

Hindus Us, Muslims, and the Rest Others in Roy's the Ministry of Utmost Happiness

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Abstract *This study explores self and othering in Roy's novel The Ministry of Utmost Happiness. Roy took twenty years to complete this political romance. The narrator of this political romance talks about the others of Indian society, i.e., religious minorities, political traitors, and low caste groups. These others are always striving to secure a place in a biased Indian society. Their quest for identity has often led them to a blind alley where they have found themselves helpless and oppressed evermore. The situation has become worse under the government of the right-wing Hindu party BJP. This study is an attempt to explore the ways how the weaker part of the society is treated as another and outcast in a so-called secular state. Roy has presented the true face of India. This research tries to comprehend her mind and investigates The Ministry of Utmost Happiness multidimensional and multi-layered tale.*

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Introduction

The very term Post-colonial was first coined in the mid-1980s in the journals of Ashcraft and Tiffin as a subtext. Its main themes were universality, differences, othering, otherness, nationalism, postmodernism, feminism and ethnicity. Post-colonial studies deal with the literature of those countries which are and were colonized. These theories are involved in the literary works of those countries' writers who have got freedom from British imperial powers. In order to comprehend the literature by the colonized countries in the past and present times, the post-colonial theory was provided (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2004). Post-colonial understanding, especially diasporic knowledge, is often defined by a coexistence of opposites that is a characteristic of consciousness that exists in the duration of the other coexistence of quietness, silence, vitality and singularity (Grace, 2007). It was Fanon (1963) who developed the concept of the other in his writing to be a key concern in post-colonial studies. According to him, the other is the other. He is not me. The term othering defines and labels an individual as a subaltern, as someone who is socially subordinate, subjugated, oppressed and excluded. The person is excluded and discarded

from the social norms and the version of the self in the process of othering. The researcher's primary aim is to find out the various ideological meanings embedded in Arundhati Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is chosen on the basis that the chosen novel was released in 2017 and is a comparatively fresh novel and is supposed to be the groundbreaking work on the book. An Indian writer wrote the book on racism and had cases of self and othering. It was Spivak (1985) who systematically described the concept of going on. In her essay, *The Rani of Sirmur*, Spivak (1985) used the concept of self and others. She introduces here three proportions of the British colonial authority's othering in India. The important point which needs clarification is that in spite of being different from each other, we agree on our understanding of literature. Such as Coetzee (1980) interacts with his readers and makes an impact on them. He uses the language in a way that responds to his readers when they read it. Many post-colonial writers lay emphasis on the original words rather than the translated ones. The translated words do not make a huge impact on the readers as the untranslated words can.

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Therefore it is important to study the aspects of language. This can also help to understand the differences between the self and the other. The current study uncovers how are self and othering presented in terms of Hindus, Muslims and the rest in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*.

Literature Review

For the current research, the notions of self and othering are of key significance. The other, in its broadest sense, is someone who is different from one's self, and this definition is also the essence of the word in many other areas ([Murfin & Ray, 2009](#)). It might also be proposed that otherness reflects the distinction of the sexual, ethnic and relationship senses of difference between oneself and others (Wolfrey, 2004). The basic idea of [Said's \(1978\)](#) is that orientalism is eventually a political view of reality whose organization fostered a binary resistance between the familiar Europe, West, us and the strange, the Orient, the East and them ([Lomba, 1998](#)). It shows that the culture and state of mind in the East is to be a divergence, to be a distortion and thus to be given an insufficiency grade ([Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001](#)). The conception of the othering between post-colonial studies in South Asia is similar to the conception of the subaltern as subject to the state form of the governing classes (Ashcroft et al. 1999).

Although there is another view, we know that the main point to understanding violence is to know the process of othering ([Spivak, 1985](#)). [Reicher \(2007\)](#) holds that contestation can be understood in terms of identity. However, when one group tries to develop a personal identity in contradiction with some other group, it leads to violence. This process creates othering. The other can be regarded as another self. It is a mirror or foil ([Benbassa & Attias, 2004](#)).

