

ARUNDHATI ROY'S FICTION: MAPPING THE MICRO-
NARRATIVES OF THE MARGINALIZED

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of the
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

The thesis titled “Arundhati Roy’s Fiction: Mapping the Micro-Narratives of the Marginalized” submitted by Tashfia Annan (14203007) of Spring, 2019 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and Humanities on April 10, 2019.

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Abstract

Postmodernism starts with shifting of ideas from modernism. In postmodernism, authors adopt multiple features like historic-metafiction, magic realism, intertextuality and many more. One of the major changes that happen in postmodernism is, focusing on micro-narrative rather than meta-narrative. Postmodernists give importance to every small issue in society. Arundhati Roy, being a postmodern writer, brings light to the shattered stories of people living in our society. The aim of this thesis is to illustrate the sufferings of marginalized groups, specifically Transgender, Dalits (untouchables), and women in Indian society by tracing Roy's two novels, *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The untold stories of these people from the fringes of the society, their experiences, and their views on issues that directly concern them are what Roy capitalizes in her fiction. She gives them voices to portray their terrible day to day sufferings in her novels *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Further, this paper includes, biographical mapping of Arundhati Roy to depict how her real life experiences shape her fiction.

Chapter 1: Introduction: Modernism vs. Postmodernism

Postmodern is the condition or attitude that comes after modernity. It is an idea through which people tried to perceive their time. The literary critic Fredric Jameson identifies postmodernity with "late capitalism" that is a stage of capitalism following finance capitalism. Postmodernism according to Jameson, is a cultural form which has developed in the wake of the socio-economical order of present day capitalism. It characterizes life under capitalism. Relatively, postmodernity is the social condition and one's response to it. On top of that, postmodernism is the adaption or reaction of postmodern thoughts in art and literature. Therefore, postmodernity is a social condition whereas postmodernism is a cultural and literary movement. When modernity ended in the late 20th century, postmodern age has started. To understand postmodernism it is important to understand two more literary movements which are modernism and post-structuralism. While defining the term postmodernism it is necessary to know about modernism as both are interconnected. Scholars such as Ihab Hasan states: "postmodernism is a continuation of modernism" in his essay "POSTmodernISM: A Paracritical Bibliography." Modernism is a literary and cultural movement which flourished in the first decades of the 20th century. The introduction of Modernism did not happen with mere concepts like science, reason or truth. It happened with the horror of war, tragedy of soldiers and people. People were devastated by the effects of First World War. There was a sense of loss and also hope for rebuilding the lost community. The movement was built on a sense of lost community and embraced multiple features of modern sensibility. Hence, postmodern literature includes multiple features like pastiche, metafictionality, irony etc.

Although postmodernism is periodized from the early 20th century, some features of it were already present in works from previous periods. For example *Tristram Shandy* by Laurence

Sterne has many postmodern elements in it, although the novel was written in 18th century. Rabindranath Tagore's play *Chitra* was published at a time when modernist literature was at its peak, it surprisingly demonstrates many postmodern elements. Through the character Chitrangada Tagore dramatizes the burden of gender roles assigned to a person at birth and provides a poetic reversal of these roles which is quintessentially postmodern. Moreover, the famous collection of Middle Eastern stories under the title *One Thousand and One Nights* also known as *Arabian Nights* demonstrates many elements of postmodernism such as magic realism, science fiction, detective stories and many more. Therefore, it can be noticed that postmodernism is a condition that existed in all the prominent ages.

Significantly, there are many important names of scholars and critics related to 'postmodernism'. They have developed the idea of postmodernism and given their own interpretation about postmodernism such as Jean François Lyotard, Ihab Hasan, Frederic Jameson, Jean Baudrillard and Roland Barthes. Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* is widely acknowledged as the foremost theoretical expression of postmodernism. Lyotard defines postmodernism as "incredulity towards meta-narratives such as Christianity, Enlightenment, Marxism or Capitalism" (28). He believes there is no absolute truth or solution for all humans that these meta/grand narratives claim to give, instead postmodernism focuses on micro narratives. Elaborately, postmodernism rejects the possibility of objective truths or universal claims. In the place of objective truth, postmodernists focus on "micro-narratives" which aim at looking at any phenomena from their specific geographical and socio-historical specificities. They find 'local narratives', or stories about reality that work for particular communities. These are the shifts in ideas from modernism to postmodernism, hence these two conditions, modernism and postmodernism cannot be discussed

separately. That is to say, in modernism “the notion of truth” no longer exists, instead the postmodernists view reality through the lenses of culture. They believe truth can have different versions; therefore Postmodernism celebrates plurality and diversity. American born social theorist and sociologist Charles Lemert has written extensively on social theory, globalization and culture. From his perception, Postmodernism has “something to do with what is allegedly happening to Modernism. So, if Modernism is a culture of modern age (or, simply, of modernity), then Postmodernism has something to do with the breaking apart of modernism” (Lemert 21). Postmodernist writers break down the conventional way of narrative and experiments with new forms of writing and many of them manipulate previous forms. Since the previous forms cannot accommodate contemporary complexities, postmodernists adopt “formlessness” as the new form. A modern work creates its own conventions and does not take them over from previous works. For instance, the theme of destruction is related with the theme of fragmentation or cultural fragmentation in postmodernist literature. Often postmodernist writers use fragmentation/alienation as a theme in their novels. A good example can be given from the *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh. Ghosh uses the technique of looking back to memories to narrate the past events. The story revolves around three geographical locations namely Dhaka, Calcutta and London and the narrative shifts spatially and temporally across these places. The characters and the memories both are fragmented in the novel hence it is considered as a nonlinear tale.

Besides, in ‘Postmodernism’ the word post is associated with post-structuralism. As said above, postmodernism coexists with post-structuralism and modernism which renders the movement as well as the term a relative dimension: postmodernism is defined with reference to particular geo-political and spatio-temporal contexts. An important person who defines and

introduces post-structuralism is Jacques Derrida. Derrida's lecture made a radical break from past ways of thought. It concerns the 'decentring' of our intellectual universe. The centre of Western thought and philosophy has always been white European man. Post-structuralist writers challenge this biased centrality and pose counter-narrative questions showing that there are no fixed points or guaranteed facts in life. Additionally, he develops the theory of deconstruction. The idea of deconstruction is an approach to understand the relationship between the text and the meaning. Derrida here emphasizes more on language. He believes that language is used to organize and construct reality. Language enables us to give meaning to the world. No single thing gives off meaning of its own accord. According to Derrida, deconstruction reveals the repress hypothesis of a work of art and there is no fact outside of society, language or culture. Puja Mondal explains this statement by stating that, "The things do not have a single meaning. Instead, the meaning embraces fragmentation, conflict and discontinuity in matters of history, identity and culture" (Mondal 1). Deconstruction focuses on the meaninglessness of meanings. Moreover, postmodernism gives more importance to readers' views on a text rather than highlighting creator's points. One pre-dominant idea of postmodernism is "The Death of the Author". The essay titled "The Death of the Author" is introduced by the French literary critic and theorist Roland Barthes. Barthes here criticizes the traditional literary criticism of interpreting a text based on biographical context of an author. "To give a text an author and assign a single, corresponding interpretation to it is to impose a limit on that text" (Barthes X). It means, readers should have their different exposition of the text to liberate the text from absolutism or else it imposes a limit on the text. The concept of the essay is, the moment an author writes a text he/she is considered dead and the interpretation of the text completely depends on the reader. Previously readers could not express anything about the text without

