

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SELECTED WORKS OF ARUNDHATI ROY

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ABSTRACT:

This research paper examines the representation of women in selected works of Arundhati Roy, namely *The God of Small Things*, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and *The End of Imagination*. The study aims to analyse how Roy represents women not merely as victims of patriarchal structures but as complex subjects shaped by gender, caste, sexuality, religion, nationalism, state violence, memory, and political resistance. Methodologically, the paper adopts a qualitative research design based on manual close reading and thematic content analysis. The selected works are treated as primary texts, while feminist theory, intersectionality, postcolonial feminism, queer theory, and subaltern studies provide the critical framework. The thematic findings reveal that Ammu in *The God of Small Things* represents gendered punishment, sexual autonomy, caste transgression, and maternal vulnerability. Anjum and Tilo in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* expand the representation of womanhood through transgender identity, alternative kinship, political mourning, and resistance to normative domesticity. In *The End of Imagination*, Roy's essayistic voice connects womanhood with anti-nationalist dissent, ecological vulnerability, and ethical resistance to militarised power. The study argues that Roy's representation of women is intersectional and politically charged because gender is never separated from caste, class, religion, nation, and history. The paper contributes to Indian English literary criticism by offering a systematic analysis of women's representation across Roy's fictional and non-fictional writings.

Keywords: Arundhati Roy; representation of women; feminism; intersectionality; postcolonial literature; gender and resistance.

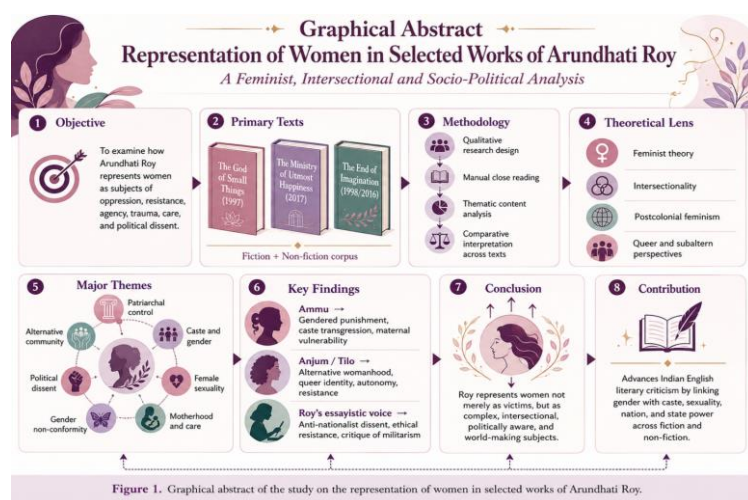


Figure 1. Graphical abstract illustrating the objective, primary texts, methodology, theoretical lens, major themes, key findings, conclusion, and scholarly contribution of the study on the representation of women in selected works of Arundhati Roy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Arundhati Roy occupies a distinctive position in contemporary Indian English literature because her writings combine literary experimentation with political dissent. Her fiction and non-fiction repeatedly challenge social hierarchies, including patriarchy, caste oppression, communal violence, neoliberal development, nationalism, militarisation, and ecological destruction. Although Roy is internationally known for *The God of Small Things*, which won the Booker Prize in 1997, her literary reputation cannot be separated from her political essays and activist interventions. Her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, appeared nearly twenty years later and broadened the narrative field from a Kerala family tragedy to a fragmented national landscape of minority lives, caste violence, gender non-conformity, Kashmir, and political dispossession (Iyer, 2018; Menozzi, 2018; The Booker Prize Foundation, n.d.).

The present paper focuses on the representation of women in three selected works: *The God of Small Things*, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and *The End of Imagination*. These works are significant because they present womanhood across different literary modes. *The God of Small Things* represents women through family, caste, sexuality, motherhood, and social punishment. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* expands womanhood through Anjum's transgender identity, Tilo's unconventional autonomy, and the alternative kinship structures created in Jannat Guest House. *The End of Imagination*, though not a fictional text centred on women characters, is significant because Roy's dissenting essayistic voice challenges militarised nationalism from an explicitly embodied, ethical, and planetary position.

The representation of women in Roy's works cannot be understood through gender alone. Her female figures are shaped by intersecting structures of caste, religion, sexuality, class, state violence, and historical trauma. Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality is useful because it explains how systems of oppression operate simultaneously rather than separately (Crenshaw, 1989). Similarly, postcolonial feminist criticism argues that women in the Global South cannot be studied only through universalised Western feminist categories, because their lives are shaped by colonial history, nation, caste, religion, class, and development politics (Mohanty, 1984; Spivak, 1988). Roy's women are therefore not abstract "female" figures; they are historically situated subjects.