[Smith \(1996\)](#) demonstrates how anti-Semitism, which was buried by the effects of the Holocaust, has regained its position around the world. About 38 % of Polish people still consider Jews responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. Similarly, about 70% of people in Slovakia hold that it was just to punish Jews in the shape of the Holocaust. Thus, Jews are considered other in Europe and North America. In recent time more than 200,000 Muslims were killed in Bosnia in order to make a peaceful living for Serbs. In order to create a positive identity for ourselves, we

create boundaries between ourselves and others. It's done for the sake of earning purity for self and self-group. [Tripathi \(1987\)](#) declares that the idea of "purity" is relevant to Hinduism, and "for a Hindu, the journey of his life is a constant search for purity and refinement" (p. 238). Purification is key to all the rites and rituals in Hinduism. A Hindu purifies himself through offering daily "puja". All Hindus consider people other who do not purify themselves or cross the permissible limits.

Not only Hinduism but all the religions of the world lay emphasis on purity ([Dumont \(, 1980\)](#)). Before they were saved by Jesus, all the Christian suffered from the impurity of the original sin. According to Hussain Haqqani, the notion of "jihad" also lays emphasis on the purity of self and for the sake of own group. Islam very clearly elaborates on what is "haram" or impure. This aim of purity can also be achieved by criticizing the other. In order to fulfil this motive, the main target is none other than the women of the other group. [Butalia \(1998\)](#) recounts that about 100,000 women were kidnapped, abused and killed as subject to all kinds of violence on both sides of the border at the time of the partition of India in 1947. A heart touching picture has been painted by her of those women of whom she says that they were asked to walk naked in the streets. Several women have cut off their breast. Their bodies were tattooed by the mark of other religion. They were forced to have sex with men of other religion, and many of them were impregnated. She goes on to point out that these women were not accepted by the groups they belong to and are abandoned. They were considered impure. In fact, [Butalia \(1998\)](#) presents many examples where Sikh women killed themselves because they were afraid to be dishonoured. They want to keep their "Sikhi" pure.

A woman's body is considered a subject of othering in all religions. In old Hindu families, a woman who is suffering from menstruation is not allowed to take part in the household chores because it is considered that her touch will defile the food. Biblical instructions are also there for a menstruating lady. She is announced as impure women, and men are asked to refrain from having sexual relations with her. In Jewish law, a woman has to take her ritual bath "mikvah" in order to pure herself after menstruation (Wenger 1998, 1999). Couto-Ferreira and Garcia-Ventura (2013) say that women have been considered as causes

of impurity from the times of ancient Mesopotamia. They also state that the standard of purity in those days was physical cleanliness, etiquette, order and behaviour. Behind the creation of national and societies, there was a meme of purity. Jesus and Buddha both created the holy land. The literal meaning of the word Pakistan also means "pure", and it was created for a definite purpose. Muhammad Ali Jinnah's rhetoric behind the famous two-nation theory was that the Muslims of India were living in the land of impure Hindus. As true followers of Islam, they demand a separate pure homeland. While for the Muslims of India, the creation of Pakistan served as a social and political identity, for Nationalist Hindus, it was a violation of "Pure" Mother India. It must be kept in mind that the apprehension with "purity" is not for moral reasons. It is, as Berthold (2010) proposes in terms of the American Whites, to exercise authority over the "other".

In those districts high in illiteracy and poverty, Naxalite activity is observed ([Borooah, 2007](#)). Sarkar (2002) observes that a Gujarat riot was a result of the ideology of Hindus and its confrontations with secular ideology. It's a question of how confrontations of ideology lead to violence. According to his vision, each individual prefers the ideology school. Often, political ideologies are classified as liberal / conservative, left / right, secular / fundamentalist, and fascist / democratic. Ideologies are special types of social cognitions, according to psychologists, and are socially represented belief systems that are linked to intergroup behaviours and attitudes ([Farr & Moscovici, 1984](#)). Ideologies often define members of a group or group; either they belong to the structure of a group or to the structure of an outgroup. In polycultures, people believe that all cultures are connected because, over a period of time, they have influenced and interacted with one another. Polyculturalism is the result of the discourse on composite culture in India. Composite culture in India is reflected in cultural practices and everyday life and is now a belief in India. With their interactional styles and behavioural arrangements, people prefer ideologies ([Jost et al., 2003](#)).