particular reference to some authorities. If a specialized authority like scholar or critic does not approve the view of the reader it does not count, whereas writers and readers can have their own voice in postmodernism. Regarding this matter, A. Hariharasudan in his article, "Postmodern Readings into Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*" mentions that, "... there is a transfer of power from the modernist vision of the author having privileged knowledge, to a more equitable balance of power where the Postmodern author distinguishes that their offering is taken up by readers and through multiple readings" (Hariharasudan 23). In postmodernism, the essential meaning of a text depends on the impressions of a reader rather than the taste or view of its creator.

That is to say, postmodernism is not separated from these two literary movements. The ideas gradually get developed and the writers use different elements. Hence it is said that modernism did not suddenly end so that postmodernism could begin rather they now co-exist so it is a continuation. Postmodernism is often called a plural form as it has many versions. Postmodern writers tend to employ sarcasm, black humour and produces subject matters even the serious ones with playfulness and fragmentations. Moreover, postmodernists attempt to replace meta-narratives by focusing on specific local contexts as well as the diversity of human experience. Postmodernism as a movement took various forms and manifestations in different places and had been subject to local conditions and changes. Writers from different terrains adopt different forms of postmodernism. For example, the American postmodernism focuses on dystopia and hyper-reality. On the other hand, South American literatures have elements like magic realism. Alternatively in other continent like Asia or specifically in Indian subcontinent writers often use features like intertextuality, irony and micro-narrative. For instance, regarding the marginalized, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" shows

her concern about the marginalized subaltern groups. She is an influential critic related to postcolonialism, feminism, deconstruction and Marxism. In the text she tries to depose the binary opposition between subject and object, self and other, center and margin and the majority and minority. In general, the term ‘subaltern’ means lower rank in military. She borrows the term from Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” and shows the earliest political historiography shifted the voice of the subaltern groups like women, tribal people, Third world and orient.

Notably among all the prominent writers the core contributor of my thesis is Arundhati Roy who, like other postmodernists, focuses on the similar features like magic realism, irony, micro-narrative, intertextuality and many more in her two novels *The God of Small Things* and in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Being an interesting and broad topic, the concentration of this thesis is to do a textual analysis/close reading of the marginalized characters in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and to relate it with micro-narrative. In doing so it will trace the autobiographical background of Roy’s life to show how her social actions shape her fictional narrations.

Roy uses many stylistic features to convey her message about the marginalized. Both of the novels are an ode to the outcasts of India, highlighting the facts that society has failed its minorities/marginalized. Most of the characters in these two novels are products of oppression or subjected to political corruption. For instance, in the novel *The God of Small Things* Roy fictionally constructs marginalized characters that can be traced by reading characters like; Mammachi, Ammu, Baby Kochamma and most importantly Velutha. The story also revolves around Ammu and velutha where one is tormented to the patriarchal society and another is the victim of Indian caste system that makes him an ‘untouchable’. Similarly in the *The Ministry of*

Utmost Happiness, while telling Anjum's story, Roy gracefully narrates the peculiarities and tragedies of the 'Hijra' community, along with that she brings out the issue of untouchables by portraying other important characters.

ii) **Biographical Mapping of Arundhati Roy**

Being apolitical and social activist Roy herself works with the marginalized that reflects in her two novels as well. Roy shows much passion of an activist in her interviews and in her opinions which is reflected in her writings. Pramad K. Nayar in the article "Mobility and Insurgent Celebrityhood: The Case of Arundhati Roy" states about Roy that, "Roy's activism enables her mobilization of 'insurgents,' those with political views opposed to the state's and involved with social justice struggles" (Nayar 1). Further, in the article "*The God of Small Things* Wisconsin" Dharwadkeret and others authors state about Roy's activism:

Roy is a dynamic political activist, vocal spokesperson of the anti-globalization movement, and a vehement critic of neo-imperialism and of the global policies of the United States. She mixes her celebrity status with her political advocacy to speak out on social issues and achieve media impact. (Dharwadkeret al 9)

Also Roy has been involved in various protests such as against Sardar Sarover Dam project which took away homes of the poor. She was also against building Narmada dam. She penned down an essay about it named 'The Greater Common Good'. She influences people through her writings for the betterment of society. Her activist passion can be traced in many of her essays such as, "War is Peace" (2001), "Power Politics" (2001), "The Greater Common Good" (1999), "The End of Imagination" (1998), "The Algebra of Infinite Justice" (2001), "The Cost of Living" (1999), "The Shape of the Beast" (2008), "Kasmir : The Case for Freedom" (2011), "Capitalism: A Ghost story" (2014), "An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire" (2004),

“War Talk” (2003) and many more. Also Shsuree Raj in her article mentions about Roy’s activism that, “She got famous for her social activity as well as her participation in many revolt in order to bring change in the society. She is a writer with a cause behind every action; there is an effort to create a better situation for the underprivileged” (Raj 3). Moreover, Roy’s activist enthusiasm is noticeable in her award winning novel *The God of Small Things* and also in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. In the novels she criticizes the social and political structures through the representation of gender oppression and class discriminations. Roy in both of her novels *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* writes about Naxalite (The Maoist Party of India) and about ‘Dalit’. In her real life she works with the Naxalites for giving the proper rights to the marginalized which she enumerates in her book *Walking with the Comrades* and *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*.

However, in both of her novels she mentions about ‘Dalit’ (untouchables) to portray the sufferings of this class and to create awareness. Further, in real life she works with ‘Dalit’ and tries to reduce the extreme torture upon the untouchables. To look into the ‘Dalit’ sector it is important to know about the caste divisions of Hinduism that is strongly practiced in India. In ancient India there is a system developed where people were separate close communities. The communities are known as ‘caste’ in English. About this caste issue, Veena Shukla in his article “Untouchability and Social Exclusion in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*” mentions about the social and religious divisions that, “The caste system in the religious form is basically a simple division of society in which there are four castes arranged in a hierarchy and below them the outcast, but socially the caste system was more complicated” (Shukla 964). By this he means that, socially there are more castes, sub-castes and divisions than religious divisions. “Presently, there are about 3,000 castes and 25,000 sub castes in India, each related to a specific occupation.

