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VICTIMIZATION AND OTHERIZATION OF THE MUSLIMS IN ROY'S
THE MINISTRY OF UTMOST HAPPINESS: A POSTCOLONIAL
CRITIQUE

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a postcolonial analysis of Arundhati Roy's novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, by exploring the portrayal of victimization and the otherization of Indian and Kashmiri Muslims. It delves into the portrayal of the Muslims as victims of a system (the Hindu-dominated system) that perpetuates their exploitation and marginalization. The narrative of the novel explores the aftermath of India's partition and the consequent power dynamics that have relegated the Muslims to the status of 'others'. Employing qualitative methodology, the study shows how Roy's vivid prose exposes the systemic injustices faced

by Muslim characters, including discrimination, violence, and loss. The research critically examines the novel's exploration of identity, nationalism, and religious polarization, while also highlighting the deliberate efforts within the Hindu community to establish India as an exclusively Hindu state. Ultimately, this postcolonial critique of the novel seeks to provoke reflection on the dynamics of communal relationships and the urgent need for empathy, understanding, and social change in contemporary India.

INTRODUCTION

Arundhati Roy is a renowned Indian author, activist, and political commentator. She began her career working in television and movies, starring in the film *Massey Sahib* in 1985 and writing screenplays for films like *In Which Annie Gives It*, *Those One* and *Electric Moon*, both directed by her husband, Krishen. However, Roy gained international fame with the publication of her debut novel, *The God of Small Things*, which appeared in 1997. This semi-autobiographical novel captures her childhood experiences in Aymanam, winning the prestigious Booker Prize for Fiction in 1997, and becoming a bestseller. Roy sheds light on the struggles and injustices the weak segments of society endure, highlighting the systemic oppression and violence they encounter by the strong ones.

Roy's second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* delves into the intricacies of one's sense of self, focusing on the obstacles encountered by individuals who are identified as Muslims. The novel stands out as a brave and intellectually stimulating piece of literature that defies conventional societal standards and compels readers to confront unsettling realities. It examines the interplay between societal and religious tensions, as well as the suppression of cultural expression within Indian society. The story of the novel sheds light on both overt and covert methods employed by colonial powers and their collaborators to manipulate and exploit Muslims according to their own agendas. The narrative revolves around a diverse set of characters from various communities residing in Indian society. While addressing multiple themes, the novel specifically examines the experiences of victimization and Otherization faced by the Muslims. By depicting their stories, Roy (2017) aims to raise awareness about the victimization and Otherization faced by Muslims, emphasizing the urgent need for compassion, understanding, and social change.

One of the key aspects explored in the book is the aftermath of the partition of India and Pakistan, which led to significant shifts in power dynamics. As the Hindu community gained influence, the Muslims found themselves marginalized and manipulated, their identity reduced to that of "others." Roy (2017) highlights the deliberate efforts within the Hindu community to establish India as a Hindu nation, relegating Muslims to the fringes of society. Through her vivid prose, the novelist exposes the harsh realities faced by the Muslim characters, capturing their experiences of discrimination, violence, and loss. She confronts the reader with the systemic injustices that perpetuate their victimization, raising important questions about identity, nationalism, and the consequences of religious polarization. Roy's (2017) powerful storytelling and nuanced exploration of the victimization and Otherization of Muslims in India compel us to ponder on complexity of communal

relationships and the urgent need for empathy, understanding, and social change.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How does the novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, depict the victimization and Otherization of the Muslims in India and Kashmir?

In what ways, does the novel contribute to the otherization of the Muslims within the postcolonial context of India and Kashmir?

OBJECTIVES

Objectives of this study are given below:

To analyze the portrayal of victimization and Otherization of the Muslims in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and understand the underlying themes and narrative techniques employed by Arundhati Roy;

To critically examine the novel's representation of the Otherization of the Muslims and its implications within the postcolonial framework of India and Kashmir.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Batra (2017) in his article "Politico-literary Response to Terrorism: A Study of Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*," examines the theme of terrorism and its socio-political implications. He analyzes Roy's narrative techniques, character development, and thematic elements to highlight the novel's engagement with political realities and the complex nature of terrorism. The article explores how Roy's work challenges traditional notions of terrorism by presenting a nuanced understanding of the motivations, experiences, and the consequences associated with acts of violence.

