

# Marginalization, Hegemony and Pitfalls of India's Post-colonial National Consciousness: A Critical Study of Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 19 Feb 2026; Received in revised form: 17 Mar 2026; Accepted: 21 Mar 2026; Available online: 29 Mar 2026</p> <p>©2026 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/</a>).</p> <p><b>Keywords – Post-colonial nationalism; Marginalization; Cultural hegemony; Subaltern identity; Political resistance; Contemporary Indian literature; Social justice</b></p>	<p>Using Arundhati Roy's, <i>The Ministry of Utmost Happiness</i> as a paradigm, this paper judiciously analyzes the ideas of othering, power hierarchies and post-colonial identities. When it stars marginalized communities like transgender folks, religious minorities and politically subjugated peoples, this book gives you a multi-dimensional representation of how the world exists now. Employing qualitative textual analysis, the research explores Roy's subversion of hegemonic practices of nationalism by rendering visible subjects on the fringe. This research uses theoretical standpoints from post-colonial studies, cultural hegemony, and subaltern theory to analyze the ideological discourses at play in the novel. The analysis shows how Roy reflects the paradoxes of neo-colonial politics that emphasize unity, yet re-establish social hierarchies through exclusion. By way of Anjum and other marginalized groups, the story shows how socio-pilosity ca1 identity informs micro-experiences in which all the sea and sales power germane to post-colonized nation-states keep on being tricks in female creator's store from religion to politics gymnastics disoblged consider open victories. The study also emphasizes the importance of alternative communities and symbolic spaces which challenge hegemonic forms of social organizations and offer new forms of belonging. The novel reconfigures the stocks of identity, power, and nation by positioning marginalized voices as agents in resistance rather than passive victims. The study concludes that Roy's work provides a robust critique of the ideological underpinnings of post-colonial nationalism, presenting an alternative vision for inclusive citizenship and social justice in modern times.</p>

## I. INTRODUCTION

Post-colonial literature is central to understanding how newly sovereign peoples wrestled with questions of

identity, power and social justice in the immediate aftermath of colonialism. Nationalism was birthed in many post-colonial societies as a unifying force of anti-

colonial struggle. But the rise of nation-states has also created new forms of exclusion, marginalization and ideological hegemony. Some academicians claim that post-colonialist nationalism reiteratively restructures those disparity frameworks in a pecking order execution of the mental oppression for various minority factions such as ethnic, theological, gendered communities and classes. As a result, much post-colonial literature challenges the epistemic rupture between nationalist unity and social inequality.

This irony can be interrogated through the lens of the contemporary Indian literature. Arundhati Roy is only one of many significant writers addressing marginalization, identity and political power. In her novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), she delivers a finely wrought portrait of Indian society, seen through the eyes of such marginalized characters as hijras, religious minorities, political dissidents and displaced peoples. Its multiple narrative forms and fragmented structure help engage critically with contemporary Indian socio-political realities. Are “inadequacy” instead effective tools to make people comfortable speaking about their positionality in a socio-political landscape, one they find indifferent and disillusioned by (Sharma) It explains that “this narrative shows Roy’s concern with subalternity” (Sharma, 2024), forcing individuals into expressing where they stand.

One of the underlying themes of the novel is marginalization within post-colonial nationalism’s scaffolding. Atish Roy, who writes about characters on the edges of society whether due to gender identity, religion, caste or political views. Such marginalized figures are thus able to challenge dominant narratives of Indian nationalism by revealing the social and political inequalities that get encoded within the Indian nation-state. In the light of this, scholars argue that the novel reflects the struggle for survival of marginalized people in a dog-eat-dog world built on bias, violence and apathy (Mandal, 2018).

Moreover, Roy’s work interrogates the idea of hegemonic power that shapes both national identity and public discourse. The novel reveals how ideological edifices such as political power, religious nationalism and caste hierarchy bring minority peoples to the edge.

By casting characters from diverse social backgrounds, Roy transcends the center-margin binary and reimagines how power interacts with identity in contemporary Indian society (Montheil, 2025).

It’s also central to the novel that it examines political division and civic bloodshed. In episode narratives, revolving around communal riots or the state surveillance and militarization of Kashmir, Roy illustrates the tension between democracy as a normative ideal and plural practice versus authoritarianism in the post-colonial state. However, across the pages of this novel, critics argue that nationalism makes ideology a weapon with which to justify exclusion and quell dissent in the name of national unity (Maurya and Kumar 2019).