This occupation, it must be remembered, has been assigned to them by the ancient *saints*” (964). From this caste division the lower castes are the ‘untouchables’. Simply ‘Dalit’ means ‘broken people’ who live at the bottom of India's rigid social order. In this regard, Roy in her book *Power Politics* states that: "Fifty years after independence, India is still struggling with the legacy of colonialism, still flinching from the cultural insult (and) We are still caught up in the business of "disproving" the white world's definition of us" (54). After many years of independence India has not brought any changes in its caste system, specifically in ‘Dalit’ society. People from upper caste treat ‘untouchables’ as inhuman. Roy portrays the sufferings of marginalized individuals and gives voices to them in both of the novels, therefore, the main concentration of the paper is to focus on the marginalized characters and discuss it in light of micro-narrative.

Chapter 2

Literature review:

Arundhati Roy weaves the experiences and aspirations of India's marginalized people into perfect prose. Roy lightens up the rebellious, critical and also surviving pictures of people in her novels and essays. To do that, she uses many features of postmodernism like historic-metafiction, micro-narrative, magic realism, temporal distortion and many more. Hence, it is said postmodernist writers celebrate collectiveness and use multiple features. To discuss Arundhati Roy's novels in light of postmodernism, specifically micro-narrative, I have taken other books and articles as my secondary recourse to prove my arguments.

In this section, I will mainly discuss about the core contributors or scholars, whose research has helped me to develop my thesis. I have extensively borrowed from Jean-François Lyotard, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Arundhati Roy and others in shaping my ideas. Both of Roy's novels tell us about individual sufferings of the minority living in Indian society. It appears in the novels like; every individual, every city and each place has its own story. In her real life she is involved with many social works and through her writings she tried to create awareness about the wrong happenings which can be traced in her writings for example, "The Doctor and The Saint" and in her books like, *Algebra of Infinite Justice*, *The End of An Imagination*. In these pieces she talks about the horrific sides of Hindu caste system, struggles of Dalits and about India's nuclear test. Roy in her novels illustrates about 'untouchables' (Dalits), transgender, portrays minorities based on religion and war. In the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* Roy portrays the struggles of transgender community in Indian society. Javeed Ahmad Raina in his article "Transgender Marginalization and Exclusion": A study of Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*" discusses about transgender community in India and

relates the sufferings with Anjum. He finds out that although they have been provided the voting right, they are still deprived of the basic rights. They have limited access to job, education, and health care facilities. On top of that, transgenders have lack of access to public toilets in hospitals, prisons and in other public places, which illustrates the discrimination faced by them. All these issues are now a great concern to Indian society; hence I choose the topic related to India's marginalized people to explore and explain the discriminations faced by them and to acknowledge people through it.

In particular, Roy portrays the horrific effects of war going on in Kashmir in her novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. "In Kashmir when we wake up and say 'Good Morning' what we really mean is 'Good Mourning' " (Roy 279). Considering these facts, it shows that, Roy is not centered to one specific problem of society rather she emphasizes on various issues and brings that out in front of the people to make them acknowledge the forgotten people. It is an aspect of postmodernism where authors focus on 'little-narratives' and are not centered to one thing. Much like the French postmodernist Jean-François Lyotard who states in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* that, "little narratives" are the most inventive way of creating knowledge and that they help to break down "modernity's grand narratives," Roy in both of her novels presents us with fragmented narratives on different communities (35). In modernism, there was a blind faith placed in the singular explanations which was provided by the grand narratives. Whereas, in postmodernism, authors embrace multiplicity of theoretical viewpoints in order to appreciate the heterogeneity of human experience, and employ 'little narratives'. Postmodernism focuses on every individual problems of society and this similarity can be noticeable in Arundhati Roy's writings. She particularly emphasizes on the sufferings of individuals, for example, while referring to the problems of religion in India she also refers to the

problems in between the Muslims through the Shia and Sunni disputes. “And after Azadi ?. [...] What will Sunnis do to Shias? They say they will go to Jannat more surely if they kill a Shia than if they kill a Hindu” (222 Roy). Although in India the Muslims are being ill-treated and killed for many reasons, the problem also lies in the people belonging to same religion. In Islam people now divide themselves as Shia and Sunni and hate each other. Roy illustrates that the war is not only going between Hindus and Muslims rather amongst the Muslims themselves. Hence, it can be said the author is not centered rather she is concerned with various issues in the society that go beyond the narrow racial boundaries and focuses on ‘little-narratives’ thus, it relates with Lyotard’s view point.

On another note, Veena Shukla in his article “Untouchability and Social Exclusion in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*” talks about the ‘Dalit’ problems of Indian society which has helped me reasoning my thesis. Shukla portrayed the demographics and social conditions of Dalits in his article. “Even after attaining political autonomy, there has been no improvement in their status. ‘Caste’ still continues to play a highly important role in shaping the lives of the masses. Today there are about 250 million Untouchables” (Shukla 963). He also mentions about the unjust and maltreatment upon ‘untouchable’ in India which is a matter of concern. The above mentioned facts relate with another resource which I used in developing my arguments on ‘Dalit’ issues, that is “The Doctor and The Saint” an introductory essay of Arundhati Roy on Ambedkar’s book *Annihilation Of Caste*. Here Roy shows the terrible system of caste in Hinduism and to do that she quotes Ambedkar and proves his statements with real statistics. Ambedkar in his book depicts the horrible treatments that happen with untouchables. He shows his disgrace for the caste system in Hinduism. Speaking about the caste system, Roy brings example to portray the injustice with them as has been discussed by Ambedkar. “In 2012

alone, the year of *the* Delhi gang-rape and murder, 71,574 Dalit women were raped (the rule of thumb is that only 10 percent of rapes or other crimes against Dalits are ever reported), and 651 Dalits were murdered” (Roy 13).

Likewise, in the article “Controlling women’s sexuality: rape law in India” by Geetanjali Gangoli illustrates about rape in India, where he shows, suppression and abuse is related with power. Those who have power get the license to abuse woman. He also mentions about Dalit women, who are regularly getting raped by upper class men but cannot stand for their right as they belong to lower castes and classes. In the same way, Nivedita Menon in the article “Marxism, Feminism and Caste in Contemporary India” shows how caste determines labor in India. He shows the privilege of upper caste people and the sufferings of lower caste people. Equally, in the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, we find the picture of abused Dalit woman through the character Revathy and her mother. Moreover, in both of the novels Roy portrays other ‘Dalit’ characters, one is Velutha and the other is Saddam Hussain through which she tries to illustrate the cruel experiences of untouchables in her fictions. Hence, the articles “Untouchability and Social Exclusion in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*” by Veena Shukla, and “The Doctor and the Saint” by Arundhati Roy and other articles mentioned above are relatable to my thesis.

Along with that, other scholars for instance, M.A Sonia in her article “Social Consciousness in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Thing*” shows that the novel is about atrocities against minorities, children, women and untouchables. Also Filippo Menozzi in his article “Beyond the Rhetoric of Belonging: Arundhati Roy and the Dalit Perspective” brings out the current situation of Dalits in India and shows Roy’s perspective towards that. It is a

reflection on Arundhati Roy's recent involvement in Dalit politics which helped me to put my arguments about Roy's personal experiences reflected in her fictions.

