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The Class Conflicts And Marginality In The Select Works Of Arundhati Roy

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ABSTRACT:

Arundhati Roy became universally fame by her prestigious novel “*The God of Small Things*” takes place mostly in 1969 and 1993, in Ayemenem (Aymanam), in the district of Kerala. Marxist ideas grew popular in Kerala soon after India’s liberation from British colonial rule, and in 1967 the Naxalite party split off as a more radical Communist group than the mainstream. The growing social unrest from these labor movements affects the action of the early novel. The ancient Hindu caste system (dividing Untouchables from Touchables, among other rules) was abolished around 1950, but many Indians still clung to old traditions and the class divide. Some of the characters in the novel are also Syrian Christians, an ancient community in Kerala originating with St. Thomas. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is the second novel by Indian writer Arundhati Roy, published in 2017, twenty years after her debut, *The God of Small Things*. The novel weaves together the stories of people navigating some of the darkest and most violent episodes of modern Indian history, from land reform that dispossessed poor farmers to the 2002 Godhra train burning and Kashmir insurgency. Roy's characters run the gamut of Indian society and include an intersex woman (hijra), a rebellious architect, and her landlord who is a supervisor in the intelligence service. The narrative spans across decades and locations, but primarily takes place in Delhi and Kashmir.

Arundhati Roy’s openness as a narrator which adds a lot of charm to the novel. Arundhati Roy explains in the novel that connections between the very smallest things and the very biggest things. *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is also focused the theme of class conflicts, Marginality and abusive of women in our Indian society.

KEYWORDS: Class Conflicts, Oppressed, Marginality, Humiliating, Spotless, Abusive.

INTRODUCTION:

The God of Small Things are revealed in a fragmentary manner, mostly jumping back and forth between scenes in 1969 and 1993, with backstory scattered throughout. The story centers around the wealthy, land-owning, Syrian Christian Ipe family of Ayemenem, a town in Kerala, India. Most of the plot occurs in 1969, focusing on the seven-year-old twins Estha and Rahel, who live with their mother Ammu, their grandmother Mammachi, their uncle Chacko, and their great-aunt Baby Kochamma. In the backstory before 1969, Mammachi was married to Pappachi, an Imperial Entomologist who beat her cruelly. By 1969 Pappachi is dead and Mammachi is blind. Behind her house is the Meenachal River and her pickle factory, Paradise Pickles & Preserves. Baby Kochamma is a bitter, jealous old woman who unrequitedly loved an Irish missionary. Chacko went to Oxford and married Margaret Kochamma, an English woman. They had a daughter, Sophie Mol, and then Margaret left Chacko for a man named Joe. Chacko returned to Ayemenem and took over the pickle factory. Ammu married Baba, trying to escape Ayemenem, but Baba turned out to be an abusive alcoholic. After the twins were born the two separated and Ammu moved back to Ayemenem. In the wider society of Kerala, the Communist Party is gaining power and threatens to overthrow landlords like the Ipes. The Ipes live near an Untouchable (an inferior caste) family that includes Velutha, a young man who works for Chacko and is beloved by the twins. The main action centers around Sophie Mol's visit to Ayemenem. Joe dies in an accident, and Chacko invites Margaret Kochamma to Ayemenem for the holidays. Estha, Rahel, Ammu, Chacko, and Baby Kochamma make a trip to the airport, and on the way their car is trapped by a Communist march. The family then goes to see *The Sound of Music*, and Estha is molested by the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, a vendor at the theater. The next day Sophie and Margaret arrive, and the family returns to Ayemenem. Estha fears that the Orangedrink Man will come for him, so he and Rahel find a boat and row across the river to the "History House," the abandoned home of an Englishman who "went native." The twins set up a hideout there. Meanwhile Ammu dreams about Velutha, and that night she and Velutha meet by the river and have sex. They continue to meet every night for the next two weeks.

Finally Vellya Paapen (Velutha's father) comes to Mammachi and confesses his son's relationship with Ammu. Mammachi and Baby Kochamma lock Ammu in her room, where she screams that the twins are "millstones" around her neck. The twins decide to run away to the History House, and Sophie Mol comes with them. Their boat tips over as they cross the river and Sophie Mol drowns. The twins reach shore and, terrified, fall asleep in the History House, unaware that Velutha is there too.