So *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* works as much as a literary text, as it does a socio-political commentary on post-colonial national consciousness in India. In this inverted universe, where the colonial state is old and collapsing, the shifting tentacles of power know how to pivot be more monster-like Roy shows her readers their (reader) relationship with marginalized voices and asks how easily hegemonic narratives can disperse. The present study is in this context explores representations of marginalization, critique of hegemonic nationalism and post-colonial national consciousness in Roy’s novel. Duration of the project Because you may direct it towards at least one (but ideally a few publishing houses in view of get around) with which deal to contact.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* has been the object of a growing body of scholarship in the past decades; much of this work approaches the novel as a critique of present-day India’s fractured nationhood. The novel’s expansive political canvas, and its refusal to offer a single national narrative, were underscored in early critical responses. For example, Iyer (2018) interprets it as an account of a “fractured nation” and argues that the novel’s multi-stranded structuring is reflective of the fractured nature of social and political realities in postcolonial India. Meanwhile, in a similar vein, Ganguly (2018) reads the novel as an

event of contemporary Indian English literature, while Maurya and Kumar (2019) foregrounds its dense political allusion and historical referencing specifically to processes of riot, militarization and the ideological deployment of nationalism. Taken together, these studies confirm that Roy's fiction is not merely representational; it is an actively interventionist critique of the Indian nation-state.

One of the chief clusters of critical reviews examine the novel around a lens of subalternity and marginalization. According to Awasthi (2022), Roy's novel re-centres on those such as hijras, Dalits and girls at all times written out of social and political locations in order that the subaltern consciousness turns into a approach of defiance, not merely passive victimhood. Reading the text through the lens of "subalternity" and "new women," Suman and Ranjan (2024) build on this argument to claim that Roy's characters transcend victimhood, exercising forms of agency and self-definition. Babar and Ahmed (2023) read the novel in a similar way, where particularized "otherness" is at work, claiming that Roy charts how society makes outsiders through prejudice, inequality and gendered exclusion. These reading are vital for your topic as they show that marginalization in the novel is not incidental but constitutive of the nation's hegemonic order (Awasthi, 2022; Babar and Ahmed, 2023; Suman and Ranjan, 2024).

Another large body of work concerns gender, queer identity and transgender experience. Suleman et al. As Bahl et al. (2020) note, the novel's sustained engagement with political and gender injustice is especially evident through Anjum's narrative. Rhema and Senthamarai (2023) also read violence in Anjum's story through trauma theory, showing how particular forms of gendered violence as well as stigmatization and social exclusion both fictionalized in the novel as well as lived events jeopardizes one's ability to incorporate grief into a unitary identity except when that generates profound psychic scars. Gopaladhas (2025) extends this line of analysis by venturing into the gendered spaces of the novel, contending that Roy reveals how physical and symbolic space alike are structured through discriminatory practices that render those who do not

fit within normative gender binaries to be marginal. Finally, Kuiti (2021) engages a prominent queer feminist framework by reading motherhood in the novel to facilitate resistant and anti-normative practice. Together these studies demonstrate how Roy uses the gender deviant body not just as character quirk but rather as one of a key site through which to reveal the hegemonic national morality and means of social control (Kuiti 2021, Rhema and Senthamarai 2023, Gopaladhas 2015).

There are attendant literatures on precarity, ruin, otherness. Claiming that Roy places the precarious lives of India's "others" at its center, Mendes and Lau (2020) argue that she transforms precarity into a creative, relational form of survival. It's with some irony that Mitra (2022) also lingers over the novel's "ruin-worlds," haling how there exists life, death and repair all at once in those damaged environments, which nonetheless sustain community. Reading with a bioregional and cosmopolitan outpost, Sarkar (2023) reads the novel as in particular conversation with intersex identity and a remaking of home outside fixed anthropocentric and nationalist borders. More recently, Jadoon (2024) examined the political valence which happiness, intimacy and solidarity contain in its titular novel through an analysis of how Roy's anti-hegemonic ethics enables us to see the personal as political. This is significant work because it moves beyond a simple oppression narrative and charts how Roy imagines counter-spaces of care, kinship and survival in the face of the nation-state's exclusions.