In the article "Writing in the Necropolis: Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*," the author Tickell (2018) offers a critical analysis of Roy's novel within the framework of transcultural studies. The article explores the themes of violence, marginalization, and resistance in the context of India and its complex socio-political landscape. The author examines Roy's narrative strategies, such as her use of multiple perspectives and fragmented storytelling, to illuminate the experiences of marginalized communities, including Muslims. Similarly, in their research "Political and Gender Issues in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*," Suleman, Mohamed, and Ahmmed (2020) also delve into the political and gender-related themes present in Roy's novel. They examine the ways in which Roy's characters navigate and challenge societal norms, highlighting the intersections between politics and gender in the narrative. The article sheds light on the author's exploration of power structures, marginalization, and the struggles faced by individuals in a complex socio-political landscape.

In their research article "Gender and Sexual Identity in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*: A Cixousian Analysis of Hijra's Resistance and Remaking of the Self," Anuar and Asl (2021) explore the themes of gender and sexual identity in Roy's novel. They employ a Cixousian analysis to

examine the portrayal of the Hijra community and their experiences of resistance and self-transformation. The authors delve into the ways, in which, Roy's narrative challenges societal norms and binary constructs of gender and sexuality, focusing on the agency and empowerment of the Hijra characters.

Mendes and Lau (2020) in their work "The Precarious Lives of India's Others:

The Creativity of Precarity in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*," explore the theme of precarity in Roy's novel. They examine how the marginalized characters in the book, referred to as 'Others,' navigate the precariousness of their lives and find creative ways to assert their agency and resilience. Drawing on postcolonial theories and concepts of precarity, the authors analyze the socio-political context in which the story unfolds and its impact on the lives of the characters. They discuss how Roy portrays the struggles and complexities faced by the marginalized communities in India. Lau and Mendes (2022) in another article explore how Roy employs the theme of romance to challenge and subvert conventional narratives surrounding marginalized communities. The authors analyze the portrayal of characters such as the hijras and Kashmiri Muslims, emphasizing how their stories disrupt dominant power structures and challenge normative notions of love and identity.

In his article titled "Too much blood for good literature': Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and the question of realism," Menozzi (2019) delves into the issue of realism in Roy's novel. He examines the complex narrative structure and the interplay between reality and fiction in the book, particularly in relation to the depiction of violence and suffering. He explores the tension between the desire for aesthetic pleasure and the ethical imperative to address the harsh realities of violence and oppression.

In their article titled "Political Overtones and Allusions in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*," Maurya and Kumar (2019) explore the political dimensions, political themes, symbols, and allusions present in the narrative, highlighting how Roy engages with the socio-political landscape of India. The authors examine the portrayal of political events, such as the Kashmir conflict and the rise of Hindu nationalism, and the ways in which these events shape the lives of the characters. They also discuss the use of allegory and symbolism to convey political messages and commentaries. Researchers argue that Roy's novel serves as a critique of the dominant political ideologies and power structures in India.

The existing literature lacks the theme of victimization and Otherization of Muslims in Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. So, the present research will fill the gap in this direction.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Postcolonial theory offers a lens through which to examine the power dynamics, cultural hegemony, and colonial legacies that shape the experiences of marginalized communities in postcolonial societies. Post-colonialism refers to a theoretical and intellectual framework that examines the historical,

cultural, social, and political implications of colonialism and its legacies on formerly colonized societies. It seeks to challenge and deconstruct the power structures, Eurocentric narratives, and discourses that perpetuate the marginalization and subordination of colonized peoples.

Post-colonialism encompasses various perspectives, including literature, cultural studies, history, sociology, and anthropology, to critically analyze the complex dynamics between colonizers and the colonized. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989) argue that post-colonialism addresses “the continuing impact of colonization on societies, cultures, and individuals” (p. 2). Ahmad (1997) argues that postcolonialism refers to “any resistance to colonialism” (p. 337). The notion of ‘Other’ is of immense critical attention in the domain of postcoloniality. It is used for those who are low in rank, and, who are termed as subalterns. Antonio Gramsci (2007) coined the term “subaltern” to denote the low and downtrodden individual of the society. The concept of “subaltern” has been widely recognized by critics and intellectuals as a mode of criticism and an exploration of postcolonial issues. According to Guha (1982), the term “subaltern” refers to individuals of an inferior rank. In his work, Said (1978) emphasizes the marginalization of the “Other”, both pre and post colonization period. Said challenges Western assumptions about the East and sheds light on various issues related to colonial or imperial rule. Furthermore, Said argues that the concept of the “Other” extends beyond politics and encompasses cultural and literary domains as well.

Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin (2011) remarks that the Muslims are stigmatized as other, backward and terrorist and “All these stereotypes have emerged with renewed force since 9/11” (p.2). They argue that the Muslims are “threatening, untrustworthy terrorists” (p.3). Morey and Yaqin (2011) warn about the potential danger of using terms such as the “Muslim Other” and “the West” (p. 6) in discussions, even when critiquing or deconstructing them. They caution that by invoking these terms, there is a risk of inadvertently perpetuating the notion of homogeneity that often stifles ongoing intercultural debates. In other words, the act of labeling and categorizing can contribute to oversimplifying complex cultural dynamics and hinder a nuanced understanding of diverse perspectives. The term “marginalization” refers to a state of being positioned outside the dominant culture and “central social processes” (p. 205), as stated by Patton (2005). It signifies a marginalized status where individuals or groups are excluded from the mainstream and often face social, economic, and political disadvantages. Barry (2004) suggests that any deviation from Western norms can be recognized and labeled as “other” and “marginal.” (p.67) Crane (2004) argues that marginality is a process whereby individuals or groups gradually find themselves in a “marginalized position” (p. 623), often due to societal factors and power dynamics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research will employ a qualitative analysis of Roy’s novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, using literary criticism and postcolonial theory as the primary analytical frameworks, focusing on the victimization and otherization

of Muslims in India and Kashmir. The methodology involves close reading, identification of key passages, and thematic coding.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Roy (2017) points out that the leaders and organizations in India display strong opposition to Muslim values, treating them as the “other” within society, thus intensifying their marginalization. Following the Hitlerian ideology and considering them to be Hitler, they compare “the Muslims of India to the Jews of Germany” (p. 41). This comparison further exacerbates the oppression and marginalization experienced by the Muslim community in India. The Hindus exert control over the Muslims, treating them as puppets and perpetuating exploitation on them.

There is a determined effort within the Hindu community to establish India as an exclusively Hindu state, thereby relegating the Muslims to the status of ‘others’. They declare that India is purely “a Hindu one”(p. 41). In this context, the term “other” refers to colonized Muslims, with the Hindus assuming the role of colonizers and the Muslims representing a religious minority subjected to their dominance. Muslims faced intense hatred and became victims of the dominant Hindu community’s animosity within Indian society.

The novelist highlights the violation of this constitutional oath by the Prime Minister, who addresses all “Mussalman”, calling them “the other” (p. 41). Here the novelist underscores the contrast between the leader’s public persona and the discriminatory rhetoric he espouses. Symbolically, The Prime Minister represents the colonial forces and embodies the mindset of oppressors who perceive marginalized communities (Muslim one) as others. This portrayal emphasizes the parallel between the Prime Minister’s actions and the historical behavior of colonizers who viewed and treated marginalized groups as distinct and inferior. Further, the Prime Minister in his speech declare that the Muslim spread their faith “through terror” (p. 41).

In his speech, the Prime Minister crafts a couplet to warn the Hindu community about the possibility of a tragic event in India similar to “what had happened in America” (p. 42). The Prime Minister, already harboring suspicions about Muslim identity, becomes even more cautious about the state of India following the 9/11 incident. As a result, he introduces an anti-terrorism law in the country, which primarily affects the Muslim population. The Muslim community, already marginalized, becomes further marginalized and insecure. The Prime Minister’s labeling of Muslims as terrorists infringes upon their basic human rights. Political marginalization further exacerbates the situation for the Muslim community.

Religious minorities in Indian society, including Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs, have been severely and deeply impacted by public violence. This climate of violence has contributed to a pervasive sense of discrimination against these religious groups. Disturbingly, such violence often goes unpunished, and there are instances where state actors are involved, either by inciting violence, engaging in hate speech, or failing to conduct proper

investigations following such incidents. Newspapers carry the news of Muslim boys killed in “encounters” (p. 42) with the police.

