and exited from the story" (Roy,1). Roy describes Anjum living in the graveyard like a tree, she herself is a part of the environment since she has nowhere to go. Roy shows the harsh reality of how human behaviour where Anjum or Anjuman has no place in the society

Reena Ranjith, et al. (2022); www.srinivaspublication.com

PAGE 789

International Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences (IJMTS), ISSN: 2581-6012, Vol. 7, No. 2, December 2022

SRINIVAS PUBLICATION

and she lives in the graveyard, she wants to be away from everyone as she is not accepted in the society and she is regarding the environment as her home (An exclusive extract from Arundhati Roy's The ministry of utmost happiness (2022)) [2].

In both her novels,' *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness'*, as she begins the novel, she starts describing the environment and she demonstrates a propensity to discuss issues related to the environment and how it's being ruined through human greed. In an interview, Roy beautifully describes how she loves India and talks about the beauty of Indian rivers, mountains, etc. She also loves India for its remarkable resisting movements, the poorest people resisting the richest people to redefine the meaning of civilization, happiness, and modernity (SOAS [Video], (2013)) [3]. In her writings, we see nature in its pristine beauty as well as nature as destroyed by human activity.

Roy has described environmental issues that have been neglected in Indian civilization for a long time in *The God of Small Things*. She claims that the Universe has been suffering willful ruin for generations, much like Indian women who keep silent in the face of patriarchal subjugation. A movement known as ecofeminism seeks to link feminism with environmentalism here (An Ecocritical Perspective of Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things (2017)) [4]. Ayemenem is situated on the banks of the Meenachal River, which had a lot of water and was extremely stunning during Rahel's time. When Rahel returns, she discusses the changes that have occurred in the environment and the river that has been polluted because of the establishment of the hotel industry on the banks of river Meenachal. This is one of the examples of changes in the river that have occurred over the course of a few years.

Roy in the preface of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, describes "Armies of flying foxes unhinge themselves from the Banyan trees in the old graveyard at magic hour, when the sun has gone but the light has not, and drift across the city like smoke. Each milk-producing cow or buffalo that perished as a result of the chemical relaxation became poisoned vulture bait. Saliva-bearing silver beards flowed from their beaks, and one by one, they died as they plummeted down their branches." The demise of the amicable old birds went unnoticed by most. Here, we see how environmental problems have been greatly exacerbated by human activity while going largely unrecognised.

Roy's notable non-fictional works are *The End of Imagination*, *The Cost of Living*, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, *Power Politics*, *War Talk*, *Power Public in the Age of Empire*, *Listening to the Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, *Kashmir the Case of Freedom* and *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*. In Roy's non-fiction books, the environment is not often explicitly acknowledged. "The majority of my non-fiction writing is an argument, but fiction is where you build a world that you allow the reader to explore. It's a lot more complicated. It is the thing that makes me feel the happiest. I enjoy writing fiction the most because I feel like I'm utilising all of my abilities.", declares Arundhati Roy in a conversation (Khanna, A.2020) [5], (Badajena, P. M. (2017)) [6].

2. RELATED WORKS :

The keywords used to search the literature are environment, environment justice, environment design, Arundhati Roy, Covid -19 and pandemic ranging from the years 2005 to 2022. The search engines used for the search are Google Scholar and Research Gate.

Table 1: Related works on Environment, Arundhati Roy and Covid -19

S. No	Focus	Outcome	Reference
1.	Environment	A thorough investigation has been conducted into the enslavement of Adivasi (Tribal) girls as well as deforestation, poor working conditions for quarry workers, the plight of enslaved zoo animals, inadequate health facilities, filthy rivers, mushrooming slums, mounting poverty, rapidly expanding dumping grounds, and unplanned urbanisation.	Kherdekar, A. D (2019). [7]
2.	Environment	The advent of green cultural studies or ecocriticism, underlines the relevance of environmental concerns and their profound linkages with literature, while also serving as a manifesto for human environmental consciousness.	Anand, D. (2005). [8]
3.	Environment Justice	Comprehends the dynamics and connections between India's continuous ecocide and the Indian government's	Mir, F. A. (2014). [9]

