Pursuing Environmental Equity in Postcolonial India: An Eco-Material Exploration of Arundhati Roy's Novels *The Ministry Of Utmost Happiness* and *The God of Small Things*

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Abstract

This article examines the portrayal of postcolonial ecocriticism in Arundhati Roy's novels, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*[1] and *The God of Small Things*.[2] Roy's narratives offer a profound critique of an imbalanced universe where multiple perspectives influence not only national and physical landscapes but also global contexts. This study scrutinises how the texts, while situated in the Indian context, pivot on postcolonial attitudes that resist dominant discourses, ultimately challenging established notions of politics, history, and ecology. Upamanya Pablo Mukherjee's concept of 'eco-materialism' is employed to underscore the intricate relationship between environmental and historical realities. Mukherjee's framework showcases how the environment becomes an integral part of history, intertwined with human-induced financial flows and global capitalism. These practices exacerbate neo-colonialism and environmental vulnerabilities, emphasising the importance of environmental justice. The article also explores the deleterious effects of anthropocentrism and capitalist values, which lead to ecological blindness and violence against nature.

Keywords: eco-materialism, capitalism, anthropocentrism, postcolonial ecocriticism, environmental justice

Introduction

Significant climate changes have prompted the global community to contemplate the challenges posed by future transformation. The deterioration of the environment has been traced from colonial times to the postcolonial era. This article showcases the theoretical framework of postcolonial ecocriticism by highlighting the aspect of 'eco-materialism', dissectting the intricacies of Arundhati Roy's narratives, through unravelling layers of ecological thought and postcolonial critique embedded within them. While these novels are rooted in the Indian context, they reach far beyond its borders, resonating with a global audience. They serve as a resounding call for environmental justice in a world driven by unbridled capitalism, exploring the imperatives of eco-

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[1] Arundhati Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (London: Penguin, 2017).

[2] Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (London: Penguin, 1997).

materialism and the web of trans-corporeality that links all life forms. Through this exploration, light will be shed on persistent and detrimental effects of anthropocentrism and capitalist values that underpin contemporary society. These value systems, as Roy contends, have led to ecological blindness, violence against nature, and the erosion of our environment's resilience. This research unveils the urgent need for a more equitable, sustainable, and interconnected world. Roy's novels are not merely stories; they are catalysts for change, inviting us to reflect on our collective responsibility towards the planet and its myriad inhabitants. The ecocritical lens we apply will reveal the environmental concerns that Roy's literature so passionately and poignantly addresses.

Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and *The God of Small Things* portray an unbalanced universe with a multiplicity of views affecting not only the national, or the physical, but also the global world. Although the text has been placed and viewed in the Indian context Paul Jay commented that "in some way to the legacy of colonialism, they pay more attention to the contemporary effects of globalisation than they do to the imperatives of postcolonial state making the constitution of specifically postcolonial identities and subjectivities."[3] In other words, it focuses on resistance to the dominant discourse which throws light on postcolonial attitudes which help to break the shackles of the literary canon and "rewrites a particular version of history or challenges a forceful commonplace view of politics."[4]

Eco-Materialism: Intersecting Postcolonial, Ecocritical, and Societal Perspectives

Upamanya Pablo Mukherjee develops a robust theoretical concept by integrating the postcolonial with ecocritical. Postcolonial environmentalism portrays "the methodological ability to hold the particular and the general, the local, regional and global levels, within the same analytical move."[5] To achieve this, Mukherjee proposes the concept of 'eco-materialism' which depends on the amalgamation of environment and history in the social and political domains that are conditioned by environmental realities. In this context, the environment becomes a part of history, and history is embedded in geography shaped by humans initiating the flow of capital. Accentuating the financial flows towards uneven development causes uneven distribution of wealth. At its core, Mukherjee shows how marginalised and disempowered people are put at risk by the practices of select higher groups of people and industries, including multinational corporations, disregarding their environmental vulnerabilities which further exacerbates the mechanisms of neo-colonialism. The expansion of humanity is closely tied to material factors and has historically followed cyclical patterns, as noted in Thomas Malthus's argument that population growth will eventually outstrip food supply, leading to a collapse.[6] Events like the Industrial Revolution accelerated population growth by providing more opportunities for food production through agriculture. In summary, the

[3] Paul Jay, *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), pp. 95-96.
[4] Pramod K. Nayar, *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction* (Delhi: Pearson Education India, 2008), p. 3.
[5] Upamanya Pablo Mukherjee, *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture, and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.18.
[6] James Bonar, *Malthus and His Work* (London: Routledge, 1967).

increasing population consuming resources like food is causing disruptions in the functioning of our society.

