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Political Violence, Religion and Gender Identity in
Arundhati Roy's
The Ministry of Utmost Happiness

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ABSTRACT

A keen observer of Indian society, Arundhati Roy has a unique perspective on the country. The marginalized, downtrodden, and revolutionaries of the 21st century can look to her as a social reformer and activist. A Booker Prize-winning author's second book, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) was published twenty years after the first publication of Arundhati Roy's debut novel entitled 'The God of Small Things'. The book details some of the most heinous crimes of the past. Land reform, the 2002 Godhra train burning and the conflict in Kashmir are examples of contemporary Indian history. It depicts the hardships,

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anguish, and rights of the LGBT people in the context of the United States and India of the present day. Sociopolitical events of the period are also featured in the novel - the tale of India and the rest of the globe in the context of its own. Roy analyzes several forms of power. Contemporary Indian society and many characters in the narrative based on their backgrounds, the political connections or castes they belong to. The paper focuses on political and social issues. The Ministry of Utmost Happiness is an example of gender, religion, and power issues discussed from various angles.

KEYWORDS

religion, power, gender identity and political violence.

INTRODUCTION

Indians refer to India as their "Country" or "Nations," not as a nation. As a collective term, "nation" is used to denote a historically established group of people who share a common racial identity, geographic location, economic circumstances, ethnicity, and psychological make-up as expressed in a shared culture.

Indian literature in English began to imitate European theories and ideologies in the early twentieth century, losing its own traits. There was a shift in the literary framework of India, as well as in the political system and in particular the democratic system, during the same time.

Today, these concepts 'secularism' and 'democracy' are only found in the constitution and have lost their meaning or rather become "pseudo" or "illusion" in the modern context. However, caste, class, gender and other social strata still divide Indians. Many writers and campaigners have attempted to awaken people from their happy ignorance, but they are unable to do it.

The God of Small Things, Arundhati Roy's debut novel, explores the issue of caste in South Indian culture. Christians who adhered to a caste system at the beginning of the 20th century populate most of the characters. For her, the book gave her notoriety and acclaim. The Ministry of Utmost Happiness (2017) was released in 2017 after a 20-year delay. On sociopolitical problems in between these two books, she authored an abundance of essay-

length works.

ANALYSIS

Coexisting Indian religions have flourished for many millennia. Many religions were born, flourished, and evolved in the Asian continent prior to the rise of Western religions. For thousands of years, several different indigenous religions coexisted alongside Islam and Christianity. During the Vedic period, roughly between 1500 BCE and 500 BCE, India's religious history began.

Among the most prominent tensions in the story is between Hindus and Muslims; most of the bloodshed that the protagonists witness, and experience derives from these disputes. Atheism and Islamophobia fuel India's growing violence and intolerance, as Roy shows. Hindu nationalism and the atrocities against Muslims in secular India perpetrated by Hindu radicals following the separation of Pakistan and India are frequently discussed in the novel. This "unofficial" remark, Roy argues, unambiguously justifies the slaughter of Muslims as retaliation for the alleged attack on Hindus. A non-official representative for the ruling party has gone on record saying this in order to keep the government's support for the slaughter of Muslim residents hidden. It's disturbing that someone linked with the administration would make such a comment in public, indicating that Hindu nationalism has penetrated the normal political landscape. It's practically impossible to separate the two. The country's continuing hostility toward religious minorities is facilitated by the fact that religion and government are intertwined.

Roy is more critical of the Hindu hardline government than the Muslim opposition in Kashmir, but she vividly illustrates the way wherein extremist Islam console servers only to split groups from one another prolong the carnage in the region. Some of the most extreme Muslim groups were demanding Kashmir as their own. "What does liberty mean? There is only Allah," is the Kashmiri phrase for freedom, yet this interpretation plainly limits the freedom of all citizens who live under these terrorists' authority and establishes a pattern for an intolerance-driven Kashmir. Religious strife and violence will very certainly continue to affect the country's residents.

After establishing people's democracy and fulfilling the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, and anti-monopoly capital tasks, the Indian people can move toward socialism.

The novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, exposes the dreary lives of peasants. During

the dam building, which resulted in the destruction of tens of thousands of acres of forest, the indigenous residents of the rural region were compelled to relocate to the city. As a result of slum clearance, many individuals are compelled to relocate outside of the city. At this time, the government has made no attempt to raise the standard of living for the people, yet they are actively working to endanger the lives of the poor peasants. People are rising up in revolt against the government, and it's here to stay.

Since antiquity, society has been divided into two classes: the powerful and the powerless, and those who are weak or vulnerable are subjected to the control and flattery of the powerful. It's as if they don't exist in the real world. The stakes are high, and if they don't act quickly, they could lose their sense of self. As a result of lack of experience, they are the lowest of the low in this world, and they are scared of being insulted. Gender identity issues are at the basis of transgender maltreatment and identity crises in this study. As a result of a person's level of feminine or masculine qualities in an adult, gender identity alludes to the fact a person's identity. A person's sexual orientation is influenced by their internalized sense of gender identity. Throughout society, people are denied freedom of thought, expression, and action in all areas of their lives. As long as they can hang on to the stereotype, they'll hunger for recognition and a position in the world. Racism against women in India is also analyzed in this paper.

Women in Indian culture are treated as subhuman in a society dominated by men. Discrimination against both men and women is the cause of their plight. Stereotypes that maintain the supremacy of men over women constitute the crux of male-dominated society. Forcibly stripped of their human rights as well as their own identities, they are subjected to a barrage of abuse and rape. Despite their best efforts, women are unable to speak about their pain and suffering. In society, but robs them of economic opportunity, employment, and a fair voice in politics. They are ostracized from the general public and the national conversation, and their efforts are never acknowledged. They are tormented by feelings of insecurity, as well as prejudice and a sense of loss of self-identity.

Minority religious and political groups are marginalized by the power hierarchy of these institutions, which results in their marginalization. Power is wielded in a variety of ways, and the

opposition that arises as a result of power itself contributes to its instability. In addition, there is a wide range of resistance at all levels of society, making power more vulnerable.

Roy focuses on critiquing the power centers that are striving to exert authority in society, and he does so in great detail. Media or perhaps the journalism, religious issues; her incisive pencil does not spare any facet of the subject matter. "

CONCLUSION

In her work, Arundhati Roy depicts the resistance that these power centres faced through various personalities. It was in the graveyard when they were all together at the end of the novel that the Muslim 'Hijra' and a Syrian Christian woman, along with Kashmiri militants, a Dalit, and a liberator, fought in their respective ways. This is in accordance with Foucault's theory of non-linear flow of power, which makes it unstable and eventually leads to subversion in the Roy book.

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