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REGULATING LIFE AND LIVING OTHERWISE: POST HUMANISTIC BIOPOLITICS IN *HARVEST* AND *THE MINISTRY OF UTMOST HAPPINESS*

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Abstract: Biopolitics, as conceptualized by Michel Foucault explores how authorities and institutions exercise control and power through agencies of body and life encompassing the areas of health, gender, reproduction, etc. Instead of explicit execution of power, authorities device methods that can potentially shape life, bodies, and behaviors of individuals and thus society. This paper examines the operation of biopolitics in contemporary Indian literature, focusing on Manjula Padmanbahan's renowned play *Harvest* (1997) and Arundhathi Roy's notable novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017). These texts are read and analyzed through the lens of biopolitics, to explore the spectrum of life management in contemporary Indian society, highlighting both technological and socio-political mechanisms of control. Whilst *Harvest* portrays techno-market control over human bodies, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* presents social and political control of population, especially that of the marginalized community. The characters of both texts are further juxtaposed with each other in order to identify the diverse agencies by which power regulates the body. In addition, reading the aspect of biopolitics in a post humanistic framework enables one to view how life is regulated in society via invisible agencies of power and control. The comparative analysis of these texts would reveal how post humanistic subjectivity emerges through cooporation and negotiation, instead of individual autonomy and liberty. A close reading of Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* and Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* would clearly show us the micro and macro level mechanism of power in our society, through which human lives are essentially controlled and commodified. Using Foucault's Biopolitics and Rosi Braidott's Post humanistic theory as theoretical frames, this study demonstrates how contemporary Indian literature interrogates the intersection of body, consciousness, ethics, and survival under systems of power.

Keywords: *Biopolitics, Posthumanism, Michel Foucault, Braidotti, Indian Literature, Liminal space, Discipline, Body.*

Introduction

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (1975), in its philosophical examination of penal forms in society details the various ways in which traditional exercise of authoritarian power is supplemented by new mechanics of power in the current society, particularly after seventeenth and eighteenth century (Foucault, 16). Further, these novel technologies of power use the body as an important machine to optimize and operate its capabilities through certain regulatory controls whereby the very biological existence of

the body is transformed into a narrowing site of governance. Foucault understands that this body serves as an instrument or as an intermediary, (Foucault, 11) employed solely to deprive an individual of their essential right and liberty. Rosi Braidotti in her study on Post Humanism in her eponymously titled book, *The Posthuman* (2013) observes how the subjectivity of human self is often equated with conscious and self- regulating socio-ethical behaviors, whereas otherness is regularly defined as its negative and specular counterpart (Braidotti, 15). According to Braidotti, this 'otherness' is used as a mere tool of monitoring and regulation so as to keep a part of the population in check. Her study further exemplifies and explains how the otherness potentially makes certain groups of people to be reduced to the less than human status of 'disposable bodies' (Braidotti, 15). Both Foucault and Braidotti thus draw on the post-humanistic idea of body and power, demonstrating how power by ways of multiple agencies is employed to regulate and control the human body.

Contemporary Indian literature increasingly engages with these dynamics by portraying the human body and mind as sites for ethical, technological, and political dialogues. Although the concepts of post humanism and biopolitics are discussed globally, in Indian academia, analysis of these discourses remain underexplored. This study tends to address this gap in literary scholarship by analyzing two complementary texts: Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* and Arundhathi Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The former is set in a dystopian world where the body is seen as a device for economic advancement, a not too far reality where the rich feed on the financially poor. The whole play is a complex debate on what is ethically right and wrong for a third world population, with the text continuously drawing us to the concept of wealth versus dignity, and how bodily parts become simple pieces of pawn in a struggle for power and authority. The characters in the play are all in one way or another pulled into effective manipulation devised by the powerful, even the most sentient of the group being misled till the very end. The story constantly brings up the concepts of supervision and surveillance, pointing out how human autonomy is a mere illusion coupled with fake surety and false security. Moreover, the authoritarian supremacy that is established through disdain and humiliation in the narrative conjugates with the post-colonial concept of cultural dominance, by which a third world individual is treated as someone to be utilized and discarded upon the colonizer's whim. However, reading through a posthuman lens, this act of dominance goes beyond their literal body, and towards their consciousness and cognizance. Reading with Foucault's idea of 'political anatomy' (Foucault, 138), the text illuminates how an individual is restricted by one's own bodily controls by another individual of higher authority. Analyzed through both post-colonial and post humanist discourses, the text surely gives a glimpse into how intimidation and manipulation destroy one's life and liberty.