The central research problem addressed in this paper is how Arundhati Roy represents women in selected fictional and non-fictional works and how this representation challenges conventional ideas of femininity, motherhood, sexuality, domesticity, and political agency. The paper asks whether Roy's women are represented only as oppressed figures or whether they also function as agents of resistance, dissent, memory, and alternative social imagination. The study argues that Roy does not present women through a single feminist model. Instead, she constructs multiple forms of womanhood: Ammu as a transgressive mother and lover, Rahel as a traumatised daughter and witness, Anjum as a transgender woman who creates alternative community, Tilo as a politically alert and emotionally independent woman, and Roy's essayistic self as a dissident female voice against nuclear nationalism.

The objectives of the study are: to analyse the representation of women in the three selected works; to examine how Roy connects women's experiences with caste, patriarchy, sexuality, religion, and state power; to interpret female agency, resistance, trauma, and survival in fictional and non-fictional contexts; and to evaluate the literary and socio-political significance of Roy's feminist representation. The paper is significant because it brings

together Roy's novels and political essay under one interpretive framework and shows that her representation of women is deeply intersectional, ethical, and resistant.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of women's representation in Arundhati Roy's works has developed across feminist criticism, postcolonial studies, caste studies, queer theory, and political literary criticism. Early feminist theory provided the foundation for analysing how patriarchal structures define women through relational roles. De Beauvoir argued that woman is historically constructed as the "Other" within male-centred social systems, making womanhood a position shaped by dependence, objectification, and social definition rather than autonomous selfhood (de Beauvoir, 1953). This theoretical position is useful for reading Ammu in *The God of Small Things*, because her social identity as daughter, divorced wife, mother, and lover is controlled by patriarchal family morality.

Butler's theory of gender performativity further complicated fixed definitions of gender by arguing that gender is not a stable essence but a repeated social performance regulated by norms (Butler, 1990). This idea is particularly relevant to *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, where Anjum's identity challenges binary models of male and female. Through Anjum, Roy represents gender as embodied, socially contested, and politically vulnerable. Butler's framework helps explain why Anjum's womanhood is not merely private identity but a challenge to the social order that polices bodies and names.

Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality is equally important because Roy's women are rarely oppressed through gender alone. Ammu's sexual punishment is inseparable from caste hierarchy; Anjum's marginalisation is shaped by gender identity, religion, and class; Tilo's political vulnerability emerges through her connection with Kashmir and state surveillance; and the female subject in *The End of Imagination* speaks against nationalism, militarism, and ecological catastrophe. Crenshaw argued that gender oppression must be studied together with other structures of power such as race and class; in the Indian context, caste, religion, region, and state violence become equally necessary categories (Crenshaw, 1989).

Postcolonial feminist criticism also provides an important framework. Mohanty criticised the tendency to homogenise "Third World women" as passive victims and argued that women must be read within specific historical, political, and economic conditions (Mohanty, 1984). Roy's works support such a framework because they do not represent Indian women as a single group. Ammu, Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Anjum, Tilo, Jahanara Begum, Miss Jebeen, and the unnamed victims of political violence occupy different social locations. Spivak's question of whether the subaltern can speak also remains relevant, because Roy's writings repeatedly confront the difficulty of representing marginalised voices without appropriating them (Spivak, 1988).

In Roy-specific scholarship, Iyer examined *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* as a fragmented national narrative told through minoritarian perspectives. Iyer argued that Roy chose a sprawling and polyphonic form to represent a postcolonial nation through hijras, Dalits, Kashmiris, and other marginalised figures (Iyer, 2018). This study is relevant because it situates Anjum and Tilo not only as female figures but as narrative centres through whom Roy questions the idea of the nation. Similarly, Menozzi argued that *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* challenges conventional realism by combining fictional and non-fictional modes and by developing an "aesthetic of the inconsolable" (Menozzi, 2018). This argument is important because Roy's representation of women is inseparable from the novel's refusal to provide neat resolution.

