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Marginalized in Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* in the Light of Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus"

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes to research into the people who are considered peripheral and dwelling only on the margin of a modern developed Indian society based on their portrayal in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The word marginal generally refers to the state of being not regarded as a part of a main group or situation. The principle characters of Roy's stunning humane fiction *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*-Anjum, Saddam, Tilo, Musa and others do not belong to the mainstream class of Indian society and are neglected, pushed over on several occasions and almost broken by the society in which they live in. It is possible to explore the complex process of marginalization with the theory of Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological state apparatus". He has presented ideology as a system of delusion that acts on behalf of the ruling class. Considering Roy's, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* with Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" proves every aspect of human life is badly affected by ideology. His theory shows how Ideological State Apparatus legalized the domination of the lower-class people.

Keywords: Ideology, Peripheral, Caste, Transgender, Ruling class, Domination, Socio-political, and Illusion.

INTRODUCTION:

One of the most promising writers of India, Arundhati Roy catches the eyes of the world by her first novel *The God of Small Things* which I read while doing my graduation. Her ways of putting the social problems into fiction and her mesmerizing writing styles fascinated me a lot. Her second novel also makes her readers spellbound where she portrays absolute sadness of human life under the title of happiness Arundhati Roy's writing infuses socio-political aspects with literature; she has shown concern towards the society in her all forms of writing. Roy has created the story of her later novel in a way which condemns people to think about the unnoticed events and their role in society. In a study about the social activity of Arund-

hati Roy Anup Baul and the Dr. Reena Sansamstates claim,

"Arundhati Roy, the author shows acute sensitiveness to her surroundings which are reflected in her non-fictional works, books and essays" (Roy 35).

The miserable situations of the peripheral people find place in her novel and to me this is the most attractive aspects of her writing. Roy's ground-breaking second novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* focuses on various marginalized people. Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" will be used to show how ideology works to dominate the down-trodden people.

The socio-political aspect which is presented in the above-mentioned novel is very much similar with Althusser's concept of ideology. In "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" Althusser has redefined Marxist notion of ideology. It is a kind of belief or idea which exists in a community, group or society. ISA means some notions which help the state policy for dominating the mass. Here Althusser's concept is used to show how ideology works to dominate the minor. It will explore different ideas and beliefs of people and how these ideas are working on behalf of the upper class to dominate of lower-class people.

Such as, the caste system is legalized by some ideologies. The novel is abounded with different kinds of ideologies. Religious ideology is one of the most important ideologies which make people blind about their activities against other people. The cultural ideologies include the beliefs of a certain group of people. People's attitude towards hijra, dalit and other minor people like adivasis are example of cultural ideologies. The voices which are presented in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* are the mouth of all the marginal people throughout the world. In this modern world, most of the countries take pride in their scientific, technological and military advancement, often forgetting the importance of basic humane virtues like compassion, kindness, generosity, mercy and other values which are essential for building a harmonious world for all human beings. Almost all the leading nations, now a day, profess to practice democracy in their governments which guarantee equal rights to each of its citizens. Unfortunately, for numerous people in many of the countries the reality is quite different; the term equality is not applied in their case. Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is mostly concerned about these people who are living in the fringe of society.

METHODOLOGY:

For this research, the text of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy is scrutinized and a theoretical approach is adopted to analyse the key ideas. The materials of this research are collected from a span of sources, both primary and secondary. A significant critical essay by Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus", which deals with the role of ideologies in society consulted here. Besides, a UniversePG | www.universepg.com

significant number of information has been taken from Internet for this research work, scholarly writings and articles published in different journals is also used as a great source for this research. Some key ideas are taken from several of Roy's interviews published in social media.

Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses

Louis Althusser "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation" will be adopted here to show how ideology works to suppress lower class people. The term ideology has been taken from Marx. For Marx ideology is an illusion and an unsystematic distortion of reality. Althusser differs himself by pointing it as a systematic distortion. Ideology is the way of considering or understanding our world. It has no history in the matter of structure and function. Ideology denotes an idea or a set of ideas or attitudes reared by any organization, institution, community or society etc. It is a kind of idea which is taken for granted. People never think that those ideas are not natural rather taught, reared, and spread out by any institution. Instead of questioning it people consider ideology as a universal truth. In disguised manner ideology is subconsciously making people slave to the capitalist belief system which is impacting every aspect of human life.