Whilst Padmanabhan's play is set in a dystopian world, Roy's novel is set in a realistic present where certain communities are socially and politically ostracized based on specific

regulatory norms and behaviors. The prominent characters in the book, including the transgender protagonist, are more or less in a state of limbo, where they had to construct a safe place for themselves as a community; a hybrid space that is between the extreme power struggles in a society where everything is identified in binaries. Whether it be the binaries of gender, religion, or socio- ethical justice, the characters constantly are out of place and space in the very society that they are a part of. Throughout the story, the recurring mentions of the protagonist having nowhere to go effectively place the characters in an eternal liminality. These liminal spaces of society are often conferred on communities that have been outcasted and isolated in a struggle for socio-political power, as seen with the case of the Hijras in the novel. Foregrounding the mental and emotional scars left behind by regulatory forces on an individual and a community as a whole, the text depicts the harrowing state of the 'other', the group of individuals that are forcibly required to be more or less invisible to authoritarian figures. Unlike Padmanabhan's play, there isn't a question of ethical justice in Roy's text as the characters are rejected of even their basic rights as a human being, their body and mind being constantly put through tribulations beyond their control. Although Roy draws in harsh socio-political realities of present India, this study focuses on how power as a self-regulatory force works through the characters, often via an invisible agency.

Both these texts contribute in their own way to our reading of post humanistic power struggle, oppression of the other, and exploitation of the weaker section, thus clearly echoing the ways of society we are all a part of. While Padmanabhan's play illustrates the technological and economic regulations on individual bodies through intimidation and manipulation, Roy's book demonstrates the ills of systemic governance over socially and politically marginalized communities in society. This study hence attempts to bridge both these ideas so that the biopolitical scenario of current Indian society could be analyzed, thereby igniting wide discussions on the concept of power, body, and life.

Furthermore, by close reading the texts, both the micro level (in terms of body) and macro level (in terms of community) mechanisms of power can be identified within and without the society which by nature normalizes exploitation and suppression of the marginalized. The fact that these regulations are carried out through almost invisible agencies in our society undoubtedly paves way for deeper queries on the intersections of social norms and thus the governance of the vulnerable. Besides, the judicial and ethical implications of the same are highly significant, especially in such an inherently diverse population with complex cultural and religious norms and customs.

Using Foucault's idea of biopolitics and Braidotti's concept of posthumanism, this study investigates how contemporary Indian literature depicts the multiple agencies and mechanisms in the society, through which the human lives are essentially mediated, regulated, and interrogated.

The Biopolitics of Body in Padmanabhan's *Harvest*

Padmanabhan's *Harvest* illustrates a dystopian world where the protagonist Om Prakash agrees to donate his organs to a wealthy client from the west, igniting discussions on commodification of body and insignificance of life. He not only agrees to put his own life in the collateral, but also that of his family members by allowing them to be controlled and monitored as per the receiver's whim. His contract with the Inter Plants Services- a transnational company, puts the whole family under the constant supervision of the wealthy, carried out through force and disgrace to not only regulate their bodily needs but also their social and emotional needs as well. The narrative, when read with Foucault's assertion that bodies can be wielded as an instrument of power (Foucault, 11) clearly shows the manipulative ways authorities employ to monitor and commodify human lives without their knowledge.

The whole story is set in and around a single room of Om Prakash's dingy apartment where the toilet is two stories down and shared with over 40 families. The whole projection of poverty and pity of the third world population contrasts with the technological evolution and advancement of the west, which is repeatedly portrayed in the contempt and disdain shown by Ginny (AKA Virgil) regarding Om's living environment (Padmanabhan, 28). Each character in the story is being manipulated and exploited in their own accord, effectively allowing the powerful to prey on them. While Om and Ma were influenced by monetary pleasures, Jaya and Jeetu were influenced by bodily pleasures with Jaya being the only character sane enough to show suspicion and derision. Om's desperation as the sole provider of his family is evident at the beginning and it in some way justifies his reckless decision. However, the fact that he gets blindsided by the ridiculous contract of his employers proves his weak conscience and will. He argues with Jaya in Scene 2 of Act 1: "You think I did it lightly. You think it's a heavy price. But at the cost of calling you my sister…we'll be rich! very rich! Insanely rich!," (Padmanabhan, 23) completely disregarded her feelings as a woman and moreover as his wife. Although Jaya constantly reminds him of the consequences, Ohm identifies himself as a chosen one and thus very important to Ginni: "Ginni really cares for us," he says in Act 2 Scene 2, "would she spend so much money on me, then? If I am just a chicken to her?." (Padmanabhan, 50).

