

**Intertwined Sequences and Subaltern Studies Identified in Anuradha Roy's
*The Earthspinner***

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Abstract

Anuradha Roy is an acclaimed Indian author known for her insightful and evocative storytelling. Her writing has received widespread acclaim both in Nationally and Internationally and she has earned DSC prize for South Asian Literature and Economist Crossword Book Award. She has also contributed essays and articles to various publications. Her novel, *The Earthspinner* delves into complex realities of marginalization with an Indian town undergoing rapid change. Through the characters like Nela and Shankar, Roy reveals the struggles of marginalization, communities facing caste discrimination, environmental degradation and economic exploitation. The abstract aims to analyze the themes of marginalization and resistance which shed light on the struggles of diverse characters as they navigate the turbulent waters of social injustice and inequality. Roy's narrative masterfully captures the difficulties of identity and power dynamics in a rapidly changing world offering a nuanced portrayal of resistance and loneliness in the face of marginalization.

Keywords: Marginalization, Rapid change, Discrimination, Economic Exploitation, Social Injustice, Identity, Resistance, Loneliness.

Anuradha Roy's fifth book, *The Earthspinner* (2021) is a great reflection on how personal struggles become entangled to form the structure of human experience in Postcolonial India. The novel starts primarily from the year 1980s in the fictional town of Kummarapet in southern India, the novel brings about the past and present, India and England, to examine how personal traumas, creative longing and social conflict interconnect in the lives of its two protagonists. The novel narrated through the parallel stories of Sara, a young Indian undergraduate studying at an English University and the third-person account of Elango, a Hindu potter and auto-rickshaw driver illustrates how personal struggles are never totally separate but rather form a complex web of overlapping experiences that break the boundaries of culture, religion and time.

The novel is not only a depiction of illicit love between Hindu potter Elango and Muslim woman Zohra but in its nuanced exploration of how individual struggles increase and reflect larger societal tensions in Post-Independent India. Roy's story says that struggles of character whether based on trauma, displacement, creative drive or religious difference are inherently interdependent and also it causes many effects which change not just individual lives but whole communities. Through the use of the potter's wheel where clay is pressed and re-molded under pressure, Roy offers a metaphor for how human lives are constantly shaped by both inner desire and outer pressures and easily broken interdependence of all things.

The Ethno-religious and Cultural conflict in *The Earthspinner* is the overarching driving force that illustrates the interrelatedness of the conflicts between characters, characteristic of how tensions that exist in society trickle into individual life and tie different characters together by common weakness and equal damage. The Hindu-Muslim divide that characterizes the novel's central conflict is not a remote political reality but an intimate force that rules each relationship and decision in the novel. Elango and Zohra's illegal passion becomes the prism through which Roy looks at how religious differences create man-made barriers that destroy natural human connections. The blood-stained imagery illustrates how Ethno-Cultural trouble traumatizes individuals even before violence erupts, inflicting psychological trauma whose threads bring the characters in fear and expectation of disaster.

The novel illustrates how religious conflict works through and how Weber's theory describes as power structures working beyond economic class. The scenes which illustrates how personal struggles become collective weapons, with personal relationships being battlegrounds for greater ideological wars. The interconnectivity of the character conflicts is best seen in the way the religious conflict resonates out from affecting only the immediate victims to touching the whole community. Sara as a child witness is emotionally drawn into the conflict when she unwittingly informs Akka of Elango and Zohra's meeting at the pond. Her trauma and sense of guilt demonstrate how religious conflict renders a person an assistant to and victim of the conflict without active involvement. Even the dog Chinna, is entangled in the sectarian conflict his fidelity towards Elango rendering him a target for anger and displacement in the community.

Roy's narrative reveals how Ethno-cultural conflict gets made to function through the mechanism of symbolic interpretation, where pieces of art become bearers of religious and political meaning. Elango's terracotta horse created as a personal act of devotion and traditional art gets re-signified by the community as either a sacred temple artifact or a desecrated symbol depending upon who views it and what they wish to see. The Urdu calligraphy inscribed by Zohra's grandfather converts the horse from Hindu religious piece of art to what the community perceives as Muslim contamination, revealing how cultural hybridity becomes dangerous in polarized societies. The novel's investigation of religious violence transcends personal tragedy to examine how sectarian violence creates cycles of trauma that unite generations. Sara's later narrative in England demonstrates how the childhood violence of her own past continues to inform her adult self and artistic vision connecting her battle with displacement and cultural dislocation back to the very first moment of communal outburst in Kummarapet. With her making pottery in the basement

studio of the English University, she tries to heal her own trauma as well as to salvage Elango's ruined artistry, demonstrating how personal struggles with trauma can become acts of cultural preservation and resistance.