Althusser has introduced Marxist notions of state-power and state-apparatuses. State power may change but state apparatuses through which repression is practiced do not change. Marx has expressed his view about Repressive State Apparatuses which is the mechanism of a state to repress the mass for example police, prison, law, military etc. Althusser has talked about Ideological State Apparatuses which works as a support of Repressive State Apparatuses. Ideological State Apparatuses primarily work through ideology and secondarily repression. To explain Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatuses scholar says,

"Althusser included among state ideological apparatuses the schools, the family, religions and religious institutions, and the mass media. They worked less by power and politics (as did the RSAs) and more by ideology" (Wolff 4).

These apparatuses exist both in private and public domain. For example, ideologies exist in family, edu-

educational institutions, religions etc. Althusser has talked about different kinds of ideological state apparatuses such as - the family ISA, the communicative ISA, religious ISA, the educational ISA etc. In all ISA, the soul discourses at work are always dominated by the ruling classes ideology. Repressive State Apparatuses work through action for example police punishes the thief but Ideological State Apparatuses work behind it as a 'shield' to secure the benefit of the capitalist state.

He considers the educational Ideological State Apparatus as the core of all ideology. School selects a group of people who are suitable for capitalists' country and most are leave to become workers and become the agent of exploitation. Ideology is an imaginary construction. It gives certain knowledge of the world in which we live in but at the same time introduce us to its recognition.

To represent the domination clearly Althusser has introduced the concept of Subject and subject in his writing. The Subject is the capitalist states which dominate and subject is the one who submits himself or herself to the Subject. Ideology makes individual subject which means individual can never think freely. People are living in ideology but they are not conscious about it as a result instead of judging any belief people takes everything for granted. In spite of being an illusion people takes it as a truth because it has material existence in practices. For example, people pray with the belief that it will bless them. Their day-to-day life is influenced by it. No one is outside ideology. Althusser has given example to expand his idea of people's becoming subject. He tells that when a man is called by his/her name s/he responds and becomes subject. The birth of a child is already expected and he will be introduced with his father's identity so he is not free. Everything about a person is pre-determined so he is never free to think otherwise.

As the ideologies which are at work in society are the ideologies of the ruling classes so it is natural that every single ideology will be one behalf of the dominant class. It has been already stated that people are always in ideology and they are always ready to suppress the marginal group of people without thinking about any valid reason of this oppression.

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness in the light of Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"

Ideology is the way we perceive the world. It is a system of understanding and considering our world. Ideology is an illusion to the reality which is taken for granted. The set of ideologies which are at work are always of ruling class's ideology. Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" gives a subtle view of how society works and its idea about different ideologies. For example, Religious ISA, the Educational ISA, The Family ISA, the Cultural ISA and so on. Religion is one of the most important areas of discussion for Althusser. Like any other ideology it enlists an individual in a particular belief system. As it has been already said, ideology is a part of super structure. So, it is easily understandable that the religion which is dominant in a particular society is the religion of powerful people or the religion which is believed by the majority of this respective society. According to sociologist Durkheim religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices which are related to sacred things.

"In Durkheim's view religion is a collective act that includes many forms of behaviour in which people interact with others" (Schaffer 325).

Another scholar says

"Any practice or institution that looks as though it is characterized by ritual, myth, magic, witchcraft, shamanism, mysticism, the supernatural, the traditional (non-modern), the irrational or non-rational, the unscientific, will probably also be the placed in the "religion" basket" (Fitzgerald 211).

Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* has introduced a character who belongs to a minor religion in India. Through her characters she portrays the exact situation of minor group in any country. In every country the minors are always deprived and sometime tortured. The protagonist is a minor with regard to religion. As it has been already stated, that ideology is usually established by powerful people. So, the people who belong to the minor religion are thrown out from the mainstream society. The politicians are also from the majority that means Hindu religion so they hold the belief that they are the original inhabitant of the state.

"The poet prime minister of the country and several of his senior ministers were member of an old organization that believed India was essentially a Hindu nation and that, just as Pakistan had declared itself an Islamic Republic" (Roy 41).

The dominant religious ideology used to suppress the minor group of people in the novel. When the prominent ideology used to suppress the minor the relationship between the two groups is worsened. In the case of India, Hindu and Muslim all are against each other. Muslims are being killed desperately in Kashmir. They even don't show mercy to child. The death of Miss Jabeen is a real horror and it shows the cruelty of religious biasness.