His colonial mindset is also apparent in the same scene when he opines that westerners are not "small, petty people like us" (Padmanabhan, 50). Om's cowardice is further explained when he lets Jeetu be taken for organ harvesting instead of him, the body and life of his own brother being of little value to him. Reading this with Foucault's idea of 'political anatomy', one of the mechanics of power that shows one's hold over others' bodies (Foucault, 138), both Om and Ginni feel rightful to decide on what other people do with their bodies. Furthermore, the deep-rooted manipulation of Om is visible when even after

receiving his life back in Scene 4 of Act 2 he is lamenting how easily replaceable he is and that he is indeed not the chosen one. (Padmanabhan, 68).

On the other hand, Jaya is presented until the very end of the play as a character with her sanity safe and intact regardless of her surroundings, the only one rebelling against the system and questioning the ways of the powerful – the only one rebelling in her own minute ways. Jaya is a representative of not only the economically weaker sections but also the sexually and morally under looked. Her position as a woman, moreover as a wife and daughter in law, leaves her with little to no power in the family. Coupled with her finding sexual gratification in her brother-in-law pushes her even further away from the social pedestal leaving her helpless and hopeless in the face of regulatory power. Her final act for freedom is nothing but a quest for her self and her dignity. Here Jaya is doubly or even triply suppressed by multiple agencies of power which not only includes her family but also the society she is a part of. Besides, whether she actually found her liberation or not is an unanswered question even though the story ends with her finally reaching a state of freedom of her own accord. Her closing act of rebellion in Scene 2 of Act 3 clearly draws on what she needs the most in her life:

> I want to be left alone - truly alone. I don't have to hear any sounds, I don't want any disturbances. I'm going to take my pills, watch TV, have a dozen baths a day, eat for three instead of one. For the first time in my life and maybe for the last time of my life, I am going to enjoy myself, all by myself. (Padmanabhan,102)

This stand of her is a clear response to the repeated injustice she has faced not from one but multiple agencies in and around her.

Meanwhile, Jeetu—Om's brother and Jaya's brother-in-law—is a victim of the socio-economic conditions of society, which have pushed him to a condition worse than death. Even after the Inter plants services took him, except Jaya, none of his family feels even a bit of remorse for him, with Om even saying in Scene 4 of Act 2 that he doesn't need to be worried about Jeetu as his brother never took responsibility for anything (Padmanabhan, 69) in his life. Jeetu, like Jaya, is subjected to multiple oppressions, his acts constantly regulated by the norms and customs of the society that even he is a part of. Being a prostitute ousted by his family, his act of rebellion doesn't give him freedom, instead pulls him deeper into depravity. His subjectivity is thus in a constant battle between individual autonomy and societal expectation. He argues with Jaya in Scene 3 of Act 2: "I don't mind being bought- but I won't be owned" (Padmanabhan, 31) and that "when I sell my body, I decide which part of me goes into where and whom!". However, like every other character in the play, his will is only until the rich casts their power as he, without a complaint, goes with the guards in Scene 1 of Act 3, leaving Jaya to lament on what had happened to his ideals and pride (Padmanabhan, 82).

Ma, on the other hand, is completely subdued by the seeming luxury offered by the rich, constantly taunting Jaya for her denial of the same. "You're jealous of her", she tells Jaya about Ginni in Scene 2 of Act 2: "You don't see what a good, kind, generous, loving person she really is" (Padmanabhan, 53). Her disregard for Jeetu as he is taken away in Scene 1 of Act 3 clearly shows how she has successfully turned to be a puppet for power, her saying: "Why should I care about what happened to Jeetu? I am through caring about anybody" (Padmanabhan, 83) echoing the mindset of a population consumed with illusions of a seemingly perfect world. Ma's acquisition of the VideoCouch is a clever allegory of the present population who are fed fake narrative time after time through the diverse channels controlled by the instruments of power. Ma's lack of knowledge is further exploited through intimidation by the guards when they more or less force her to accept the VideoCouch even though she is clueless as to what it actually does. Ma accepting her so-called state of 'comfort' without understanding what it means, clearly depicts how people as a mass choose to shut their eyes and ears in front of the imposing figure of regulatory power (Padmanabhan, 86).