A different body of critique frames language, form and multilingualism as political strategies. As Ross (2022) notes, Roy's politics of language lies at the forefront as it fights against hegemonic literary and national hierarchies that place vernacular textures, alongside multilingual expression to the side. Neumann (2021/2023) also shows that multilingualism in the novel is not ornamental but instead destabilizes singular narratives of nation and literary authority. By looking at it through the lens of ethical narratology, Pour Jafari and Baradaran Jamili (2022) argue that Torabi's method for telling her story is in itself motivated by moral considerations, forcing the reader to confront suffering and plurality and historical violence while not feeling

secure in finding out how they're all resolved nationally. These studies demonstrate how Roy's critique of postcolonial nationalism operates thematically but also through form, voice and narrative texture.

The novel's treatment of Kashmir, militarization and the postcolonial state has also attracted close scrutiny from scholars. While Pal (2023), works on Basharat Peer not Roy, will help in locating Kashmir as a space of "othering" in the postcolonial discourse as such. More precisely, critiques of Roy's novel say that Kashmir reveals the failure of Indian secular nationalism and violence inherent in state sovereignty. In his essay on the postcolonial subalternation of Kashmiris, Hassan reads *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* as a Critique of the Indian state's exploitative relationship to minorities and Kashmir proper. The 'trauma', the 'story' in the novel is indissociable from histories of militarization and repression (Piciucco 2024). These readings support the argument that the novel links national consciousness to coercion, surveillance and the silencing of politically unwanted groups.

At a more general theoretical level, work on postcolonial nationalism and hegemony also informs how we read Roy's literary critique. Nayak (2021) questions the boundaries of postcolonial historiography while also showing that the language of postcolonialism itself risks reintroducing elitist and exclusionary forms of knowledge. As Zhang (2023: 2) points out, postcolonial nationalism has an ambivalent relationship to anticolonial discourses that is at once enabling and

constraining, managing in part to replicate hierarchies and reactionary logics. Majumdar (2015) has taken a return to subaltern studies as a way of recovering non-elite political agency, while Bagde (2020) presents on the persistence of human-rights violations against Dalits in India. Read through the lens of Roy, these studies bring to light how postcolonial nationalism can work hegemonically: it invokes the people but denies vast swathes of them citizenship, dignity and representation (Bagde, 2020; Nayak, 2021; Majumdar, 2015; Zhang, 2023).

However, despite this flourishing body of scholarship, there remains a significant gap in the The current critique often either compartmentalizes one aspect, whether it is the novel gender or subalternity (but not each of these aspects in unison as a coherent analysis), and does not sufficiently put the three key elements marginality/hegemony and appendices to post-colonial national consciousness effectively in conversation with one another. Maurya and Kumar (2019), Suleman et al. While related (2020), Awasthi (2022), Mendes and Lau (2020) Babar and Ahmed (2023) do not always tie together how Fanon's critique of national consciousness sits alongside Gramscian hegemony, nor the portrayal of socially erased bodies and communities in the novel. Your scholarship can contribute by making plain how Roy's novel does not simply chronicle lives in the margins, but instead anatomizes how the postcolonial nation makes those margins through ideological, cultural and political domination while it also unveils fragile counter-publics of resistance and care.

*Table: Overview of Key Literature on The Ministry of Utmost Happiness and Post-colonial Nationalism*

Author(s)	Year	Research Focus	Key Findings	Relevance to Current Study
Iyer	2018	Fragmented nationalism in Roy's novel	The novel portrays India as a fractured nation where multiple identities challenge the idea of a unified national narrative.	Supports the argument that Roy critiques dominant nationalist discourse.
Ganguly	2018	Political dimensions of Roy's fiction	Roy's narrative reflects contemporary socio-political conflicts in India and questions the legitimacy of nationalist ideology.	Demonstrates the novel's political engagement with modern Indian society.

