

The Sufferings of Individuals Due to Their Social and Religious Identity: A Study of Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

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Abstract: Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a novel that deals with the problems of marginalized people of India such as transgender women, Dalits, and Indian Muslims. Her writing mostly focuses on the afflictions of different people due to their fixed identities in the society. This novel will be analyzed focusing on Louis Althusser's theory of "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses". In his theory, Althusser has said ideologies have their practical existence. This means ideologies are not simply a bunch of abstract ideas rather they exist for real in the social life. The aim of this article is to investigate how social ideologies, which form the identities of individuals in society, may become a reason of suffering, humiliation, and oppression in the society. The major characters of this text suffer due to their low social class. The individuals fall on the pit of persecution for belonging to the impoverished class. This article will focus on how social and religious identity become a means of oppressing and humiliating people who do not fit in the stereotyped social system.

Keywords: *Ideology; social identity; religious identity; suffering; oppression; marginalization.*

Introduction: Arundhati Roy is a very veteran Indian author and social activist, who pens against the social follies, corruption, discrimination, and repression of the marginalized people of India in her writings. In Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), she has focused on the fact that identity plays a vital role in individuals' life. People always want to identify themselves and others through certain ways of identification. In the above-mentioned text, Roy has delineated that one's identity does not only add up good fate to one always rather it may also become a reason of suffering and oppression. Most of the main characters of this novel are found to be suffering due to their fixed identity in the society, which is not good enough for them to be accepted or well treated in the society. In this regard, this text can be studied under the light of Althusser's theory "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1968). For him, the presence and importance of ideology in humans' daily life is massive. Everything around this world is camouflaged with the fabric of ideology. He believes that ideology is responsible for the formation of one's social and religious identity. Roy has depicted in her writing how individual's identity gets created in a society and also how an individual may suffer due to his/her social and religious identity. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, she has pictured how Muslims, transgender women, and Dalits get humiliated and tortured due to their social identity. It is like their social identity is a cursed oracle for them which lead them towards the eternal pit of suffering. The objective of this article is to examine how the identity of an individual may turn into a reason of disquietude and suffering. For this purpose, this text will be studied in the light of Althusser's theory of "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses". This article focuses on the influence of identity in the social life and also how the identity of an individual gets formed centering around ideology or a set of ideas, beliefs, and values in the society. This article endeavors to show how an individual's social and religious identity may become a reason of suffering, humiliation, and ill-treatment.

Literature Review: This part incorporates an overview of researches that have been done on Arundhati Roy's writing over the time. This section focuses on the relevant researches that have been done on Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The researcher of the study has reviewed the works that are directly connected to the present study. The reviewed literature mainly includes scholarly articles and dissertations on Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, which creates an occasion to contemplate on how the social and religious identity may become a means of suffering and humiliation for an individual.

Article history:

Received 01 June, 2021

Received in revised form 2 October, 2021

Accepted 15 November, 2021

Available online 15 November, 2021

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Aparna (2018) [1] has said that *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a reflection of various types of discriminations that exist in the Indian society such as transgender discrimination that is based on gender identity, women discrimination that is based on male domination, Dalit discrimination that is based on caste system, Muslim minority discrimination that is based on religious prejudice, and national identity crisis that is based on multi-ethnic alienation, which leads to the issue of identity crisis in the dislocated and disoriented people. Arundhati Roy has used a plethora of historical events to represent the theme of identity crisis. The victims of discrimination go through personality disorder and feel alienated because they are incompetent to synchronize with the biased society.

Kumar (2020) [2] has stated that Roy describes the issue of identity crisis in her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, in detail due to the polyphonic sounds of her women characters. Revathy play important roles. The novel's three mothers, Jahanara, Maryam, and Revathy, face physical and mental problems due to their daughters. They risked their own identities to protect their daughters' personal and social identities.