Reena Ranjith, et al. (2022); www.srinivaspublication.com

PAGE 790

International Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences (IJMTS), ISSN: 2581-6012, Vol. 7, No. 2, December 2022

SRINIVAS PUBLICATION

		capitalist policies, particularly the devastation produced by environmentally disastrous major dam projects.	
4.	Environment Design	Asserts that the new product design methodologies, such as designs for the environment and life cycle, have evolved as a result of people's increased awareness of environmental concerns.	Giudice, F., La Rosa, G., & Risitano, A (2006). [10]
5.	Arundhati Roy	Arundhati Roy attracts more attention against the protest of all forms of environmental degradation, massive urbanization, pollution, etc she comes forward to emphasise the significance of protecting India's natural ecosystem in order to shield the population from nature's harsh effects.	RAHMAN, D. M. M (2014). [11]
6.	Covid -19	Focuses on the COVID-19 principles followed by the Indian Railways, as well as their heroic efforts to protect personnel, passengers, and the general public during the COVID-19 national crisis.	Rao, A., & Shailashri, V. T (2020). [12]
7.	Environment	Roy writes to motivate her readers to take action and support the development of their countries and more sustainable earth.	Mohsin, SW, & Taskeen, S (2017). [13]
8.	Environment	Environmental issues are reflected in international literature. Ecological imbalance not only affects living organisms but also has an effect on human existence and the economy.	Reddy, BM, & Shende, SN (2021) [14]
9.	Arundhati Roy	The explanation that concerns regarding the environment is not a latest trend, literary discourses have dealt with the environment for centuries. Roy informs her audience that they are eager participants in the corporate "war" against the tribals.	K. Rekha. (2020) [15]
10.	Pandemic	The political acceptability of nationalisation and universal basic income has increased. The way the pandemic has been received thus far at least shows that we are capable of finding new ways to live. The virus is a portal, a doorway between this world and the next, as Arundhati Roy has stated.	Matthewman, S, & Huppatz, K (2020). [16]
11.	Covid-19	The problems mentioned are relevant given that the pandemic has developed amid terrifying, nebulous future possibilities. Healthcare systems that have had to cope with ongoing shortages of hospital beds, drugs, ventilation equipment, and oxygen have felt the effects the most acutely. In India, calls for universal health care have increased due to the clear and quick failure of the provision of health services.	Paul Boyce, Raina Roy (2022). [17]
12.	Arundhati Roy	Examines Roy's writings on Globalizing dissent; while concentrating on the articles and speeches she has given in those settings. She argues that her writings should be read for their contributions to an important body of postcolonial environmentalist literature.	Taylor & Francis (2009). [18]

3. RESEARCH GAP :

According to the literature review, many environmental studies have been conducted on Arundhati Roy's fictional works, but very few have combined her fictional and non-fictional works to study the

Reena Ranjith, et al. (2022); www.srinivaspublication.com

PAGE 791

International Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences (IJMTS), ISSN: 2581-6012, Vol. 7, No. 2, December 2022

SRINIVAS PUBLICATION

environment. As an environmentalist, there aren't many reactions to the post-COVID ecocritical investigations. There has not been any research taken up on her insightful responses to COVID as a consequence of man's apathy towards nature.