Similarly, in the opening scene of the play as well, the whole family members are intimidated by the sudden arrival of guards, who essentially silence their questions while making them mere receptors of the orders. When Om asks the guards what he has to do, they simply ask him to listen (Padmanabhan,14) and any attempt to question them is instantly shut down:

> Guard 1: Your physical data has been sent for matching and we are confident that you will both be well satisfied. Any questions?
>
> Om: Uh... Uh… but what about… I mean when will I actually have to –
>
> Guard 1: Sir, any questions to the information received so far?
> Om: (Uncertainly) No... I mean-
>
> Guard 1: (nods and ticks) Right. (Padmanabhan,15)

Thus, through humiliation and manipulation, the authoritative figures, represented by Ginni in the play, succeed in reducing the family to be their passive receptors without individual autonomy.

According to Braidotti, the industrialization practices take the body as assemblage, involving manufactured objects, money, imagination, and even the construction of subjects (Braidotti, 106). In a world where monitory benefits foreground ethical and moral consciousness, the protagonists are made to believe that whatever is forced upon them are their own choices, thus falling prey to the systemic governance of the powerful. Padmanabhan's play in multiple ways depicts not only the helplessness but also the hopelessness of present society, where masses are monitored and controlled by the powerful through more ways than one.

It is worth considering that the fear of guards was not the only thing that had led the family to follow Ginni's orders. The powerplay here is cleverly masked through various agencies of coercion with intimidation and humiliation being the prominent ones. The body and life of Om and his family is unapologetically regulated and monitored using the seemingly perfect picture of a life of luxury. Reading with Braidotti's idea of 'disposable bodies' (Braidotti,15), the complex biopolitical inter readings of the play offers us a lens towards the complex power struggle in our society where humans are not even in control of their own body, life, and liberty.

The Biopolitics of Society in *Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

While Padmanabhan focuses on individual bodies, Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* explores the concept in social and political networks. The characters in the novel, including Anjum (a transgender Muslim) suffer systemic neglect from society where the marginalized characters are forced to fight for equal status and where the individual's life becomes regulated based on social, political, or administrative customs and norms.

Reading with Foucault's idea of how power networks function in society to collectively regulate a population, the novel clearly depicts how certain populations are ostracized from their legal protection and thus ousted from the primary socio-economic landscape. In the very beginning of the novel, Roy uncovers this systemic failure to recognize anything beyond the accepted binary by essentially regarding them as 'abnormal' (Foucault, 199) in the eyes of the powerful. This instills a fear in the 'normal' population, successfully castrating the former out of mainstream dialogues. This fear of the other than ordinary is instilled gradually though various cultural devices, including religion and language. Jahanara Begum's fear for her baby is thus justified when she says:

> In Urdu, the only language she knew, all things, not just living things but all things – carpets, clothes, books, pens, musical instruments – had a gender. Everything was either masculine or feminine, man or woman. Everything except her baby. Yes of course she knew there was a word for those like him – Hijra. Two words actually, Hijra and Kinnar. But two words do not make a language. Was it possible to live outside language? (Roy, 13).

The whole narrative of Anjum revolves around the final question that Begum has posed. Was it possible to live outside the language? Live outside the norms and customs of the normal? Live outside the Duniya- Anjum's term for the world for apparent ordinary individuals.

Roy, throughout the play portrays as Anjum having no place in the world, even after she found the safety of the Khwabgah, a place where sexually marginalized people like her felt accepted:

> The Khwabgah was called Khwabgah, Ustad Kulsoom Bi said, because it was where special people, blessed people, came with their dreams that could not be realized in the Duniya. In the Khwabgah, Holy Souls trapped in the wrong bodies were liberated (Roy, 48).

This search for a safe space not only shows the vulnerability of the individual but also of the community as a whole. The subjectivity of the character, in this context, is clearly assembled through interactions with both social institutions and political structures around her.