Anjum, a transgender Muslim character, encounters a lost girl named Zainab amidst television reports on bomb blasts, while a new law in India allows prolonged detention without trials and soon the jails “were full of Muslim men” (p. 42). Anjum expresses gratitude to God upon realizing that the lost child she encounters is a girl, as she believes that being a girl provides some level of safety. Following this incident, Muslims find themselves further marginalized within Indian society compared to previous circumstances. The Muslim community lacks a sense of security in the largest democratic country, India. Muslim boys face encounters where they are killed or arrested under charges of planning terrorism. The implementation of the new law allows suspects to be held in custody without trial for extended periods.

According to Roy (2017), the Muslim community in Kashmir experiences severe marginalization and victimization, being denied even the most basic rights for survival. The novel highlights the unjust arrest and imprisonment of a large number of Muslim boys, around a hundred, who become victims of this tragic incident. Anjum and Zakir Mian, two characters in the novel, also suffer the same fate and are unjustly thrown into prison for an extended period of time. Meanwhile, the Chief Minister of Gujarat, who is a devoted member of the organization, is preparing for re-election, while acts of violence continue unabated in the state for several weeks. Mobs, equipped with swords and tridents, are dressed in headbands that bear detailed records of the “Muslim residences, businesses, and shops”. (Roy, 2017, p. 45). The massacres and violence are pervasive, affecting various aspects of life, including homes, businesses, shops, and even hospitals. The presence of the police as part of the mob suggests a lack of protection and accountability. The novelist shows how the Indian government employs similar tactics of violence, domination, and subjugation to oppress minorities, particularly Muslims. The narrative portrays the arrest, intimidation, and physical abuse of Muslims by sacred Hindu mobs, supported by the government. The novel explores the suppression and torture endured by minorities, presenting a reflection of neocolonialist strategies utilized by the Indian government, as described by Frantz Fanon.

The Muslim community, indeed, faces significant challenges and marginalization in various aspects of life. While it is important to acknowledge that other communities, such as the Sikhs, may also experience marginalization, the Muslim community often bears a disproportionate burden of discrimination and exclusion. The Hindu community, being the majority in India, holds considerable power and influence in the country’s social, cultural, and political spheres. It is crucial to recognize that systemic factors, historical contexts, and socio-political dynamics contribute to the marginalization of any community. In the case of the Muslim community in India, their minority status, coupled with prevailing power structures and dynamics, can contribute to their marginalized position within society. However, it is essential to approach the topic with sensitivity and nuance, recognizing that not all

members of a community may share the same experiences and that individual experiences can vary within and across communities.

Roy (2017) points out that, in order to build a road, "WaliDakhni's shrine had been razed to the ground" (p. 46). The quote highlights the destruction of WaliDakhni's shrine in Ahmadabad and its replacement with a makeshift Hanuman temple during the riots in 2002. This act symbolizes the efforts of certain Hindu politicians to erase the cultural and religious identity of the Muslim community. By demolishing historical and cultural sites significant to the Muslim community, there is an attempt to undermine their roots and heritage. It is important to note that the experiences of the Muslim minority in India can vary, and not all Hindus or Hindu politicians engage in such actions. However, it is true that the Muslim community in India faces various challenges, including deprivation, injustice, and maltreatment.

The novel highlights the pressure on Muslims to hide or change their religious identity due to suspicion and discrimination. Mansoor, a character in the novel, shaves off "his beard" and wears Hindu dress in order to "pass off as a Hindu" (p. 46) and avoids being targeted or associated with negative stereotypes. In order to protect themselves, characters like ZakirMian's son resort to altering their appearance by shaving their beards, and, by adopting symbols associated with Hinduism, such as tying a red thread, to avoid suspicion and potential harm. This reflects the challenges faced by Muslims in India who may feel compelled to assimilate into the dominant Hindu identity to protect themselves from prejudice and potential harm. It underscores the challenging reality faced by Muslims during periods of communal tension and the lengths they may go to preserve their safety and lives.