Raina (2017) [3] has asserted that the author analyses some major Transgender, third gender (Hijra) characters in the novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and tries to locate their alienation within gender specific literary discourse. He claims that readers will notice that these characters are pulled between two worlds: masculine and female, love and hate, life and death, and so on. They sometimes seek to avoid desire altogether. As language and desire are complementary, their attempts to remake themselves through 'naming' and 're-naming' turn out as a heroic but unsuccessful exercise. Such characters either persevere the torment of social stratification or attempt to locate their identity in the complex social, and gender taxonomy, cultured by dominant class from various prevalent and divisive socio- religious discourses.

Methodology: This paper adopts a qualitative style of research and analysis to reach the aim of the paper. In this process, a standard amount of previous literary endeavors concentrated on Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* have been considered and brought under considerations. This article minutely studies Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* incorporating Althusser's theory of "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" to show how individuals suffer due to their social and religious identity. Roy has talked a great deal about the existence of social and religious ideology in the society. She has also illustrated how individuals suffer enormously due to the social and religious ideology. On the other hand, he has discussed that ideologies are not abstract rather they have their corporeal existence. For this very reason, Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, has been studied in the light of Althusser's theory of "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", since there is a connection between the thoughts of Roy and Althusser.

The Rationale of the Study: There are so many works on Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. For instance, Aparna (2018) [1] has focused on various types of social discriminations and multi-ethnic alienation in her article. Kumar (2020) [2] has concentrated on identity crisis of transgender women in her writing. On the other hand, Raina (2017) [3] has depicted the internal conflict of transgender women in his article. None of these writers have contemplated on the fact that the social and religious identity may often become a reason of individual's suffering. Therefore, the researcher has put forward the following research questions.

1. What is the influence of social and religious identity in an individual's life?
2. How does social and religious values/ideologies form an individual's identity?
3. How does an individual suffer due to his/her social and religious identity?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this article is to expose how individuals suffer and become scapegoats due to their social and religious identity. And this study has got the following specific objectives as well.

1. To show the influence of social and religious identity in human life.
2. To discover the way social and religious identity controls individual's life.
3. To reveal how social and religious identity makes individuals suffer.

Conceptual Theory: Louis Althusser is one of the most influential Marxist philosophers of the 20th century. His theory of “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (1968) has been path breaking. He argues that ideology is not a ‘false consciousness’ rather ideology is sustained by institutional practices. He holds the belief that ‘ideas’ are not simple abstract concepts rather they have their existence in the real life- “.....the ‘ideas’ or ‘representations’ etc., which seem to make up ideology do not have an ideal or spiritual existence” (Althusser, 1968, p.695). [4] He says that ideology is ‘empirically’ visible to everyone since ideology has its own ‘State apparatuses’. He emphasizes the fact that ideologies have their materialistic existence- “....an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices.” (Althusser, 1968, p.695) [4]. He believes that ideologies become implemented through different state apparatus like religion, politics, ethics, values, and so on.

The next point that Althusser focusses on is that ideology acts as a driving force for people in the society. People using their ‘consciousness’ believe in different ideas which later on lead them doing things or behaving in a certain way, as he says-

.... the ideological representation of ideology is itself forced to recognize that every ‘subject’ endowed with a ‘consciousness’ and believing in the ‘ideas’ that his ‘consciousness’ inspires in him and freely accepts, must ‘act according to his ideas,’ must therefore inscribe his own ideas as a free subject in the actions Of his material practice. (Althusser, 1968, p.696) [4]

If an individual does not act according to his ideas then that will be considered something as ‘wicked’. Althusser further argues that if an individual does not act according to his beliefs or ideas that is because he does something else, which is again a part of ‘the same idealist scheme’. He believes that- “...the ‘ideas; of a human subject exists in his actions, or ought to exist in his actions, and if that is not the case, it lends him other ideas corresponding to the actions.” (Althusser, 1968, p.696) [4] This means the way an individual acts is always influenced by the ideas or beliefs he/she has already gathered through his consciousness.

