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# SEPARATION AND MARGINALIZED RESISTANCE IN THE NOVELS OF ARUNDHATI ROY'S THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS AND THE MINISTRY OF UTMOST HAPPINESS

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## ABSTRACT

Arundhati Roy's fiction gives special attention to people who live outside the powerful social and political structures of society. Her novels *The God of Small Things* (1997) and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) deal with different settings and historical situations, but both are concerned with separation, exclusion, and resistance. This paper examines how caste, gender, sexuality, religion, political conflict, and social conventions create separation in Roy's novels. It also studies how marginalized characters respond to these conditions. In *The God of Small Things*, the relationship between Ammu and Velutha shows how caste and gender restrictions control personal relationships. Velutha's position as a Dalit man makes him vulnerable to social and physical violence, while Ammu suffers because she does not fit the accepted image of a woman. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, marginality becomes wider and more political through the experiences of Anjum, Tilo, Musa, Kashmiris, religious minorities, and displaced people. The Jannat Guest House represents an alternative community where people rejected by mainstream society can find belonging. Roy therefore does not present marginalized people only as helpless victims. She also shows their ability to resist through love, memory, political action, storytelling, survival, and community. The paper argues that separation is a major way through which power is maintained in Roy's fiction, while resistance begins when people question or cross these imposed boundaries.

**KEYWORDS:** *Arundhati Roy, separation, marginality, resistance, caste, gender, subalternity, The God of Small Things, The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, Kashmir, identity*

## INTRODUCTION

Arundhati Roy is one of the important contemporary Indian writers in English. Her fiction connects personal experiences with larger social and political questions. Her first novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997), focuses on a family in Kerala, while her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), moves across Delhi, Kashmir, and other politically troubled spaces. Although the novels are different in form and subject, both are deeply concerned with people who are separated from the social mainstream.

Separation is an important part of human life in Roy's fiction. Her characters are separated by caste, gender, religion, class, sexuality, family rules, political conflict, and geographical boundaries. These divisions are not natural or harmless. They are created and maintained by social institutions and systems of power. Roy shows that such divisions can affect people's relationships, identities, choices, and even their right to live with dignity.

In *The God of Small Things*, caste is one of the strongest forms of separation. The relationship between Ammu and Velutha challenges the caste system as well as the patriarchal rules of society. Velutha is a skilled and sensitive person, but his Dalit identity places him outside the social position occupied by Ammu's family. Ammu, meanwhile, is also marginalized because she is a divorced woman who refuses to live according to traditional expectations.

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy expands the idea of marginality. The novel deals with transgender identity, communal conflict, Kashmir, state violence, displacement, poverty, and political resistance. Anjum, Tilo, and Musa experience different kinds of exclusion. Yet they are not shown simply as powerless individuals. They create relationships and spaces in which alternative forms of belonging become possible.

This paper argues that Roy uses separation to expose the working of social power, while marginalized resistance provides a challenge to that power. Her characters resist through love, memory, identity, political action, and community. Her fragmented narrative style also supports this resistance because it gives space to voices and experiences that are often absent from dominant histories.

### Separation in *The God of Small Things*

Caste is one of the central causes of separation in *The God of Small Things*. The novel shows that caste is not simply a social identity. It affects relationships, employment, physical contact, family honour, and individual freedom.

Velutha is a Dalit man who works with Ammu's family. He is intelligent, skilled, and capable, and he has a close relationship with the children, Estha and Rahel. However, his social position remains inferior because of the caste system. His relationship with Ammu becomes unacceptable because it crosses a boundary that society has created between caste groups.

The relationship between Ammu and Velutha is therefore more than a love story. It challenges the social rules that determine who is allowed to love whom. The relationship becomes dangerous because it crosses both caste and gender boundaries. Ammu is expected to behave according to the rules of a respectable woman, while Velutha is expected to remain within his assigned caste position.

Velutha's death demonstrates the extreme consequences of this system. His humanity and personal qualities cannot protect him from caste prejudice. His treatment reveals the contradiction between his value as an individual and the low position assigned to him by society. Through Velutha, Roy shows that caste-based separation can become physical violence.