<b>Maurya and Kumar</b>	2019	Political symbolism and nationalism	The novel exposes how nationalism is used as a political tool to justify exclusion and violence.	Provides evidence for the study's discussion of hegemonic nationalism.
<b>Awasthi</b>	2022	Subaltern consciousness	Roy foregrounds marginalized identities such as hijras and Dalits to challenge dominant social hierarchies.	Reinforces the theme of marginalization and subaltern agency.
<b>Babar and Ahmed</b>	2023	Otherness and social exclusion	The novel illustrates how social institutions construct "others" through gender, religion, and class.	Supports the study's argument on structural marginalization.
<b>Suman and Ranjan</b>	2024	Gender and agency	Marginalized characters demonstrate agency and resilience rather than passive victimhood.	Contributes to the discussion on resistance and identity formation.
<b>Mendes and Lau</b>	2020	Precarity and survival	Roy portrays precarious lives but highlights creative forms of survival and community among marginalized groups.	Relates to the study's findings on alternative communities.
<b>Mitra</b>	2022	Ruin-worlds and community	The novel shows how marginalized communities create meaningful lives within socially damaged environments.	Supports the argument about symbolic spaces such as Jannat Guest House.
<b>Ross</b>	2022	Politics of language	Roy uses multilingual narrative strategies to challenge dominant literary and political hierarchies.	Demonstrates how narrative form critiques nationalism.
<b>Piciucco</b>	2024	Trauma and storytelling	The novel links personal trauma with historical violence, particularly in the Kashmir conflict.	Supports analysis of political violence and state power.
<b>Zhang</b>	2023	Post-colonial nationalism	Nationalism in post-colonial contexts can reproduce hierarchical power relations and social exclusion.	Provides theoretical grounding for analyzing hegemonic nationalism.
<b>Nayak</b>	2021	Post-colonial historiography	Post-colonial discourse sometimes reproduces elitist perspectives while claiming to represent national unity.	Helps frame the critique of post-colonial national consciousness.

### III. METHOD

Using a qualitative textual analysis, this study aims to explore themes of marginalization and hegemony, and the shortcomings of post-colonial national consciousness in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy. The qualitative literary analysis is a common approach employed in the literary and cultural field to analyse meanings, ideological formations, and

social representations crystallized in written works (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). This method allows for research about how narratives mirror larger socio-political realities and cultural discourses. As a form of textual analysis, it works well within post-colonial literature because such writers are able to reflect dominant ideological systems, or at least challenge it by creating space for the voices of the oppressed (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007).

Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2016) serves as the main text for this research. It is examined through close reading of narrative episodes, representations of gendered characters, dialogues and mythical spaces that bring up issues of marginalization, gender identity, political conflict and state power. Close attention is paid to Anjum, Tilo and Musa, whose stories reflect the complex interplay of identity, power and resistance in modern Indian society. Through these narrative constructs, the novel is read as a challenge of hegemonic nationalist discourse and an unmasking of the contradictions underpinning post-colonial nationhood.

This study is guided by a theoretical framework that draws on post-colonial theory, cultural hegemony and studies of the subaltern. Much of the mark Gramsci left on political thought comes from his theory of cultural hegemony in which he suggests that the ruling groups use ideological and cultural means to capture a society (Gramsci 1971). In post-colonial contexts, the mechanism of hegemony puts forth a monolithic notion of national identity that relegates minority communities to the periphery. Post-colonial theorists like Homi K. Bhabha believe national identity is itself hybrid and contested, not homogeneous (Bhabha, 1994). In a parallel way, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak underlines the need to acknowledge subaltern voices beyond dominant political and cultural discourses (Spivak, 1988).

Along with the primary text, secondary texts comprise peer-reviewed journal articles and books and critical essays surrounding post-colonial nationalism, gender studies, and contemporary Indian literature. These texts offer scholarly readings that validate the critical approach and place Roy's narrative in an academic register.

There are three stages to this analytical process. The text is then analyzed in order to seek important themes concerning marginalization, identity politics, and hegemonic power structures. Secondly, these themes are viewed through the lens of post-colonial and cultural hegemony theory. Finally, the results are synthesized to assess how Roy's novel critiques the

limitations of post-colonial national consciousness in India.

#### IV. RESULTS

For this part, a detailed interpretation of the findings emerged from conducting qualitative textual analysis on Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is provided. The analysis was performed by coding narrative episodes, character development, symbolic spaces and political contexts found in the novel thematically. These results point to certain interrelated themes that demonstrate how Roy critiques post-colonial national consciousness in India. The analysis identified four core thematic dimensions: structural marginality, hegemonic nationalism, identity-based resistance, and the formation of counter-communities that contest dominant national discourses.