Art in *The Earthspinner* is both a reflection of social gap and a bridge that spans characters across time, culture and emotional divides showing how artistic production is both personal therapy and shared memory. Roy's masterful deployment of pottery, calligraphy and narrative shows how artwork is a language through which characters express their innermost struggles and try to move beyond the confines placed by their conditionings. The potter's wheel metaphor at the heart of the novel establishes the novel's understanding of life as a constant process of re-shaping and re-forming under pressure. Sara's description of her work in England as a potter "I put a ball of clay on it, I cover the clay with both my hands, and if I shut my eyes, I have the planet turning in my hands to the rumble of an engine" (Roy 21) demonstrates how artistic production allows characters to experience a sense of control and enormous connection despite their actual powerlessness in the face of social and political forces.

The metaphor connects Sara's subjective struggle with displacement and cultural estrangement to the Universal desire for agency and meaning-making. Elango's fixation on constructing the terracotta horse is the confluence of personal tragedy, artistic aspiration and cultural remembrance. His vision of the horse "breathing fire below the ocean" bridges his own personal artistic ideal to myth and ancestral tradition, illustrating how artistic inspiration arises from the confluence of personal psychodynamics and shared cultural heritage. The horse is a material embodiment of Elango's struggle to reconcile his passion for Zohra with his devotion to traditional Hindu craftsmanship, illustrating how artwork is a domain in which ostensibly incompatible selves can be reconciled. Roy's account of artistic trauma describes how loss of creative work resonates beyond the individual artist to affect entire communities. When the mob slays Elango's horse, they slay not just a piece of art but part of cultural heritage, a symbol of interfaith coexistence and a repository of collective memory.

Sara's protection of a fragment of the broken horse as a symbol shows how art remainders can function as touchstones to traumatic memory and sites of ongoing attachment to lost bonds and devastated communities. Sara's developing self as potter and storyteller bridges her own personal experience of cultural displacement with wider issues of artistic heritage and cultural survival. Her work as a potter in England is both a personal coping instrument and a preservation practice for culture, sustaining her link to Elango's teaching and Indian art traditions despite her spatial and temporal removal from their original context. In retelling the story of Elango she converts personal trauma to shared memory showing the means by which storytelling can be a form of artistic resistance against cultural erasure.

Roy's complex narrative structure in *The Earthspinner* uses multiple points of view and temporal shifts to illustrate how personal consciousness is interlinked and how the process of "mindreading" both literal psychological interpretation and metaphorical empathetic knowledge functions as an underlying means by which characters conflicts become entangled. The novel's form itself encapsulates the theme of interconnectedness by

refusing to keep rigid boundaries between various characters experiences and temporal phases. The shifting between Sara's first-person account and the third-person narrative of Elango achieves a rich narrative structure that portrays how personal struggles are always interpreted through the prism of relationship and perception.

The fact that Sara is the narrator situates her not just as a passive observer of what happens but an active interpreter who illustrates the intellectual and affective effort needed to comprehend another human being's experience. Her ability to "read" Elango's mind and motives "I was positive that for all the hours between the time Zohra left the pond and the following afternoon, Elango would think of nothing but that she had hobbled the whole scrubby way to the pond-despite her limp-to look for him" demonstrates how reading others' difficulties involves both empathy and projection, so that all narrative comprehension is necessarily intertwined. This chronology splitting reflects the form of traumatic memory itself, wherein past experiences break through into current consciousness in unpredictable manners, implying that the characters' conflicts do not remain rooted in their source points but continue to echo throughout time.

Roy's application of "mindreading" as both narrative strategy and thematic component demonstrates how characters problems become entwined through their efforts to read one another's minds and know in advance what they need and will think. Sara's impressive knack for reading the unwritten interactions between Elango and Zohra detecting a fizzle in the air something invisible that exists between men and women shows how from an early age, she acts as a nexus between various adult experiences, rendering her complicit in their conflicts even as she is shielded from the full comprehension of their real meaning. The way consciousness is handled in the narrative shows how personal struggles are always imbricated within structures of observation and interpretation. The way Elango is conscious of being observed and judged by his society, the way Sara is conscious of her parents' marital conflicts and the way Zohra deals with her grandfather's protective anxieties all show how personal struggles exist within webs of social observation that make personal experience necessarily collective.

