KHANDAKAR ASHRAFUL ISLAM[1] **DOI: 10.15290/CR.2021.34.3.02**

Noakhali Science and Technology University, Bangladesh

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0176-4518

Biopolitical *Nomos* and "bare life" in Arundhati Roy's novels

Abstract. Biopolitics—the maneuvers and stratagems employed to regulate, manage and govern people—is one of the most contested theoretical paradigms, which deals with the relation between state politics and human lives. While Foucault links the biopolitical nomos with the oppressive practices which render the human body docile, Giorgio Agamben sheds light on the new biopolitical nomos, which applying the most draconian means, subdue people within the law. According to Agamben, the arbitrary use of such sovereign power not only robs of the constitutional rights of the individuals but also denies their rights to live. Agamben observes that under the new biopolitical nomos each individual is exposed to the threat of being treated as a Homo Sacer, whose life can be taken with impunity. Focusing on Foucault's concept of biopolitics and applying Agamben's concepts like "state of exception" and Homo Sacer, the present paper investigates into Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* to argue that in present-day India; the enactment of juridico-discursive power (communal riots, lynching, and violence to the lower caste) is not only denying the human rights of the minority groups but also exposing them to a "bare life."

Keywords*:* Biopolitics, *Homo Sacer,* State of exception, Riot, Arundhati Roy.

Biopolitics—one of the most contested theoretical paradigms—refers to those political actions which manipulate human lives through individualization, subjectivation, discipline and surveillance. Michel Foucault links the biopolitical *nomos* primarily with the methodological and the oppressive practices, which, establishing authoritarian relations between power and knowledge, tend to manipulate human bodies to make them docile, manageable and productive. Unlike Foucault, Georgio Agamben analyzes modern sovereignty—whose institutions are formed from the decay of monarchial rule—as a biopolitical project where sovereign power enforces its dominance "through the most draconian means, including murder of those whom it wishes to eliminate, while remaining nominally within the law" (Parfitt 2009: 41). Agamben argues that modern political regimes, in the name of democracy, development, and security, have radicalized the biopolitical *nomos* and became more repressive and violent over time. A central proposition of Agamben's argument is that modernity has led sovereign power to take ever-increasing recourse to the "state of exception"—a situation in which "the operation of the law is suspended while it remains nominally in force" (Parfitt 2009: 41). Those who are subjected to a state of exception are reduced to a situation that Agamben terms "bare life" in which any human rights or constitutional rights, they may have had, are rendered null, and each of them are treated as *Homo Sacer* whose "life can be taken with

[1] Address for correspondence: Noakhali Science and Technology University, Sonapur, University Road, Noakhali 3814, Bangladesh. E-mail: ashraf.2205@nstu.edu.bd

impunity" (Agamben 1998: 71). Agamben observes that the modern biopolitical projects through "exclusion from the community and deprivation of a voice" (Agamben 1998: 21) have reduced the minority and the marginalized people to "animal bare life." In *The God of Small Things* (1997), henceforth *TGST,* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), henceforth *TMUH* through Arundhati Roy's portrayal of the violent assertion of caste and class supremacy, rise of religious extremism, spread of communal violence, lynching of minority people, execution of state-sponsored violence, it gets apparent that even in present-day India the people of the lower class, lower caste and minority groups are exposed to an ambience of Agamben's "bare life." This paper is an attempt to argue that in postcolonial India the perpetuation of the juridico-discursive power and enactment of the repressive biopolitical *nomos* have left no option of living for the deprived and destitute people except a "bare life."