Additionally, in the essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak includes the problems of Indian culture. In it, she describes the circumstances surrounding the suicide of a young Bengali woman that indicates a failed attempt at self-representation. Because her attempt at "speaking" outside normal patriarchal channels was not understood or supported, Spivak concluded that "the subaltern cannot speak." Also by using the word 'subaltern' she portrays the minorities who are inferior to the other. Roy similarly shows the marginalized or in other words the subalterns who cannot stand for themselves, if they do so they are being shuttered and oppressed by the upper class like Velutha and Ammu from the novel *The God of Small Things*.

Further, The article "A Study On Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry Of Utmost Happiness* Study" by Sushree Smita Raj, shows that Roy's fiction *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, holds the unbearable truths of society such as wretched condition of minorities, humiliated life of transgenders, life of Naxals, rape and moreover the story is about the marginalized group of people who are victims of injustice, inequality and prejudice. Similarly Javeed Ahmad Raina in the article "Transgender Marginalization and Exclusion: A study of Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*" shows the difficult life of Transgender in Indian society keeping the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* centered to that. Further, another book has played an important role to develop my thesis that is, *Transgender voices: Beyond Woman and Men* by Lori B Girshick. It portrays how the society does not accept transgender as they are different from the stereotyped gender norms. Further, it depicts the two transitions of their life, one is social and the other is physical, both of the transition is difficult for them. All these secondary

resources helped me to develop my points about marginalized people in Indian society; therefore these are relatable to my thesis.

Chapter: 3

Research Methodology

As a qualitative research, this thesis is aimed at critically identifying and evaluating the representation of the marginalized groups in Indian society. As a part of the research, I will carry out analysis of archival materials and try to evaluate and assess the texts by juxtaposing them with theories and methodologies that relate to them. Arundhati Roy, going against the privileged and the dominant, incorporates the marginalized and the oppressed in her fiction rendering belonging to the postmodern than any other schools. My thesis will demonstrate that Roy uses the postmodern technique of micro-narrative in her fiction which validates it when compared to authoritative versions of history: fiction becomes stronger than truth.

Narrative technique emerges as a dominant aspect of postmodern literature, because of its manifested apathy towards grand narrative which is a defining feature of modernist literature, and also because of its invested interest in giving voice to the voiceless, in exposing what often remains hidden, and in representing the experiences of the marginalized. Postmodernism's apathy for grand narratives is clearly justified when we see the numerous examples of micro narratives that address a number of issues often overlooked or ignored in many works of modernist literature. Works like *Heart of Darkness* failed to incorporate the voices and experiences of people from the fringes of the society, people who are deprived of any space in the narrative, primarily because of their racial, gender, and/or class status. Joseph Conrad, through his narrator Marlow, shows us the process of colonization and its inevitable vices through a lens that is shamelessly European, racist, and biased. As readers we are forced to ask about the feelings and reactions of the colonized people as well as the views and ideas of Kurtz's fiancé. Unfortunately, Conrad's narrative is so engrossed with describing the rich history of

European colonization that started with the Romans invading England and culminated in the exploitation of the non-Europeans. This grand narrative, like many others dealing with nationalism, war, social class, religion, and similar issues, does not give any agency to the people from the peripheries. Postmodern novelists, because they are inclined to presenting an event or explaining a situation from all the possible angles, naturally incorporated as many perspectives into these as they could. As a result, the dialogic structure of modernist narrative is replaced with a polyphonic one that helps us see an event through multiple points of view, and the grand narrative of the work is thus transformed into a narrative consisting of numerous micro narratives.

Micro narratives are narratives within the grand narrative, and these are infallibly coherent with the overall narrative objective as this play a vital role in conveying the central message of the novel. Despite being parts of the main narrative, micro narratives are essential devices through which the writer fuses minute details into the text. These details, in turn, help the reader better understand the narrative world, a world that is inhabited not necessarily by the central characters but also by other characters whose views matter, should matter. Arundhati Roy understood it better than many of her contemporary novelists, mostly because of her role as a social activist which helped her see the world through the eyes of the oppressed and the marginalized. Truth from the perspectives of the privileged, as Roy repeatedly asserts both in her fiction and critical essays, differs significantly when seen from the perspectives of the underprivileged. Roy, as a novelist with a political cause, is clearly interested in representing not necessarily the marginalized people, rather she is deeply involved in constructing a platform for the voiceless to speak. Roy does not speak for her minor characters: the characters speak and

Roy relay their words. Dalits like Velutha, Saddam Hussain, and queers like Anjum and Ammu thus become not instrumental in Roy's narrative but inseparable part of it.

Postmodern narrative mode is significantly different from modernist and realist narratives as it is less concerned with going on with the reader's anticipations. Postmodern writers shock the readers and leave them baffled: s/he portrays a character or describes a situation for the readers to draw whatever conclusion they want to. This seemingly apolitical stance of postmodernism is a deliberate strategy often utilized by many writers which instigate the readers to evaluate the text solely from the perspective of the characters within it. Roy handles this difficult task with unflinching dexterity and a craftsmanship that force us readers to reinterpret the truths associated with communal violence, gender discrimination and religious fanaticism in post-independent India. These diverse issues have been artistically woven into the narrative of the story without making them sound imposed or look dispersed. These stories within the stories are perfect examples of micro narratives Roy uses in both of her novels: *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*.

Chapter: 4

Textual Analysis in Light of Micro-narrative

Notably, micro narrative focuses on individual narrative and that too often focuses on minority or marginalized in the society. It brings out their struggle, survival and their helplessness. Previously in structuralism authors used to focus on macro/grand narratives where collective things were being concentrated. Gradually in the time of modernism and post-modernism people started to give importance to the small issues that are concerned with society. In the society marginalized people are being thrown out into the chasm of misfortune and suffering. The different class stratification of the society into various racial and ethno-social categories have made their life difficult. For the humiliation of being ‘different’ or ‘marginalized’ they also have to suffer from inferiority. Arundhati Roy, being an activist, writes about the sufferings and tortures that are happening with the marginalized. Her focus on individual sufferings, problems and concern in her novels is related with the aspect of micro-narrative. However, her concern about minorities can be traced in many ways for instance; Outlook magazine has reported one interview of Roy on 30 Aug, 2018, where she states referring to the felony about marginalized that: “In the India of today, to belong to a minority is a crime. To be murdered is a crime. To be lynched is a crime. To be poor is a crime. To defend the poor is to plot to overthrow the government”(Outlook1). There is always a group of people who are tormented by oppression, suppression and they suffer from discrimination caused by the society. As Audre Lorde in her article “Age, Race, Class, and Sex”: Women Redefining Difference” states:

In a society where the good is defined in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need, there must always be some group of people who, through

systematized oppression, [...] Within this society, that group is made up of Black and Third World people, working-class people, older people, and women (830).