Scholarship on *The God of Small Things* often emphasises caste, sexuality, family history, and female transgression. Khattak and colleagues interpreted the novel through postcolonial feminism and argued that colonised women in Roy's fiction experience subalternity through patriarchal culture (Khattak et al., 2019). The figure of Ammu has received particular critical attention because she violates the sexual, caste, and family codes that control Syrian Christian respectability in Kerala. In this sense, Ammu is not only a victim of patriarchy but also a disruptive figure whose desire exposes the violence of caste and gender morality.

The existing scholarship has therefore established that Roy's writings engage with feminism, caste, gender identity, minoritarian politics, and resistance. However, there remains a need for a study that examines the representation of women across both fiction and non-fiction through a unified thematic content-analysis framework. Much criticism focuses either on *The God of Small Things* or *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* separately. The present study fills this gap by reading three selected works together and by tracing how Roy's representation of women moves from domestic transgression to queer community and finally to political dissent against militarised nationalism.

The major literature gap is that existing studies often examine Roy's women within individual texts or isolated frameworks such as feminism, caste, queer identity, or postcolonial politics. Few studies systematically compare the representation of women across Roy's fiction and non-fiction. This gap is significant because Roy's representation of women develops across literary forms: Ammu's domestic and caste-bound crisis in *The God of Small Things*, Anjum and Tilo's minoritarian and queer-political identities in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and Roy's dissenting female voice in *The End of Imagination*. By applying manual close reading and thematic content analysis, the present study offers a unified framework for interpreting women's representation as intersectional, political, and resistant.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a qualitative research design based on manual close reading and thematic content analysis. The primary sources of data were Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and *The End of Imagination*. These texts were selected through purposive sampling because they represent Roy's engagement with women across different genres and social locations. *The God of Small Things* was selected for its representation of Ammu, Rahel, Mammachi, and Baby Kochamma within the framework of family, caste, sexuality, and patriarchal morality. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* was selected for its representation of Anjum, Tilo, Jahanara Begum, Zainab, Miss Jebeen, and other marginalised female or feminised subjects. *The End of Imagination* was selected because it presents Roy's political voice as a dissenting female subject resisting nuclear nationalism, militarism, and state power.

The textual data were collected directly from the selected primary works. The units of analysis included character-centred passages, narrative descriptions, symbolic images, scenes of gendered violence, references to women's bodies, motherhood, sexuality, caste transgression, gender identity, political dissent, and alternative kinship. The analysis was limited to women's representation and did not claim to cover the complete thematic range of Roy's writings. The study did not use statistical software because its design was interpretive and qualitative.

Manual close reading was used as the main data analysis tool. Each primary text was read repeatedly to identify recurring thematic patterns related to women's representation. The

marked passages were grouped under thematic categories such as patriarchal control, caste-gender intersection, female sexuality, motherhood, gender non-conformity, political dissent, symbolic space, trauma, and alternative community. These categories were interpreted through feminist theory, intersectionality, postcolonial feminism, queer theory, and subaltern studies. The findings were then compared across the three works to identify continuities and developments in Roy's representation of women.

4. THEMATIC INTERPRETATION AND LITERARY IMPLICATIONS

This section analyses the major thematic patterns identified through close reading of the selected works. The themes are discussed in relation to the research objectives and are supported by primary textual evidence and secondary critical frameworks.

4.1 Patriarchal Control and the Regulation of Female Life

Roy's representation of women begins with the exposure of patriarchal control over female bodies, choices, and social identities. In *The God of Small Things*, Ammu is controlled first by her father, then by marriage, then by her natal family after divorce. Her identity as a divorced woman makes her socially vulnerable because she no longer fits the idealised roles of obedient daughter, wife, or respectable mother. The novel's patriarchal order permits male desire but punishes female sexuality. This double standard is evident in the family's tolerance of Chacko's "Men's Needs" while Ammu's desire becomes a scandal (Roy, 1997, ch. 13, para. 107). The phrase reveals the gendered hypocrisy of respectability: male sexual freedom is normalised, while female sexual autonomy is treated as contamination.

This representation aligns with de Beauvoir's argument that women are often positioned as the Other within male-dominated structures (de Beauvoir, 1953). Ammu's tragedy is not caused only by personal rebellion but by a social order that denies her the right to desire, choose, and live beyond prescribed roles. Roy therefore represents patriarchal control not as an abstract ideology but as a concrete family mechanism operating through shame, surveillance, and punishment.

