

Unheard Story of Small Things in Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

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Abstract

With *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) Arundhati Roy returns to fiction after twenty years of non-fiction and political journalism. With her long-awaited second novel, Roy also leaves behind the ambiguous status of the single-novel author. Her work is certainly reflective of the bitter reality of society. She does not hesitate either to write or speak on any antisocial issue. Fantasy, fairy tale or romance is hardly found in her work rather she prefers to decipher the suffering of mankind. She highlights mostly about underprivileged and deprived sections of the society: hijras, political rebels, the deserted baby girls, women who will not know their place in the main stream of the society, the poor. This article aims to look at *Unheard Story of Small Things* in her present novel set within the narrative of Roy's experience with India's others.

Keywords: Transgender, dystopian, Satire

The long-awaited second novel from Arundhati Roy has finally appeared after two decades, under the title *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* for what readers were eagerly waiting for. After the publication of *The God of Small Things* was the Booker prize winning novelist turned into an activist. That was probably responsible for her departure into non-fiction and publication of books opposing armament,

industrialization, globalization, etc. This novel "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" is a political novel from every aspect, as it refers to political grandees for the sake of highlighting issues of the most deprived section of the society. As compared to her last and only other novel *The God of Small Things* (1992), the literary traits, by no means inconsequential, take secondary place in relation to the writer's political philosophy voiced in this novel. She has adopted several strategies to accomplish the agenda; these are: being selective in the choice of material, put in negatives with emotional capital through deft use of language, and creating an insider-character to support the opponent's viewpoint. All these make the novel a dystrophic one which refuses to note any positivity around or any ray of light at the end of the tunnel.

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, engraved the setting, gave life to the character and soul to the story. The story highlights about gender discrimination, religious differences and the political domination that always encouraged assassinations of innocent people. Instead of sympathy to the victims, they are named as accused and they are murdered on the name of law.

This massive and sprawling tale has two main folds: one follows Anjum, a hijra, unrolling threadbare Persian carpet in a city graveyard but she calls it home. She and her company harbor a hope that has no entity but only to resurrect the breath lost by years ago. The other follows Tilo,

a thorny and irresistible architect turned activist (who seems to be modeled on Roy herself), and the three men who fall in love with Tilo.

The first chapter, "Where Do Old Birds Go to Die?" The main character of the novel Anjum has been compared with the tree. Roy used the metaphor of a tree to tell the life of Anjum. She writes-

"She lived in the graveyard like a tree. At dawn she saw the crows off and welcomed the bats home. At dusk she did the opposite. Between shifts she conferred with the ghosts of vultures that loomed in her high branches. She felt gentle grip of their talons like an ache in an amputated limb. She gathered they weren't altogether unhappy at having excused themselves and exited from the story" (3)

The tree could mean a natural growth. It could also signify her will to live against all odds, shuttling her between the poles. She resists the vultures that loomed in the high branches of the tree. The vulture being eliminated through poison acts as a metaphor, the way Indian society is poisoned by history of corrupt politicians, religious hatreds, and shedding blood, death and denied justice to innocent people. When we move forward we find that she is called by different names-

Magnu, Romeo, Anjum, a history is imposed on her, through different names, but she is least bothered about it.

"It doesn't matter. I'm all of them, I'm Romi and Juli, I'm Laila and Majnu. And Mujna, why not? Who says my name is Anjum, I'm Anjuman. I'm a mehfil, I'm a gathering. (Roy, 4).

As we discover Anjum really becomes a mehfil for all. Her Jannat Guest House acted as an abode for multi-faith and multi-caste people. In second chapter, we find Anjum in Khwabgah, the resort exclusively belonging to the transgender as their comfortable and safe-zone. Throughout the first four chapters, the readers

are introduced to one of the subject-matters of the novel – the domain of the hijra- the transgender or third gender people.

In India the community still is fighting to avail their civil rights. They beg for their survivable. In the text Roy has captured the transformation, the plight, the struggle of Anjum which symbolically presents for every transgender living in a democratic country like ours. Society has failed to provide equal rights to the community and they are treated as shame and nothing worth for main stream community.