However, Anjum's illusion of Khwabgah as a paradise breaks after she nearly dies in the hands of extreme Hindu nationalists, survived however, only because of her identity as a Hijra. She returns to Khwabgah as a changed woman as the guilt and trauma finally forced her to leave that place for good. Either as an act of rebellion against society or as a final plea of helplessness, she finds refuge in her old family graveyard which acts as a symbol, an extended allegory of her existence away from the living, but not yet with the dead. However, in a fiery show of resilience, she manages to build something for herself and people like her in that graveyard, giving rise to Jannat Guest House, a space for socially and legally ousted individuals. Jannat Guest House perhaps is one of the most striking allegories in contemporary Indian literature, depicting how in our society, certain communities have no place amongst the living, so that they need to find asylum with the dead.

The house thus finds occupants like Saddam Hussain, a Dalit young man and Imam Ziauddin, a blind priest, effectively acting as a liminal space, and more accurately a 'societal limbo' if I may call it that way. This is a place where even the most powerful detests to enter for multiple reasons, but particularly:

> None of the municipal officers who visited her was man enough to take
>
> the matter further and run the risk of being embarrassed by her legendary
>
> abilities. Also, like everyone else, they feared being cursed by a Hijra (Roy, 59).

Although this worked in favor for Anjum, it still poses the question of basic rights and dignity the community as a whole lacks.

Anjum constantly rejects the norms of the world outside Jannat House, even questioning and condemning whatever that is happening in Duniya which she explicitly argues that she is not a part of. Anjum's life thus was from the beginning to the end deeply influenced by agencies around her, finally making you question whether what she finally achieved was freedom or not. Biopolitics in her case doesn't function through the state directly but through cultural customs and norms which regulate an individual though covert and invisible means.

Unlike Anjum's resilience, Tilottama's search for identity goes through countless trials and tribulations. Whilst Anjum felt alienated due to her bodily existence, Tilo felt alienated at

first due to her social existence – as a daughter of an intercast relationship and later due to her physical existence – threat posed by the militarization of Kashmir. The rejection of her mother's burial by the church, when read with Foucault's observation on religious groups as disseminated centers of discipline (Foucault, 212) makes us wonder how deeply interlinked this systemic force is. Tilo's survival is constantly through negotiation with the authority, continuously displaced until she reaches Jannat Guest House:

> The battered angels in the graveyard that kept watch over their battered charges held open the doors between worlds (illegally, just a crack), so that the souls of the present and the departed could mingle, like guests at the same party. It made life less determinate and death less conclusive. Somehow everything became a little easier to bear" (Roy, 303).

Braidotti observes in her explanation on biopolitical bodies that the subject is merely a transversal entity, which neither masters nor possesses but merely inhabits the world in a community or a pack (Braidotti, 193). Tilo in her repeated quest for safe space doesn't really find a perfect solution but negotiates into the walls of Jannat – the societal limbo as discussed earlier.

Whilst Tilo can be considered as a victim of overt state governance and oppression, Saddam Hussain's narrative foregrounds the biopolitics of caste, exposing how Dalit lives are rendered expendable within the Indian socio-political order. The fact that the state refuses to acknowledge his father's murder is clear indication of their plight as the 'other' in the world, where mere aspects of justice, dignity, and safety are denied. Unlike overt state violence, the biopolitical control over Dalit bodies operates through judicial neglect, social stigma, and structural invisibility. Here, the abuse of power over them is diffused, normalized, and even regarded as an acceptable outcome. Saddam's adaptation of the name is in itself an act of resistance against his cate-marked identity although that act alone doesn't provide him the liberation he expects. His disillusionment and hopelessness are evident when he says: "The only way you can be careful with these bastards is by ceasing to exist! If they want to kill you they will kill you" (Roy, 306). The result is Saddam's constant state of suspicion and vulnerability. His situation is a great example of how biopolitics operates intersectionally in society, leading to a relational belonging of individuals.

Anjum, Tilo, and Saddam are marginalized due to their identity inside a specific population, while Musa's narrative foregrounds the governance of a population as a whole. The narrative represents Musa as a victim of collective threat, where his legal rights are not invisible but suspended altogether. Musa, being a Kashmiri journalist, exists in a state of exception providing the authority with unapologetic power over his body. Here, Roy presents Kashmir as a biopolitical zone where surveillance is not only tolerated but also normalized. This situation transforms everyday existence of an individual into a struggle

for invisibility whereby a person voluntarily chooses to be alienated from the community as a whole as an escape from regulatory clutches of governance.