4. RESEARCH AGENDA :

The purpose of the study, "Arundhati Roy as an Environmentalist with Special Reference to Covid - 19," is to evaluate how Arundhati Roy's ideas and beliefs have influenced efforts to reduce environmental risks. The study is based on the environmental concerns that Arundhati Roy presents in her fictional writings. The environment and its problems at the moment are assessed, along with how they relate to the covid -19 pandemic. The problems and solutions presented in this article demonstrate how we should pay more attention to the environment and its concerns in order to prevent the majority of environmental issues.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

The objectives of the study are based on the following points:
(a) To observe how Arundhati Roy use symbols and metaphors in her literary works to convey the importance of the environment to society.
(b) To comprehend Arundhati Roy's nonfictional works' significance from the viewpoint of the environment.
(c) To recognise problems and obstacles related to the post-COVID environment.
(d) This study has the potential to raise public awareness.
(e) To evaluate current and projected outcomes using SWOC Analysis.

6. METHODOLOGY :

The texts' T*he God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness'* are used as the primary sources for this paper. For the secondary sources, scholarly articles in journals are taken from Google Scholar and Research Gate etc. Qualitative research is done based on the available literature. This qualitative research is carried out by examining and interpreting existing knowledge on the subject utilising the keywords "Arundhati Roy, Environment, COVID19, Environmental Projects, Portal" found in online articles, peer-reviewed journals, publications and other websites.

7. ARUNDHATI ROY'S ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS :

Hydro-Electric Dam Project / Sardar Sarovar Project:
The judiciary authorized the construction of thirty major, one hundred thirty-five intermediate, and three thousand small dams in addition to raising the height of the Sardar Sarovar dam. The forty million residents in the region would receive water, irrigation, and electricity as a result of this decision.
Together with Medha Patkar, Roy opposed the Narmada dam project on the grounds that it would force 500,000 people to leave their homes without enough compensation and would not provide the irrigation, drinking water or other benefits that were hoped for. Roy donated the proceeds from her books as well as her Booker prize to the Narmada Bachao Andolan. In the central and western regions of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharastra, she waged a fight against India's huge hydroelectric dam project. Even though they were unable to prevent the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam, the protests garnered international attention and caused the World Bank to reconsider funding similar projects in the future.

India's Nuclear Weaponry:
Arundhati Roy was severely shaken by India and Pakistan's nuclear tests in May 1998. She studied the devastation that might result from a nuclear war. She conveys her opinions to the masses through her essays. Her essay *The End of Imagination* is an attempt to enlighten the masses about the consequences of such nuclear tests. Roy's indictment of the nuclear policy of the Indian government, *The End of Imagination*, was written in response to India's nuclear weapons testing in Pokhran, Rajasthan.

The Muthanga Incident:
The Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha, a social organisation promoting Adivasi land rights in Kerala, organised a substantial land occupation of a piece of a former eucalyptus plantation in the Muthanga Wildlife Reserve.The leaders were detained, a movement member and a police officer were slain. Roy remarked, "You have blood on your hands," to the former chief minister of Kerala. (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2022)) [19].

Reena Ranjith, et al. (2022); www.srinivaspublication.com

PAGE 792

International Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences (IJMTS), ISSN: 2581-6012, Vol. 7, No. 2, December 2022

SRINIVAS PUBLICATION

The executive director of the committee to protect journalists (CPJ), Ann K. Cooper, writes to the prime minister of India expressing her alarm over recent attempts to stifle discussion about the social and environmental effects of Gujarat's Sardar Sarovar Dam, which is a part of contentious irrigation and hydroelectric project along the Narmada River. In accordance with Article 19 of India's constitution, which declares that "All people shall enjoy the right to freedom of speech and expression," CPJ anticipates that the Supreme Court will dismiss its contempt of court case against Arundhati Roy.