Baby Kochamma goes to the police, telling Inspector Thomas Mathew that Velutha tried to rape Ammu and kidnapped the children. Six policemen find Velutha and beat him brutally in front of Estha and Rahel. When Mathew finds out that Velutha is innocent, he threatens to charge Baby Kochamma. Terrified for herself, she convinces Estha to "save Ammu" by telling the police that Velutha killed Sophie Mol. Velutha dies in jail that night. After Sophie Mol's funeral Baby Kochamma convinces Chacko to throw Ammu out of the house, and Ammu is then forced to "return" Estha to Baba. The twins are separated for twenty-three years, during which Estha stops speaking altogether. When he is thirty-one Baba "re-returns" him to Ayemenem. Meanwhile Rahel is kicked out of many schools, and Ammu dies when Rahel is eleven. Rahel marries an American and lives in Boston, but then gets divorced and returns to Ayemenem when she hears Estha is there. The twins are reunited in 1993. Mammachi has died and Baby Kochamma and the cook, Kochu Maria, spend all day watching TV as the house falls apart. The History House has become a five-star hotel. Rahel and Estha (who still doesn't speak) sift through some old trinkets and notebooks and end up reaffirming their closeness by having sex.

THE CLASS CONFLICTS:

The God of Small Things basically deals with the complicated relationships between members of the Ipe family in Ayemenem, India. Each family member has different factors weighing on their relationships, like social obligation, familial duty, and personal dislike. Baby Kochamma, one of the book's most negative characters, allows her personal grudges and preoccupation with society's approval to lead her to betray her own family. Outside of the Ipes, Vellya Paapen also chooses his duty to society over familial love when he offers to kill his son, the Untouchable Velutha, for sleeping with Ammu. It is this tension between internal love and social obligations that makes up most of the novel's conflict.

The most important relationship of the book is between the twins Estha and Rahel and their mother, Ammu. The twins see themselves as almost one person, and their closeness is a shelter from the harsh political and social forces of their world. The twins' relationship with Ammu is also very complex, as Ammu is both a loving mother and an unpredictable woman who sometimes says and does things that hurt her children deeply. The very existence of the twins in her current state of divorce is also a disgrace for Ammu in Indian society. Mammachi deals with social and personal issues with her children as well, as she loves Chacko with a repressed sexuality and forgives his affairs, but disowns Ammu when Ammu sleeps with an Untouchable. Familial love is always struggling with society and duty in the novel, and it is rarely victorious.

Arundhati Roy's second book was much anticipated – after all, one is always in need of a song. Within weeks of its publication, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* found itself on the Booker longlist in July. However, other than Roy being a celebrity and the book's intentions, there is little by way of depth and complexity to buttress the novel's worthiness up to the standards of a Paul Beatty or Kiran Desai, or even Roy's own previous accomplishment. And yet, it is a necessary book. The central characters of the book – Anjum, Tilottama, Musa and Saddam – roam in the peripheries of society. Anjum, an Old Delhi *hijra* and survivor of the Gujarat pogrom, exiles herself to the neighbourhood graveyard after losing the affection of her adopted daughter. Saddam Hussein, an untouchable, awaits the day when he can avenge his father's lynching. Tilottama and Musa, enigmatic outliers, follow each other through the horrors of violence-ravaged Kashmir as star-crossed lovers and comrades.

In telling their individual and collective stories, Roy takes on the ambitious project of unmasking the social and political fault lines of the Indian subcontinent. Indeed, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a genuine paean for the patched integrity of the dispossessed and brutalised and is welcome at a time when words such as 'poverty' 'secularism' 'reservation' and 'Muslims' are becoming unwelcome. And yet, despite her ardour, the book is a bit of a mystification. The astute storytelling you'd expect from a novelist of Roy's status is sadly missing. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is noble in its vision, ambitious in its scope and dreadful in its editing.