##### **Structural Marginalization and the Politics of Exclusion**

The first significant finding explores the ubiquitous nature of structural marginalization in the novel. Roy foregrounds marginalized communities especially transgender people, religious minorities and political dissidents in the story. Anjum, a queer woman of the hijra community in India (a term used to denote people) is forced out to live as an outsider face numerous instances of discrimination and shows us how one systemic flaw leads to another. Her life story lays bare the extent to which social norms and institutional practices shut out gender minorities from public life.

According to this analysis, Roy depicts marginalization as a systemic social phenomenon rather than an individual bias. The story shows the ways in which cultural traditions, religious attitudes and state institutions can together promote systems of exclusion. Anjum's story shows how marginalized people often experience gender discrimination along with economic and social marginalization. This plays out in the way these disparate forms of marginalization challenge and collide with one another, exposing the shortcomings of the post-colonial state's ability to forge a cohesive national identity.

Beyond gender identity, Roy also highlights that marginalization does not only exist in the form of being a queer. The novel is also one of the best recent explorations of life for people struggling in lower social classes, minority religious communities and politically oppressed groups. Roy emphasizes the parlous multiplicity of inequality that still pervades Indian society by encapsulating these myriad experiences within an overarching narrative.

### **Hegemonic Nationalism and Ideological Dominance**

The second main finding of the study relates to hegemonic nationalism and its dynamic(s) in the socio-political milieu of the novel. Roy questions a concept of the nation as a single, cohesive whole. Rather, the story provides that nationalist ideology serves merely as a vehicle for political elites to uphold power and crush dissent.

The findings demonstrate that the novel repeatedly highlights the chasm between official stories of national unity and the material conditions for life for marginalized communities. Roy also demonstrates, through the references to communal riots and political propaganda and religious polarization, how nationalist discourse is used as a vehicle for legitimizing discrimination against minority groups as well making all manner of justification for violence against these communities. Nationalism takes on a strong ideological character in this context, legitimizing hierarchies among the social classes and strengthening dominant cultural habits.

Another key aspect of hegemonic nationalism in the novel, is its intersection with religious identity. Roy shows that religious symbols and rhetoric are often mobilized to reinforce nationalist sentiment. This is a process that typically excludes communities which do not conform to the religious identity that ends up co-terminus with the nation. Narrative thus illustrates the manner in which nationalism can evolve from a unifying political ideology into an exclusionary structure that actively marginalizes minority populations.

### **Political Violence and the Role of the State**

The third key finding from the analysis concerns the depiction of political violence and state power in the novel. Roy's description of the conflict in Kashmir serves as a potent illustration of this post-colonial state and power as it is concretely exercised, or resisted, within contested political spaces. By presenting various narratives through the experiences of characters tied to the Kashmiri struggle, it exposes its violence across everyday life and how militarization, surveillance and political repression seep into the fabric of daily existence.

The findings suggest that Roy frames the state as an entity that protects national sovereignty while simultaneously oppressing marginalized communities. The militarization of Kashmir, for instance, exposes the gap between democratic precepts and coercive state operations. The local population live in fear under the eyes of armed forces, checkpoints and perpetual surveillance.

These narrative features indicate that the post-colonial state frequently mirrors its colonial regime by reproducing structures of control. By showing the human impact of political strife, Roy highlights the moral and social toll of preserving national cohesion by force. Such criticism fundamentally challenged the legitimacy of state power and opened up a whole new set of questions regarding nationalism, sovereignty, and human rights.

### **Identity, Agency, and Resistance**

Another key point of this research is how resistance reshapes the narrative of marginalized identities, making it a basic component in defining those identities. Roy's narrative does not merely present marginalized people as such, so-called passive victims of the oppressor. Rather, the characters resist in multiple ways that push back against the existing social and political order.

Political activism, personal defiance and the formation of supportive communities are various forms these acts of resistance take. Characters who resist dominant ideologies do so through small forms of resistance rather than ambitious confrontation. For instance,

networks of solidarity allow marginalized individuals to offer emotional support and collective strength.