The Hindu mantra "Om bhurbhuvahsvaha, tat saviturvarenyam, bhargodevasyahimahi, dhiyoyo nah pracodayat" (p. 49), too, highlights the challenges faced by characters like Anjum and ZakirMian's son in navigating a hostile and violent environment where their Muslim identity could make them targets. Anjum teaches Zainab a Sanskrit chant, the Gayatri Mantra, which they believe can be recited in mob situations to try to pass off as Hindu for their safety. However, Anjum herself does not fully understand the meaning of the mantra.

Anjum, the Muslim character, upon her distressed return, harbors a fearful belief that the violent events which Gujarat witnessed "could come to Delhi any day" (p. 48). The line shed light on the marginalized and prejudiced condition of Muslims in India, as well as the perception held by some Indian officials who view Muslims as terrorists and a threat to Indian and Western values. The reference to Edward Said's work on Orientalism suggests that Muslims are often stereotypically associated with terrorism and portrayed as the cultural 'other' by the dominant Hindu community. The experiences of Anjum and her aunt, Begum Zeenat, highlight the suspicion and mistreatment faced by Muslims, including being mistaken for Pakistani spies.

Hindu extremists say that Muslims have only one residence that is, "Qabristanya Pakistan!" (p. 62). This thing highlights traumatic experiences

and lasting impact of the Gujarat incident on Anjum, a Muslim character in the novel. Anjum's decision to move to a graveyard can be seen as a symbolic attempt to distance herself from the horrific violence and discrimination she witnessed and experienced at the hands of Hindus during the Gujarat riots. The mention of Anjum's decision to live in a graveyard symbolizes her rejection of the oppressive and uncivilized behavior of the Hindus towards the Muslim community. It signifies her resistance against the unfair treatment imposed by the privileged class in Indian society. Despite the difficulties and discrimination, she faces, Anjum continues to uphold her religious rituals, such as sacrificing a goat on BakrEid, as a form of defiance and affirmation of her identity.

Anjum's desire to forget what happened reflects her need to cope with the traumatic memories and perhaps find solace in a place where she can attempt to rebuild her life away from the hatred and violence she encountered. Further, the line "But she knew very well that she knew (p.70)" suggests that Anjum is unable to completely escape or forget the atrocities she witnessed. The memory of the violence and the knowledge of what happened remains with her, serving as a constant reminder of the pain and suffering endured by the Muslim community.

It is important to note that the novel depicts a fictional narrative, or account of the experiences of all individuals affected by the Gujarat riots or the broader situation of Muslims in India. The phrase, "They, They, Who?" too emphasizes the Otherization of the Muslims whose "only one place" is "graveyard or Pakistan" (p. 62). These phrases highlight the dire situation and marginalization faced by Muslims in Indian society, particularly in the aftermath of the 9/11 incident. It depicts a perception that the Hindu community is determined to exclude and remove Muslims from Indian society, pushing them towards the margins or even forcing them to leave the country.

The text of the novel also emphasizes the social, economic, and political marginalization experienced by Muslims, depriving them of basic human rights. Saddam Hussain is a "Muslim character" who "worked in the mortuary"(p. 73). Saddam, in the novel, is associated with handling cadavers and hence, he experiences unequal and discriminatory treatment from the Hindu doctors. This treatment reflects the hierarchical social structure in which the Hindu upper class holds a position of power and looks down upon individuals from lower social classes or marginalized groups. It suggests that amidst the marginalization and prejudice faced by Muslims, there are still connections and alliances formed, as well as instances of warmth and acceptance among individuals from different backgrounds. The depiction of Saddam being fired from the mortuary due to a dispute with the Hindu doctors further emphasizes the discriminatory practices and unequal treatment he faces. It highlights the deep-rooted prejudices and social divisions present in the society portrayed in the novel.

From the narrative of fiction it is clear that there is a prohibition imposed on Muslims regarding the slaughter of cows "on the day of Bakr-Eid" (p. 89)

because the cow holds great religious significance for the Hindus, who consider it a sacred animal and do not engage in its slaughter. The given phrase implies that in India, it is often safer to be a cow than to be a Muslim, highlighting the discrimination and vulnerabilities faced by the Muslim community. The word "Cow-Killers" (p. 88) is being propagated by the police as a means to incite violence against Muslims and accuse them of slaughtering cows. This false rumor is being spread throughout the city, creating a volatile atmosphere.