Methods and Materials

In order to gratify the objectives of the study, a qualitative research method was selected. This

method was most suitable for exploring, describing, explaining and analyzing the data. The compactness of qualitative research depends upon the skills and abilities of the researchers. This type of research is the result of the researcher's personal observation and the findings based on that observation. The researcher must collect data on their own. This portion of the research focuses on providing theoretical background-related explanations. This research utilizes some analytical theories that are important. Post-colonial theory is used in this research as the main theory. In addition, the evaluation of this research uses the concept of Orientalism proposed by Edward (1978), argued about it as one of the post-colonial concepts and the question of self and others that becomes an effect of segregation. This research observes and analyzes the third gender depiction and factors that led *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* to segregate. Edward Said's Orientalism is thought to become a suitable theory in this research. But earlier, this research describes the post-colonial theory. Postcolonial is one of the critics of literature who observe and study the indications or colonial effects. Moreover, post-colonial starts when the method of hegemonic dominance occurs to the fragile individuals by superior individuals. Post-colonialism comprises a collection of concepts in philosophy and different approaches to literary analysis dealing with literature published in English in nations that were or are still colonies of other nations. From the above statements, this research concludes that post-colonial is a theory that concerns a colonizer with dominance and authority to guide the colonized in the region.

Data Analysis

The geopolitical position of the country is played by all the protagonists of the book. Because the country becomes a nation-state, law-keeping politics and order become narrow and remorseless from time to time, strategic and historical sites become sites of dispute and conflict. Major characters move from location to location, melting into native histories. Personal history melts into national history. Anjum travels to Gujarat and becomes a victim of the communal riots that cask Asian nation and the subcontinent; Tilo travels from Delhi to Srinagar and back; she additionally visits her home city in Kerala to require care of her sick mother. The

cultural areas of those various locations become sites of philosophic conflicts that represent multiple sides of the new Indian identity. Instances of conflicts are often drawn from the government areas of geographic region, east-central India and also the capital town itself. The 9/11 attacks within the United States of America have influenced and altered world politics in impossible ways that. The U.S.A. attacked Afghanistan, and its folks fled to several regions of the planet as well as the Republic of India. Consequently, Delhi is flooded with Afghan families. However, ironically, the unfortunate event was a boon to wily politicians in India:

The planes that flew into the tall buildings in America came as a boon to many in India too. The Poet-Prime Minister of the country and several of his senior ministers were members of an old organization that believed India was essentially a Hindu nation and that, just as Pakistan had declared itself the Islamic Republic, India should declare itself a Hindu one... (Roy, 2017, p. 34).

New laws were approved, and Muslims were victimized; at intervals, no time, the prisons were choked with young Muslim men. The writer attracts an uncomfortable image of hate-politics that was accelerated and worsened by a worldwide terror event. Within the globalized world, the ramifications of an incident happening in an exceedingly distant location that felt throughout the planet at intervals no time. It penetrates the lives of individuals living in numerous continents in strange ways that – Anjum is disquieted for her adopted daughter Zainab thanks to her traumatic experiences in Gujarat throughout the riots, withal is comfortable by the actual fact that Zainab was a baby girl, not a boy. The feminine wasn't such a lot in danger because the male was. As for the transgender, tortured and harried as they'd a far better likelihood to survive within the insane world as they weren't counted within the world of 'normal' individuals. A real historical event is conferred in fiction in order that the reader will objectively analyze it and hit his/her own judgment. The Gujarat incident leaves a permanent scar in her mind because it is for the state, that couldn't be erased from memory/history, "She tried to unknock that little detail as she rattled through her private fort. But she failed. She knew very well that she knew very well that she knew very well" (Roy, 2017, p. 63). It's there to stay to decide the longer-term course (fate) of the state because the alliterated

repetition suggests. Mythology, History, politics, and religion are woven into the touch of the identity of the state that successively is woven into the texture of the novel:

A few audacious scholars had begun to suggest that the Ramlila was really history turned into mythology and that the evil demons were really dark-skinned Dravidians – indigenous rulers - and the Hindu gods who vanquished them (and turned them into Untouchables and other oppressed castes who would spend their lives in service of the new rulers) were the Aryan invaders (Roy, 2017, pp. 86-87).

In the new dispensation, the evil demons had returned to mean not simply indigenous folks, however everyone who wasn't a Hindu. History repeats itself; history reveals the long run. In the third chapter of the novel "The Nativity", Roy attracts an image of the short, forceful changes that the state underwent once its formation. India presently became "world's favourite new superpower" (Roy, 2017, p.96), however, at the expense of her own poor voters. Immeasurable people were touched by their localities solely to finish up in slums and 'unauthorized' colonies in cities. However, they were persecuted, and their colonies destroyed, wiping them out from history –"They could flatten history and stack it up like building material" (Roy, 2017, p. 99).

Roy presents contemporary India with a kaleidoscopic view while employing photographic realism. Afghan refugees are flooding to Old Delhi, and planes are flying like "unseasonal mosquitoes" (Roy, 2017, p. 40). The lisping tongue of former India's Prime Minister Atal Bihari Bajpayee and the ideology of Hindutva in his party are instances of this kaleidoscopic art. She presents things as it is. She unfolds India like a filmmaker like a painter, and while dealing with her novel, we really feel that these things are happening before our eyes. She describes the story of the Godra train attack. She portrays the destructions and ruinations of the Gujrat riots. Roy's mastery of fiction writing reaches its climax when she shapes the personality of Narendra Modi. Her expression of Modi's statement about the insurrection as Newtonian being an equal and opposite reaction to an action of the disaster of the Muslim fundamentalist is full of wit. "He didn't acknowledge Newton, of course, because in the prevailing climate, the officially sanctioned position was that ancient Hindus had discovered

all science" (Roy, 2017, p. 45). Modi is called Gujrat ka Lalla in the novel, which means beloved of Gujrat. He supports mob violence, and his parakeets target minorities in India. As mentions in the novel: "Some of its supporters and ideologues openly admired Hitler and compared the Muslims of India to the Jews of Germany" (Roy, 2017, p. 41).

Anjum witnesses the change of India into a new brutal, intolerant, senseless and bigoted state where masses are killed in the name of culture, religion, race, caste and regions. Minorities are suffering; lower castes are in wretched conditions, and the mobs are setting the scene of violence. Such as the narrator narrates in the novel:

A railway coach had been set on fire by what the newspapers first called 'miscreants. Sixty Hindu pilgrims were burned alive. They were on their way 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 (Roy, 2017, p. 44).

The element of religious othering is comically portrayed by the writer. Minorities, especially Muslims, were in a tight corner in Indian society. In such a situation, it was very difficult for anyone to unfold his original religion. When Saddam Hussein, a friend of Anjum, dweller of Anjum's graveyard, visits Sangeeta Madam for a security guard job, he shows himself as Dayachand because "every idiot knew that in prevailing climate a security guard with a Muslim name would have been considered a contradiction in terms" (Roy, 2017, p. 75). Muslims of Gujrat also hid their identity. The Muslims who visited Gujrat and shrines in other major cities of India also wore and dressed like Hindus for the sake of their lives. When Anjum and Zakir Mian visited Ahmed Abad, Zakir Mian was slaughtered by the mob, but Anjum was saved because she was a Hijra. Then Anjum tells the story:

Anjum said it was a Sanskrit chant, the Gayatri Mantra. She had learned it while she was in the camp in Gujrat. People there said it was good to know so that in mob situations, they could recite it to try to pass off as Hindu. However, neither she nor Anjum had any idea what it meant (Roy, 2017, p. 47).