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, introducing the concept of biopolitics, Foucault accentuates the rise of the "juridico-discursive" model of power (Foucault 1979: 82). In this model, power is assumed to be exercised as "interdiction and repression in a framework of law (Lemke 2005: 3). In fact, in *TGST* the violent act of Kottayam police to the lower caste Velutha, is a definite indication of the enactment of the "state of exception", where the police exercised the authority that "does not need law to create law" (cited in Minca 2006: 389). For Agamben, the space of exception constitutes "the original *nomos*, the founding gesture of the political space of modernity, the ontological device that lies at the roots of the modern nation-state and its potential translation into a biopolitical machine" (Minca 2006: 390). Fahimeh Nazari & Hossein Pirnajmuddin in "Revisiting Colonial Legacy in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*" remark that the way the Kottayam police executed Velutha without investigating the gravity of the charges brought against him by Baby Kochamma, that purposive action is indicative to "the forceful inflection of law" (Nazari & Pirnajmuddin 2013: 67). In fact, the violence perpetuated on Velutha has turned him into a *Homo Sacer.* Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, represents that *Homo Sacer* is the "originary figure of life taken into the sovereign ban, …in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide" (Agamben 1998: 83).

As Foucault explains, the execution of such homicidal law permits the perpetual instigation of new dominations and the staging of meticulously repeated scenes of violence. The violence over Velutha is the exhibition of the supremacy of the upper caste people, where Velutha becomes the victim of biopolitics. In *TGST,* Roy depicts how the police forces, Baby Kochamma, Comrade Pillai and the other upper caste people, as agents of "repressive state apparatus," instil hegemonic power to expand their spatial control over "what Touchables fear, the fear of losing privilege, of being dispossessed, of having one's purity and ascendancy questioned" (Passos 2008: 96). In fact, Velutha's affair with Ammu—the transgressor of love laws—is apprehended as an infringement in the Touchable world. This transgression of caste boundary arouses unredeemable fear, "civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness," (*TGST* 308) which needed to be exorcised violently in order to uphold the sanctity of caste hierarchy. In the process of this exorcism, in front of Rahel and Estha, Velutha is brutally beaten by six Touchable police officers. Rahel and Estha are the eyewitness of the perpetuation of extreme violence on Velutha. In that merciless police assault Velutha's

> skull was fractured in three places. His nose and both his cheekbones were smashed, leaving his face pulpy, undefined. The blow to his mouth had split open his upper lip and broken six teeth, three of which were embedded in his lower lip, hideously inverting his beautiful smile. Four of his ribs were splintered, one had pierced his left lung, which was what made him bleed from his mouth…His spine was damaged in two places, the concussion had paralyzed his right arm and resulted in a loss of control over his bladder and rectum. Both his kneecaps were shattered. (*TGST* 310)

Ghina M. Sumrain & Shadi S. Neimneh assert that in *TGST* "[t]he police as a reconstruct of the colonial hegemony represents India's oppressive colonial history" (Sumrain & Neimneh 2016: 66). Velutha's subalternity and subsequent death at the hands of the police officers result from the perpetuation of oppressive caste and class supremacy, which in dealing with the people of the lower caste and lower class, exercise biopower with the "sovereign right to kill…to kill anyone" (Foucault 2003: 260).

Although Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize winning first novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) brings forth the terrible consequences of the caste and class exploitation, its sorrows and agonies seem private. By contrast, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*—published in 2017—is about "India, the polity, during the past half-century or so, and its griefs are national" (Acocella 2017: 1). In *TMUH* Roy's narrative exposes those sites of abusive and exploitative power—communal riots, state-sponsored violence, deprivation of minority rights, and violation of human rights—which, apart from jeopardizing the lives of those afflicted, have exposed them to a "bare life." Somak Ghoshal, in his review, "A Far Cry from the Writer's Brilliant First," prefigures *TMUH* as "a gargantuan handbook to modern India and its injustices" (Ghoshal 2017: 1). In *TMUH*, telling those individual and collective stories, Roy takes "a panoramic view of violence, injustice, suffering over decades of India's history" (Ghoshal 2017: 1). In fact, Roy's writing is a counter-discourse to the official version of the "idea of India" that projects India as a stable democratic nation with unity, equality, and religious neutrality. Manoj S. in "Historicizing Fiction: Critiquing Contemporary India in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*" remarks that in *TMUH,* Roy sheds light on those events of Indian history which at times:

> failed the true spirit of democracy, since its inception with the Indo-Pak partition, spanning mainly the events of the last three or four decades. In the novel there are recurrent references to the rising tide of totalitarianism in the Indian governing system and the exclusion of the marginalized classes from the centers of power. (Manoj 2017: 113)

Suranjan Das argues in "The Nehru Years in Indian Politics" that in postcolonial India, "despite certain obvious outward changes in forms of governance or employment of new political hyperboles, the Indian government under Jawaharlal Nehru represented in many respects a continuation of British attitudes both in form and substance" (Das 2001: 7). This colonial attitude of exploitation and oppression was intensified during the imposition of Emergency by Indira Gandhi in 1975. Referring to the reign of Indira Gandhi's Emergency period, Roy in *TMUH* has pointed out the beginning of the "state of exception," which through bureaucratic governance achieved permanence in India's system of governance. The period of Emergency from 25th June 1975 to 21st March 1977 is considered "the darkest period of independent India" (Ghosh 2016: 2). Apart from the suspension of civil rights, violation of human rights and subversion of democracy, mass imprisonment of the dissenting voices became pervasive during the

Emergency period. In fact, in India the Emergency period is the systematic and administrative beginning of the institutionalization of hegemonic power.

During the Emergency period, the "state of exception" became the rule of law. During these twenty-one months of authoritarian rule, the police were empowered with the legal right to search homes without a warrant. The police were also given the power to arrest people without any specific allegation. In *TMUH*, the transgender woman Anjum's gruesome experience in a wedding party—where the host and three of his guests are violently beaten and arrested without a warrant—epitomizes the power and brutality the police exercised during the emergency period to spread fear and terror. Using state power and coercion, the opposing voices to authority were brutally suppressed in this period. During the Emergency period civil rights were suspended, newspapers were censored, and in the name of population control, thousands of men (mostly Muslim) were herded into camps and forcibly sterilized. A new law—the Maintenance of Internal Security Act—allowed the government to arrest anybody on a whim. Thus, Indira Gandhi's imposition of Emergency (from 25 June 1975 to 21 March 1977) has laid the foundation of a monarchical type of family rule, that spreading its tentacles, not only institutionalized the oppressive biopolitical *nomos* but also accentuated the enactment of the abuse of power.

Agamben argues that hegemonic power politics, locating itself "at the very margin of politics, turns out to be the solid basis of a political body that decides not simply over the life and death of human beings, but who will be recognized as a human being at all" (cited in Lemke 2005: 5). In *TMUH* Roy depicts that the rise of the dominant political ideology is the major catalyst behind the "living dead" condition of the minority Muslims in India. The graveyard symbolizes the threatened condition of the minority people in this novel. S. Manoj remarks, "[t]he metaphor of the graveyard equips Roy to explore the complex relationship between life and death in the context of contemporary Indian life" (Manoj 2017: 119). *TMUH* begins in the graveyard where Anjum—a transgender woman—starts to live after her deadly experience in Gujarat pogrom. Her near death experience in Gujarat massacre exposes the obnoxious political reality that perpetuates the evil practice of "domination, exploitation, expropriation and, in some cases, elimination of the vital existence of some or all subjects over whom it is exercised" (cited in Rinbow & Rose 2006: 198).

The Gujarat massacre originated from the burning of a coach of the Sabarmati train at Godhra on 27 February 2002. It was carrying nearly sixty Hindu pilgrims returning home from "a trip to Ayodhya where they had carried ceremonial bricks to lay in the foundations of a grand Hindu temple they wanted to construct at the site where an old mosque once stood" (*TMUH* 44). The circumstantial evidence could not form any acceptable proposition about the events, which culminated in the burning of the coach. However, the allegations were pointed directly to the Muslims and "the police arrested hundreds of Muslims… from the area around the railway station under the new terrorism law and threw them into prison" (*TMUH* 44).