Althusser argues that ideology has a profound connection with subjective experience. He has said that ideology hails or ‘interpellates’ concrete individuals as concrete subjects. What he implies by this is that the practices and beliefs inherent to ideology propagate a sense of identity-

...ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals, or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing. (Althusser, 1968, p.699) [4]

Individual’s conscious experience of the world and sense of individual personhood are always bound up in effects of the social institutions that have raised and educated him/her. Rather than viewing people’s immediate experiences as conditioned, they appear to be free or obvious interpretations of the world.

For Althusser, an individual is always-already a ‘subject’ even before his/her born. The existence of ideology in human life can be traced right from the ‘happy event’ of their birth. Althusser says that everyone knows how and in what way an unborn child will come to this world-

...the forms of family ideology (paternal/maternal/conjugal/fraternal) in which the unborn child is expected: it is certain in advance that it will bear its father’s name and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable. (Althusser, 1968, p.700) [4]

Even before the birth of a child s/he becomes a part of the ‘familial ideological configuration’. That means that child is considered as an identical entity with a set of values which are found common in its family heritage. Thus, the materialistic presence of ideology is found in human life even before the individuals come to this world. As a result, a child is expected to behave or act according to its social ideology, beliefs, and values.

Textual Analysis: Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a well-read novel all around the world. This text has highly been appreciated due to Roy’s skills of narrating the lives of the insignificant people of the society in a very minute and realistic way. Her writing compels the readers to think that those insignificant lives also

matter. The identity of an individual is very important in the society. Everyone wants to identify and to be identified, since no one seems to be comfortable with something that is unknown. Due to that people always try to familiarize or label things according to their different ranges of knowledge. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy has dealt with various identities of the people of different social levels of India. She has focused on the fact how people get treated differently due to their identities. In Roy's writing, she has created so many occasions for her readers to realize that most of the reasons of individuals' sufferings are due to their social and religious identity. This article focuses on how the identity of an individual gets molded by the social and religious ideology and also how an individual suffers due to his/her identity. In this regard, Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* will be analyzed through Althusser's theory of "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses".

The importance of individual's identity is very essential in social life. The identity of individual is centered around ideology, but this ideology is not something abstract rather it can be considered as a concrete subsistence. Althusser has said in his "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1968) that ideology can be compared to the way a specific person is hailed by saying 'hello'. In a street when a particular person is hailed by a single hello, he/she responds and reacts to that- "...he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and it was really him who was hailed." (Althusser, 1968, p.699) [4]. Thus, the manner of hailing and responding to that hello turns into an ideology. Whenever someone hails someone, s/he is expected to respond to that hailing. Roy has narrated the importance of identity in Indian socio-cultural context in her novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. In India Hindus are comparatively more protected and safer than the Muslims when a social clash apprehends. For instance, in a certain passage of the novel, it is found that Mansoor, a young Muslim man, shaves off his beard and wears red puja thread, when he gets ready for Ahmedabad to search for his missing father- "As a precaution he shaved off his beard and wore red puja threads on his wrist hoping pass off as Hindu." (Roy, 2017, p.46) [5]. The Muslims try to pretend to be Hindus so that they don't get troubled or tortured in a turbulent situation. Again, it is found that Anjum, the protagonist of the novel, asks her daughter to memorize 'Gaytri Mantra' so that she can pass off as a Hindu in a mob situation-

Anjum said it was a Sanskrit chant, the Gaytri 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. (Roy, 2017, p.46) [5].

This shows that in India identity is not only something abstract rather it is concrete, and the Muslims are tortured and treated with terror due to their religious identity.

