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Nature as Refuge for the Marginalized: An Ecocritical Analysis Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things and The Ministry of Utmost Happiness

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ABSTRACT

Environmental well-being is a vital component of human life, as a healthy environment sustains not only physical survival but also social and psychological stability. Contemporary literary studies increasingly recognize literature as a powerful medium for articulating environmental concerns, and Arundhati Roy's fiction occupies a significant place within this discourse due to its sustained engagement with ecological degradation, displacement, and social injustice. This paper presents an ecocritical analysis of select novels by Arundhati Roy, with particular emphasis on the representation of nature as a home and refuge for socially and psychologically suffocated individuals. Drawing on the theoretical framework of ecocriticism, the study examines how Roy's narratives foreground the intricate and interdependent relationship between human beings and the natural world. The paper explores how marginalized, displaced, and silenced characters—victims of capitalist development, state violence, and ecological destruction—seek shelter, belonging, and emotional healing within natural spaces. Roy's evocative portrayal of landscapes, rivers, and non-human environments reveals nature not merely as a backdrop but as an active, nurturing force that offers solace and restoration to those excluded from dominant social structures. In The God of Small Things, the river and its surrounding landscape emerge as spaces of comfort and emotional refuge, particularly for characters alienated by rigid social norms. Similarly, in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, the graveyard is reimagined as a living ecological space that functions as a home, sanctuary, and site of resistance for brutally marginalized and victimized communities. The study argues that Roy presents nature as a healing and redemptive entity capable of absorbing human suffering and restoring fractured identities. Through her characters, she highlights how environmental degradation intensifies social suffocation, while a return to nature enables survival, dignity, and emotional recovery. Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative textual analysis grounded in ecocritical theory. By examining The God of Small Things and The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, this paper demonstrates that Roy's fiction advances a powerful ecological vision in which nature becomes a compassionate home for the oppressed, underscoring the urgent need for environmental consciousness and ethical coexistence

Keywords: *Ecocriticism; Nature as home; Marginalized communities; Environmental degradation; emotional healing*

INTRODUCTION

Human beings have historically derived comfort, identity, and emotional stability from their natural environments. From indigenous settlements to rural landscapes, nature has functioned not merely as a physical setting but as a source of cultural continuity, psychological well-being, and collective belonging.

However, when environments and indigenous cultures are marginalized, exploited, or destroyed for socio-economic, political, and commercial interests, the consequences extend far beyond ecological loss and deeply affect human lives at social, psychological, and emotional levels. Environmental degradation, displacement, and capitalist development often result in alienation, trauma, and a profound sense of suffocation among marginalized communities. This paper examines how Arundhati Roy's fictional narratives compellingly demonstrate that native and marginalized people can flourish only within their natural and ecological surroundings. Roy repeatedly suggests that forced displacement from native environments leads to psychological distress, emotional fragmentation, and social disintegration. Through her characters, she illustrates that harmony with nature offers comfort, dignity, and inner peace, while any disturbance to ecological balance directly disrupts human lives. Roy's fiction thus foregrounds the idea that nature functions as a protective shelter and a symbolic home that nurtures mental and emotional well-being.

By portraying rivers, forests, burial grounds, and natural landscapes as spaces of refuge and belonging, Roy articulates a powerful ecological vision in which nature becomes inseparable from human survival. Her narratives reveal that the suffocation experienced by marginalized individuals—caused by caste oppression, state violence, capitalism, and environmental destruction—can be alleviated through reconnection with the natural world. This study, therefore, investigates how Roy presents nature as a home that provides healing, solace, and resistance against socio-political oppression.

Research Question

In what ways can nature be understood as "home" for suffocated individuals in Arundhati Roy's novels *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between humans and nature remains a central concern in contemporary literary studies, particularly within ecocritical discourse. Ecocriticism, as an interdisciplinary approach, examines literary representations of nature in relation to environmental, social, and political concerns. Arundhati Roy's fiction is especially significant in this context, as it intricately weaves ecological consciousness with issues of caste, gender, displacement, and state violence. Roy's novels *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* portray the paradoxical role of nature in the lives of marginalized individuals. While nature offers solace and temporary refuge, it simultaneously reflects the damage caused by social hierarchies and environmental exploitation. Kumar (2009) argues that Roy employs natural landscapes in *The God of Small Things* to explore the psychological and social suffocation of her characters, suggesting that nature functions as a double-edged force—providing peace while exposing rigid caste and social barriers.