The novel describes the event that the burnt bodies of the Hindu pilgrims are brought to Ahmedabad to be displayed so that the public can pay homage to the pilgrims' departed souls. The horrific sight of the burnt bodies of the Hindu pilgrims triggers the flame of hatred and instigates the desire for revenge in the Hindu polity. Moreover, the

hate speeches which officially held the Muslims responsible for those fatalities culminated in the brutal killing of the minority Muslims in Gujarat. Roy depicts that the butchering of the Muslims in Gujarat pogrom,

> went on for weeks and was not confined to cities alone. The mobs were armed with swords and tridents and wore saffron headbands. They had cadastral lists of Muslim homes, businesses and shops…When people who had been injured were taken to hospital, mobs attacked the hospitals. The police would not register murder cases. They said, quite reasonably, that they needed to see the corpses. The catch was that the police were often part of the mobs, and once the mobs had finished their business, the corpses no longer resembled corpses. (*TMUH* 45)

These merciless killings and violence are desperate attempts to create awe among the Muslim polity. From Roy's depiction, it can be inferred that in India the people of the Muslim community are living a 'bare life' like the *Homo Sacer* who might be

> killed by anyone without being condemned for homicide since he or she had been banned from the juridical-political community. While even a criminal could claim certain legal rights and formal procedures, this "sacred man" [read: a Muslim] was completely unprotected and reduced to mere physical existence. (cited in Lemke 2005: 5)

Roy puts forward that violence against the minority Muslims is not a unique phenomenon in India. In fact, in the politics of India, the rise of right-wing supremacy has culminated in the intensification of the hostility against the Muslims. The spread of hatred and violence against the Muslims have grave political significance. The criminalities and the unchallenged atrocities against the Muslims demonstrate the hegemony of the rule of majority over the minority. P. Sahadevan accentuates that in the status quo of the rule of the majority,

> The state behaves more as an agent of the dominant/majority ethnic community.…In many cases, [the minority] is virtually taken captive by the majority group to serve its ethnic interests while minority/weaker groups face a threat of those institutions on which they rely for protection, equity and justice....The relevant intermediary institutions [such as] bodies of popular representation (parliament) and adjudication (judiciary)…function like a mere rubber-stamp of the dominant/majority community. (Sahadevan 2013: 82)

According to Hardt and Negri, biopolitics is a form of power "expressed as a control that extends throughout the depths of the consciousnesses and bodies of the population" (Hardt & Negri 2000: 24). Staging of violence or riot is a strategy that evokes terror and fear.

Riot, in fact, is a mechanism of "Repressive State Apparatus" which through violence asserts the dominance of the powerful over the powerless and reestablishes the domination over the minority groups, rendering the message that the people of the minority groups are alive only because of the mercy of the majority. As depicted in *TMUH,* when these rioters were demolishing the Muslims' properties and mercilessly killing them, "thirty thousand saffron parakeets with steel talons and bloodied beaks, all [were] squawking together: Musslaman ka ek hi sthan! Qabristan ya Pakistan! (Only one place for the Mussalman! The Graveyard or Pakistan!") (*TMUH* 62). It appears that creating a reign of terror for the Muslims, these rioters are in a mission of making a monolithic, monolingual, mono-religious India whose idealogues have politicized that the proper place of the Muslims is either Pakistan or Qabristan (grave). The desperation of the right-wing fundamentalist group makes it apparent that India's secularist political ideology has come to a dead end and, therefore, the majority of the Hindus treat the

minority Muslims as *Homo Sacer*. At present, this violent ideology is gaining influence at an alarming pace. It is heart-rending that in a democratic country, Muslims are always prone to the threat of extermination by the extremist view of the majority. Roy emphasizes that it is the present-day political outcry that Muslims do not belong to India, and hence they cannot be offered anything more than a "bare life"—stripped of all individuating legal and political status and protection.