Moreover, Linda Weintraub explains that eco-materialism aims to reconnect people with their natural environment by integrating 'New Material' principles within an ecological framework,[7] while also recognising that while industrialisation and technology have brought material abundance, they also threaten the environment, from the atmosphere to global ecosystems and their inhabitants. Eco-materialism calls for responsible consumption to counter the excessive materialism seen in industrialised societies, as "it not only challenges heedless human behaviours that disrupt or damage ecosystems, it strives to devise interactions that fortify the ability of ecosystems to support diverse forms of life. This task is daunting."[8] The term 'ecocide' has emerged to describe environmental devastation on par with terms like suicide, homicide, and genocide, being used to characterise events like "dead lakes, species extinctions, and bee colony collapses" often with uncertain prospects for recovery. In 2010, a proposal was submitted to the United Nations to classify ecocide as an international crime, arguing that "the proposal identifies human induced environmental is criminal offences. In addition, it establishes a legal duty of care for potential victims of ecocide."[9]

Destruction of the Environment: Anthropocentrism, Capitalism, and Slow Violence

Fundamentally, anthropocentrism is based on the dual perception of organisations and natural environments,[10] the "belief that there is a clear and morally reluctant dividing line between humankind and the rest of nature, that humankind is the only principal source of value or meaning in the world."[11] However placing humans at the centre of the concerns for an optimal natural environment is not considered an issue, as the Rio Declaration at the Earth Summit stated that "human beings are at the centre of concerns."[12] Yet what appears to be problematic is the structure in which humans are at the centre of nature. The imbalance between humans and ecology results in the mismanagement of the eco-centric equation. The human chauvinism arises from the nature/ culture binary has intensified the contestation of cultural and political biopower which results in the 'othering' of the world beyond humans. This not only places humans "as the central element of the universe"[13] but also claims them as superior and masters of nature. Anthropocentrism dominates the economic, social, political, religious, and ethical considerations towards the environment. Moreover, these consequences show their outcome in the form of the "domination

[7] Linda Weintraub, *What's Next? Materialism and Contemporary Art* (London: Intellect Books Limited, 2019).
[8] Weintraub, *What's Next?*, p. 7.
[9] Weintraub, *What's Next?*, p. 65.
[10] Rogene A. Buchholz, *Principles of Environmental Management: The Greening of Business* (Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1993).
[11] Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (London: Routledge, 2023), p. 51.
[12] "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development", *UNCED* (1992). At: https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/rio1992.
[13] Rob Boddice, "Introduction. The End to Anthropocentrism," in *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments*, ed. Rob Boddice (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 1-18.

of [the] external world" which exhibits repercussions by the "domination of the inner nature of the humans, which [led] in turn to the domination of humans over humans."[14] This scenario has created an atmosphere of terror, panic, trepidation, hostility, and dismay that equate to a sort of "ecological blindness" that was "driven by an irrational desire for mastery and control" of nature.[15] This embodiment of the bias has increased the alteration of the ecological imprints which further led to the genocide of nature that reduces the reviving capacity of the environment.

Moreover, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*[16] brought to the forefront the hidden and indiscriminate harm caused by DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) to a global audience. However, just a year prior, Frantz Fanon, in the opening pages of *The Wretched of the Earth*, used DDT as a metaphor for anticolonial violence, advocating for the use of DDT-filled spray guns as a tool against the "parasites" spread by the colonizers' Christian church.[17] Fanon's portrayal of decolonisation is filled with explicit acts of both subjugation (maintained through bayonets and cannons) and resistance (involving bullets and knives in a deadly struggle between the colonisers and the colonized).[18] Yet, his perspective on violence and what Aimé Césaire referred to as the "rendezvous of victory" was not burdened by the concerns that would later emerge with the environmental justice movement. This movement raised issues about long-term imbalances in risks, blurring the lines between defeat and victory, colonial dispossession, and official national self-determination.[19] We can certainly reinterpret Fanon through an environmental lens, considering his focus on land as both property and a source of dignity. Yet, our modern theories of violence must include insights from science that Fanon did not have access to, one that addresses environmentally embedded violence that is challenging to identify, confront, and reverse.