4.2 Caste, Gender, and Sexual Transgression

The representation of Ammu is also inseparable from caste. Her relationship with Velutha challenges both patriarchal control and caste hierarchy. Roy's famous formulation of the "Love Laws" marks the social code that decides who may love whom and how much (Roy, 1997, ch. 1, para. 166). Ammu's sexual transgression is therefore political because it violates the caste boundary that protects upper-caste and Syrian Christian respectability. Her desire becomes dangerous not simply because she is a woman but because she desires a Dalit man.

Intersectionality is essential for understanding this theme. Crenshaw's framework shows that systems of oppression intersect rather than operate separately (Crenshaw, 1989). Ammu is punished as a woman, but Velutha is destroyed as a Dalit man. Their relationship exposes how gender and caste reinforce each other. Roy's representation therefore moves beyond liberal feminism by showing that female desire in caste society is never merely private. It becomes a threat to social hierarchy.

4.3 Female Sexuality, Desire, and Moral Punishment

Roy's treatment of female sexuality is central to her feminist politics. Ammu is represented as emotionally wounded but also desiring, angry, tender, and unpredictable. The phrase "Unsafe Edge" captures the social fear produced by her refusal to remain contained within respectable femininity (Roy, 1997, ch. 2, para. 39). Her sexuality unsettles the family because it cannot be absorbed into marriage, reproduction, or caste purity.

In feminist terms, Ammu's punishment reflects the patriarchal regulation of women's bodies. Butler's theory of performativity is useful here because Ammu fails to perform the expected gender script of obedience, shame, and silence (Butler, 1990). Her body becomes a site of resistance, but also a site on which society enacts punishment. Roy does not romanticise Ammu's rebellion; rather, she shows the severe cost of female autonomy in a caste-patriarchal order.

4.4 Motherhood, Vulnerability, and Emotional Complexity

Roy's representation of motherhood resists sentimental idealisation. Ammu is a mother who loves her children, but she is also exhausted, socially isolated, economically insecure, and emotionally wounded. Her motherhood does not protect her from patriarchal punishment; instead, it increases her vulnerability because her children become witnesses to her humiliation and loss. Rahel's later life shows how maternal suffering becomes intergenerational trauma.

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, motherhood is reimaged through non-biological and alternative kinship. Anjum's relation to Zainab and later to Jannat Guest House expands motherhood beyond biological reproduction. The graveyard community allows mothering to occur through care, adoption, shelter, and collective survival. This challenges conventional domestic models of motherhood and aligns with postcolonial feminist critiques of family as a site both of care and control (Mohanty, 1984). Roy therefore represents motherhood as emotionally powerful but socially unstable, capable of both tenderness and pain.

4.5 Gender Non-Conformity and Alternative Womanhood

Anjum in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is one of Roy's most significant representations of gender non-conforming womanhood. Born Aftab, Anjum enters the Khwabgah and steps into "another universe," a phrase that marks not only spatial transition but also gendered rebirth (Roy, 2017, ch. 2, p. 25). The Khwabgah provides a community where Anjum's identity can be named, embodied, and socially recognised, even though the wider society continues to marginalise her.

Butler's theory helps explain how Anjum destabilises binary gender categories (Butler, 1990). However, Anjum is not simply a theoretical figure of gender fluidity; she is also Muslim, poor, vulnerable to communal violence, and socially excluded. Iyer observes that Roy's novel expands minoritisation beyond religious binaries by including caste, gender, sexuality, and region (Iyer, 2018). Anjum therefore represents womanhood as plural, embodied, and politically situated.

4.6 Tilo, Female Autonomy, and Resistance to Domestic Possession

Tilo in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* represents another form of womanhood. Unlike Ammu, whose rebellion occurs within the family, Tilo resists domestic possession, romantic ownership, and state control. She is desired by several men, yet she remains difficult to possess or define. The novel describes her as living in a "country of her own skin," a phrase that symbolises bodily autonomy and emotional sovereignty (Roy, 2017, ch. 8, p. 216). Tilo's womanhood is not constructed through marriage, motherhood, or domestic respectability.

Tilo's autonomy is also political because her life intersects with Kashmir, surveillance, militarisation, and state violence. She becomes a keeper of fragments, papers, memories, and witness accounts. Menozzi's argument that Roy's second novel questions how literature can represent suffering is especially relevant here (Menozzi, 2018). Tilo's function is not to

resolve trauma but to carry and preserve it. Her representation therefore links female autonomy with historical witnessing.