In *TMUH*, Roy underscores that, in present-day India, like the minority Muslims, the lives of the Dalits are also threatened and jeopardized. With the strengthening of the political dominance of the right-wing ideology, many incidents of lynching of lower caste people have taken place in India. Lynching exhibits the supremacy of the dominant religious groups over the minority. In those scattered incidents of lynching, lower caste people, especially the Dalits, are either killed or humiliated in the name of preserving the sanctity of the holy cow. In many places, cow protection groups (Gau Rakshak) are created to safeguard the cows from slaughter. To shed light on the dilapidated condition of the Dalits, Roy depicts Dayachand as a representative of the Dalit class. Dayachand belongs to the Chamar family—the Untouchables who collect the carcass, skin them, and turn the hide for their livelihood. On the day of Dussehra—a day of ceremonious celebration of the victory of Lord Rama (good) over Ravana (evil)—Dayachand, his father, and three of his father's friends had to collect a dead cow from a Brahmin's house. While returning home, at Dulina police station, they were blackmailed by the station-house officer, Sehrawat, for his commission. It has become an unwritten practice to give a certain amount of money to the police if the Chamars carry any carcass. On each carcass, Sehrawat usually demands a previously agreed-upon sum. However, on that day, he claimed nearly triple of the amount he used to take earlier, which means that the Chamars would have been losing money to skin that cow. Sehrawat was adamant and did not pay any heed to their pleading. Meanwhile, the dead cow that was collected from the Brahmin's house started to decompose in the tempo. Confining the Chamars, Sehrawat, in fact, tried to "take advantage of the political climate" (*TMUH* 88) which in the name of cow protection was openly dehumanizing the Dalits and the Muslims. When the poor Chamars expressed their inability to pay such a big amount, the police imprisoned them on the charge of cow slaughter. And kept them locked up in police custody without trial. It got apparent that Sehrawat, from his position, was abusing his power to exploit the poor Chamars.

With the passage of time, as the stink of the decomposed cow became unbearable, there spread a rumor that some cow killers were kept arrested in the police station. Eventually, the angry mob started gathering outside the police station. The dead cow in the Tempo, "stinking up the whole area, was proof enough for them" (*TMUH* 88). Moreover, the arrest amplified the severity of the incident. Unfortunately, the truth never reached the agitated mob that the Chamars had been taking a dead cow for skinning and been arrested for being unable to pay the desired commission to the station officer in charge. Gradually as the mob started shouting "Jai Shri Ram! and Vande Mataram! More and more joined in and it turned into a frenzy" (*TMUH* 88). In the heat of the moment, a group of "gau-rakshak" (cow protector) went inside the police station and handed the alleged cow-killers over the violent mob. At first, "[t]hey began to beat them…with their fists, and with shoes. But then someone brought a crowbar, someone else a carjack" (*TMUH* 88) and began to break their bones. In a frenzy, the mob, being "invigorated by

the Hindu ideology of 'Gau Rakhsha', butchered the men" (Mandal 2018: 126). It is heart-rending that everybody watched the killing, but nobody came forward to prevent it. As the mob finished its business, they "splashed through puddles of [Dayachand's] father's blood as if it were rainwater...[with blood] the road looked like a street in the old city on the day of Bakr-Eid" (*TMUH* 89). This case is not reported as murder because no dead body is found there. Whatever remains after the lynching no longer resembles a human body. Through this story of lynching, Roy has accentuated that despite the Constitutional protection Caste oppression is an ever-present phenomenon in India. The lynching of Dayachand's father and his fellow mates has brought to light not only the existential crisis of the low caste Chamars, but also the reality that in India these minority groups will survive only by living a "bare life" as long they are not killed in the name of restoring the sanctity of "holy cow".