The formation of identity whether it is social or religious depends on ideology and its state apparatuses. Althusser (1968) believes that ideology is not simply a bunch of ideas rather it has materialistic existence. For him ideologies become materialized, when they are practiced as the components of religion, politics, ethics, values, and so on. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, it is found that the identities of different characters are formed around the social, religious, and political ideologies. Due to these kinds of identities, they become treated in different ways in the society and they suffer a lot due to their identities which have been formed by social, religious, and political ideologies. In the context of India, Roy has tried to describe the image of social and religious identity of Indian Muslims. She has shown how most of the Muslims suffer and are loathed in India due to their social and religious identity. Roy has focused on the ceaseless historical war between India and Pakistan. These two countries got separated from each other due to their religious differences. Most of the Hindus think, since Pakistan had announced itself an Islamic Republic, so India ought to moreover pronounce itself a Hindu one. In India, Muslims are living their lives in a vulnerable situation. They often become the victims of religious riots that is sponsored and sheltered by ruling majority group for social and political gains. Minority Rights Group International (2017) has rightly said-

Communal violence further intensifies the marginalization of those affected, who frequently face high levels of insecurity alongside inadequate access to justice and reparations, often with particularly challenging implications for women. Religious minorities have long been the target of a range of different forms of persecution, such as hate crimes, threats, attacks on places of worship, and forced conversion. (MRGI 3) [6].

Some supporters of an older political organization of India believed that the Muslims of India should be treated just like the Jews of Germany- "Some of its supporters and ideologues openly admired Hitler and compared the Muslims of India to the Jews of Germany." (Roy, 2017, p.41) [5]. The way the Hindus look at the Muslims of India that is completely influenced by their political and religious ideology. In India the majority number of the population are Hindus, due to that the politicians of India always put their efforts to keep the Hindus content. It almost looks like in India the only way of keeping the Hindu supporters happy is to make the Muslims suffer-

Even after the Post-Prime minister's government fell at the Center, the election after election in Gujarat. Some people believed he ought to be held responsible for mass murder, but his voters called him Gujarat ka Lalla. (Roy, 2017, p. 63) [5].

The politicians of India try to get the votes of the Hindu supporters by saying that they will be 'avenging centuries of Muslim Rule'. (Roy, 2017, p.81) [5]. Most of the Muslims are considered as terrorists in India. The Muslim boys are killed by the police or caught red-handed in the act of planning terrorist attacks. In most of the cases, the police do not even feel the necessity of verifying whether the arrested Muslims are actually guilty or not. In no time the prison gets stuffed with young Muslim men- "A new law was passed which allowed suspects to be detained without trial for months. In no time at all the prisons were full of young Muslim men." (Roy, 2017, p.43) [5]. Here the Muslim boys are found to be whimsically tortured and killed mostly due to their religious identity.

Althusser (1968) has said that People utilize their 'consciousness' in terms of believing in different ideas which later on govern them doing things or behaving in a particular way. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, it is found that most of the Hindus of India believe Muslims to be terrorists and chaotic, and this is certainly a part of ideology where Muslims are bound to be considered evil. Roy has depicted the vulnerable situation of Muslims in India. The Hindus of India consider the Muslims as a threat to Hindu India- "...others viewed them as proof that Muslims did not wish to 'integrate' and were busy breeding and organizing themselves and would soon become a threat to Hindu India." (Roy, 2017, p.14) [5]. Due to this kind of ideology, the Muslims of India suffer the most. The Hindus often become intolerant with the Muslims. They torture and kill the Muslims in the most brutal way, when there arises a religious riot or mob situation. For instance, in a passage of the novel Anjum is found to try to forget how the Hindus have slaughtered and burned the Muslims in a religious riot that she has witnessed herself- "She tried to unknow what they had done to all others- how they had folded the men and unfolded the women. And how eventually they had pulled them apart limb from limb and set them on fire." (Roy, 2017, p.61-62) [5]. The Hindus of India want the Muslims to leave India once and for all. They utter slogans against the Muslims, where they say- "Only one place for the Mussalman! The Graveyard or Pakistan!" (Roy, 2017, p.62) [5]. The Hindus consider the Muslims a threat to the Hindu India, due to that they torture and kill the Muslims brutally. The Muslims of India suffer and become ill-treated because of their social and religious identity. Their identity of being Muslims seems to be a curse for them since they suffer a great deal due to their religious identity.