"Her eyes are closed and her body is wrapped in a shroud. Blood from a wound on her temple has seeped through white cloth, a rose-shaped stain"(Roy 190).

Religious bigotry has become so horrible that people can never think of any good about other religion. It is taken for granted that the people who belong to other religion are vicious. Innocent people are suffering much for it. The novel shows that Islam is a minor religion in India and there are some reports about Muslim terrorist. So, it was taken for granted that Muslims are heinous and without any kind of investigation every Muslims were blamed. Even the administration does not judge the accuracy of the case for this government's encounter is taking many innocent people's life. The report of newspaper is showing the poor situation of them

"The Urdu papers carried stories of young Muslim boys being killed in what the police called encounter" (Roy 42).

The mass people remain silent against the repression because they believe what the government is doing, is doing for the religion. Here in the name of religion ideology is making people 'subject' as Althusser has argued. Althusser has pointed out that ideology hails people and makes people believe that what they are doing is doing for religious sake and state has no connection with it.

The writer has discussed a lot about the cow issue. People are being punished or killed for eating beef. It's a belief of Hindu religion that cow should not be killed

because it is a religious symbol for them but for Muslims there is no such thing. So, they have no problem to eat beef. But people are so blind in their belief that they kill the people who eat beef. By this they materialize their belief that they should protect the cow and this is actually helping the upper class or the state to gain some financial benefit. As Muslims are the minors in India the extremists can easily do this without facing any questions from the authority. The people who do it are known as the defenders of the Hindu Faith.

"Aspiring politicians jump started their careers by filming themselves making hateful speech or beating up Muslims and uploading the videos on YouTube" (Roy 402).

People are using religion for personal benefit. State has a different agenda which is related with financial benefit. The financial benefit of it is portrayed in the novel very vividly.

"They accuse you of eating beef and then take over your house and your land and send you to the refugee camp. It's all about property, not cows. You have to be very careful" (Roy 402).

The ideology is working here as a medium to support the Repressive State Apparatus. It's not about religion, it's about power, who have the power is using their arm to marginalize the minor and uses ideology as a support for this domination.

Anjum also tells that Muslims are not also innocent. When they had the power, they were abusing it too. When they had the power, they have also subjugated the people of other religion. The ideology works behind this is that they are forcing people to go to the right path because they believe that what the people of other religion doing is a sin and this belief legalized the persecution.

"Let me tell you that we Muslims are motherfucker too. Just like everyone else" (Roy 90).

Power is the main tool to dominate and subjugate other group of people not any specific religion. Religious ideologies are not only confined within two different religious groups. There are conflicts within the religion also. For example, Hindus are divided in

different castes. Even sometime their deities are different. The importance of different god is not similar among them. Muslims are also divided in various groups and these groups are all against each other. Each group considers that they are the real believer and other people are wrong. The belief is materialized when two groups of Muslim are fighting against each other. Ideology has made them subject and the subject has submitted himself to ideology subconsciously. S/He can't even tolerate the other groups of believers. Because it has been taken for granted that he is right even a slight difference is not tolerated by them. Hindus have their own caste system, where the lower cast people are trimmed from the society. The people from lower caste are also tolerating the repression as they consider themselves polluted and considering them not worthy of participating in the mainstream society.

Cultural ideology is one of the most important areas of Althusser's discussion. Culture means the idea, custom, and social behaviour of a particular society and cultural ideologies are those ideas, customs, and code of behaviour. Every society has its own culture that means every society has its own ideology. This exists through practice. Gender biasness is a common issue in every society. As it has been already said, the notions which build up a society are always in favour of powerful a person that means powerful gender who is male. The ideology legalized all kind of domination over women. Women are always degraded in society on the basis of the ideology that women are not as powerful as man.

Another group of people who are downtrodden in society are the hijra. The novel is pictured with the painful story of hijra. When a hijra is doing something better than other still she is being insulted. Anjum at her childhood was doing well in music class. But all her talent was ignored when everyone has understood that she doesn't have a definite sexual identity, her fellow classmates started to tease her. Writer comments,

"At first people were amused and even encouraging, but soon the snickering and teasing from other children began. He's a She. He's not a He or a She. He's a He and a she. She, He, He, She. Hee! Hee! Hee!" (Roy 12).

There are different insults which a transsexual has to undergo in a society. They are treated like an outsider and live without a language, without a family, without a job above all without an identity. They are like a curse in society; it is a nightmare for every parent to think about them as their child.