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy presents nature as a site of resistance, regeneration, and hope. Bose (2011) contends that Roy reimagines natural spaces as healing zones that enable emotional and spiritual recovery for oppressed individuals. Roy's critique of environmental destruction caused by multinational corporations further underscores her ecological activism. Narayan (2007) emphasizes that Roy's environmental concerns are inseparable from her engagement with the political struggles of marginalized communities, positioning her work within postcolonial ecocriticism. Ghosh (2004) highlights Roy's critique of both colonial exploitation and contemporary capitalist-driven ecological crises. Studies by Needham (1999) and Menon (2001) explore themes of gender, caste, and patriarchy in *The God of Small Things*, while McMahon (2005) analyzes its non-linear narrative structure. Kunhi and Kunhi (2017) specifically identify ecocritical elements in the novel, emphasizing its environmental symbolism.

Scholars such as Bandyopadhyay (2011) note Roy's sustained engagement with socio-environmental and human rights issues. Jaidka and Dhar (2020) examine *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* through the lens of

environmental concern, while Zahid and Ahmed (2022) focus on neoliberal economic policies depicted in the novel. Batra (2017) explores spirituality and secularism, whereas Narayan (2019) analyzes representations of marginalized communities. Maurya and Kumar (2019) further investigate themes of identity and belonging, reinforcing the centrality of nature as a space of refuge and resistance in Roy's fiction.

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study adopts a qualitative research methodology grounded in close textual reading and interpretative analysis. The primary objective is to explore how ecological spaces function symbolically and materially within Roy's fiction, particularly in relation to marginalized and suffocated individuals. An inductive and analytical approach has been employed to derive meanings from the selected texts, allowing themes and patterns to emerge organically from the narratives. Ecocriticism provides the central theoretical framework for this study. Through an ecocritical lens, the research examines the interconnected relationship between human beings and the non-human environment, focusing on issues such as environmental degradation, displacement, and ecological injustice. This framework enables a critical exploration of how nature operates not only as a setting but as an active, restorative force within the novels. The methodology is interpretative and subjective, aligning with the qualitative nature of literary analysis.

Sources

Both primary and secondary sources are utilized in the present study. The primary sources consist of Arundhati Roy's novels *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Secondary sources include scholarly articles, critical studies, and theoretical works on ecocriticism, postcolonial studies, and environmental humanities, accessed through both print and credible online platforms.

Ecocriticism

In response to the growing ecological crisis, literary studies have increasingly engaged with environmental concerns, giving rise to ecocriticism as a significant theoretical approach. Ecocriticism emerged as a critical response to environmental degradation and seeks to examine how literature represents the relationship between humans and the natural world. As Glotfelty (2004) defines it, ecocriticism aims "to explore the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (p. xvii). This interdisciplinary approach investigates the complex interactions among human beings, non-human entities, cultural practices, and ecological systems. Ecocriticism challenges anthropocentric worldviews and highlights how environmental exploitation is deeply intertwined with social injustice, colonial histories, and capitalist expansion. By applying this framework, the present study examines how Roy's fiction critiques ecological destruction while advocating for ethical coexistence between humans and nature.

Representation of Nature as a Home in Arundhati Roy's Selected Novels

Arundhati Roy is widely recognized as one of the most influential contemporary writers whose literary oeuvre consistently engages with environmental concerns, social injustice, and political resistance. As an active participant in environmental discourse, Roy foregrounds ecological degradation and its intimate connection with human suffering, particularly among marginalized and indigenous communities. Her fiction reveals a deep, inseparable bond between human life and the natural world, presenting nature not merely as a physical backdrop but as a sustaining force that provides comfort, identity, and emotional stability. Roy repeatedly articulates her concern over the violation of nature and demonstrates how ecological destruction directly disrupts human lives.

Debarati Bandyopadhyay (2011), in her discussion of Roy's literary activism, argues that Roy persistently addresses socio-environmental and human rights issues in order to awaken ecological consciousness among readers. Roy's narratives urge individuals, as consumers of the Earth, to recognize their ethical responsibility toward nature. This ecological vision forms the foundation of Roy's portrayal of nature as a home and refuge for those rendered socially, psychologically, and culturally suffocated by oppressive systems.