Roy depicts the dark sides of a multicultural country through her writings. There are people from different castes and religions in India. The different religious beliefs and caste ideologies sometimes fail to make a balance and end up in violence. Roy exhibits this notion and shows the maltreatment happening with the lower class people in society. Most often clash is between Muslims and Hindus but there are also clashes in between the same religion. Speaking about micro narrative, Roy in her novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* writes about the minorities of the society. She shows the difficulties of the transgender community, focuses on caste issues and the survival of woman in society, lastly the main subject of the novel that revolves around war in Kashmir where she shows how war and religion in different places can make people helpless. Further, in *The God of Small Things* the unaccepted love laws portray the barriers of patriarchal society and the suppression of lower class people. The detail analysis is discussed below:

1.1: Hardship of transgender community in Indian society

In the first place, Roy illustrates the lives of transgender, where she depicts their limitations, sufferings and deprivations. There is a complex history of transgender exclusion, ranging from the religious beliefs to the social mythical narratives. In this section, the unfortunate state of 'Hijra' community (transgenders) in Indian society will be discussed as portrayed in the novel. The key text *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* will be centered to explore the situations faced by them (transgender) on a daily basis.

Transgender people are individuals just like any other human beings but their dual biological identity makes it difficult for them to survive in the society. As Javeed Ahmed Raina states that, “In every society, they are marginalized and forced to live a life of an ‘other’”(Raina 864). Their behavior and identity are not similar to the “normal” gender norms, and this is why they are not considered “normal” ‘man’ or ‘woman’. The protagonist Anjum faces this discrimination from his childhood, “He’s a She. He’s not a He or a She. He’s a He and a She. She-He, He-She Hee! Hee! Hee!” (Roy, 12).The teasing becomes unbearable and Anjum stops going to the music class. Being a child facing all these pain sometimes makes people traumatic. The transgender community constitutes marginalized section of the Indian society. They are denied proper education, health services and other human rights. Again, Raiana states about Indian Transgender situation in his article that, “Their education as well as public space is restricted or they themselves choose to live a life of seclusion due to certain limitations” (829).Roy in the novel portrays how everyday they are shunned by both family and society equally, and face severe identity crisis as they could not define themselves in the conventional male and female boundaries.

Concerning this, the novel starts with Anjum’s surviving story as a ‘hijra’. Anjum’s life is not any different from other struggling transgender persons. She was named as Aftab after her birth and later becomes Anjum. Although Aftab’s parents try to hide his original identity as a ‘transgender’ but Anjum chooses to live with that. Aftab is born with exceptional talent and passion for music but his physical complexity has been exposed when his voice changed. He is born with both male and female genitals which makes his identity more complex. He is not allowed to go to school for his complex identity. However, one day he discovers a ‘hijra’ outside their home and all Aftab wants is to be like her. “Whatever she was, Aftab wanted to be her, he

wanted to be her more than he wanted to be Borte Khatun” (Roy 19). Finally, Aftab manages to enter in Khwabgah and starts living with the other people. The restrictions of transgenders in the society are more visible to Anjum when she starts to live there. “In the next hour Anjum learned that the Holy Souls were a diverse lot and that the world of the Khwabgah was just as complicated, if not more so, than the Duniya” (27). The undergoing pain of being a hijra is seen in every individual living in Khwabagh. For instance, Bismillah is thrown out by her husband for not bearing him a child, even though it was her husband who was responsible for it, “Of course it never occurred to him that he might have been responsible for their childlessness” (21). Their whole world is filled up with pain. Developments of society do not make any changes in their lives. As Nimmo Gorakhpuri says to Anjum that, nothing settles down for them, societal problems like: Price-rise, school admission, Hindu Muslim riot makes ‘normal people’ unhappy but it solves at times for them, whereas transgenders life remains the same with or without any changes of society. “The riot is *inside* us. The war is *inside* us. Indo-Pak is *inside* us. It will never settle down. It *can't*” (23). In their entire life time they try to be happy but fail again and again. Hence, Nimmo refers to God to establish why God has created ‘hijras: “it was an experiment. He decided to create something, a living creature that is incapable of happiness. So he made us” (23). The pains of social discourse make them (third gender) to hide their identity sometimes. They often seek to avoid desire altogether. Their public humiliation has no bound. These people try to ease the sufferings caused by social stratification through hiding themselves or putting their lives at the whims of others. Sushree Smita Raj states about Roy’s text regarding the transgenders that, “In the text Roy has captured the transformation, the plight, the struggle of Anjum which symbolically presented for every transgender living in a democratic country. Society has failed to provide equal rights to the community and they are treated as shame” (Raj

4). The discussion of sexuality is considered taboo in any conservative society. Hence the matter of transgender is never discussed publicly which makes them to remain inside the walls of taboo. Again, Sushree Smita Raj in the article “A Study On Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*” states about Indian society that, “India is never a utopia for the trans genders. The homophobic society never treated them as complete human beings. They lost their identity and remain silent. Roy exposed the small world of transgender with bigger complications in desperate need of help” (4). The stereotypical beliefs about them in society never encourage them to have a better life.

Since, the matter is considered taboo, their struggles remain disclosed. Further, it is important for us to know that, being a transgender is not always a matter of biological fact. There are many transgenders who psychologically adopt the behavior of third gender. The society does not understand or accept the fact that being transgender or act like one is sometimes a psychological phenomenon rather than physical. Some people adopt to be like a female even being born as male. This is a freedom of choice to any individual which our society doesn’t accept. Roy also portrays this phenomenon in the novel by depicting the character Raiza. “She was a man who liked to dress in women’s cloths” (22). Also it is mentioned about her that: “However, she did not want to think of as a woman, but as a man who wanted to be a woman. She had stopped trying to explain the difference to people (including to Hijras) long ago” (22). Raiza is a man but she chooses to be in the transgender community as she wanted herself to be a female in a man’s body. In any conservative society telling the truth of gender complexity is difficult because it is a significant decision which people rarely accept. For instance in ‘*Chitra*’ a dance drama by Rabindranath Tagore, where Chitrangada is the protagonist, who has been born as a female but brought up as a male. At one point of her life she tries to have the feminine wiles

to get loved by a man called Arjuna. She needs to pretend as a conventional woman for the fear of rejection. Rarely people welcome a woman as a warrior who is associated with the qualities deemed as ‘manly qualities’, hence Tagore makes a different approach to portray the stereotypical notion of our society which does not accept a woman as she is rather it makes her the way it wants her to be. As we see, to get an acceptance by the society they have to go through two transitions, one is social another is physical. The social transition is the fear of being accepted in the particular way one’s body is altered with its mind. Lori B Girshick in his book states, “As a social construct, the gender binary attempts to force people to appear and behave in feminine or masculine ways not both or neither, or bits of one today and parts of another tomorrow” (Girshick 8). The existence for transgender in our society gets bitter and bitter as we cannot break down the binary construction of gender roles. Likewise, Vivek Shraya in *She of the Mountains* illustrates the conflict between a person and his body. The nameless protagonist is taunted for his homosexual attitude even when he was not aware of what it is. As it is mentioned in the book, “you're gay, you're gay! YOU're gay, you're gay, you're gay, you're GAY, you're gay, you're gay, you're GAY, you're gay! you're gay, you're gay! You're GAY, You're gay, you're gay, you're gay, YOU're gay...” (28). The phrase “You’re a GAY” constantly haunts him in his childhood to understand what it actually implies. The author explores the sexuality as well as social and political inferences in the personal interest of the individual. Similarly, Roy presents these unconventional subjects in her novel, especially in this particular text she chooses to give voice to the unspoken, ignored underestimated Hijra and hence she portrays Anjum as one of the main characters.