Catastrophic events that transcend clear temporal and geographical boundaries are characterised by displacements of various kinds: temporal, geographical, rhetorical, and technological. These displacements tend to simplify violence and underestimate the human and environmental costs, making it easier for these events to fade from collective memory. For example, consider the Marshall Islands, which endured sixty-seven American atmospheric nuclear tests between 1948 and 1958, with the largest test being equivalent in force to 1,000 Hiroshima-sized bombs. The Atomic Energy Commission declared the Marshall Islands "by far the most contaminated place in the world"[20] in 1956, a condition that would affect their independence in the long term, despite their formal self-governance status in 1979. This historical legacy of nuclear

[14] Andre Krebber, "Anthropocentrism and Reason in Dialectic of Enlightenment: Environmental Crisis and Animal Subject," in *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments*, ed. Rob Boddice (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 321-329.
[15] Andrew Brennan, and Y. S. Lo Norva, "The Environment," in *The Routledge Companion to Ethics*, ed. John Skorupski (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 754–765; Brian Deyo, "Tragedy, Ecophobia, and Animality in the Anthropocene," In *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*, eds. Kyle Bladlow and Jennifer Ladino (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), pp. 195-212; Martin Gorke, *The Death of Our Planet's Species: A Challenge to Ecology and Ethics* (Washington D.C: Island Press, 2013).
[16] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962).
[17] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove, 1968), p. 42.
[18] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 36-37.
[19] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 249-316.
[20] Stephanie Cook, *In Mortal Hands: A Cautionary History of the Nuclear Age* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009), p. 168.

colonialism, forgotten by the colonizers, continued to manifest in the birth of "jellyfish babies" in the 1980s: infants born without heads, eyes, or limbs, who survived only briefly.[21]

Edward Said's insight that struggles over geography involve not just armed conflict but also carry a deep symbolic and narrative aspect, coupled with Michael Watts' emphasis on understanding the "violent geographies of fast capitalism,"[22] should be supplemented by a deeper comprehension of "slow violence."[23] These are the delayed effects that underlie significant acts of forgetting. Violence, particularly environmental violence, should be recognised and carefully analysed as a contest not only over physical space, bodies, labour, or resources but also over time.[24]

Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* begins with a prologue that marks a striking blow on the extinction of the species and depicts the horrid condition of nature. This highlights the dismal sides of anthropocentrism and slow violence as stated, "When bats leave, the crows come home. Not all the din of their homecoming fill the silence left by the sparrows that have gone missing, and the old white-baked vultures, custodians of the dead for more than a hundred million years, that have been wiped out."[25] This portrays the concern for the lower species of nature that were once a part of the environment and are extinct because of abnormal environmental changes. Their extinction has not been marked as a concern by any environmental agency or the government. Not only this, but the selfishness, greed and unquenchable thirst of humans have also contributed to the demise of the old vultures that once were part of an important cycle in an ecosystem as the scavengers of the dead. Nature has provided the earth with certain species that eliminate the toxic and dead bodies of animals, but eventually, due to human involvement for materialistic benefit, they have themselves disturbed the ecological sensibility. Moreover, in the case of the vultures they have been poisoned, "The vultures dies of Diclofenac poisoning. Diclofenac, cow- aspirin, given to cattle as a muscle relaxant, to ease pain and increase the production of milk, works – worked like nerve gas on white–baked vultures. Each chemically relaxed, milk-producing cow or buffalo that died became poisoned vulture – bait."[26] This all came into effect because of the increase in dairy products and their consumption by the urban population. Roy notes, "As cattle turned into better dairy machines, as the city ate more ice cream, butterscotch crunch, nutty-buddy and chocolate-chip, as it drank more mango-milkshake."[27] The effect of chemicals on the human body reflects the fact that for the surplus production of food in agriculture, crops are boosted by the nitrogenous fertilizers that enter the human body through the food chain.[28] Similarly, when vultures feed on the rotten bodies of cattle that are injected with the poisonous diclofenac, it enters the vultures' bodies and affects them. This concept of surplus production has been brought up by the modern capitalist civilization which poses an existential threat to living

[21] Zohl de Ishtar, *Daughters of the Pacific* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1994), p. 24.
[22] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992).
[23] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2011).
[24] Nixon, *Slow Violence*, passim.
[25] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 1.
[26] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 1.
[27] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 1.
[28] L. Herber, "The Problem of Chemicals in Food," *Contemporary Issues: A Magazine for a Democracy of Content* vol. 3, no. 12 (1952), pp. 206-241.

organisms presently and in the long run. Not only this, but Roy propounded that "there was so much else to look forward to,"[29] which provides the readers with a glimpse of the leitmotifs in the text about the various instances that reflect the cause and effect that modulated human existence.