The results also imply that the phenomenon of resistance within the novel is deeply entrenched in the notion of identity creation. In rejecting the labels assigned by dominant social structures, marginalized characters reconfigure their subjectivity and carve out new modes of belonging. They are able to assert their agency and challenge the ideological boundaries that prevent them from being a part of society through this process.

### **Alternative Communities and the Reimagining of the Nation**

The most original result of this study, perhaps, is the ways the novel presents other social spaces that trouble nationalistic narratives. Roy also introduces symbolic settings such as the Khwabgah and the Jannat Guest House that operate as bastions of inclusivity for those abandoned by mainstream society.

These spaces are a radical rethinking of national identity. In contrast to rigid political structures associated with the state, these communities contain empathy, mutual support and social diversity. People from multi backgrounds share an open space that breaks down barriers associated with race, gender, religion and class.

Roy employs such spaces to demonstrate the potential for building a better type of society according to this analysis. Through the depiction of marginalized communities that develop their own modes of belonging, the novel dismantles the hegemony different politics by showing how they are more than merely political institutions. Instead, Roy argues that a nation's real strength comes in its willingness to make space for a variety of beliefs and the recognition of all citizens' dignity.

### **Integrated Interpretation of Findings**

In general, positive findings of this study show that The Ministry of Utmost Happiness expresses an integrated criticism on post-colonial nationalism. At heart, the novel sheds light on how systems of marginalization and the ideological dominance and political violence that enforce them intersect to shape experiences within

a nation-state. Yet Roy's vision is also one of resistance and renewal, a sense that positive change can emerge in the form of alternative worlds.

The results also expose how Roy's idea of the nation conflicts with traditional nationalism by portraying a disjointed and multivocal social reality. Rather than depict the country as a singular entity, the novel reveals both its diversity and complexity what defines present-day India. By centering marginal voices, the narrative challenges readers to rethink what citizenship, belonging and identity can mean in a post-colonial world.

In the end, this study shows that Roy's text is not only critical of post-colonial nationalism as a phantasmatic utopia but also discloses alternative understanding of nation as one built on diversity, social justice and collective solidarity i.e. as essential for democracy.

### **Discussion**

It opens the door to rich insights as to how Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* serves as a crucial literary intervention that reveals the contradictions in India's post-colonial national psyche. By centering marginalized communities and alternative sites of socialization, the novel contests the dominant national narrative that conceives of the nation as a unified and homogeneous entity. Post-colonial theory, cultural hegemony and modern identity/resistance debates are used to read these data.

One of the main implications drawn from these results has to do with the way that marginalization is seen as a structural condition rather than an isolated problem of this or that social group. Roy's story illustrates how exclusion is pervasive across the social institutions, political systems and cultural categories. Individuals like Anjum are symbolic of the embodiment of experiences that fall outside mainstream definitions of gender, religion, and citizenship. This depiction bolsters an argument made by scholars that, often, post-colonial countries reproduce the hierarchical power dynamics established in colonial rule and maintain varieties of social injustice long after independence is achieved. Roy dismantles the traditional literary hierarchy, which tends to silence subaltern voices, by placing marginalized identities at the forefront of the narrative.

Another key aspect of the debate concerns how hegemonic nationalism has influenced the ideology of the post-colonial state. Roy's exposure of the way that nationalist narratives stifle diversity and dissent suggests an implicit critique of the myth of national unity in her own work. The novel depicts communal violence, political surveillance and militarization as manifestations of how nationalism operates as a system of ideological compulsion. From a theoretical point of view this statement is in accordance with Antonio Gramsci's cultural hegemony theory where dominant groups use cultural and ideological means to maintain power through indirect way rather than just direct ways. Roy's story shows that hegemonic nationalism operates on the levels of state institutions and also social conventions about what constitutes membership in the nation.

This also underscores the sense of identity woven into political resistance. Marginalized characters in the novel are not only victims of exclusion but also members of a resistance that are 'challenging dominant ideological structures. These characters create alternative narratives through personal relationships, storytelling and acts of solidarity that challenge the legitimacy of hegemonic power. This discovery echoes the ideas of post-colonial theorists like Homi K. Bhabha, who argues that national identity is never stable or homogeneous but always hybridized and contentious. Thus, Roy's narrative exposes how waivered subjects navigate identity and belonging in a splintered socio-political milieu.