EXPLOITATION OF THE MARGINALIZED:

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness opens in a graveyard full of flying foxes, bats, crows, and sparrows. Lest the reader mistake it for a place of romantic wildness, it is also a place where the vultures have died of diclofenac poisoning, which is used to ease the pain of cows so that they'll produce more milk. In the graveyard is Anjum, born a hermaphrodite, not technically a Hijra — a female trapped in a male body, as a doctor in the novel describes it. Born Aftab in Shahjahanabad, the walled city of Delhi, Anjum had both boy parts and girl parts, which left her Muslim mother terrified. In Urdu, all things, not just living things, but all things — carpets, clothes, books, pens, musical instruments — had a gender. Everything was either masculine or feminine, man or woman.

Was it possible to live outside language? Naturally this question did not address itself to her in words, or as a single lucid sentence. It addressed itself to her as a soundless, embryonic howl.

This question, whether it's possible to live outside the control of language, outside of the circumscribed categories, the binaries that don't work for many of us, recurs throughout the book, growing louder and louder as the book explores the conflict in Kashmir. Anjum's mother tries to raise Aftab as a boy, but one spring morning Aftab sees what appears to be a woman, Bombay Silk, in bright lipstick and gold high heels. He follows her to Khwabgah, the House of Dreams. A group of eight Hijras live there together with their guru Ustad, and eventually Aftab is able to insinuate himself into their lives. Finding a sense of belonging makes Aftab unbelievably happy. But his first friend in the house asks if he knows why God made Hijras, and explains, "He decided to create something, a living creature that is incapable of happiness. So he made us." The friend goes on to explain that what makes grown-ups unhappy are things like:

husbands' beatings, wives' cheatings, Hindu-Muslim riots, Indo-Pak war — *outside* things that settle down eventually. The war is *inside* us. Indo-Pak is *inside* us. It will never settle down. It *can't*.

Anjum wants to contradict her, but eventually the words prove prophetic. Her body begins to rebel — she grows hairy, tall, muscular, and she develops an Adam's apple — and like anyone whose outsides aren't aligned with her internal sense of identity, she develops a strong unhappiness. In spite of these difficulties, however, she becomes Delhi's most famous Hijra, undergoing a botched surgery and

treatment for her voice. She mothers a daughter, Zainab, whom she finds crying on the steps and who immediately trusts her. A trust that subdues momentarily the internal battle her friend had dubbed “Indo-Pak.”

Years later, as a result of getting caught up in an approximation of the 2002 Gujarat riots, Anjum winds up in a refugee camp, and when she returns to Khwabgah, she’s altered so much that her daughter is afraid to be around her. She takes up residence in a graveyard, and over the years, her home there gets bigger and bigger until it becomes a guesthouse that she rents to down-and-out travelers. As she tells her friend, a Dalit (once known as an untouchable) who has taken the name Saddam Hussein, “Once you have fallen off the edge like all of us have [...] you will never stop falling. And as you fall you will hold on to other falling people [...] This place where we live where we have made our home, is the place of falling people.”

Amid protests and performance art by the graveyard, another baby is abandoned by her mother and then kidnapped by a woman introduced as S. Tilottama, who goes by Tilo. Something of a Christ figure who will eventually “settle accounts and square the books” and turn the tide (perhaps the saffron tide), this baby — Miss Jebeen the Second — provides an entry point into a beautiful and tremendous love story. Tilo is one half of the couple that forms the love story that is braided into Anjum’s narrative. While all of the protestors, activists, artists, and other marginalized people squabble about whether to call the police — Anjum is firmly against it — Tilo takes the baby.

CONCLUSION:

The research concludes that everyone in Indian society is classified as being of the lowest caste or social class is marginalized. The state agents are the elites and powerful individuals who have done all in their power to marginalize all the lesser members of society. In India, Dalits, minorities, transgender persons, and the impoverished continue to be colonized. In our nation, they are not receiving their just compensation. Because they understand the consequences of upsetting the dominant groups, political leaders are backing them. The elites and political leaders share the goal of marginalizing the disadvantaged class.

The subaltern class is being marginalized by the state through the use of the military, police, and militant organizations. They employ sophisticated tactics against these impoverished and defenseless individuals. These marginalized individuals are targeted by militant groups, who incite them to insurgency before capturing and killing them through counterinsurgency. Their lands are taken, and their homes are set on fire. Similarly, in various places of India, the peasant class people are evicted in the names of different projects but no alternative measures are implemented for their reinstatement.

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