Critiques of Development, Capitalism, and Environmental Degradation in Literature

Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin have stated that "radical third-worldist critiques tend to see development as little more than a disguised form of neo-colonialism, a vast technocratic apparatus designed primarily to serve the economic and political interest of the West."[30] Roy attacks first-world countries, particularly their acceleration of financial progress in the name of development, to the detriment of third-world countries. In *The God of Small Things* the case of the rubber, opium and indigo plantations by which Britishers explointed and plundered Indian resources and eventually in the name of development, cause India fall into the debt trap by providing financial help is described. Moreover, the emergence of capitalism cannot be solely explained by economics. The term "Capitalocene"[31] views capitalism as a system of authority, profit, and reproduction deeply intertwined with the interconnected web of life. It envisions capitalism as a framework where human relationships are shaped by the geographies of life. The importance of political economy is not dismissed; instead, it underscores capitalism as a historical process where islands of commodity production and exchange exist within vast expanses of inexpensive—or potentially inexpensive—natural resources. The relentless accumulation of wealth relies on the presence and active cultivation of human and non-human elements of nature whose costs of reproduction are deliberately excluded from economic calculations. This process, as ecological economists, for example Karl William Kapp, have long pointed out, involves externalization.[32] Additionally, it is a process of harnessing nature's productivity for capitalist purposes which is portrayed in Roy's novels as ineffective because it inflicts harm on both humanity and the environment; and because it operates by structuring production and markets through the monetary system, which is a significant aspect of the interplay between humanity and nature. P. K. Nayar notes that many financial and development organisations such as the World Bank, ASPs, foreign direct investments (FDI), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and NATO are predominantly financed by First World nations and prioritize policies that ensure profitability.[33]

Roy shows her concern over the building of a dam over the Narmada River that obstructs the natural flow of water. The resultant benefits of the dam turned out to be dangerous and disastrous for the people residing in the area. The huge "Save the Narmada" movement eventuates, in which women have been prominent as leaders and participants. The high status of women in the

[29] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 1.
[30] Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 27.
[31] Jason W. Moore, "The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 3 (2017), pp. 594–630.
[32] Karl William Kapp, *The Social Costs of Private Enterprise* (New York: Schocken, 1950).
[33] Pramod K. Nayar, "Eco," in *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2015).

Himalayan area and among the tribal groups of the Narmada Valley, including unusual freedom of action and movement that accompany their role in the subsistence economy, is partially responsible for their prominence in the environmental movement. The women are accustomed to the responsibility and leadership of the community for survival. Their work involves them directly and daily with forests and natural resources. They are alert to environmental changes, and they respond readily and knowledgeably to the need to protect the environment.[34] Further, Roy regarded the Narmada Valley Development Project as "India's Greatest Planned Environment Disaster". The dam is planned to benefit three states in particular; Gujarat, Maharastra, and Madhya Pradesh. The aim was to provide electricity and pure drinking water to the common people in those areas. Further, it also aims to provide water facilities for irrigation purposes to millions of hectares of land. Yet, eventually, it turned out to produce more disastrous results. It created a homeless terrain by placing Indigenous people, mostly Adivasi, without any rehabilitation facilities, marking the economic, cultural and habitat loss to the Indigenous population. Additionally, a good amount of electricity is needed to start the dam project, instead of the electricity it was expected to produce. Also, the threat of flood arises instead of providing water for irrigation purposes. Moreover, the cost of the project was a great debt to the World Bank, creating economic bondage to the West. Roy projects the failure of the dam by stating that, "rivers were bottled and sold in the super market, fish were tinned, mountains mined and turned into shining missiles, massive dams lit up the cities like Christ-mess trees. Everyone was happy."[35]