Thus death and torture, in all their glory act as mechanisms of power (Foucault, 34) in this novel, with mass graves and body counts acting as a symbol- a token to remember:

> In the graveyard, seventeen-plus-one graves had been readied. Neat, fresh, deep. The earth from each pit piled up next to it, a dark chocolate pyramid. An advance party had brought in the bloodstained metal stretchers on which the bodies had been returned to their families after the postmortems. They were propped up, arranged around the trunks of trees, like bloodied steel petals of some gigantic flesh-eating mountain blossom. (Roy, 216).

The power of fear over not only individuals but a community is clearly portrayed in the novel especially with how the military is used as a tool to silence and suppress. The military, in the text, is a core biopolitical apparatus through which the state exercises control over life and death. Rather than a force of defense, it is portrayed as a machinery of governance, through which the population is subject to surveillance, control, and subjugation.

> The sullen city was wide awake but feigning sleep. Empty streets, closed markets, shuttered shops and locked houses slid past the jeep's slit windows – 'death windows', local people called them, because what peered out of them were either soldiers' guns or informers' eyes. Packs of street dogs slouched about like small bears, their burred coats thickening in anticipation of the approaching winter. Other than tense soldiers on hair-trigger alert, there was not a human in sight. (Roy, 181).

This shift from military being a sovereign power to biopower is what Foucault furthers in his idea of Panopticon – a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures automatic functioning of power. (Foucault, 201).

This mechanism is perhaps most apparent in the letter that Revathy – a Maoist member in hiding writes to Anjum:

> Operation Green Hunt is announced by Government. War against People. 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 at night because at night police come, hundred, two hundred, sometimes five hundred police. They take everything, burn everything, steal everything. Chickens, goats, money. They want adivasi people to vacate forest so they can make a steel township and mining. Thousands are in jail. (Roy, 319)

Roy's characters are thus in a constant quest for freedom and identity, ultimately finding themselves inside the Jannat Guest House, a graveyard turned sanctuary where the desolates and outcasts find sanctum.

Towards the end of the novel, Saddam, Tilo, and even Anjum let go of their past symbolically presented through the funeral scene:

> Saddam Hussain dug the graves. A stylish, Madras-checked shirt was interred in one. A pot of ashes in the other. Imam Ziauddin demurred a little at the unorthodoxy of the proceedings, but eventually agreed to say the prayers. (Roy, 314)

Jannat Guest House at this stage is not just a building but a space of inclusion where sexually, politically, socially, and judicially ostracized people find their solace. This societal limbo is in some parts an attempt to escape from the biopolitical regulations, which is normalized in Anjum's Duniya:

> The rules for the dead (same as for the living in the guest house) were esoteric – warm, welcoming smiles or irrational roars of rejection, depending on nobodyreally-knew-what. The one clear criterion was that Jannat Funeral Services would only bury those whom the graveyards and imams of the Duniya had rejected." (Roy, 28)

The biopolitics in Roy's narrative thus extends beyond individual bodies, and towards collective communities. Biopolitics thus operates here in multiple scales involving social, political, and ethical concerns, essentially reiterating that, although power does not kill everyone, it ensures control through persistent vulnerability.

Bridging Biopolitics in Padmanabhan and Roy

Padmanabhan's *Harvest* and Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* although differ in structure, tone, and tone, effectively engages in a shared concern over the regulation and governance of life and body in contemporary India. Both texts in their own ways discuss the concept of biopolitics, not as a singular machinery but as a mechanism of power diffused through invisible agencies through regulation and neglect. While *Harvest* portrays a dystopian society of technological exploitation and corporate abuse, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* draws on a realistic present marked by militarization, social injustice, and caste violence. Mutually, the texts interrogate the multiple ways in which the biopolitical regime operates around us monitoring, regulating and often discarding the basic privileges of body and life.

Foucault's concept of biopower and biopolitics provide a constructive framework when reading the texts, working at a micro level in Padmanabhan's play and at a macro level in Roy's novel. Although both texts place their characters at the mercy of the regulatory power, Om Prakash's body has its value as long as it can sustain another life, making it not only an essential commodity for the governing body but also something to be nourished and protected. Saddam Hussain and Musa in stark contrast to Om are repeatedly exposed to injustice and torture, their body undervalued and their existence under-protected only because they fall outside the normative frameworks of caste and politics. Regardless of

these differences, all three of them are essentially stripped off their subjectivity and thus dignity.