The latter also discusses the importance of alternative spaces in the novel. Boundaries are blurred there, as these symbolic spaces share similar motifs of empathy and solidarity; places like the Karabagh and Jannat Guest House where people deemed interstitial have gone to form a community through mutualism. Such spaces resist the dominant political order by proposing a vision of society that is opposed to rigid social hierarchies. In this sense, Roy's narrative suggests the marginalities of society may themselves become spaces for creativity, for resistance and socio-political transformation. Within these spaces, the idea of the nation as a plural and inclusive space rather than a political homogenous one is beginning to take shape.

Another key point in the conversation is the book's presentation of political violence and state power. Roy's portrayal of the conflict in Kashmir shows us how post-colonial state power can reproduce some of the familiar forms of authoritarian control characteristic of colonial regimes. Thus, the militarization of the region and surveillance for political dissent also expose the fault lines between democratic aspirations and coercive rule. Such narratives show that, in many cases, the interests of the nation-state supersede justice for both individuals and labour around notions of territory sovereignty and ideological unity.

All in all, the discussion indicates that Roy's novel is an important text for post-colonial literary discourse today by interrogating the foundations of national identity within the context of Indian nationhood. The Ministry of Utmost Happiness critiques the hegemonic nature of nationalism and the under representation of big democracy in its writing through its sprawling, multi display narrative that explores a range of voices across gender, class and religion. The novel ultimately asks its readers to reshape their understanding of citizenship, belonging and commonality in a multi-ethnic society.

Last but not least, the whole discussion also emphasizes how Roy questions the extremes in post-colonial and national consciousness so that people can achieve a new perspective on nation which entails inclusion of everyone thus bringing into focus all staking of empathy, social justice and keeping democracy intact.

### **Conclusion**

Utilizing qualitative textual analysis and drawing on post-colonial theory, cultural hegemony, and subaltern studies, the study examined how Roy's narrative contests dominant ideological frameworks and foregrounds the realities of communities frequently marginalized in traditional conceptualizations of the nation.

These findings show how the novel explicitly centers marginalized bodies, especially gender minorities, political dissidents and socially excluded groups. In doing so, Roy unsettles the conventional literary and political narratives that tend to ignore such voices. The stories told through characters like Anjum and Tilo illustrate the ways social exclusion works through

interlocking axes of power around gender, religion, politics and cultural codes. Such representations show that marginalization is not just an individual state but a structural one, found within the structures, institutions and ideologies of the nation-state.

Another notable finding of this study is that Roy interrogates the term post-colonial nationalism in a critical tone. Although nationalism historically units as an ideology of anti-colonial struggle, the novel suggests that instead it can function as a hegemonic ideology which subdues pluralism within society and legitimizes exclusionary practices. The story reveals the tensions between the nation's democratic pillars and citizens experience of inequality and marginalization through its depiction of communal violence, political conflict, and state surveillance.

The paper further reveals that another vision of belonging is created by Roy's establishment of symbolic spaces through the Khwabgah and the Jannat Guest House. These spaces offer refuge for marginalized people and constitute types of collective solidarity that disrupt dominant power structures. Roy works steadily, constructing communities of empathy and inclusion so that the nation becomes not a bloody political project marked by schismatic borders but instead a plural entity capable of dreaming.

Furthermore, this study redefines an important field of post-colonial literary scholarship by creating a unified analytical model that articulates the overlapping dynamics of marginalization, hegemony and national consciousness. It shows how the process of literary storytelling can illustrate the complexity of power, identity, and resistance within post-colonial societies. Roy's writing shows that literature can be a powerful means by which to critique political ideologies, and push for broader notions of citizenship and social justice.

Ultimately, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* provides a searing indictment of the post-colonial national consciousness that is increasingly inadequate to contemporary India. In foregrounding the voices of the marginalized and revealing the inner workings of hegemonic power, then, these novel challenges readers to rethink conventional notions of nationhood, identity

and belonging. According to the article, in order to shape a larger vision of what the nation should represent in the world beyond colonialism and as part of a post-colonial landscape, diversity must be acknowledged and structural inequalities addressed.

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Last but not least, the author appreciates the efforts of colleagues and reviewers whose constructive comments and suggestions improved the quality as well as clarity of this work. The guidance and motivation facilitated by them proved to be essential in achieving this study.

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