Roy further commented on the Indigenous population, and implicated the wretched condition of the poor in the name of development, by stating that, "villages were being emptied, cities too, millions of people were being moved, but nobody knew where to."[36] The author portrayed the dingy and grim side of modernization which is filled with industrial waste; in *The God of Small Things*, while portraying the condition of the Meenachal River, which was "warm, the water. Greygreen. Like rippled silk. / With fish in it. /With the sky and trees in it. /And at night, the broken yellow moon in it,"[37] and its transformation into "a ghastly skull's smile, with holes where teeth had been, and a limp hand raised from a hospital bed."[38] Similarly, in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, she described how "in the miles of bright swamp tightly compacted with refuse and colourful plastic bags…the air was chemical and the water poisonous. Clouds of mosquitoes rose from their thick green pond."[39] This scenario was a nostalgic memory of the past, which was a "happy meadow" for them, but now the house is underwater and fish "swim through his windows. Crocodiles," "knife through the high branches of the silk cotton trees" and "tourists" "go boating over his fields, leaving rainbow clouds of diesel in the sky."[40] Roy explicitly complains about the deterioration and exploitation of nature in the name of development aided by science. The

[34] P. P. Karan, "Environmental Movements in India," *Geographical Review*, vol. 84, no. 1 (1994), pp. 32–41.
[35] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 98.
[36] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 98.
[37] Roy, *The God of Small Things*, p.123.
[38] Roy, *The God of Small Things*, p.124.
[39] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 100.
[40] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 113.

condition of Gulabiya, who is homeless, and others like him who suffer for the deeds of developers encourages the readers about "environmental justice",[41] such as protests in the deprived sections of Jantar Mantar, where nobody gives heed to the protestors, neither the media nor the government.

The Indian environmentalists Ramchandra Guha, Sunder lal Bahuguna, and Upamanya Pablo Mukherjee have all acknowledged that the root cause of ecological imbalance arises because of the materialistic modern civilization that "makes man the butcher of earth." In the wake of development, Roy herself portrayed the interconnectedness of anthropocentrism in which emerging technology affects the environment and the non-human species making conditions worse. She reflects on the use of plastics and how it has created an unhygienic, non-eco-friendly atmosphere that has choked the sustenance of non-human species because there is nothing for them to eat; "a cow that had died – burst – from eating too many plastic bags at the main garbage dump."[42] Another instance is the frozen crow that was hanging in mid-air; later it was discovered that the crow died of a new Chinese string that was "made of tough, transparent plastic, coated with ground glass."[43] This reflects the neglectful attitude of humans towards the other species in biodiversity. Yet a character named 'Zainab' places the non-human species in a bodily form around her surroundings. She feels the pain of the caged animals and frees "all the half-bald, half-dead white chickens" from the butcher's shop. She kept the goat as a pet and saved her from sixteen Bakr-id slaughterings until its natural death. This love and affection she holds for the lower species and natureis moving Later, she turned the graveyard into a little zoo like a "Noah's Ark of injured animals," where all the injured and neglected animals take refuge. Peacocks that cannot fly, peahens, cows, tortoises, Payal the mare, a donkey, the old dog Biroo, and others take refuge.

Further, Roy also commented on the act of preservation, where in the name of rehabilitation animals have been tortured and are caged, and presented a grand portrayal as the fanciful portrait to look at for the sake of mere entertainment. The author also portrayed the unethical process of modernisation that deforms the lower species of their natural shape and figure as stated,

> Two bulls live in the service lane outside my flat. In the daytime, they appear quite normal but at night they grow tall…When they piss, they lift their legs like dogs…These days one is never sure whether a bull is a dog, or an ear of corn is actually a leg of pork or a beef steak. But perhaps this is the path of genuine modernity?[44]

Humans have lost their ethical and moral values, and have sold their conscience for material benefits. For the excessive production of poultry items, "the scientists working in the poultry industry are trying to excise the mothering instinct in hens in order to mitigate or entirely remove their desire to brood. Their goal, apparently, is to stop chickens wasting time on unnecessary things and thereby to increase the efficiency of egg production."[45]

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[41] "Environmental Justice," *United States Environment Protection Agency* (2024). At: https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice.
[42] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 404.
[43] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 404.
[44] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 299.
[45] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 299.