In his interview to Dave, Lori B Girshick claims that it is worse to say people ‘that kind of thing he is’ because it is hard to make people understand about this natural occurrence

(Girshick 11). Moreover, Girshick in his book *Transgender Voices: Beyond Woman and Men* mentions about another interview with a transgender where he asked about the cross-dresser and transsexuals that “Could we see breasts, for example, as appropriate on a man? Could he be one type of man?” The person replied that “I believe so, I believe it isn’t the lack of breasts that’s make the man, it’s his internal sense of masculinity” (12). By this it is traceable that, being a third-gender sometimes is a psychological phenomenon. However, it can be both psychological and biological situation but their existence is not accepted or even they are considered as cursed in a society. Our society needs to give importance to these issues and accept the fact that, transgenders are individual and different from the binary gender roles.

1.2: Dalits (Untouchables)

Caste system is an unappealing side of the Indian society. It is a matter of regret that the society that has flourished by the banks of Ganga and has been the breeding land of thousands of noble minds is still embedded in this unnatural reality of caste distinctions. Every man is born equal, a Dalit or a Brahmin. The unjust and maltreatment of the ‘untouchables’ in India is a matter of concern. The concept of division in class is not making any betterment rather it is a curse to the Indian society. Looking into the Dalit sector, the problems of caste system in Indian society can be noticed. Dalit means, ‘broken people’ who belong to the lower caste in Hindu religion. Roy portrays the sufferings of the untouchables and the injustices that happen to them in both of the novels. Also in her introductory essay “The Doctor and The Saint” she mentions about caste system that: “Caste was implied in people’s names, in the way people referred to each other, in the work they did, in the clothes they wore, in the marriages that were arranged, in the language they spoke” (12). Ambedkar in his book *Annihilation of Caste* states: “Hinduism is a veritable chamber of horrors” (Ambedkar 15). Further, Roy gives her statement on this quote

of Ambedkar with the statistics of the National Crime Records Bureau that is: “a crime is committed against a Dalit by a non-Dalit every sixteen minutes; every day, more than four Untouchable women are raped by Touchables; every week, thirteen Dalits are murdered and six Dalits are kidnapped” (14). In addition to that, Roy mentions about stripping and parading naked, the forced shit-eating, the seizing of land, the social boycotts, the restriction of access to drinking water and etc. Roy proves the statement of Ambedkar with these statistics (14). These inhuman acts are forced upon them. Even in Hinduism, they believe that caste system upholds their long tradition. Whereas, the lower caste are the sufferers who tends to convert from the religion only because of these cruel actions made upon them. Roy in reference to this, in her Essay “The Doctor and The Saint” says that; people are converting to other religion to get away from all the terrific acts that society does to them, “because the term ‘Dalit’ includes Untouchables who have converted to other religions to escape the stigma of caste (like the Paraiyans in my village who had converted to Christianity), whereas ‘Scheduled Caste’ does not”. (Roy 14)

However, considering all these realistic situations Roy portrays a ‘Dalit’ character ‘Velutha’ in her novel *The God of Small Things*. In the novel, beliefs of Indian society are portrayed as through the untouchables who are punished for having been bad in a former life. By being good and obedient, an untouchable can obtain a higher rebirth. Velutha’s lack of complacency causes him many problems throughout the novel. “It was not entirely his fault that he lived in a society where a man’s death could be more profitable than his life had ever been” (Roy 267). He is considered as ‘Paravan’ which means the lower caste. “Each region of India has lovingly perfected its own unique version of caste-based cruelty, based on an unwritten code that is much worse than the Jim Crow laws” (Ambedkar 15). As Ambedkar says ‘each region’ has its own way of cruelty we can trace the way in Aymenem house as the author describes. Velutha

used to come in the Ayemenem House from the back door with his father, as their foot step is considered polluted. Moreover, Upper caste people do not allow untouchables to their home as if Dalits are like animals that will harm them, “Pappachi would not allow Paravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched” (71). Further, back in Mammachi’s time Paravans were not allowed to walk on public roads and “they had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed” (71). Each description by the author of the Dalit characters shows the inhuman treatment of them. Roy’s representation of the treatment towards Dalits are happening in real life hence, Ambedkar says, “Outside of these varnas are the *avarna* castes, the Ati-Shudras, sub-humans, arranged in hierarchies of their own the Untouchables, the Unseeables, the Unapproachables whose presence, whose touch, whose very shadow is considered to be polluting by privileged-caste Hindus” (Ambedkar 15).

Moreover, Velutha is encouraged to go to school though not together with ‘Touchables’ but to a special school for ‘Untouchables’ only. Then again, Velutha manages himself to be the factory carpenter although ‘Paravans’ are not ‘meant to be carpenters’. Nivedita Menon in his article mentions that; “Caste determines labour in India, and the labouring body is marked indelibly not only by gender but by caste”(Menon 138). The lower caste people have no right to choose any work by themselves. The ill-treatment has no bound in their lives. In the introductory essay ‘The Doctor and The Saint’ Roy says that, the Indian Railway station which is the biggest station in India, there a Dalit worker has to clean 172,000 open-discharge toilets open handed. “This shit, which must amount to several tonnes a day, is cleaned by hand, without gloves or any protective equipment, exclusively by Dalits” (Roy 21). Untouchables are sufferer of these injustices from birth to death. Along with that, loving Ammu, being a paravan makes Velutha to

sacrifice his life whereas, Chako being an upper class man can satisfy his sexual urges with any Dalit woman. Not only satisfying urges but also raping Dalit woman by upper caste man is very common in India. As Roy mentions in the essay that, “men of the privileged caste have the right over the ‘polluted body’ of untouchable women but do not have the right to marriage: “Love is polluted, Rape is pure” (15). The caste system is paralyzing the society from further prosperity.