The novel proposes that no purely private battle exists; each crisis that is personal unfolds within family, communal and cultural witness contexts that convert individual suffering into communal experience. The epistolary aspects of the novel, which see Chinna's former owner writing letters in search of her wayward dog add a further level of narrative insight that demonstrates how battles with loss and yearning forge bonds between individuals who never share a direct encounter. These advice letters, with their public address to a columnist, illustrate how personal suffering finds expression in public spaces, converting private sorrow into public discussion and showing how personal struggle informs wider conversation regarding loss, attachment and survival. Roy's narrative practice discloses how "mindreading" is both a survival strategy and a kind of emotional labor that is specifically visited on marginalized characters. Sara's vision to understand adult conflicts and emotions is both a defense mechanism and a burden pushing her into early psychological maturity as well as equipping her with the empathetic skills that eventually allow her to tell Elango's story. This illustrates the ways that deeply interconnected struggles necessitate the work of certain

characters as emotional bridges or interpreters for other characters establishing hierarchies of responsibility and understanding that mirror larger social structures of power.

The four main characters Sara, Elango, Zohra and Chinna constitute a galaxy of overlapping struggles that cross conventional axes of age, species, religion and social standing and demonstrate how personal pain and resilience form webs of influencing and shared risk. The individual struggles of each character interconnect with and compound the others creating a rich needlepoint of relationships that illustrates how no struggle occurs in a vacuum. Sara's Position as Witness and Heir: Sara is both the most powerless and most powerful character, her childhood status permitting her to witness adult discomfitures and her ultimate position as narrator giving her the authority to transform personal suffering into public memory. Her own struggle with cultural displacement from her Indian childhood to English University experience echoes and prefaces Elango's eventual exile, establishing a parallel story of geographical and cultural dislocation. Sara's connection with pottery is the key to her principal manner of remaining connected to both cultural heritage and to her connection with Elango, illustrating how artistic practice may operate as a bridge through temporal and spatial separation.

Sara's fight with guilt over becoming unwittingly involved in revealing Elango and Zohra's relationship illustrates how children unknowingly become participants in the adult arena their naivety rendering them witnesses to as well as agents of destruction. Her visions of "pursuing after Akka attempting to prevent her, sees herself falling over Elango's body, attempting to prevent his hands from being crushed" illustrate how traumatic experiences leave deep psychological scars that intertwine her destiny with the tragedy of Elango in space and time (Roy 8). By turning her guilt into a practice of memorialization through the preservation of a piece from Elango's ruined horse, Sara shows how personal grappling with complicity can turn into works of cultural preservation and resistance. Elango's persona is the nexus of artistic drive, love that must be kept secret and social exclusion, his plight testifying to the ways in which individual longings invariably run up against collective demands in divided societies.

His passion for Zohra and his fixation on sculpting the terracotta horse are two sides of the same universal longing to break free of the confines of his station and craft something beautiful that testifies to his humanity. His relationship with Chinna offers him the unconditional acceptance withheld by human society, showing how interspecies contact can provide sites of emotional nurturing outside the reach of human societies. Elango's tragedy illustrates how creative work in contested social territories is necessarily political irrespective of the intentions of the producer. His horse, a private gesture of devotion and old-fashioned craftsmanship is a sign of religious disrespect because it is a combination of Hindu imagery over Muslim calligraphy, demonstrating how hybrid cultural forms trouble the sharp borders on which communal identity rests.

Zohra's own character exists in large part through suggestion and quick look rather than clear representation, her challenges revealed largely through their impact upon other characters and through irregular moments of direct interaction. Her physical disability the

limp that serves to identify her mobility is both a source of openness and a site of strength, making visible how physical difference can produce both social marginalization and personal strength. Her romance with Elango is an act of passive resistance to religious orthodoxy, her agreeing to meet him at the pond and letting her grandfather write down the horse as a sign of active resistance to communal borderline in the face of her restricted social power. Zohra's bond with her blind calligrapher grandfather shows how artistic families invent their own kinds of cultural transmission capable of overcoming religious divides. Her final fate with Elango relates her plight to larger patterns of punishment for those who are willing to love across religious divides.

Chinna's character in the novel goes beyond regular pet or animal companion roles acting instead as a character whose trouble about abandonment, loyalty and belonging is reflective of and insightful to the human characters' equivalent challenges. His initial personhood as "Tashi," that of the nameless woman whose letters punctuate the story, makes him a character with his own history of trauma and loss prior to his relationship with Elango. His capacity to comfort several characters like Elango, Sara's father, the blind calligrapher showcases how non-human consciousness is capable of providing types of healing and connection that leapfrog lines of human social division. Chinna's final destiny as a character went through various families and communities, showing how innocent creatures are victims of human conflict, their loyalty and love potential leaving them open to the effects of human decisions.