There are different stories about hijra in a society which work to marginalize these groups of people. In the Gujarat massacre Anjum was kept alive because it is their belief that killing hijra brings bad luck for them. For that she calls herself 'Butcher's Luck'. In another story Gudiya has told to Kulsum Bi that hijra has a special place in Hindu mythology. When Ram, Sita and Laxman were banished the people of Ayodhya, who loved Ram, followed him. Ram ordered all the men and the women to go to their home but he had forgotten to talk about the hijra. So, they waited for him at the edge of the forest for fourteen years. Both of these two stories are example of ideologies which people belief about hijra in Indian society. These two stories are the structure which moulds people's attitude towards hijra. In both of the two stories they are being shown as the symbol of bad luck. Their life will save someone from bad luck for another person's good luck she has to live. In The second story which presents them as a forgotten reveals that they are not actually counted in a society. The hijras are also a part of the society; in fact, they grab an important place in the history. They used to protect the queens and daughters of the Mughals. In spite of these historical contributions, they are being treated like an extraneous. It's because the powerful ruling class has created an ideology of forgetfulness about them.

The caste system of India is legitimized by religious scripture. It is a class distinction system which has been passed down through generation. It categorizes everything from a person's marriage to profession. In this system the domination is constructed on the basis of the lower class being impure. And the lower class has submitted them to the system without any protest. It is because they are being convinced that they are impure and incapable of participating in any social work. Thus, oppressor deceived the oppressed classes. This novel presents Saddam is as a representative of dalit class. His father was beaten and murdered in the market. The oppressors are also in ideology which

gives them reason for torture. For instance, the people who have participated on the carnage of Saddam's father have considered it as a religious duty. Police spread out the rumour that these two dalits have killed the cow. Cow is a divine symbol for Hindu people and people have beaten two men for slaughtering a cow. While beating them they were calling their god.

“Some people started shouting *Jai Shri Ram! and Vande Mata ram!*” (Roy 88).

Cow becomes more important than living human being. Dalit class people used to collect the dead cow because the upper-class farmer doesn't pollute them by touching the dead cow. Saddam's father was also engaged with this work. That day he was also engaged with this work but the upper-class Hindu who used to take benefit from him has made up story that he is a cow slaughter and the police themselves have spread out this rumour. Everyone has believed that Saddam's father has murdered the cow no one questioned it. Their tasks are described by the writer,

“...they began to beat them, at first just with their fists, with shoes. But then someone brought a cowbar, someone a carjack” (Roy 88).

As the charge is against dalit, people believed it blindly. Here the in impropriety is done by police but mass people are killing two innocent men and not even feeling guilt as they belong to Dalit class. The ideologies which are around caste system have made one group of people marginalized and people's attitude towards them is like they are born to do menial work of the society. For example, the noble-born Hindu who is assigned to do post-mortem does not do it because it may defile them. This works is done by dalits. About attitude of doctors' writer says,

“The Hindu doctors who were required to conduct post-mortems thought of themselves as upper cast and would not touch dead bodies for fear of being polluted” (Roy 72).

These works are actually done by the people who belong to lower caste. They are being disregarded for their cast. Even education cannot remove this belief from people's mind which is clear from their attitude.

The men who actually handled the cadavers and performed the post-mortems were as cleaners and belong to lower caste. They were called Chamars. The doctors, like most of the Hindus, looked down on them and considered them to be untouchable (Roy 73).

Ideology is not constructed on the basis of some reality but it lives in people's subconscious and entraps them in a fixed frame of belief system. Ideology is not good or bad how it is working is the main issue. According to Althusser we all are always in ideology and it numbs people and they become unaware of their action.

CONCLUSION:

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness is a kind of novel which explores the people and the incidents which are unnoticed and covered by the glow of progress. Arundhati Roy has drawn these unseen sceneries to the light by excavating the layer of development of Independent India. India is known throughout the world for cricket, Bollywood, scientific exploration but behind these there is another dark world which is full of misery. Roy has conjoined the sociological aspects with psychological aspects to show the real condition of a person in society. The torments and grievances which the peripheral people of the novel undergo are very much similar to the argument of Louis Althusser. Roy's portrayal of these down-trodden people of society, in her novel, draws people's attention to the condition of minor group throughout the world.

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The author declares no conflict of interest with respect to the research.

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