The God of Small Things: Ecological Marginalization and Human Suffering

Arundhati Roy's debut novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) powerfully articulates environmental degradation through its sustained attention to "small things"—neglected lives, silenced voices, and marginalized spaces within postcolonial Indian society. The novel establishes a profound parallel between the oppression of women, lower-caste individuals, and the systematic exploitation of the natural environment. Both women and nature are rendered voiceless, violated, and expendable under patriarchal, caste-based, and capitalist structures that prioritize power, profit, and social conformity. Roy's narrative demonstrates that ecological destruction is not merely a background condition but a lived reality that shapes human relationships, identities, and emotional well-being.

Central to this ecological critique is the Meenachal River, which functions as both a life-sustaining natural entity and a silent witness to social and moral decay. Once a source of nourishment, play, and emotional refuge, the river gradually becomes polluted and degraded, mirroring the erosion of ethical values and social harmony. Roy deliberately aligns the contamination of the river with the psychological suffocation of characters such as Rahel, Estha, and Velutha. Their intimate relationship with the river underscores how natural spaces provide emotional grounding and a sense of belonging, especially for those excluded from dominant social structures. When this ecological balance is disrupted, the characters experience alienation, trauma, and emotional fragmentation, revealing the deep interdependence between environmental health and human well-being.

Moreover, Roy exposes how the ideology of modernization and unchecked development intensifies both social and ecological marginalization. Industrial expansion, tourism, and consumerist aspirations reshape the landscape while displacing indigenous and lower-caste communities from their traditional habitats. Velutha's tragic fate exemplifies this intersection of ecological and social violence: as a Dalit whose skills are rooted in a tactile relationship with nature, he becomes a threat to entrenched hierarchies and is violently erased. His death signifies not only caste oppression but also the annihilation of alternative, ecologically sustainable ways of living. Through such representations, Roy suggests that environmental destruction is inseparable from systems of domination that dehumanize vulnerable populations.

Importantly, *The God of Small Things* does not present ecological damage as an isolated crisis but situates it within broader structures of power, memory, and historical injustice. The loss of ecological balance leads to emotional suffocation, fractured identities, and unresolved trauma, particularly among those who are already marginalized. Roy's narrative thus reinforces a central ecocritical argument: violence against nature inevitably reproduces violence against human lives. By foregrounding "small things" and overlooked spaces, Roy challenges dominant narratives of progress and development, advocating instead for an ethical consciousness that recognizes the mutual vulnerability of humans and the natural world.

Nature as a "Home" in *The God of Small Things*

Roy emphasizes that natural elements—rivers, trees, and forests—are not passive backdrops but active participants in the lives of her characters, shaping their emotional and psychological landscapes. The Meenachal River, for instance, serves as a site of memory, play, and solace for Rahel and Estha, offering a sense of continuity amid social and familial upheaval. Velutha's intimate knowledge of the river and his small

house by its bank exemplify how proximity to nature fosters resilience, autonomy, and a sense of belonging for those excluded from dominant societal structures. Furthermore, Roy highlights the restorative and ethical dimensions of nature: it not only provides physical shelter but also nurtures the characters' inner lives, allowing them to process trauma, experience joy, and assert agency within an oppressive social order. The deterioration of the river and surrounding environment, therefore, is doubly significant—it signifies the loss of ecological balance and the corresponding erosion of spaces that sustain human dignity and psychological well-being. By presenting these natural spaces as organic, living entities that can heal and shelter, Roy situates nature as a "home" in both symbolic and practical terms, demonstrating how ecological and social marginalization are intertwined and how re-connection with the natural world becomes essential for the survival of suffocated and oppressed individuals.

River Meenachal: A Symbol of Comfort and Home

Roy presents the Meenachal River through contrasting images of abundance and decay, reflecting the trauma inflicted upon the natural environment. In its earlier state, the river is depicted as vibrant and life-sustaining: it is "warm… grey-green… with fish in it. With the sky and trees in it" (Roy, 1997, p. 123). The river's clarity allows the reflection of the surrounding ecosystem, symbolizing harmony between human life and nature. In contrast, the present condition of the river is marked by pollution and neglect: it is "no more than a swollen drain now… sequined with the occasional silver of a fish" (Roy, 1997, p. 124). The transformation of the river into "a slow, slugging green ribbon" carrying garbage to the sea signifies the destructive consequences of unchecked development. Despite its degradation, the river continues to function as a space of emotional refuge for marginalized characters. Velutha's ecological knowledge and craftsmanship further highlight the intimate relationship between marginalized individuals and nature. His construction of the sliding-folding door at Ayemenem House symbolically represents a passage between culture and nature, reinforcing the idea that harmony with the natural world offers both physical and psychological relief. The river thus emerges as a site of belonging, memory, and comfort for those excluded from dominant social structures.