In *TMUH*, Roy raises strong allegation against India's politicians. Roy criticizes them pointing out that in postcolonial India, the corrupted politicians manipulating the greater prospects of globalization—greater employment opportunity, eradication of hunger and poverty, and infrastructural development—have mercilessly exploited and dispossessed the poor, the marginalized, and the Adivasi people from their lands. In many of her essays, debunking the shining image of India Roy has exposed the real plights, sufferings, and challenges of Indian mass people. Challenging the justification of implementing the policies of globalization for Indian polity, Roy in "Shall We Leave it to the Experts" asks,

> What is globalization? Who is it for? What is it going to do to a country like India, in which social inequality has been institutionalized in the caste system for centuries? A country in which 700 million people live in rural areas. In which 80 percent of the landholdings are small farms. In which 300 million people are illiterate. Is the corporatization and globalization of agriculture, water supply, electricity and essential commodities going to pull India out of the stagnant morass of poverty, illiteracy and religious bigotry?... Is globalization going to close the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged, between the upper castes and the lower castes, between the educated and the illiterate? (Roy 2002: 1)

The questions have remained unanswered both from the sides of the politicians and the government. In practice, the arbitrary implementation of government projects like Narmada Project, Operation Green Hunt and many more projects like such has continued to uproot people from their land and habitat. Some have accepted this expulsion as their fate, some have resisted. Some have adopted the path of armed struggle to get their land back. In fact, the lack of land reformation activities and unjust allocation of land have made many Adivasi and tribals of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana launch armed militancy against the government forces in protest.

Roy in *TMUH* depicts Revathy as a victim of such a ruthless project of government—"operation green hunt". This project's enforcement had forcefully evicted countless Adivasis and tribal people from their living place and arable lands. However, "[p]eople in mass democracies are usually slow to recognize the nature of the undeclared wars conducted by their representatives" (Mishra 2001: 3). In *TMUH* Roy has depicted those Adivasi people who took arms to resist the government-sponsored aggression of the thousand of police and paramilitary who mercilessly killed unnumbered Adivasis and burned their villages to hand over this vast land to the petrochemical companies for mining. Revathy exclaims that during the time of the aggression of the government forces

the situation in the forest becomes very dangerous. At times police, Cobras, Greyhounds, Andhra Police launch massive attacks and kill the party workers mercilessly. Therefore, for safety, these Adivasis are forced to live in the forest. It is ironic that the victims who are fighting for reclaiming their land for living and farming are labeled as militants and treated as *Homo Sacer* whom the security forces have the right to kill with impunity. In Roy's remark, "[t]here is no terrorism like State terrorism" (Roy 'Democracy' 2002: 1)

From the story of Revathy, Roy sheds light not only on the plights, sufferings and the causes of the armed struggle of the marginalized people of Dandakaranya but also on the ruthlessness of the government agencies which are acting violently against the Adivasis. Being a victim of "Operation Green Hunt" and losing her habitat Revathy joins PLGA—the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army—to protect her people and to get their land back through armed struggle. She is the only literate woman among her fellow comrades. Hence, she is trusted with some confidential works by the party. To pursue those works, she has to go out of the forest very often. As Roy depicts, it is always risky for the party workers to stay out alone because usually the police keep many villagers and informers deployed to work against them. One day, while Revathy was returning to the camp from the city, she was abducted by the police. As usual, her arrest is not recorded. She is given chloroform and is taken to a desolate place. When she had regained consciousness, she found herself lying naked on a table and there were six police officers around her. She was brutally tortured by those police officers. Revathy delineates that horrendous experience stating that,

> One [started] cutting my skin with a knife-blade...If I closed my eyes they slap me. Two are holding my hands and two are holding legs...They are smoking and putting their cigarettes on me. I thought they would kill me like Padmakka and Laxmi but they said 'Don't worry Blackie we will let you go. You must go and tell them what we did to you. You are a great heroine. You supply them with bullets, malaria medicines, food, toothbrushes. All that we know. How many innocent girls have you sent to join your party? You are spoiling everyone'… They kept on burning me and cutting me. Then one man forced open my mouth and one man put his penis in my mouth. I could not breathe. I thought I would die. They kept putting water on my face. Then all raped me many times...I was bleeding everywhere. (*TMUH* 422-423)

Roy gives a disturbing graphic description of the torture and sexual violence perpetrated on Revathy to make the reader ponder on the horrific fact that this "is the experience of so many women in the forest" (*TMUH* 423). Revathy emphasizes "maximum hatred police had for women workers" (*TMUH* 423). She delineates the horrific killing of her fellow comrades stating that,