Anjum, the protagonist of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, seems to suffer the most due to her identity of a transgender woman. Althusser has emphasized the fact that people always like to think about the things that are inside the box, but they really feel uncomfortable with the things that are outside the box. For Althusser, humans get introduced with ideologies even before they understand what it is. He says that a child even before its birth is tagged with a family name and will have an 'identity' which is 'irreplaceable'. A child is provided a fixed set of ways of behaving and acting depending on whether it's a boy or girl- "...pathological structure that the former subject- to- be will have to 'find' its place, i.e., 'become' the sexual subject (boy or girl) which it already is in advance." (Althusser, 1968, p.700) [4]. Anjum is found to be a prey of this identity politics. Her family has waited for long to have a baby boy. Her parents were initially happy to receive her since they thought her to be a baby boy. But it was Anjum's mother, who realized first that Anjum's boy-part was not normal rather it was small and unformed and that was mostly like a girl-part. For Jahanara Begum, the mother of Anjum that was the biggest nightmare ever. Because she has learnt like the other people of the society that everything has its own gender-

...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 own baby. (Roy, 2017, p.8) [5].

The amount of shock of Jahanara Begum expresses how much the world is consumed with one's gender identity, and it also portrays how much importance does the identity of an individual bear in a society. On that moment Jahanara felt herself to be a helpless mother with her child, she even thought of killing her child and herself to escape from the shame of giving birth to a 'hijra'. Later on, Jahanara Begum and her husband thought of medical solution for Aftab/Anjum, the doctor told them that the surgery could be done but his 'Hijra tendencies' would not go away- "While treatment would surely help, there would be 'Hijra tendencies' that were unlikely to ever go away." (Roy, 2017, p.17) [5]. After listening to this kind of thing, Anjum's father has put all of his efforts to inculcate manliness amid her. He tells Anjum stories of warriors and manliness but they have no impact on her-

...he embarked on the cultural project of inculcating manliness in Aftab. He passed on to him his love of poetry and discouraged the singing of Thumri and Chaiti. He stayed late into the night, telling Aftab stories about their warrior ancestors and their valour on the battlefield. (Roy, 2017, p.30) [5].

As Aftab's father is really worried about his Hijra tendencies, he forbids Aftab to study poetry and also to stop singing since in Indian culture having these hobbies are often tagged to the girls. The parents of Anjum are really petrified since she does not have an identity which will fit in the society. Before throwing lights on Anjum's sufferings, it is very important to understand what transgender identity is. Gender identity insinuates a person's identity on the premises of the level of feminine or masculine characteristics in an adult that comply to the traditional concept of society as a male or female. A person's gender identity is essentially a mental component of an individual's sexual orientation. In an article, "Let Us to Live: Social Exclusion of Hijra Community", Hijra or Transgender has been identified by Sibsankar Mal (2015) [7], as "an umbrella term to signify individuals who defy rigid, binary gender constructions and who express or present a breaking and blurring of culturally prevalent stereotypically gender roles." Anjum's identity does not fit in the traditional gender identity and this has become the destroyer of her life. Since the very childhood, Anjum was bullied due to her transgender identity. Before Anjum's transformation into a transgender woman, her name was Aftab and she was known as a boy. At that phase of her life, she had a great talent in music, but she was bullied by her fellow mates in the music school for sounding like a girl having the identity of a boy- "...soon the snickering and teasing from other children began: *He's a She. He's not a He or She. He's a He and a She. She-He, He-She! Hee! Hee! Hee!*" (Roy, 2017, p.12) [5]. After this kind of bullying Anjum never went to her music school. The bullying and insult of Anjum does not even go away when she consciously chooses the identity of a transgender woman. It seems like the degree of her humiliation gets growing higher and higher with her growing age. Anjum is not accepted in the society because of her identity as a transgender woman, she receives hatred from the people whom she does not even know and it seems to be a common phenomenon for her-

She didn't turn to see which small boy has thrown a stone at her, didn't crane her neck to read the insults scratched into her bark. When people called her names- clown without a circus, queen without a palace- she let the hurt blow through her branches like a breeze and used the music for her rustling leaves as balm to ease the pain. (Roy, 2017, p.3) [5].