Beyond its physical and symbolic functions, the Meenachal River also operates as a moral and ethical entity in Roy's narrative, embodying care, continuity, and resilience in the face of human and environmental violence. The river mediates the experiences of Rahel and Estha, teaching them patience, observation, and an attunement to the non-human world: "Here they learned to fish… Here they studied silence and learned the bright language of the dragonflies. Here they learned to wait, to watch, to think thoughts, and not to voice them" (Roy, 1997, p. 24). Through these interactions, Roy demonstrates that nature provides more than physical shelter—it nurtures emotional intelligence, ethical awareness, and a sense of interconnectedness between humans and the environment. Even as industrialization and pollution threaten the river's vitality, it continues to anchor the characters' identities and memories, offering continuity amidst social upheaval and personal trauma. This duality of vulnerability and resilience in the river's character reinforces its role as a "home" for suffocated individuals, highlighting Roy's ecological vision in which natural spaces actively sustain the psychological, moral, and emotional well-being of marginalized communities. The river, therefore, is not merely a backdrop but a living, responsive force that mediates healing, belonging, and resistance against both social oppression and ecological degradation.

River as an Organic Entity

Roy treats the Meenachal River as a living, organic entity endowed with agency and emotional resonance. It plays a formative role in the lives of Rahel and Estha, serving as a space where they learn silence, patience, and emotional resilience. As Roy narrates: "Here they learned to fish… Here they studied silence and learned the bright language of the dragonflies" (Roy, 1997, p. 24). The river becomes a silent teacher and caretaker, offering protection and solace to children marginalized by familial and societal trauma. In this sense, nature

is not passive but actively participates in nurturing suffocated individuals, reinforcing Roy's ecological philosophy.

In this section, Roy portrays the Meenachal River as a living, sentient presence rather than a passive backdrop. The river acts as a teacher and caregiver, guiding Rahel and Estha in learning patience, observation, and emotional resilience. It provides protection, comfort, and a sense of stability to children who are marginalized and traumatized by social and familial oppression. By giving the river agency and emotional resonance, Roy emphasizes that nature itself can nurture, heal, and support suffocated individuals, reflecting her ecological and ethical vision. This approach reinforces the idea that human well-being is deeply interconnected with the health and vitality of the natural environment.

History House: A Sacred Native Space Turned Commercial Site

The History House represents another crucial ecological space in the novel. Once a site of memory, belonging, and cultural continuity for the native people of Ayemenem, it is later transformed into a luxury hotel catering to tourists. This transformation exemplifies how capitalist development commodifies both nature and history. Roy exposes the environmental and social consequences of this shift, describing polluted waters and toxic surroundings masked by aesthetic beautification (Roy, 1997, p. 159).

The commercialization of the History House illustrates the dark side of development, where ecological destruction coincides with the displacement and further marginalization of Dalit communities. Roy critiques such development as a form of neo-imperialism that disrupts the interconnected web of human–nature relationships. This idea resonates with Timothy Morton's concept of "the ecological thought," which emphasizes the interdependence of all life forms (Morton, 2010). he History House, once a sacred space rooted in local memory and community, symbolizes the intimate relationship between the native people and their environment. Its conversion into a luxury hotel not only erases cultural and ecological significance but also exemplifies how capitalist and developmental agendas prioritize profit over social and environmental well-being. The pollution of rivers and the destruction of surrounding landscapes demonstrate how ecological degradation directly impacts the lives of marginalized communities, particularly Dalits, who lose access to spaces of refuge and cultural belonging. By presenting this contrast, Roy highlights the inseparability of environmental and social justice, showing that the commodification of natural and cultural sites perpetuates inequality and psychological suffering. In this way, the History House serves as a critical commentary on the consequences of modern development, reinforcing the study's argument that nature and human life are deeply intertwined and that the loss of ecological spaces directly contributes to human marginalization and trauma.