**Marginalization of Ammu**

Ammu's experience shows another form of separation. Her marginality is mainly connected with gender, marriage, and social expectations. Ammu leaves an unhappy marriage and returns to her family home with her children. However, returning to her family does not give her complete freedom. As a divorced woman, she is treated differently from other members of the family. Her choices and sexuality are closely judged.

Ammu's relationship with Velutha becomes an act of personal freedom, but society interprets it as a violation of its rules. Her experience shows how women's bodies and desires can be controlled by patriarchal structures. Roy does not present Ammu simply as a victim. Ammu makes choices even though she knows that those choices can have serious consequences. Her resistance is limited by the social world around her, but her desire for freedom remains important. The novel therefore demonstrates that gender and caste can work together. Velutha is excluded because of caste, while Ammu is controlled because of gender. When the two come together, they challenge two different forms of social power.

### Childhood and Psychological Separation

Estha and Rahel provide another perspective on separation. They are twins, but the violence surrounding them gradually changes their emotional lives. Their childhood is affected by conflicts that they cannot fully understand.

The children are separated from the security that childhood is expected to provide. They witness or experience events created by adults, and these events continue to affect them long after childhood. Roy also uses the children's perspective to question adult authority. Estha and Rahel notice details that adults ignore. Their unusual use of language and their imaginative understanding of the world create an alternative way of seeing reality. This is important because Roy gives value to a perspective that is usually considered less authoritative. Children, like other marginalized groups, may not control social institutions, but they can see contradictions within them.

### Marginality and Resistance in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

Twenty years after *The God of Small Things*, Roy published *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The second novel expands the idea of marginality from the family and caste system to the nation and its political conflicts. One of the most important characters is Anjum. As a transgender woman, Anjum does not fit easily into conventional ideas about gender. Her identity places her outside the social structures that define acceptable gender roles. However, Roy does not allow Anjum to remain only a symbol of suffering. Anjum develops relationships and eventually becomes connected with Jannat Guest House. This space becomes an important example of resistance through community.

### Religion and Political Marginality

Religious identity is another important source of separation in the second novel. The book engages with Hindu-Muslim conflict and the experiences of minorities in contemporary India. Roy presents religious identity as something that can become politically dangerous when combined with nationalism and communal conflict. Muslim characters may experience suspicion, violence, or exclusion because of their identity. The novel therefore raises an important question: who is allowed to feel completely at home within the nation? This question connects religious marginalization with the wider theme of belonging. A person may legally belong to a country but still feel socially or politically excluded. Roy's treatment of religion is part of her larger concern with people who are present within society but are not always treated as equal participants in it.

**Marginalized Resistance**

An important feature of Roy's fiction is that marginalized characters are not represented only as victims. Their resistance may not always lead to immediate success, but it remains meaningful. Velutha's resistance exists partly through his refusal to accept the social distance imposed between him and Ammu. Ammu resists patriarchal expectations through her choices. Anjum resists gender norms by living according to her own identity and by creating a community. This broader understanding of resistance is important because Roy does not suggest that resistance must always produce political victory. Sometimes its importance lies in protecting human dignity in circumstances where dignity is under threat.

Conclusion

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* present different worlds, but both are deeply concerned with separation and marginality. In the first novel, caste and patriarchy create strict boundaries around love, family, sexuality, and social status. Velutha and Ammu become victims of a system that refuses to accept relationships that cross these boundaries. Estha and Rahel show how such social violence can continue to affect individuals long after the original events have passed.

In the second novel, Roy expands the idea of separation to include religion, gender identity, political conflict, Kashmir, displacement, and citizenship. Anjum's story and the creation of Jannat Guest House demonstrate that marginalized people can create alternative forms of belonging. Musa and Tilo show how personal relationships are affected by political conflict.

The two novels therefore suggest that marginality is not simply a condition of weakness. It can also become a position from which dominant systems are questioned. Roy's characters resist through love, memory, political action, identity, survival, and community. Her fiction ultimately suggests that belonging is not only something given by society. It can also be created through relationships, memory, care, dignity, and solidarity. In this sense, the margins become not only places of exclusion but also spaces from which new possibilities of identity and community can emerge.

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