4.7 Women, Nation, Militarism, and Dissent

In *The End of Imagination*, Roy's own essayistic voice becomes central to women's representation. Although the essay is not a fictional portrayal of women characters, it is important because Roy positions herself as a dissenting female intellectual confronting nuclear nationalism. Her declaration "I'm female" appears in a passage where she rejects the militarised logic of the nation-state and claims planetary citizenship (Roy, 2016, Part I, essay 1, para. 1). This self-positioning is significant because nationalism is often masculinised through power, territory, military strength, and technological dominance.

Roy's critique of nuclear nationalism challenges the symbolic association between nationhood and masculine potency. When she writes that "The bomb is India," she exposes how militarised nationalism converts weapons into symbols of collective identity (Roy, 2016, Part I, essay 1, para. 1). From a feminist perspective, this critique is relevant because militarised nationalism often marginalises women's voices and bodies while using them symbolically as mothers of the nation. Roy's dissenting female voice therefore expands women's representation from domestic and fictional spaces into public political ethics.

4.8 Alternative Kinship, Community, and Political Hope

The most constructive representation of women in Roy's selected works appears through alternative community. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Jannat Guest House becomes a space where the socially rejected form new modes of belonging. The phrase "Jannat Guest House" itself is significant because it names a sanctuary built in a graveyard, a place where life, death, grief, care, and survival coexist (Roy, 2017, ch. 2, p. 69). Anjum's community includes hijras, Dalits, abandoned children, animals, the dead, the grieving, and the politically dispossessed.

This representation challenges the patriarchal family as the only legitimate form of belonging. It also complicates the idea of feminist agency. Roy's women do not always resist through direct rebellion; they resist by sheltering, remembering, refusing, mothering differently, and creating spaces where the excluded can survive. This is one of Roy's major literary implications: she represents women not only through suffering but also through world-making.

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to analyse the representation of women in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and *The End of Imagination* through feminist, intersectional, postcolonial, queer, and subaltern critical frameworks. The central argument was that Roy represents women as complex subjects whose lives are shaped by patriarchy but never reducible to it. The findings reveal that Roy's women are produced through intersecting pressures of caste, class, sexuality, religion, nation, family, and state violence. This interpretation confirms Crenshaw's view that oppression must be understood as intersectional rather than singular (Crenshaw, 1989).

The analysis of Ammu showed that *The God of Small Things* represents women's oppression through the combined force of patriarchy and caste. Ammu's punishment cannot be understood merely as the punishment of a woman who violates sexual norms. It is also the punishment of a woman who crosses caste boundaries by loving Velutha. The "Love Laws" therefore become the novel's central symbolic structure for regulating both gender and caste

(Roy, 1997, ch. 1, para. 166). This finding aligns with postcolonial feminist scholarship that rejects universalised models of female oppression and insists on historical specificity (Mohanty, 1984). Ammu's tragedy is specifically located within Syrian Christian family respectability, caste hierarchy, divorce stigma, and gendered moral surveillance.

The study also found that Roy's representation of motherhood is deeply ambivalent. Ammu's motherhood is marked by love and vulnerability but also by social helplessness. She cannot protect herself or her children from the family's disciplinary machinery. In contrast, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* reimagines motherhood through Anjum's non-biological care for Zainab and Miss Jebeen the Second. This shift from biological motherhood to chosen kinship is significant because it challenges patriarchal and heteronormative definitions of family. In this respect, Roy's fiction moves beyond victim-centred feminism and imagines alternative forms of survival.

Anjum's representation broadens the category of womanhood itself. Through Anjum, Roy presents womanhood as embodied, socially contested, and community-based. The movement into the Khwabgah as "another universe" symbolises entry into a counter-social order where gender non-conforming identity becomes livable, though never fully protected from social violence (Roy, 2017, ch. 2, p. 25). This finding extends Butler's theory of gender performativity by locating gender performance within caste, religion, poverty, violence, and urban marginality (Butler, 1990). Anjum is not represented as an abstract queer subject; she is a Muslim hijra whose identity is shaped by Partition memory, communal violence, social exclusion, and the search for home.

Tilo's representation introduces another mode of female agency. While Ammu resists through forbidden love and Anjum through alternative community, Tilo resists through refusal, mobility, secrecy, and witnessing. Her description as living in a "country of her own skin" suggests a self that refuses possession by men, state, or nation (Roy, 2017, ch. 8, p. 216). Tilo's autonomy is significant because it is neither romanticised nor domesticated. Her life remains exposed to violence, surveillance, and grief, especially in relation to Kashmir. This supports Menozzi's argument that Roy's later fiction refuses transparent realism and instead develops an aesthetic that acknowledges unresolved suffering (Menozzi, 2018).