Velutha's Small House: A Shelter in Nature

Velutha's small house functions as a powerful symbol of ecological harmony and resistance. Situated near the river and surrounded by trees, the hut represents an alternative mode of living grounded in simplicity, inclusion, and balance. Roy describes it as a structure that "nestled close to the ground, as though it was listening to whispered subterranean secrets" (Roy, 1997, p. 96), emphasizing its organic integration with the environment. Velutha's deep connection with nature grants him strength, dignity, and emotional stability, even as society denies him recognition due to caste discrimination. Nature remains his most faithful companion, offering shelter during moments of betrayal and suffering. This portrayal echoes William Wordsworth's Romantic belief in nature as a trustworthy guide and healer (Bate, 2013). Like Wordsworth's vision in *Tintern Abbey*, Roy presents nature as a constant presence that never betrays, even when human institutions fail. Velutha's relationship with Ammu also unfolds along the riverbank, reinforcing the idea that natural spaces enable emotional freedom and intimacy denied by social norms. The river becomes a lifeline—providing food, shelter, and comfort—affirming Roy's central argument that nature serves as a home for suffocated individuals who find no refuge within oppressive social systems.

Nature as a "Home" in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) powerfully extends her ecocritical vision by presenting nature as a refuge for individuals and communities rendered socially, politically, and psychologically suffocated. The novel opens with the story of Aftab, who is raised as a boy but later undergoes gender transition and becomes Anjum, a transgender woman. Anjum's life narrative foregrounds the violence of social exclusion and the persistent search for belonging. Rejected by her biological family and denied acceptance by mainstream society, Anjum initially finds shelter in the *Khwabgah*, a communal space inhabited by transgender and intersex individuals. The *Khwabgah* functions as a counter-social space that resists normative structures and temporarily offers safety, solidarity, and emotional support.

However, after decades of residence, Anjum is forced to leave the *Khwabgah* due to changing social circumstances and personal trauma. Her relocation to a graveyard marks a crucial turning point in the novel, both symbolically and ecologically. Unlike socially regulated human spaces, the graveyard exists outside dominant power structures, allowing Anjum to reconstruct a sense of home within a natural and liminal environment. By transforming the graveyard into a guesthouse and funeral service for persecuted and marginalized individuals, Anjum redefines the meaning of home as a space of inclusion, care, and coexistence. Roy thus presents nature not merely as a passive background but as an enabling force that allows displaced individuals to reclaim dignity and agency.

Roy repeatedly articulates a utopian belief that the world could resemble the *Khwabgah*—a space where difference is not criminalized and where multiple identities can coexist peacefully. When Anjum selects the graveyard as her new dwelling, she consciously chooses a natural space that is free from rigid social surveillance. The graveyard becomes an open, ecological home for the wounded, offering refuge to those expelled from the so-called civilized world.

Displacement of Natives and Ecological Violence

Roy offers a stark portrayal of displaced populations who are uprooted from their native environments in the name of development, urbanization, and capitalist expansion. The novel vividly describes the brutal conditions of laborers and homeless individuals who once lived securely within their ecological habitats but are now forced into precarious urban spaces. Roy depicts them as bodies exhausted by labor, inhaling stone dust at construction sites that erect shopping malls and housing complexes "springing up around the city like a fast-growing forest" (Roy, 2017, p. 256). This ironic comparison underscores how artificial urban growth replaces organic natural environments.

The displacement of these communities represents both ecological and psychological violence. Nature, which once offered protection and continuity, is forcibly taken away, leaving individuals exposed to physical danger, illness, and death. Roy emphasizes that homelessness is not merely the absence of shelter but the loss of an ecological relationship that sustains emotional and cultural life. This depiction reinforces the novel's central ecocritical argument: severing the bond between humans and nature results in profound social suffocation.

The Graveyard as a Symbolic Shelter in Nature

Roy's most radical ecological intervention lies in her reimagining of the graveyard as a living, democratic space where human and non-human lives coexist without hierarchy. Traditionally associated with death and finality, the graveyard in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* becomes a site of regeneration, healing, and communal belonging. Anjum finds peace and stability in this space, which welcomes her without imposing

social norms or exclusions. The graveyard thus functions as an ecological home that accepts those rejected by society.

Through the character of Zainab, Roy extends this ecological compassion to non-human species. Zainab and Saddam Hussein transform the graveyard into what they call "Noah's Ark of injured animals" (Roy, 2017, p. 148). The presence of wounded birds, aging cows, a lame donkey, tortoises, and stray dogs further reinforces the idea that the graveyard shelters all vulnerable life forms. This inclusive space becomes a sanctuary for beings that fail to conform to social or biological expectations. Scholars such as Adami (2018) argue that cemeteries carry both natural and social significance, functioning as shelters for the destitute and homeless. In Roy's novel, the graveyard transcends its conventional meaning and becomes a powerful symbol of ecological inclusivity and resistance. It embodies what ecocriticism seeks to foreground: the dismantling of hierarchical divisions between human and non-human life.