Arundhati Roy has critiqued the decision of constructing the Sardar Sarovar Dam in her book *The Greater Common Good*. Several copies of her book were burned by the political party's youngsters. This demonstrates how courageous she is without breaking down doing her utmost to protect the environment (India: Dam essay lands writer Arundhati Roy in hot water (1999)) [20].
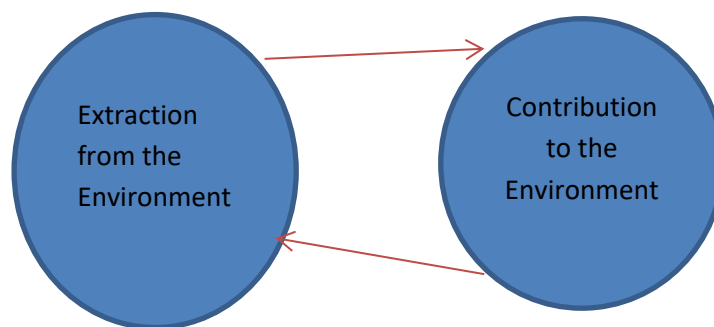
8. THE GIVE AND TAKE PROCESS IN THE ENVIRONMENT :

Fig. 1: *Environmental Stability*
(Qi, L., An, X., Zhang, S., & Wang, X., 2020) [21]

The environment's give-and-take process is a cyclic process that goes in a circle and balances itself. Humans are in charge of maintaining the balance (see Figure1). There will be an imbalance if the extraction exceeds the contribution to the environment. A person who appreciates obtaining benefits from the environment has a moral obligation to contribute to the environment and stabilize it so that humans and nature can coexist in harmony and be the reason for each other's existence rather than destruction (Thakur B. (2014) [22], (Rahman, M.M. (2013)) [23].

9. ISSUES IN THE ENVIRONMENT AT PRESENT :

(1) Contamination of the air, water, and soil due to the use of plastics, oil spills, and industrial wastes, among other things.
(2) By releasing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, human activity contributes to global warming, which in turn causes sea levels to increase, the melting of the polar ice caps, flash floods, and desertification.
(3) Resources like food, water, and energy become scarce due to overpopulation, making it difficult to feed the world's population.
(4) Ocean garbage disposal, particularly plastics and electronic debris.
(5) Ocean acidification: As humans emit more carbon dioxide, the ocean's acidity rises, severely affecting marine life.
(6) Species and ecosystems are vanishing, and biodiversity is being lost.
(7) Deforestation takes place when trees are cut down to make room for residential, industrial, or commercial operations. Less oxygen is created as a result.
(8) Lack of access to clean drinking water is one of today's most urgent public health concerns. Health issues including respiratory and cardiovascular disease can also be brought on by air pollution (10 major current environmental problems (2022)) [24].

10. SOLUTIONS FOR THESE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES :

(1) Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle: Lessen the amount of waste we produce.
(2) Conserve Water

Reena Ranjith, et al. (2022); www.srinivaspublication.com

PAGE 793

International Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences (IJMTS), ISSN: 2581-6012, Vol. 7, No. 2, December 2022

SRINIVAS PUBLICATION

(3) Educate Others

(4) Shop wisely using a reusable shopping bag that reduces the use of plastic

(5) Plant a tree

The study found a connection between emergency planning and cleaner beaches, quieter environments, and better air quality. On the other hand, there are unfavourable side effects including a decline in recycling and an increase in rubbish, which puts physical places (water and land) as well as air at danger of contamination. Lowering GHG concentrations for a brief period is not a practical strategy to improve our environment because most countries' economies are likely to grow in the upcoming months (although slowly) (What can I do to protect coral reefs? (2011)) [25].

11. THE PANDEMIC IS A PORTAL :

Covid19 has thrown us all for a loop, leaving us agitated, confused, and furious. The positive and negative consequences of Covid19 have significantly impacted our lives. It has taken away far too much from us, from employment to lives. As additional waves emerge, we are still adjusting and dealing with this pandemic.

Arundhati Roy says in her YouTube video explains that what is happening to us is more than a virus with no moral belief. The pandemic is the effect of what we have done to our environment. A uniform authority of lockdown was imposed across the whole world. It has made the mighty world kneel as nothing else could. Pandemic is a portal, a gateway between the two worlds are we going to die, or are we being born?

