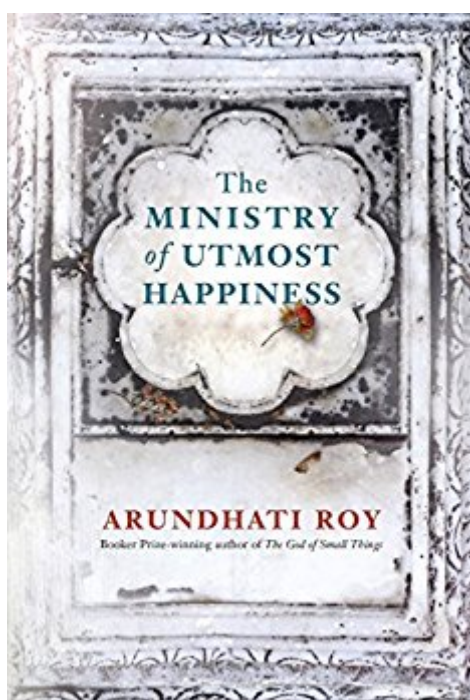


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# The Ministry Of Utmost Happiness: Longlisted For The Man Booker Prize 2017



## Synopsis

LONGLISTED FOR THE MAN BOOKER PRIZE 2017 THE SUNDAY TIMES #1 BESTSELLER and THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER 'Magnificent - unlike anything I've read in years. An absolutely dazzling, original, and ultimately profound novel... A masterpiece. Very few writers can write with such intense and yet precise emotional intelligence. Arundhati Roy is properly special. We should be grateful to have her among us.' Mirza Waheed, author of The Book of Gold Leaves 'Roy's second novel proves as remarkable as her first' Financial Times 'A great tempest of a novel... which will leave you awed by the heat of its anger and the depth of its compassion' Washington Post The first novel in 20 years from the Booker-prize winning author of The God of Small Things The Ministry of Utmost Happiness takes us on a journey of many years - the story spooling outwards from the cramped neighbourhoods of Old Delhi into the burgeoning new metropolis and beyond, to the Valley of Kashmir and the forests of Central India, where war is peace and peace is war, and where, from time to time, 'normalcy' is declared. Anjum, who used to be Aftab, unrolls a threadbare carpet in a city graveyard that she calls home. A baby appears quite suddenly on a pavement, a little after midnight, in a crib of litter. The enigmatic S. Tilottama is as much of a presence as she is an absence in the lives of the three men who loved her. The Ministry of Utmost Happiness is at once an aching love story and a decisive remonstrance. It is told in a whisper, in a shout, through tears and sometimes with a laugh. Its heroes are people who have been broken by the world they live in and then rescued, mended by love - and by hope. For this reason, they are as steely as they are fragile, and they never surrender. This ravishing, magnificent book reinvents what a novel can do and can be. And it demonstrates on every page the miracle of Arundhati Roy's storytelling gifts. 'A novel that demands and rewards the reader's concentration, this is a dazzling return to form' Independent 'This novel is a freedom song. Every page has the stamp of Roy's originality. Such brutality, such beauty' Amitva Kumar, the author of Immigrant, Montana 'Intricately layered and passionate, studded with jokes and with horrors... This is a work of extraordinary intricacy and grace' Prospect Magazine 'Gorgeous, supple, playful... Roy writes with astonishing vividness... Again and again beautiful images refresh our sense of the world' The New York Times Book Review 'A masterpiece. Roy joins Dickens, Naipaul, Garcia Márquez, and Rushdie in her abiding compassion, storytelling magic, and piquant wit. An entrancing, imaginative, and wrenching epic' Booklist starred review

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I expected to love this book. I loved *God of Small Things* and several of my all-time favourite books are by Indian authors. So after approaching it full of anticipation and expectations, it pains me to say that I found it almost unreadable. Which is feel sure is more about me and my failure as a literary reader. But I did not get it. The book is about a disjointed trio on the margins of society, people who have no people, who come together and make a new home in a Delhi graveyard. Anjum is a hermaphrodite who considers herself a "counterfeit woman" and who longs to be a mother. Saddam Hussein hero-worships the dictator Saddam Hussein and has renamed himself in his honor. And Tilo's great love is a Kashmiri terrorist. It's an extremely disjointed novel, more like a collection of barely related stories that move backwards and forwards in time, which gradually weave themselves together to allow you to spot the common threads. Along the way we are introduced to dozens of characters and for almost every one we will be given their back story in detail, whether it is relevant or not. There is a lot of telling us "what happened" and not a lot of dialogue. Essentially this is a book without a plot and if you realise that going in, you'll probably struggle less with it than I did. The writing is lovely: scenes are

described in such a way that you're there, you see what the characters are seeing. Even characters who make only a brief appearance are brought vividly to life. The instability in Kashmir and its effect on the people who live there is chillingly portrayed when an ear infection means you could get shot because you can't hear the instructions from the checkpoints. I finished it and I feel a sense of accomplishment for doing so, but would I recommend it? No not really.

It depends! If you are looking for a throughout spellbinding novel of Booker prize worthy magical writing power, you are not getting it. If you are familiar with the troublesome, never ending politics of Kashmir, you are getting information of the multifaceted warfare with its horrendous cruelties and detailed abominable practices of torture.. India it is what it is. You are getting the extremes of the poor- rich variety, the living of the ones on the fringe of society, the transgender for instance, the hijras. ( who, by the way, are since quite some time accepted with begging and voting rights) who may, like Aftab a former boy outed as a woman, choose to house in a graveyard.. You are getting insight into the the interesting ways of rebellious dissenters like Tilo and Musa and Naga. And yes you will enjoy also off and on the wonderful poetic Arundhati expressions, the writing. that transcends into "magic". You are getting a fracture . Utmost Happiness with "the whole of it": you get not.

In this anarchic novel of fragmented, symbolic narratives of India's outcasts, there is the idea of a truly great work of art for the 21st Century, an equivalent of anarchist sociologist Rebecca Solnit's vision of "A Paradise Built in Hell." There are times, especially toward the end of the book, where the narrative itself gains the immediacy and power of its ambitions. There's a taut account of violence, terrorism, and love in the insurgency in Kashmir and a poetic canvass of a community living in a Delhi graveyard, where society's outcasts build a New Jerusalem. Unfortunately, for me and apparently for a good many other readers as well, a lot of the book sags. It feels as if Arundhati Roy does not quite have her heart in it or believe her own idea, and that hollows out some of the writing. (There's even one section where one of the characters, Tilo, with more than a faint resemblance to Roy, speculates on writing a bad novel: she may have sensed that it was not going well.) If this book had arrived at a publisher's from an unknown writer, it either would not have been published or would have been massively edited. The former would have been sad; the latter might have saved it. Meanwhile, for the American reader, there is a lot of vivid and informative writing about India and much of today's world. For some, it would be more accessible in Roy's non-fiction

such as "Capitalism: A Ghost Story."

This was a disjointed and confusing narrative. I just started to get in touch with some characters and they disappeared and a whole new group of characters appeared. Some of the writing was beautiful and wonderfully descriptive but not enough for me to recommend it. I did not enjoy it.

The love parts are magical but the political and social parts are very harsh and often confusing and repetitious. The best sections are when this book deals with emotions: then it is wonderful.

I really am enjoying this book.

Only read 15% of book. Confusing and difficult to understand various names and places. I just didn't have the patience to plough through.

To be quite honest, I really struggled through this book.

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