Roy further deepens this symbolism through her depiction of Kashmir, a landscape saturated with violence and loss. The imagery of "living dead," "talking graves," and "air thick with fear" (Roy, 2017, p. 188) emphasizes how ecological spaces absorb human trauma. Air itself becomes a medium of memory and suffering, blurring the boundary between the human and the non-human. The proliferation of graves "on parks and meadows, by streams and rivers" (Roy, 2017, p. 314) visually equates death with the erosion of natural landscapes, revealing the devastating consequences of political and ecological violence. Roy's repeated use of natural imagery—trees, air, soil, animals—serves to challenge anthropocentric hierarchies. At the beginning of the novel, Anjum is described as living in the graveyard "like a tree," enduring cruelty with silent resilience (Roy, 2017, p. 3). This metaphor collapses the binary between humanity and nature, aligning with ecocritical theorists who advocate environmental interconnectedness over human dominance (Adami, 2018).

DISCUSSION

The ecocritical analysis of *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* demonstrates Arundhati Roy's sustained literary commitment to portraying nature as an active, restorative home for individuals and communities suffocated by social, political, and ecological oppression. Across both novels, Roy dismantles the anthropocentric perception of nature as a passive backdrop and reconfigures it as a living, ethical force that shelters marginalized human and non-human lives. The Meenachal River and the graveyard, though distinct in form and symbolism, function similarly as spaces of refuge, memory, and emotional survival. Through these natural sites, Roy reveals how ecological spaces become alternatives to violent social institutions, thereby fulfilling the study's primary objective of examining nature as a home for the socially and psychologically dispossessed.

In *The God of Small Things*, Roy foregrounds the destructive consequences of capitalist development and caste hierarchy by linking ecological degradation with human suffering. The pollution of the Meenachal River mirrors the moral and social decay of Ayemenem, while its earlier vitality reflects a lost ecological harmony that once nurtured emotional security and belonging. Characters such as Velutha, Rahel, and Estha find solace, identity, and freedom in proximity to the river, underscoring the argument that nature offers psychological healing where society imposes silence and exclusion. Similarly, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* expands this ecological vision by reimagining the graveyard as a democratic, inclusive space that transcends rigid social norms. Anjum's reclamation of the graveyard as a home illustrates how nature enables the reconstruction of dignity and community for those rejected by family, religion, and the state. Together, these narratives affirm that environmental destruction and human displacement are inseparable, and that reconnection with nature becomes an act of resistance and survival.

Viewed collectively, the two novels establish a unified ecological framework in which nature operates as a site of care, continuity, and ethical coexistence. Roy's fiction critiques developmental violence while simultaneously offering an alternative ecological imagination rooted in compassion and interconnectedness. By foregrounding rivers, forests, graveyards, and non-human life, she challenges hierarchical binaries between culture and nature, life and death, and human and non-human. This analysis confirms that the discussion successfully addresses the research aims by illustrating how Roy's narratives articulate environmental consciousness and activism through literary form. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that Roy's ecocritical vision not only exposes the conditions that suffocate marginalized lives but also affirms nature's enduring capacity to function as a home for healing, belonging, and hope.

CONCLUSION

The ecocritical analysis of *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* demonstrates that Arundhati Roy consistently presents nature as an organic, nurturing entity that provides shelter, comfort, and emotional healing to suffocated and marginalized individuals. The novels reveal a sharp contrast between life lived in harmony with nature and existence severed from ecological roots. In *The God of Small Things*, the Meenachal River functions as a space of connection, memory, and solace for Rahel and Estha, even as its pollution mirrors social and environmental decay. The river symbolizes life, freedom, and emotional release, underscoring the restorative power of natural spaces. Similarly, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* redefines the graveyard as a home for displaced and persecuted individuals, challenging conventional associations of death and finality. The graveyard becomes a sanctuary not only for marginalized humans but also for injured and abandoned animals, emphasizing Roy's vision of ecological inclusivity. Through these narratives, Roy articulates the dream of common people—a vision rooted in environmental preservation, coexistence, and ethical responsibility toward all forms of life. Ultimately, this study affirms that Roy's fiction advances a powerful ecocritical argument: nature remains the most reliable refuge for those betrayed by social institutions. By presenting nature as a home for the wounded, the neglected, and the homeless, Roy urges readers to recognize the inseparability of environmental justice and human dignity.

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