Roy has portrayed the dark side multicultural society living in our country. There are people of different race, caste; creed, religion and faith live in India. Sometimes, different faiths lost its balance and always end up in violence but without any achievement in general. The most often clash is between the Muslims and Hindus. Roy also talked about the plight of Kashmir Pandits after several hundred Hindus had been massacred. Government failed to protect them so they left the valley and started living in the plains. Many of them became homeless and faced endless troubles as a refugee in their own land. Muslims boys are also arrested in the suspicion of making a terrorist attack. Anjum was survived because the attackers thought that killing Hijra is a sin.

"You had better chased out these old cows that you have here, she said.' If they die here-not if, when they die – they will say you killed them and that will. They accuse you of eating beef and then take over your house and your land and send you to refugee camp. It's all about property, not cows. You have to be very careful." (402)

Roy projected the contemporary critical and sensitive socio- political issues of India. Under the covers of denomination and republic how dogmatism, racism, demarcation and injustice constantly rehearsed. How people are

massacred and angels are buried in the dark. The textbook is an uttered verity. She projected a transgender as a promoter. By doing that she has given chances to the compendiums to have regard over similar life, a life considered as a curse. But Anjum was no way shamed of her. She came what she wanted to and no way hysterical of taking a step ahead. She was able of erecting for herself 'Jannat ', a heaven. She also espoused a girl child named her Zainab and started to have a family.

Other than presenting a story through the perspective of a neglected and unaccepted transgender, she also exposed the inhuman treatment to the Dalits. These Dalits no way get a chance to develop themselves as lack of mindfulness and knowledge; they came the victim of injustice.

"In 2008 the situation much worst inside the timber. Operation Green Hunt is blazoned by Government. War against people. Thousands of police and paramilitary are in the timber. Killing adivasis, burning town lets. No adivasi can stay in her house or their vill. They sleep in the timber outdoors at night because at night police come, hundred, two hundred, occasionally five hundred police. They take everything, burn everything, steal everything. Cravens, scapegoats, plutocrat. They want adivasi people to vacate timber so they can make a sword township and mining."(421)

As she described the situation of similar depressed Dalits, who are forced to leave they enjoy native place and deprived from their civil rights. Roy presented the lives naxals in the timber. They did n't choose to do a hunger strike and request the government for their rights. They chose to lift their arms with ordnance to catch their boons as citizens of popular country like India. In the letter of Jebeen's real mama, a

Maoist explains every incident. She left her child because she cannot take care of her. She was ravished by police men who are on duty and redounded this child. As she has to live in timber, she gave up the child for her future. This was the reality which no way heard or seen. Poor women had to shut her mouth. As it's believed that it's easy to suppress a woman. The laugh of women is always remaining unheard. They're tutored to bear all the pain quietly just because they live-in a society where all laws are made to control life of women in name of culture and tradition.

Roy's rich and knowing narration wings across the landscape, traversing caste, religion and gender divides. She acerbically captures the cruel ironies of city like Delhi where dead pampers dwell "air conditioned splendour." it's a story about our contemporary world delivered through the microcosm of individuals living through the never ending and harrowing conflict in Kashmir and the marginal communities of outsiders in Delhi. The Ministry of Utmost Happiness demands a specific degree of attention and reflection in equal parts. The dedicated readers will definitely come away with a rewarded sense of empathy for humanity, despite its short comings. The Ministry of Utmost happiness isn't a sole apprenticeship of imagination; rather, it's a joint feat of both imagination and reality. Everyone who features a sophisticated taste for literature and is enthusiastic about Indian political and religious history should read it at least once since it offers a pleasant reading with the features of fiction as opposed to the tedious prosaic nature of textbooks on politics of India.

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness may be a complete satire aiming to attack the ways of patriarch society and where a transgender beg for their place, women are raped and sure to seize their lips, abandoned lives of dalits and Hindus

and Muslims war. The blind government taking all of political advantages from those events. The particular victims are the citizens. Roy always captures real events in her texts and this so called fiction is not any less. The story takes us through the lanes between the graveyards to Valley,

forest to protest field, and silent tears to demonstration.

References:

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