Eurocentrism in Colonial Ideology

Huggan and Tiffin validate that "the very ideology of colonization is thus one where anthropocentrism and eurocentrism are inseparable, with the anthropocentrism underlying eurocentrism being used to justify those form of European colonialism that see indigenous culture as "primitive", less rational and closer to children, animal and nature."[46] Arundhati Roy reflects it in *The God of Small Things* when Baby Kochamma replaced her love of gardening with the television with dish antennas; the garden has "grown knotted and wild, like a circus whose animals had forgotten their tricks. The weed that people call communist patch (because it flourished in Kerala like communism) smothers the more exotic plants."[47] Similarly, in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* she depicted the exploitation of the Adivasis and the poor by the imperialistic form of government. The portrayal of the destruction of nature is vividly present in the novel. The indigenous people are being evicted by the police forces for the sake of planting modern technologies and extracting more benefits from the natural surroundings. She writes,

> Thousands of police and paramilitary are in the forest. Killing Adivasis, burning villages. No Adivasi can stay in her house or their village. They sleep in the forest outside a night because at night police come, hundred, two hundred, sometimes five hundred police. They take everything, burn everything, steal everything. Chicken, goats, money. They want Adivasi people to vacate forests so they can make a steel township and mining.[48]

This concept of land acquisition has been practised since the aegis of the British Land Acquisition Act and is now practised in India for technological and industrial advancement which reserves the basic civil rights of individuals in state protection and welfare.

Nature has always been a bountiful giver. Roy's protagonists Anjum and Velutha consider nature in the form of a Wordsworthian ecocritical category where nature never betrays humans. Velutha seeks solace on the shores of the Meenachal River following his mother's abandonment. He establishes his residence close to the river, engaging in fishing and cooking his catch over an open flame. The natural surroundings serve as his makeshift bed for rest. Following his wrongful conviction and betrayal by both his family and the Communist leader K. N. M. Pillai, he finds refuge in the vicinity of the river. Anjum took refuge in the graveyard after the betrayal, rejection and mortification by the so-called 'Dunia'. This wild area becomes a place of solace and comfort for Anjum. She is compared to an old tree in a graveyard further highlighting the nature/culture dichotomy that exposes the exploitation of nature on a large scale. She is portrayed; "like a tree she was stoned, scratched but never bowed down to see which small boy had thrown a stone at her."[49] The durability of nature is seen where a large amount of mass destruction, exploitation, and

[46] Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, p. 5.
[47] Roy, *The God of Small Things*, p. 27.
[48] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 421.
[49] Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 3.

plundering of resources are committed. The benefits that nature provides are unmatched and unimaginable. The imbalance created by humans results in large-scale chaos and destruction. Roy portrayed it by showcasing the ecosystem imbalance in Kashmir. The excess water in the Jhelum River overflows, which causes floods in the nearby areas and a huge amount of destruction to the city near the shores, be it army camps, houses, hospitals, police stations, courthouses, and so on. This occurred due to the environmental degradation that eventually causes the melting of glaciers through global warming. Deforestation causes soil erosion that further heightens the damage.

Conclusion

Arundhati Roy portrays a comprehensive vision of the exploitation of nature in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and *The God of Small Things*. She highlights the postcolonial environmental and capitalist situations in a forthright manner that questions the progressive thought of development and state-oriented policies that are the root cause of environmental devastation. Roy creates ecological awareness that requires a trans-disciplinary approach, which brings "to the fore hidden and alternative perspectives and solutions whilst highlighting the need to address the power imbalances that prevent alternative ways of valuation and epistemic diversity, so urgently required to address growing climate related uncertainties."[50] The contemporary crises and potential decline of capitalism are not merely a repetition of an old narrative. As capitalism progressively internalises the costs associated with climate change, extensive biodiversity loss, pollution, epidemic diseases, and various other ecological costs, new movements are gaining momentum which challenge not only the unequal distribution of resources within capitalism but also the very principles by which we assess what is being distributed. The exhaustion of capitalism's valuation of reality is both internal to the capitalist system and a driving force behind new ontological politics that stand in opposition to that value system.[51] This situation is a departure from a dualistic worldview and opens up possibilities for alternative valuations of food, climate, nature, and other aspects of our world. They unveil capitalism's value system as one that values very little or nothing of particular worth. These movements also point toward a world ecology where power, wealth, and reproduction are intertwined with the needs of the interconnected web of life and humanity's place within it.

[50] Lyla Mehta, Shilpi Srivastava, Hans Nicolai Adam, Alankar, Shibaji Bose, Upasona Ghosh, and V. Vijay Kumar, "Climate Change and Uncertainty from 'above' and 'below': Perspectives from India," *Regional Environmental Change*, vol. 19, no. 6 (2019), pp. 1533–1547.
[51] Jason W. Moore, "Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism," *Sociology Faculty Scholarship* (2016), p.1.