As there is a basic necessity required for the entire world Roy is appealing through her YouTube video for health care, food, basic income, shelter, and education for everybody on the planet (Interactions between climate and COVID-19. (2020)) [26]. The impacts of COVID-19 on cities and public health are mostly regulated by human-caused factors that are increasingly more noticeable as worldwide activities decline (Arundhati Roy - The Pandemic Is A Portal [Video], (2020)) [27], (Indirect effects of COVID-19 on the environment (2020)) [28].

12. SWOC ANALYSIS :

SWOC analysis is a framework used to assess and create strategic planning. SWOC analysis evaluates current and projected outcomes as well as internal and external influences (Rekha, K. G., & Manjula, K. T., (2022)) [29], (Nayana, K., & Manjula, K. T., (2022)) [30], (Parinitha, B., & Lourdusamy, A., (2022)) [31], (Ambrose, M. C., & Lourdusamy, A., (2022)) [32], (Nayana, K., & Manjula, K. T., (2022)) [33], Aithal P. S. et al (2015) [34].

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of the works of Arundhati Roy as an environmentalist are analysed as follows:

Table 2: The SWOC Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Arundhati Roy has contributed significantly to the field of environmental studies, which is very stimulating and has given many scholars a focus for their work in the area of ecocritical studies. Being an environmentalist, her work has had a good influence on society as a whole. In this paper, i intend to understand the significance of Arundhati Roy's nonfiction writings from the perspective of the environment and to be aware of the issues and challenges that the pre and the post-COVID world holds. The public may become more aware as a result of this study.	After Covid, Arundhati Roy didn't create a lot of environmental writing. The amount of effort done on environmental work is minimal.
Opportunities	**Challenges**
There are numerous opportunities for academics to conduct additional environmental research.	Although the study's primary goal is to raise environmental awareness among the general

Reena Ranjith, et al. (2022); www.srinivaspublication.com

PAGE 794

International Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences (IJMTS), ISSN: 2581-6012, Vol. 7, No. 2, December 2022

SRINIVAS
PUBLICATION

There are going to be many chances for researchers who are interested in learning more about Arundhati Roy's environmental activities as we face difficulties like COVID.	people, some sort of action follow-up is anticipated. There is some room for skepticism.

(Kryvinska, N., Bauer, C., Strauss, C., & Gregus, M., 2014) [35]

13. KEY FINDINGS :

(1) The Covid19 outbreak and the ensuing limitations put in place to stop the disease's spread have had immediate positive effects on the environment. These include a brief improvement in air quality, decreased greenhouse gas emissions, and decreased noise pollution, nevertheless, unfavourable effects such as an increase in plastic use, have also occurred.
(2) A resilient environmental support system is necessary for societal resilience.
(3) Zoonotic illnesses are more prevalent as a result of declining biodiversity and intensive feeding systems (The Pandemic is a Portal. (2020)) [36].

The world economy is suffering significantly from the coronavirus epidemic. Almost all nations are making an effort to contain the viral outbreak by testing and treating patients, isolating suspects through contact tracing, prohibiting large gatherings, and instituting full or partial lockdown. This study investigates COVID-19's effects on society and the global environment in addition to exploring potential remedies for the illness. The pandemic has struck all over the world and also not left a stone unturned by almost affecting all areas of human life (COVID-19 measures have mixed impacts on the environment. (2020)) [37], (Covid-19 and Educational Inequities: The Long View. (2020)) [38].

14. CONCLUSION :

This study aims to demonstrate that environmental issues require a great deal of attention in order to solve the primary difficulties in a step-by-step manner. Arundhati Roy believes that everyone in the world should have access to health care, food, shelter, and a basic income. If environmental issues are resolved, our world will unquestionably be a more desirable place to live since the natural environment will be conserved and people will have access to fundamental necessities.

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Reena Ranjith, et al. (2022); www.srinivaspublication.com

PAGE 795

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SRINIVAS PUBLICATION

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Reena Ranjith, et al. (2022); www.srinivaspublication.com

PAGE 796

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PAGE 797