His relationship with the calligrapher, whom he sees on a daily basis and who addresses him as "Miya", illustrates how interspecies unions can overcome religious and cultural differences in ways that human relationships do not. Through Chinna, Roy indicates that the ability to love and be faithful without conditions is a kind of wisdom lost to human beings through their stake in social divisions and cultural orthodoxies. The four characters struggled to produce the patterns of loss, displacement and resistant creativity that uncover the novel's core perception about the interconnection of individual experience. Sara's cultural estrangement resonates with Elango's ultimate exile, Zohra's bodily vulnerability parallels Chinna's susceptibility as a stray animal, Elango's creative destruction resonates with Sara's ultimate position as cultural conservationist. These entangled struggles convey that the private pain always involves itself in larger patterns of social exclusion and cultural tension but individual acts of love, artistry and loyalty create counter-networks of resistance and healing that endure despite social devastation.

Roy's novel explains how personal conflicts mirror broader postcolonial tensions in India and the characters' inner struggles reflect national issues such as modernization, communal trauma and identity formation. The lasting effects of Partition are evident in Elango and Zohra's interfaith relationship, which becomes a site of communal outrage.

Elango's vision of the space between them as "a charnel house of burnt and bloodied human flesh" evokes inherited trauma. The novel brings out how personal choices around love and art are subject to public search in a society structured by religion and patriarchy. Sara's

movement between rural India and modern England reveals the tension between tradition and global modernity.

Her experience shows how social systems create different pressures and possibilities for self-rule. While Elango balances his caste-bound pottery with his work as an auto-rickshaw driver, his dual role exposes both opportunity and weakness, highlighting the resistance between heritage and economic survival. Zohra's disability and Muslim identity make her particularly vulnerable, her transgressive relationship with Elango underscoring how gender, religion and class shape her to be independent. In contrast, Sara's escape to England and her role as narrator highlight how education and privilege open space for female agency. Yet, this empowerment also brings alienation from community and tradition.

Anuradha Roy's *The Earthspinner* fulfills its powerful effect by illustrating how individual conflict is never actually individual, it is contained within networks of relationship, observation, recollection and cultural heritage that make the private agony at once common experience and common potential for healing. The novel's tracing of interlocking character conflict discloses essential truths about human existence in postcolonial societies, where historical trauma legacies, modernization pressures and communal division's survival combine to make individual decisions have far greater consequences than their momentary contexts. The argument that Roy presents character conflicts as inherently linked through interlinked trauma, creative work and social conflict is correct through the novel's nuanced presentation of how Sara's displacement is linked to Elango's exile, how Zohra's passive rebellion makes artistic collaboration possible and how Chinna's fidelity cuts across human social boundaries.

Each of these characters' battles with belonging, identity and survival both echoes and impacts the others' struggles to create an intricate web of shared influence, which illustrates how private and public, individual and collective, political and personal, struggles are all intertwined. The novel's handling of art as individual expression and social memory shows how artistic practice can be a bridge spanning temporal, cultural and social boundaries while at the same time being a location of struggle when it problematizes orthodox borders. Elango's terracotta horse, Sara's pottery workshop and Usman Alam's calligraphy each signify types of cultural work that conserve, transmit and rework received traditions indicating that artistic struggle is necessarily social even when it seems isolated. The devastation of the horse and the conservation of its fragment through Sara's story shows how solitary artistic loss into collective cultural memory, reworked through narrative into resources for ongoing resistance and healing.

Roy's complex narrative form, his shuttling among points of view and periods of time, reflects the novel's thematic concerns by refusing to keep firm walls between characters' experiences and moments in history. The "mindreading" technique that allows characters to be linked through sympathetic understanding and psychological interpretation implies that human awareness is necessarily relational, that comprehension of others' struggles is at once a cognitive requirement and a kind of emotional labour that forges chains of responsibility and concern across social division. The novel's larger relevance is in

challenging established conceptions of individual versus collective identity within postcolonial situations. By unpacking how characters' burdens of trauma, displacement, love and creativity are always grounded within larger social and political realities.

Roy implies that healing and resistance need to be conceived of as collective practice as well. Sara's narrative role turns her personal battle with guilt and cultural dislocation into an act of cultural survival and group healing and Elango's creative work, even in the ruin of its destruction, adds to ongoing traditions of artistic resistance that endure individual tragedy. *The Earthspinner* finally contends that in broken-down societies beset by religious conflict, cultural transformation and political strife, the interdependence of personal struggles becomes both the basis of collective vulnerability and the key to collective resilience. The novel proposes that it is by acknowledging and celebrating these ties between past and present, self and other, art and politics, human and non-human that forms of belonging and identity are produced that may endure and be transformed through social conflict. In its depiction of characters whose struggles cross religious, temporal and cultural divides, Roy presents us with a vision of human society founded not on orthodoxy or cultural authenticity shared but on recognition of mutual exposure to vulnerability and on the shared potential for love, imagination and survival against forces seeking to separate and destroy.

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