However, Anjum has trained herself not to be affected by the taunts of the society. To her, identity does not matter. Her way of looking at the world is different, she believes herself to be everyone and also no one, as she says-

It doesn't matter. I'm all of them. I'm Romi and Juli, I'm Laila and Majnu. And Mujna, why not? Who says my name is Anjum? I'm not Anjum, I am Anjuman. I'm mehful, I'm a gathering. Of everybody and nobody, of everything and nothing. (Roy, 2017, p.6) [5].

Here, Anjum denies the traditional concept of one's fixed identity. She says that she has no fixed identity, she is everybody and also nobody.

Anjum suffers extremely due to her gender identity. She suffers both mentally and physically. Being a transgender woman, Anjum can't experience orgasm. She goes through a lot of physical and mental agony due to that-

That night she dreamed she was a new bride on her wedding night. She woke distressed to find that her sexual pleasure had expressed itself into her beautiful red garment like a man's.... She sat in the courtyard and

howled like a wolf, hitting herself on her head and between her legs, screaming with self-inflicted pain. (Roy, 2017, p.27) [5].

Anjum, possessing all the feelings of a female, feels the emotional urge of being a mother. This time again she goes through a difficulty with herself, since it is not possible for herself to be a biological mother to child in this 'Duniya' -

Now she wanted to return to the Duniya and live like an ordinary person. She wanted to be a mother.... The question was, were ambitions such as these, on the part of someone like herself, reasonable or unreasonable? (Roy, 2017, p.30) [5].

Biologically it is not possible for Anjum to be a mother, but later on it is found that she adopts a girl by the name of Zainab and becomes a very affectionate and loving mother to that girl with her entire heart. Anjum suffers and becomes exhausted both physically and mentally due to her gender identity. It seems to be pretty normal in India for a transgender woman to be harassed and humiliated. It is something that can be considered as a very normal and regular occurrence in India- "True, it was only a routine bit of humiliation for Hijras, nothing out of the ordinary, and nothing compared to the tribulations others endured during those horrible months." (Roy, 2017, p.35) [5]. In a religious riot, Anjum pretended to be dead to save herself but when the 'Newton's Army' (Hindu rebels) caught her they abused her terribly calling her 'sister-fucking whore Hijra'. They were about to kill her, suddenly one of them loudly told that they should not kill her because killing a Hijra would bring bad luck to them- "Don't kill her, brother, killing Hijras brings bad luck." (Roy, 2017, p.62) [5]. Anjum escaped her death as a butcher's luck. This shows the amount of hatred and disgrace that the transgender women receive in a society. Arundhati Roy has wonderfully portrayed the suffering and dilemma of the transgender women in the society in her writing. They are unacceptable in society since they do not have a normal gender identity. In this regard Roy says- "She, who never knew which box to tick, which queue to stand in, which public toilet to enter (Kings or Queens? Lords or Ladies? Sirs or Hers?)." (Roy, 2017, p.122) [5]. It is not possible for the ordinary people to realize the suffering and anguish they go through. For instance, in this text, Ustad Kulsoom Bi, the head of the household has lived a life outside 'Duniya'. For this very reason she is familiar with the anguish of not being accepted in the 'Duniya'. Kulsoom Bi describes the agony of Hijra's in one of her conversations with Anjum-

Ordinary people in the Duniya-what did they know about what it takes to live a life of Hijra? What did they know about the rules, the discipline and the sacrifices?...The Khwabgah was called Khwabgah 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, 2017, p.53) [5].

Anjum has never been harmful to anyone in her life. Despite that she suffers and gets humiliated a lot just because of being a transgender woman.