The inclusion of *The End of Imagination* expands the study from fictional women characters to Roy's political voice as a woman writer. Roy's statement "I'm female" appears within a larger declaration of planetary dissent against nuclear nationalism (Roy, 2016, Part I, essay 1, para. 1). This finding is important because it shows that Roy's representation of women is not confined to character construction. It also appears in the authorial stance of dissent. Roy positions the female intellectual as a subject who refuses militarised definitions of nationhood, power, and citizenship. Her critique of the bomb as a national symbol challenges the masculinist language of strength, potency, and territorial power.

The findings align with existing scholarship in several ways. They support Iyer's claim that *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* narrates India through minoritarian perspectives (Iyer, 2018). They also support Menozzi's view that Roy's fiction challenges conventional realism by combining fictional, political, historical, and documentary modes (Menozzi, 2018). However, this study extends previous criticism by reading Roy's fiction and non-fiction together through the single theme of women's representation. It shows that Roy's feminist vision develops across texts: from caste-gender transgression in *The God of Small Things*, to queer and minoritarian community in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, to anti-nationalist ethical dissent in *The End of Imagination*.

The broader cultural implication of the study is that Roy's works speak directly to contemporary concerns. Issues such as caste violence, gender policing, communal hatred, militarisation, queer marginalisation, state surveillance, ecological destruction, and women's bodily autonomy remain urgent. Roy's women are therefore not only literary figures; they are interpretive sites through which readers may understand continuing social conflicts. Her representation of women links literature with sociology, gender studies, political theory, history, and psychology. Literature becomes a way of studying how power enters intimate life and how resistance emerges from wounded spaces.

The study has some limitations. It is limited to three selected works and does not cover Roy's complete body of fiction, essays, interviews, and activism. It focuses primarily on women's representation and therefore does not provide an equally detailed analysis of male characters, ecological politics, or economic development discourse. Further research may compare Roy with other Indian English women writers such as Shashi Deshpande, Mahasweta Devi, Kiran Desai, Kamala Markandaya, or Meena Kandasamy. Future studies may also apply trauma theory, ecofeminism, narratology, Dalit feminism, or queer-of-colour critique to extend the present interpretation.

6. CONCLUSION

The present research examined the representation of women in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and *The End of Imagination*. The central argument of the study was that Roy represents women as complex, historically situated, and politically charged subjects whose lives are shaped by intersecting structures of patriarchy, caste, sexuality, religion, class, nation, and state violence. The paper used manual close reading and thematic content analysis to examine how women are represented through domestic control, sexual transgression, motherhood, gender non-conformity, political witnessing, alternative kinship, and dissent.

The most significant finding is that Roy does not represent women merely as victims. Ammu is oppressed by caste and patriarchal morality, yet her desire exposes the violence of the social order. Anjum is marginalised by gender norms, religion, and social exclusion, yet she creates a living community in a graveyard. Tilo resists domestic possession and becomes a witness to political suffering. Roy's own voice in *The End of Imagination* resists militarised nationalism and insists on ethical citizenship beyond territory and state power. These findings answer the research objectives by showing that women in Roy's works are represented as wounded, resistant, marginal, desiring, political, and world-making subjects.

The study contributes to Indian English literary criticism by offering a unified feminist and intersectional reading of Roy's fiction and non-fiction. It demonstrates that Roy's representation of women cannot be confined to domestic feminism alone. Her women exist at the intersection of private life and public history. Through them, Roy interrogates caste, family, nationalism, militarism, communal violence, and state power. This interpretation advances the field by connecting Roy's literary representation of women with broader debates in feminist theory, postcolonial studies, subaltern studies, queer theory, and political ethics.

The contemporary relevance of Roy's works lies in their refusal to separate gender from larger structures of violence. In a world still marked by caste discrimination, gender-based violence, religious polarisation, war, displacement, and ecological crisis, Roy's women remain urgent literary figures. They compel readers to ask whether freedom can exist without bodily autonomy, whether citizenship can be meaningful without justice, and whether

literature can create space for those deliberately silenced by history. Roy's enduring significance lies in this challenge: to imagine womanhood not as a fixed identity but as a field of struggle, survival, and radical possibility.

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