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**Marginalization and Social Exclusion:  
A Critical Analysis of Arundhati Roy's Works**  
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**ABSTRACT:**

This research article critically examines Arundhati Roy's non-fiction writings, particularly *The Broken Republic* (2011), *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2002), and *Listening to Grasshoppers* (2009), in order to analyze her engagement with marginalization and social exclusion in contemporary India. Roy exposes the contradictions of India's neoliberal development model, interrogating the displacement of Dalits, Adivasis, women, and other vulnerable groups. Her works critique caste-based discrimination, the exploitation of tribal communities by multinational corporations, the state's militarized responses to Maoist resistance, and the silencing of subaltern voices. Drawing on postcolonial theory and subaltern studies (Spivak; Said), as well as Dalit and Ambedkarite discourse, this study situates Roy within a larger intellectual tradition that foregrounds questions of justice, democracy, and resistance. By blending reportage, polemics, and literary craft, Roy crafts a counter-narrative that challenges dominant state and media discourses. This article argues that while Roy's writings are sometimes criticized for rhetorical excess, they remain vital for understanding the ongoing struggles of marginalized communities in India and for rethinking the possibilities of inclusive democracy.

**KEYWORDS:**

Marginalization, Dalits, Tribals, Maoist movement, corporate exploitation, Feminism, Social justice, Arundhati Roy.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Marginalization remains one of the most pressing issues in contemporary India. Despite constitutional safeguards and affirmative action, large sections of the population—Dalits, tribals, women, and the rural poor—continue to face systemic exclusion from economic resources, political participation, and cultural recognition. As Gayatri Spivak famously asked, “Can the subaltern speak?” (Spivak 271), the persistence of silenced voices continues to haunt India’s democratic fabric.

Arundhati Roy, a novelist turned activist–writer, has emerged as one of the most influential public intellectuals to interrogate these silences. While her Booker Prize–winning novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) brought her global recognition, her later non–fiction writings shift towards exposing the violence inherent in India’s development paradigm. Works such as *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, *The Cost of Living* (1999), *The Broken Republic*, and *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014) offer trenchant critiques of state violence, corporate expansion, and the marginalization of subaltern communities.

This article explores Roy’s intervention in debates surrounding marginalization and social exclusion. It situates her writings within broader theoretical frameworks of postcolonial critique, Ambedkarite thought, and subaltern studies, while engaging with her vivid portrayals of dispossession, tribal resistance, and corporate exploitation.

**LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Scholarship on Arundhati Roy’s works often situates her at the intersection of literature and activism. Dwivedi’s *Arundhati Roy’s Fictional World* emphasizes how her fiction and non–fiction blur genre boundaries, combining personal narrative with political

critique. Pandit observes that Roy's *The God of Small Things* highlights caste oppression through subtle depictions of social hierarchy, a concern that carries into her later non-fiction (Pandit 171).

Postcolonial theorists like Edward Said (*Culture and Imperialism*) and Gayatri Spivak (*Can the Subaltern Speak?*) provide crucial frameworks for understanding Roy's attention to silenced voices. Roy echoes Spivak's concerns by amplifying subaltern struggles, particularly those of tribals and Dalits displaced by India's neoliberal policies. Similarly, B. R. Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* provides a critical backdrop for Roy's condemnation of caste discrimination, while Dalit literary scholarship (Kumar and Mitra) underscores the necessity of reading her interventions alongside subaltern counter-narratives.

Roy's engagement with the Maoist movement in *Walking with the Comrades* has provoked both praise and criticism. While some view her as romanticizing insurgency, others argue that her work brings visibility to communities erased by state discourse (Mitra 212). Scholars such as Channa and Mencher argue that her critiques open up interdisciplinary dialogues between Dalit, tribal, and feminist discourses, foregrounding the interconnections between class, caste, gender, and ecology.

Thus, existing scholarship establishes Roy as a contentious but indispensable voice in contemporary debates on marginalization. This article builds on that body of work by offering a consolidated thematic analysis of her non-fiction writings.