The narrator describes: "Zakir Mian's eldest son, Mansoor, went on his third trip to Ahmedabad to look for his father. As a

precaution, he shaved off his beard and wore red puja threads on his wrist, hoping to pass off as Hindu" (p.46). Zakir Mian's son does so because there was death everywhere for Muslims. India is a place where there is no humanity, no philosophy. You can exist in India if you are a high caste Hindu. Otherwise, you will be slaughtered, will be humiliated and will suffer much. You have no right to live in India if you are Muslims. Such as mentioned in the novel: "Thirty thousand saffron parakeets with steal talons and bloodied beaks, all are squawking together: only one place for the Mussalman! The Graveyard or Pakistan!" (Roy, 2017, p. 62). India is a country where caste discriminations, gender inequality and mob violence enjoys their climax.

Conclusions

This research shows that Arundhati Roy is the most real author of India, and she has depicted that reality in her novel "*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*". She has provoked different communities living in India in this novel. The scenes of present India and Kashmir as presented in the novel by Roy show the hierarchy of "self" and "othering". Roy has also depicted violence in the novel because oppression is part of colonialism. She has also depicted physical violence in India and Kashmir, and this has made the people forlorn in their home, and they had to leave their birthplaces. This novel shows political unrest in India and religious intolerance. This political unrest and religious intolerance sometimes convert into extremism. It really uproots the hopes of the people living in India. Many people died in these kinds of extremist attacks. Some had to leave their homes to become homeless. Because people were afraid of the violence or they were constrained to leave their homes by the stronger groups. This kind of physical violence was launched by the stronger groups in society due to different reasons. Religion is the foremost reason on the basis of which self and othering are formed. The followers of one religion consider themselves superior. So often, this religious extremism causes riots, as in the massacre of Ahmedabad, where Zakir Mian lost his life. There are many examples of Hindu extremist organizations using physical violence to propagate their religious beliefs. This is very clear when a violent mob killed the father of Saddam Hussain in a police station on the charge that he has slaughtered a

cow. Because slaughtering a cow is prohibited according to the teachings of Hinduism. At the time when Afghanis came to India at the time of the American attack on Afghanistan after the 9/11 incidents, new laws were made, and under those laws, Muslims came under the attack. Many Muslims were sterilized in the camps in the name of population control. Muslim young boys were often declared a terrorist and the jails were full of them. Many of them were killed in the name of “encounters”. There is self and othering within religion as well. There are many sects in Islam. One sect clearly declares the other group “kafir” (Non-Muslim). In Hinduism, there are also touchable and untouchable. Roy has realistically depicted how Dalits are ill-treated by Brahmins and other upper castes. Brahmins enjoy extra protocol due to their high caste. Roy has carefully constructed the discourse in order to portray the true picture of modern-day India through a character who is transgender. There is self and othering presented in the novel in one way or the other. India is a country with multiple religions and communities. Roy has depicted the relationship among different communities to

show the self and othering. The scenes from Kashmir also show the hierarchy of self and othering. There is violence shown by the writer. Violence is key to oppression. This oppression by the powerful also shows self and othering. There are different forms of self and othering presented in the novel. There is religious self and othering. Hindus propagate their own religion and consider the Muslims other. There is regional self and othering. The inhabitants of Kashmir do not consider themselves part of the state, and they do not abide by the law. Gender-based self othering is also there in the novel. The main character of the novel, i.e. Anjum, suffers a lot. Transgender is not considered a normal human. The researcher reaches the conclusion that in this outstanding novel, Roy unfolds the real face of India, which is ruled by extremists Hindus. All other communities are considered as aliens, subaltern and outcasts. India is a state where high castes Brahmins have the right to live, to propagate, to control over other low castes and other communities. In India, you can kill, you can destroy, you can exploit if you are a high caste Hindu.

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