Additionally, the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* starts with the attempts at self-discovery of a Delhi Hijra but her circle slowly expands by including other interesting characters including a charming young Dalit man, curiously named Saddam Hussain. In the first place, Dalit (untouchables) are one of the main issues that the author projects in her novel. Saddam Hussain has to hide his identity of being a Hindu mortuary worker for his safety. Anjum refers to him as ‘chamar’, after knowing about his origin. “Anjum used the word *Chamar* not *Dalit*, the more modern and accepted term for those that Hindus considered to be ‘untouchable’, in the same spirit in which she refused to refer to herself as anything other than Hijra” (85). Saddam Hussain is born into a family of Chamars (skinner). The ‘upper caste’ farmers used to call them ‘chamars’ to collect the carcass of the dead cow. The ‘upper caste farmers’ cannot pollute themselves by touching the carcass. “The top of the caste pyramid is considered pure and has plenty of entitlements. The bottom is considered polluted and has no entitlements but plenty of duties” (Ambedkar 15). The statement is real in a society like Indian, where the lower caste (bottom) is considered polluted but is assigned with many duties imposed upon them by the Upper caste (top) people. However, after Saddam and his father finish the work, to pass the road they had to pay the station house officer but for some reason that officer charged triple amount of money on that day. They could not manage to pay him as much as he charged and so he arrested them on the charge of “cow slaughter”. “People have beaten them and killed them for this reason

“Everybody watched. Nobody stopped them”(89). It is very common phenomenon in India that people are being executed for ‘killing cows’. “If they die here-not if, *when* they die- they’ll say you killed them and that will be the end of all of you” (Roy 402). Roy by stating this portrays that, in India people do not even justify that whether the accused person really killed the cow or not, rather they immediately get in to the action (killing/beating) for hurting their holy creature (cow). Roy skillfully portrays the marginalized of society by individually focusing on important issues to create awareness.

Again, in the last part of the novel, Roy portrays another Dalit character Revathy. When Revathy was born her father’s family came to see how ‘black’ she is “They had that caste and color feelings” (419). They didn’t approve her as their child rather they said she “was not a BC but a SC Schedule caste girl” (419). Revathy is not accepted by her paternal grand-father’s house as she is born black and belongs from the backward caste ‘Settibalija’. It shows the heinous part of caste system that, a father doesn’t accept his own child for being born from a mother who belongs to the backward caste.

1.3 Social Outcast

Further, Roy portrays minority based on religion, war and ofcourse woman as one of a marginalized group. In this section the main concern is to depict the deprivation and sufferings of woman and of the innocent souls who suffers for war that Roy portrays in her novels. Starting with the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, she depicts a revolutionary character Revathy, she plays an activist role but in her life time she survives being a woman and faces several caste problems. Revathy is the woman who works for the communist party of India (Maoist). In her letter to Dr. Azad Bhartiya, she expresses her sorrow about Indian culture that makes her suffer though her whole life and makes her belong to a minority. Although Revathy’s mother and father

are from same caste, her father tortures her in many ways. This maltreatment of woman is seen common in any conservative society like India. Roy brings out this issue by portraying Revathy's mother in the first place. "He wanted Mother to wear short dresses and do ballroom dancing" (418). When her mother refuses to do that he "tortured her with blades and complained she was not satisfying him" (419). This is both physical and psychological torture. It portrays the average life of Indian women who are being tortured both mentally and physically by their husbands and cannot get any support to stop being suppressed. Getanjali Gangoli in his article states, "In spite of these rights, women's position in Indian society is highly variable, and depends to a large extent on class and caste" (Gangoli 102). Their torture does not end even after all these. Revathy's father used to come to her grandfather's home at night and torture her mother every night, "he would torture her, cut her and send her back" (419). Then again her mother got pregnant but her father sent her mother back and married another woman. It is noticed significantly that woman in the lower-middle class society rarely get any chance to speak. Her mother could not take any stand for her own right because she belongs to a lower caste and class where her words for justice will never be counted. Even though her mother has no voice to ask for justice, she is given a narrative voice by Roy in her fiction.

Furthermore, Revathy being a female communist party member has to suffer a lot. She works for the communist party as an activist where police hates them mostly because they are women. "Maximum hatred police had for women workers" (Roy 420). She describes how the women are being tortured by the police after they got caught and killed.

Comrade Nirmalakka when she was killed they ripped her stomach and took out everything. Comrade Laxmi also they not simply killed, but cut, and removed eyes. For her there was big protest. One another Comrade Padmakka they

captured and broken both her knees so she could not walk and
beat her so she has kidney damage, liver damage, so much damage. (421)

Roy depicts the true scenario of Operation Green Hunt which was declared by Government in 2008 against the Naxalites or Communist Party of India, where thousands of Adivasis were killed, women were raped. “Thousands of police and paramilitary are in the forest. Killing adivasis, burning villages. No adivasi can stay in her house or their village”(421). They have to sleep in the forest outside at night because at night police come and take their everything, “burn everything, steal everything. Chickens, goats, money” (412). They want adivasi people to leave the forest so they can make a ‘steel township’ and ‘mining’. Further, Revathy’s undergoing pain as a female communist party member will make the hardship of woman comprehensible. In the text, Roy depicts Revathy’s situation in Operation Green Hunt, there each police man took the advantage to break her down both mentally and physically.

I was naked. There was six police around me. One was cutting my skin with a knife-blade. “So you think you are a great heroine?” he asked me. If I closed my eyes they slap me. Two are holding my hands and two are holding legs.
“We want to give you a gift for your Party.” They are smoking and putting their cigarettes on me. “You people shout a lot! Shout now and see what happens!”
[...] Settle down quietly. But first we will give you some marriage experience.”
They kept on burning me and cutting me. But I am not crying at all. “Why don’t you scream? Your great leaders will come and save you. You people don’t scream?” Then one man forced to open my mouth and one man put his penis in my mouth. I could not breathe. I thought I would die. They kept putting water on

my face. Then all raped me many times. One is Udaya's father. Which, how can I say? I was unconscious. When I walked again I was bleeding everywhere. (423)

The rape scenario is not a falsehood. Getanjali Gangoli in his article "Controlling women's sexuality: rape law in India" gives a statistics of woman rape in India that is, "Rape continues to be a serious issue for Indian women. The latest crime statistics released by the Home Ministry's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB, 2007) show that every hour 18 women become victims of rape" (101). Moreover, in reality, in 2018 a 8 year old girl in Kashmir has been raped by a police officer. Because of the lack of proper laws and ignorance against rape cases by the government, women/girls are being victimized often. In *PRESSENZA* – International News Agency, Roy mentions about the rape of that young girl "But leaving aside the criminals, the fact that people are marching in support of the rapists—men and women, you know, are marching in support of the rapists, marching, demanding the charges be withdrawn. This is what is frightening" (2). Rather than asking support for the rape victim people are making rallies in support of the police officer (the rapist). Again, Getanjali Gangoli in this regard states that, "Rape is linked with power, that is, the power that men enjoyed in society.... Rape brings out, and enlarges opposition between the sexes nakedly, [...]. Rape, and the fear of rape therefore is an instrument for terrorising and paralysing women, contributing to a low sense of self-worth"(Gangoli 101). The statement has its own example which can be linked with the rape incident in Kashmir. Since the police officer has his power, he is bailed and got support to overcome from this situation whereas the little girl is the one who is suffering from mental, physical and social traumas.