The statement suggests that Muslims in Indian society are viewed as a subjugated or oppressed community, drawing a parallel to a colonized nation. Saddam, driven by a desire for vengeance against the man who killed his father, contemplates murder. However, Anjum cautions that Muslims already face a notorious reputation globally, including within the Indian community. Anjum describes the situation of the Muslims to Saddam by stating that "Our name is mud already.", and therefore, "don't do anything in a hurry" (p. 91). Muslims in India endure social, economic, and political marginalization and are deprived of opportunities to fully participate in various fields of life. Considering these circumstances, Anjum, the Muslim character, advises Saddam to exercise caution before taking any action against the Hindu community, emphasizing the potential repercussions it may have on the already vulnerable Muslim community.

The Hindu majority, seen as the colonizers, often associate terrorist activities with Muslims, further tarnishing their image. Anjum, deeply disturbed by the dire situation faced by the Muslim community in India, expresses her fear and concern. She recognizes that Muslims are already stigmatized and labeled as a notorious and marginalized group. Powerful entities and agents in the world. The Hindu extremists consider the Muslims thieves and terrorists "must be hanged (p. 103)!" The Hindu say that both India and Kashmir belong to them and if the Muslims put any effort for liberation of Kashmir, "we'll rip you open seam to seam" (p. 103). Here the Hindus give threat to Muslims, particularly those who are actively engaged in the struggle for Kashmir's liberation from Indian control. It suggests that while they may receive generous treatment for simple requests, any aspirations for Kashmir's independence will be met with severe violence and harm. It reinforces a negative stereotype that is often associated with the Muslim community in Indian society. Muslims are unjustly labeled as terrorists, leading to the perception that they deserve severe and drastic punishment. The Muslims are looked upon as terrorists who "do not deserve Human Rights" (p. 115).

The novelist, Roy (2017) pinpoints that the Premier is strictly opposed to "the centuries of Muslim rule" (p. 401) hoping its collapse. The quoted line sheds light on the biased and distorted mindset of certain Hindu leaders towards the Muslim community in India. These leaders harbor a desire to eliminate and suppress the culture and heritage of Muslims, with the intention of promoting a narrative that solely glorifies Hinduism and upholds Hindu dominance. This discriminatory approach reflects a disregard for diversity and inclusivity, promoting a divisive and exclusionary ideology. Qadri, is murdered by the brutal Indian military officer, Singh, was a prominent human rights activist,

whose dead “body showed up in a sack floating down the Jhelum” (p. 175). Qadri’s murder reveals the sick mentality and excessive aggression of the Indian officers towards the Muslims in Kashmir who seek freedom from Indian rule. The Muslims in Kashmir face exploitation and violence at the hands of the Indian military forces. The aspiration for independence from Indian rule is fervent within the Kashmiri population. However, those brave human rights activists who dare to speak out against the influential and corrupt individuals are often subjected to murder and torture as a means to silence their voices. The Kashmiris’ slogan “Azadi! Azadi! Azadi”(p.180) has no value.

CONCLUSION

Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* stands as a poignant and critical examination of the victimization and Otherization of Muslims in India and Kashmir. Through her masterful storytelling, Roy (2017) sheds light on the injustices faced by the Muslim community and calls for a more inclusive and equitable society. The *Ministry of Utmost Happiness* provides a powerful postcolonial critique of the victimization and Otherization of Muslims in India and Kashmir. Through her rich storytelling and vivid characters, Roy (2017) exposes the deep-rooted injustices faced by the Muslim community in a society marked by religious polarization and nationalist agendas. The novel delves into the aftermath of India’s partition, depicting the power dynamics that have marginalized Muslims and reinforced their status as “others.” The novelist’s exploration of the Muslim characters’ experiences reveals a system that perpetuates their victimization, including discrimination, violence, and loss. By shedding light on these issues, Roy (2017) challenges readers to confront the realities faced by marginalized communities and to critically examine the narratives that shape societal perceptions. Moreover, the novel highlights the deliberate efforts within the Hindu community to establish India as an exclusively Hindu state, further marginalizing and alienating Muslims. Through her portrayal of the dominant Hindu narrative and its impact on Muslim lives, Roy (2017) raises crucial questions about the nature of power, identity, and nationalism in contemporary India. This postcolonial critique serves as a call to action, urging readers to engage in empathy, understanding, and social change.

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