> Comrade Nirmalakka when she was killed they ripped her stomach and took out everything. Comrade Laxmi also they not simply killed, but cut, and removed eyes. For her there was big protest. One another Comrade Padmakka they captured and broken both her knees so she could not walk and beat her so she has kidney damage, liver damage, so much damage. (*TMUH* 421)

Fortunately, Revathy could escape from the police's den, but she could not evade the consequence of the rape. Revathy is not prevented from escaping to convey the message to her fellow comrades that a similar fate is in store for them. As a consequence of that gang-rape, Revathy becomes pregnant with the baby of one of the six police officers. The role of the state and police is depicted in a horrendous manner in this novel. Roy through her narrative accentuates that under the juridico-discursive power the police

force instead of being a shield of the afflicted have turned into perpetrators. In the mission of creating terror among the revolutionaries, the police are involved in heinous unlawful activities. The arbitrary use of state power, by the law enforcement agencies, usually gets legitimation only in a "state of exception". *TMUH* exhibits that with the shelter of the state, extreme violence is perpetrated on the people who are engaged in armed struggle to reassert their right to the land of their ancestors. The causes that made the Adivasis and tribal people take arms to fight for their rights are neither taken into consideration by the media nor acknowledged by the state. Rather, they are allegedly termed as Maoists, anti-nationals above all—a threat to India's internal security. Focusing on such incidents of state sponsored violence, Roy asserts that by the state, the underprivileged and the minority sections of people are exposed to a 'bare life'— where they are rarely given any Constitutional protection. In "Trickledown Revolution" Roy remarks:

> If you pay attention to many of the struggles taking place in India, people are demanding no more than their Constitutional rights. But the Government of India no longer feels it needs to abide by the Indian Constitution, which is supposed to be the legal and moral framework on which our democracy rests. As Constitutions go, it is an enlightened document, but its enlightenment is not used to protect people. (Roy 2010: 1)

Both in *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* Roy has explicitly expressed the consequences of the assertion of oppressive power in familial, societal and political spheres. Situating the characters in the quagmire of class, caste, societal, political and state-sponsored oppression, Roy renders the message that in postcolonial India in any sphere the ruthless use of biopolitical power results in the death of mass people. In *TGST,* the upholding of caste supremacy, Baby Kochamma's hypocrisy and Pillai's political ambition have victimized four lives. Veutha is killed in police carnage, Ammu dies of fighting against the odds and the twins—Rahel and Estha—being traumatized by the violence perpetrated on Velutha turn into an emblem of living dead. In *TMUH* Anjum's premonition that Gujarat might come to Delhi any day, haunts the readers with the fear of confronting another gruesome riot until the end of the novel. Roy's horrific description of the burning and killing of the minority Muslims and lynching of Dayachand's father and his fellows—the lower caste Chamars—make us rethink of the matrix of power politics, in which no space is left for the minority people to exist. In Roy's depiction, it gets apparent that under the practice of juridico-discursive power, in present-day India, riots and lynching have become the license for extra judicial killing. Both are violent ways of enforcing power of the majority over the minority groups. Like the brutal colonial domination, these violent forms of killings, creating fear and terror, reassert the supremacy of the majority and powerful groups and make the lives of the minority more vulnerable. In her novels, Roy depicts that while police as an agent of repressive state apparatus take part in extrajudicial killings, the communal rioters—in the same manner—execute the persecution of the minority groups and lower caste people under the law of impunity and state protection. Stretching the narrative from imposition of emergency—by Indira government—to the crisis of Kasmir, Roy in her novels attempts to bring the myriad oppressed groups to visibility to emphasize that under the enforcement of hegemonic power and ruthless use of biopolitical *nomos,* people of the minority groups will live merely a "bare life" until the practice of caste supremacy,

communal hatred, religious bigotry, lynching and state-sponsored violence are "voluntarily abandoned as bad ideas" (Roy 'Democracy' 2002: 1).