Next, in the novel Roy embellishes war that is going on in Kashmir. She demonstrates the horrific sides of the war in her novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Roy in her personal life

writes for the innocent people who die for the cruel decisions of the state's upper-class people. A good example can be shaped by the incident of 'Pulwama attack'. In the novel Roy exhibits the situation of how young boys are being brain washed and used "by Pakistan to bleed India". It is something Roy terms as "Prick and Bleed policy". A real life fact about 'Pulwama Attack' in Kashmir is reflected in the novel. It shows the wrong happenings in between India and Kashmir because of unawareness of the political parties. Roy states her opinion about this matter in her article, "Our Captured, Wounded Hearts: Arundhati Roy on Balakot, Kashmir And India" in *HuffPost* which is an opinion based website and blog. On 14 February 2019, a caravan of paramilitary soldiers was attacked in Pulwama (Kashmir). A young boy of 20 years old named Adil Ahmad Dar, was a suicide-bomber by whom it has been declared and he belonged to the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad. Around 40 men had been killed. There are several attacks happening in Kashmir from 1990 but the Pulwama Attack is the most horrifying of all. In Kashmir children are growing up with the terror of war. From their childhood they are seeking for freedom and to do that without acknowledging about the horrified effect of war they are becoming suicide bombers like Adil Ahmad Dar. Roy mentions that; "There are hundreds, if not thousands, of young men in the Kashmir Valley like Adil Ahmed Dar who have been born into war, who have seen such horror that they have become inured to fear and are willing to sacrifice their lives for freedom" (*Huffpost* 4). Moreover, she states; "Any day there could be another attack, worse, or less-worse than the Pulwama attack". Likewise, Adil Ahmed Dar Roy portrays a character in the novel named Ajiz who was captured in an operation in an apple orchard near Pulwama. We can relate the link between real life incidents and Roy's fiction. According to Roy, the government is accountable for actions like this. Their 'empty' reactions towards these facts and allows the continuation of the war between India and Pakistan for Kashmir is the cause

of the innocence deaths. In the text Roy says, “In our Kashmir the dead will live forever: and the living are only dead people pretending” (Roy 343).

Speaking about minorities, Roy does not only portray woman as victim for physical abuse, rather shows the other side of the society. For instance, in the novel *The God of Small Things*, she depicts child molestation by portraying the character Estha. Orange Lemondrink Man molested Estha in the circus. “His hand closed tighter over Estha’s. Tight and sweaty. And faster still” (104). By this Roy shows the molestation is not biased towards any specific gender; it can happen to anybody, anywhere for the lack of social concern. Coming back to the woman issue as minority, Roy fictionally constructs marginalized characters in the novel that can be traced by reading three characters: Mammachi, Ammu and Baby Kochamma. Jalindar D. Kadu in the article “A Study of Marginalised Voices in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*” mentions that, “These three women are forcefully placed on the margin of society and intentionally deprived of human rights” (Kadu 1). Also the story revolves around Ammu and Velutha where one is tormented by the patriarchal society and another is the victim of Indian caste system that makes him an ‘untouchable’. Moreover, she depicts different groups of minority to show the individual sufferings. She shows the division of gender by portraying woman as minority and giving fictional figures to Mammachi, Ammu baby Kochamma. Rahel had to experience the sufferings as a child that her mother (Ammu) had gone through. Starting with Mammachi, she used to be the victim of physical abuse by Pappachi most often. “Pappachi beating Mammachi in the study” (Roy 48). That moment, Chako is the one who saves her from being beaten. “Mammachi, is significant character in the novel ... She is brutally faced marginalization. The man who is responsible for the marginalization of Mammachi is no other

than her own husband Pappachi. She was victim of her husband's brutality throughout her life" (Kadu 1).

Besides, in the novel Roy shows that, the powerful people always exploit the weaker. Likewise, the touchable habitually dominate untouchable men. "Men dominate over the women. "...civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness"(Roy 292). The social structure of average Indian women is full of many ups and downs, always there is ifs and buts. As M.A Sonia sates in her article that, "Roy lashes out at the hypocritical moral code of society. It exposes the double standards of morality in society regarding men and woman" (Sonia 607). In the novel, she depicts the people who have been placed at the bottom of the society and demonstrated how they forced into silence. The distinction that has been made between Ammu and Chako by their mother reflects the discriminatory psychology of Indian society. Mammachi allows Chako to have 'libertine' relationship with the women in the factory "he can't help having a Man's Needs" (Roy 168). Whereas, she cannot resist reacting madly and take time to believe after hearing the relationship between Ammu and Velutha. When Velly Paapen gives the news of this forbidden love affair, Mammachi reacted to him as if he is an animal not a human, "Drunken dog! Drunken Paravan liar"(256). Moreover, society has limitations on woman's education and opportunity that can make their living better. For instance, Ammu had no chance to finish her college, whereas, his brother has got the opportunity to study for abroad. Pappachi insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl, so Ammu had no choice but to leave Delhi and move with them" (Roy 38). This scenario is common in India as Sonia mentions "Even today, in spite of a fundamental improvement in woman's status, one can see in thevillages of India that the conservative and superstitious minds of a large number of people areagainst the higher education of girls" (607). The inflexible life of woman in a conservative

society like India is socially constructed. We all have to break down this rigid view of woman to make our society a better place.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Arundhati Roy can be termed as the refined writer of this decade. Through her writing and participating in many programs related to the marginalized, she whole heartedly attempts to make the society a better living place than it is. She upholds the rights of minorities and talks for the voiceless people. Her novels *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and *The God of Small Things* hold the unbearable truths of society such as wretched condition of minorities, humiliated life of transgenders, Dalits (untouchables), mediocre government, life of Naxals, rape, murder. The stories are about the marginalized group of people who are victims of injustice, inequality and prejudice. Her fictions are not only a genre; rather it seems a universe where she puts her thoughts about the wrong happenings going on in the society.

In both of the novels, Roy depicts the humiliations and distress of the minorities at the hands of the upper sections of the society. She is not centered to one problem and injustice that is going on in the society; rather she focuses on different notions of discriminations towards the marginalized. As we see, she shows the ill treatments upon Hindus in India, at the same time she portrays the clashes in between Muslims. Her representation is not blind, as she does not prioritize one minority over other; as an invested writer, Roy is more focused in exposing human vices and rescuing sufferings humanity. Both of the novels, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and *The God of Small Things* have emotional tenor about social injustice that bears direct relationship to the level of prejudice. Roy delineates the voiceless people who encounter all that tyrannies. To portray that, Roy has to encounter in speaking truth to power while sifting the facts from the fiction of progress.

Very intensely in the novels Roy portrays the obsession of Indian society with class system, untouchability, and all kinds of filth that create hatred and trigger violence. Roy specifically, depicts the race and caste issue to show the inhuman acts toward them caused by the upper castes. Each character in the novels has its own story. Roy explores each side of societal issues. She unfolds that, the fight is not against any particular individual, it is rather the followers of a particular religious faith, which is a micro-narrative. All the points that Roy takes as a concern of society, really needs to be noticed and recognized. Collective efforts can bring the changes for the betterment of our society.

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