Likewise, both Anjum and Jaya bring in two distinct forms of living under power, the former being in a normative struggle while the latter find herself marginalized. Their struggles on the onset are completely different with Jaya being disciplined to conformity while Anjum is being abandoned to precarity. Jaya's struggles are bound inside the social regulations on gender and sexuality, while Anjum's is outside the normative structure of mainstream society.

Despite these differences, both Jaya and Anjum show sanity and resilience as their surroundings erupt in chaos. While Jaya rebelled against the authoritarian norms inside the very space she was confined, Anjum relocated from it to a space away from state recognition. Anjum, unlike Jaya, receives collective care from people of similar plight, thus igniting the issues of biopolitics on a social level rather than an individual level. Reading with Braidotti's observation that subjectivity emerges when the body interacts with institutions and other socio-economic forces of society, both texts illustrate how power is diffused across familial, social, and political networks.

In a nutshell, Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* in the form of a play configures the conflict of biopolitics on individual bodies through techno-market control. The whole play focuses on the struggle between commodification and autonomy and when viewed through a posthumanistic lens, it lets us analyze how the body is seen as an assemblage of several external forces. On the other hand, Arundhathi Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* aligns biopolitics in population and communities, stimulated through social, political, and administrative regulations. A posthumanistic analysis of the text allows us to find how subjectivity is distributed through socio-political networks.

Thus, while Padmanabhan's micro-level biopolitics demonstrate a market-driven regulation, Roy emphasizes macro-level governance through socio-political governance. Posthumanist theory bridges these levels, showing how power as an agency is distributed across bodies, networks, and institutions by challenging the very notion of automatic subjectivity.

The comparative analysis of both texts additionally highlights ethical concerns within this power dynamics, with Roy's work complementing Padmanabhan's by demonstrating how biopolitical power extends beyond individual bodies towards communities and social consciousness. Both texts collectively advance the study of posthuman biopolitics in the field of Indian literature, showing how ethical negotiations can be implanted in both personal and societal spaces.

Conclusion

Examining *Harvest* by Manjula Padmanabhan and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhathi Roy, multiple aspects of biopolitics in Indian society can be inferred. Although

the two texts are separated in genre, form, theme, and plot, they essentially interrogate on how the body and thus life is valued and controlled under modern agencies of power. They reveal that biopolitics is not a singular mechanism but a spectrum of control that operates through regulation and neglect.

Drawing on Michel Foucault's formulation of biopower and Rose Braidotti's concept of posthumanism, the study argues that governance of life in these texts functions through unequal presentation of threat, violence, and abandonment. In *Harvest*, biopolitical power manifests through technological surveillance and control whereby life is managed, monitored and sustained, although stripped of autonomy. In contrast, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* presents a world where life is governed through militarization and political suspicion. Characters like Anjum, Saddam Hussain, and Musa inhabit conditions where survival is merely tolerated but not protected. The vulnerability that the characters possess are systemic, shaped by non-conformity, oppression, and marginalization.

In spite of these differences, both texts present how subjectivity is transformed under biopolitical tension. The basic rights that constitute human existence are revoked whereby the survival of characters depend solely on the mercy of agencies of power. With caution and compliance, the posthuman subjects in these texts survive through relational networks, makeshift communities, and shared liabilities. Anjum's Jannat Guest House in this regard is an improvised community – a societal limbo as discussed – where the outcasts of the mainstream society find their haven. Reading from a posthuman theoretical perspective, the subjectivity is thus not defined by individual autonomy but by relationality to the world around.

Whilst the texts extensively discuss biopolitical disputes, they do not provide a redemptive resolution for the same. Both narratives refuse to end in an absolute closure, leaving the characters in a state which is neither confined nor liberated. This could have been done in an effort to show the fragile existence of human bodies and consciousness shaped by forces beyond individual control. Both texts read into the global power structure and hierarchical governance, igniting queries on the multiple agencies that regulate power dynamics in our society. It is very important to note in this scenario that rather than reproducing western theoretical models, both *Harvest* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* localize biopolitical concerns within specific spheres of caste, gender, economic inequality, and militarization. They, without a doubt reveal how global regimes of power intersect with local structures in order to produce distinct forms of endurance and survival.

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