References

Acocella, Joan. 2017, June 5 & 12. Arundhati Roy returns to fiction, in fury. *The New Yorker.* https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/06/05/arundhati-roy-returns-to-fiction-in-fury.

Agamben, G. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. USA: Stanford University Press.

Bose, B. 2017, July–September. A fearless antinovel. *Review Biblio*.

Das, S. 2001. The Nehru years in Indian politics: From a historical hindsight. *Edinburgh Papers South Asian Studies* 16:1, 2-35.

Foucault, M. 1979. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. 2003. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College De France 1975-76*. London: Picador.

Ghosh, J. 2016. Indira Gandhi's call of emergency and press censorship in India: The ethical parameters revisited. *Global Media Journal– Indian Edition* 7:2, 1-15.

Ghoshal, S. 2017, June 6. The *Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy: A Far Cry from the Writer's Brilliant First—*The God of Small Things*. *Huffington Post India*. https://www.huffingtonpost.in/2017/06/01/book-review-the-ministry-of-utmosthappiness- by-arundhati-roy_a_22121017/

Lemke, T. 2005. A zone of indistinction–A critique of Giorgio Agamben's concept of biopolitics. *Outlines: Critical Social Studies* 7:1, 3-13.

Manoj, S. 2017. Historicizing fiction: Critiquing contemporary India in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. *Journal of Literature & Aesthetics* 17:1, 111-120.

Mandal, S. 2018. A postcolonial overview of Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness. Postcolonial English Literature: Theory and Practice*. India: Authorpress.

Michael, H. & Antonio, N. 2000. *Empire*. United States: Harvard University.

Minca, C. 2006. Giorgio Agamben and the new biopolitical nomos. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 88:4: 387-403, DOI: 10.1111/j.0435-3684.2006.00229.x.

Mishra, P. 2001, Feb. 11. There'll always be an England in India. *The New York Times Company.* https://www.nytimes.com/2001/02/11/books/there-ll-always-be-an-england-in-india.html.

Nazari, F. & Hossein, P. 2013. Revisiting colonial legacy in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things. Journal of Educational and Social Research* 3:1, 199-210, DOI: 10.5901/jesr.2013.v3n1p199.

Parfitt, T. 2009. Are the third world poor *Homines Sacri*? Biopolitics, sovereignty, and development. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 34:1, 41–58.

Passos, V. 2003. Micro-Universes and Situated Critical Theory: Postcolonial and Feminist Dialogues in a Comparative Study of Indo-English and Lusophone Women Writers. Diss. Utrecht.

Rabinow, P. & Nikolas, R. 2006. Biopower today. *Biosocieties* 1:2, 195-217.

Ram, K. 2017. Entropic fiction and its narrative strategy: A perspective on *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. *Journal of Literature & Aesthetics*, 17:1, 91-99.

Roy, A. 1997. *The God of Small Things*. India: IndiaInk.

Roy, A. 2002, January 31. Shall we leave it to the experts. *The Nation*, https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/shall-we-leave-it-experts/

Roy, A. 2002, April 28. Democracy: Who is she when she's at home? *Outlook (India),* http://www.sacw.net/Gujarat2002/arundhatiroyAug2002.html

Roy, A. 2010, September 11. Trickledown revolution, *Dawn,* https://www.dawn.com/news/562271/the-trickledown-revolution-2

Roy, A. 2017. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. India: Penguin Random House.

Sahadevan, P. 2013. Managing Internal Conflicts in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar: Strategies and Outcomes. *Policy Choices in Internal Conflicts: Governing Systems and Outcomes*. New Delhi.

Sumrain, M. & Shadi N. 2016. Postcolonial places as reconstructs of colonial culture: A reading of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities* 12:1, 58-70.

***

Dr. **Khandakar Ashraful Islam** is an Assistant Professor of English at Noakhali Science and Technology University, Bangladesh. He has obtained his PhD degree from Osmania University, Hyderabad, India in 2021. His major areas of academic interest comprise postcolonial and cultural studies with a focus on narratives of resistance.