## **THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

### **MARGINALIZATION AND CASTE:**

Caste remains one of the most entrenched forms of exclusion in India. Roy recognizes caste as not merely a social hierarchy but

a system of structural violence that deprives Dalits of dignity, resources, and opportunities. In *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, she critiques how caste oppression persists despite constitutional safeguards, noting that Dalits remain confined to degrading occupations and often face violence when asserting their rights. Echoing Ambedkar's denunciation of caste as a violation of human rights, Roy highlights how caste-based marginalization intersects with poverty, illiteracy, and lack of access to healthcare.

### **TRIBAL STRUGGLES AND DISPLACEMENT:**

Adivasis, or Scheduled Tribes, are at the center of Roy's analysis in *The Broken Republic*. She documents how tribal communities in Chhattisgarh and Odisha face displacement due to mining projects by corporations such as Vedanta and Posco. Forests, rivers, and mountains that sustain indigenous livelihoods are transformed into "Memorandums of Understanding" between corporations and the state (Roy, *Broken Republic* 15). Roy portrays the resilience of tribals who resist displacement, often chanting, "We will give our lives, but not our land." She emphasizes that development, as practiced in India, often translates into dispossession for these communities.

### **MAOISM AND ARMED RESISTANCE:**

Roy's *Walking with the Comrades* offers a first-hand account of living with Maoist guerrillas in the forests of Central India. Rejecting state narratives that label them "the single biggest internal security threat," Roy portrays Maoists as disciplined communities protecting their land and forests. While she does not uncritically endorse their methods, she emphasizes that their insurgency emerges from decades of dispossession and neglect. Her writing underscores the paradox of a democracy that criminalizes its most marginalized citizens when they resist exploitation.

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## **CORPORATE EXPLOITATION AND GLOBAL CAPITALISM:**

Roy consistently critiques the complicity of multinational corporations and the Indian state in exploiting natural resources. In *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*, she reveals how global capital operates under the guise of corporate social responsibility, while fueling displacement and inequality. For Roy, neoliberal globalization has created a society where billionaires thrive even as millions live on less than a dollar a day. Her critiques resonate with Said's analysis of imperialism, showing how economic exploitation is sustained through cultural and political dominance.

## **FEMINISM AND WOMEN IN RESISTANCE:**

Women's experiences occupy a significant place in Roy's works. She documents how women in marginalized communities—Dalits, tribals, and Maoist cadres—face layered forms of violence, from sexual assault by security forces to domestic exploitation. Yet, Roy also highlights their agency. Women participate actively in tribal resistance, organize community networks, and serve as leaders within Maoist movements. Her feminist lens links patriarchy to larger systems of oppression, illustrating how gender intersects with caste, class, and ethnicity in structuring exclusion.

## **CRITICAL DISCUSSION:**

Arundhati Roy's writings are often described as a blend of literary reportage, polemics, and activism. Her works do not claim the objectivity of social science research but instead aim to provoke moral and political engagement. Critics argue that her style—rich in hyperbole and metaphor—sometimes undermines her credibility as an analyst. Yet, it is precisely this literary force that has allowed her works to reach broad audiences, transcending academic and activist boundaries.

Roy's significance lies in her ability to connect disparate struggles—caste discrimination, tribal displacement, feminist resistance, and anti-globalization critique—into a coherent narrative of systemic marginalization. She amplifies voices silenced by mainstream media and government discourses, offering counter-histories that challenge the state's developmentalist claims.

At the same time, her works reveal the difficulty of balancing advocacy with nuance. While she valorizes Maoist resistance, critics contend that she overlooks the violence perpetrated by insurgents. Nonetheless, her refusal to simplify complex realities is itself a form of intellectual resistance, compelling readers to confront uncomfortable truths about India's democracy.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Arundhati Roy's non-fiction writings remain vital interventions in the study of marginalization and social exclusion. By exposing the violence of caste hierarchies, the dispossession of tribals, the contradictions of neoliberal development, and the silenced agency of women, Roy redefines the role of the writer as a witness, activist, and moral provocateur.

Her works resonate with postcolonial and subaltern studies, echoing Spivak's call to listen to the subaltern and Ambedkar's demand for social justice. While her style blurs the line between literature and political essay, Roy compels us to confront the deep inequities that structure Indian society. Addressing marginalization, as her writings insist, requires inclusive policies, grassroots empowerment, and a radical rethinking of democracy itself.

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