Arundhati Roy has depicted the afflictions and sufferings of the lower caste people of India in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The Dalits or the untouchable suffer a lot because of their social identity. The present article focuses on the discrimination of the Dalit people and their sufferings. According to International Dalit Society Network-

The word 'Dalit' meaning 'broken' or 'ground down', is used by 'outcaste' people themselves to describe at the same time their oppression, their identity and their collective power for emancipation. (IDSN 3) [8].

The Dalits live with the feeling of inferior complexity and possess the perils of discrimination and identity crisis. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, it is found that the people of lower caste suffer the most in the society. For instance, the doctors, who think themselves to be of upper caste do not touch the dead bodies to conduct post-mortems, since they are afraid of being polluted by touching the dead bodies. The man who actually conduct the post-mortems are the lower caste people like cleaners or sweepers, and the doctors give instruction to them wearing a mask on how to conduct post-mortems-

The men who actually handled the cadavers and performed the post-mortems were employed as cleaners and belonged to a caste of sweepers or leatherworkers who used to be called Chamars. The doctors, like most Hindus, looked down on them and considered to be Untouchable. (Roy, 2017, p.73) [5].

The people of lower caste are considered as Untouchable, and hence, they are suitable for doing all the mean jobs of the society. They are found to be humiliated and suppressed by the people of upper caste. Though Anjum, the protagonist of the novel herself belongs to the lower caste being a transgender woman, she does not believe in caste system. She believes that everyone should get the same treatment in the society-

Anjum used the word *Chamar* and not *Dalit*, the more modern and accepted term for those that Hindus considered to be 'untouchable', in the same spirit in which she refused to refer to herself as anything other than Hijra. She didn't see the problem with either Hijras or Chamars. (Roy, 2017, p.85) [5].

In the real-life things are not that easy. It is really a complicated situation in India because of its caste system. In this text, Roy has talked about a lower caste Hindu man, whose name is Dayachand. The people of his caste collect the carcass of a cow when it is dead, since the Hindu farmers do not want to pollute themselves by touching the carcass of a cow- "This was what our people did. When cows died, upper caste farmers would call us to collect the carcasses because they couldn't pollute themselves by touching them." (Roy, 2017, p.86) [5]. One day Dayachand and his father were going to collect the carcass of a cow from a farmer, on their way back they met a police man who asked for a lot of money from them to let them go forward. They tried to plead and make him understand their grievances, but the police man did not listen to them. Within a while he gathered some Hindus up and did spread the rumor that Dayachand and his father had slaughtered a cow. The mob were furious and they started to beat Dayachand's father cruelly, at a stage his father surrendered himself in the lap of death- "...all together, like an army convoy. How they splashed through puddles of his father's blood as if it were rainwater, how the road looked like a street in the old city on the day of Bakra-Eid." (Roy, 2017, p.89) [5]. It seems, since Dayachand and his father are Dalits, their lives do not matter. They can easily be killed and crushed just like the insects. The brutal treatment that Dayachand and his father have received here is just because of their social identity.

Conclusion: Arundhati Roy has depicted the lives of different people from different layers of the society in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. She has focused on how the identity of an individual gets molded in society. She has also pointed out what factors are influential in terms of shaping the identity of a person. She has showed that social and religious ideologies, and values are the most important aspects for the formation of the identity of an individual. She has also expressed her view on how an individual suffers due to his/her social and religious identity. This article has analyzed Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* using Althusser's theory of "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses". This article has showed that the identity of an individual gets shaped according to the social, political, and religious ideologies. An individual is treated in the society according to his/her identity. After a close study of Roy's, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, it is found that the individuals suffer a lot due to their social and religious identity and they are not treated according to their deeds. The society often considers an individual as good or bad according to his/her social and religious identity without evaluating that person's personal intentions and actions, which is completely illogical and bizarre. This article has minutely depicted the pangs and perils of the individuals that they go through due to their social and religious identity. Their identity does not seem to ensure any secured life for them, rather their identity seems to be a tool of their oppression and sufferings.

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