

## Pitfalls of National Consciousness of India: A Critical Study of Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

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### Abstract

Arundhati Roy has critically scrutinized the Postcolonial circumstances of India in her *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. She has depicted the plight of the post-independent India, where the notion of freedom and national consciousness of India falls apart. She has meticulously upheld the cracks and loopholes of Indian national consciousness in her writing. This novel can be examined under the light of Fanon's theory of "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" in his *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon has critically inspected how a nation gets distracted from its actual notion of freedom and national consciousness due to the different obstructive internal forces of a nation. Roy has also focused on the areas which are the pitfalls of Indian national consciousness in a very conscientious way in her writing. The aim of this article is to focus on the fault lines of the national consciousness of India.

### Introduction

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Arundhati Roy has concentrated on different aspects of India and Indian nationalism that reveal all the cracks of Indian national consciousness. Roy has bitterly criticized the people, who want to profit from the very idea of nationalism and different kinds of chaotic situations of India. She has also criticized Indians for worshiping the idea of capitalism, which is an idea that has its origin in the colonial period of India. Roy has diligently raised her voice against the racial conflict amid the Hindus and Muslims of India. She firmly believes that racial conflict is one of the strongest obstacles in the way of achieving national unity in India, since it creates a sense of alienation and separation among the Indians.

Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* can be studied in the light of Fanon's theory of "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" in his *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon has demonstrated the fault lines of the national consciousness of a nation in his theory. For him, decolonization of a nation does not necessarily often mean the end of colonization. He believes that when a country achieves independence, the middle class of that country take on the roles of the former colonizers to extract benefits and profits from that country. Arundhati Roy has shown in her *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, how the idea of Indian nationalism splits up due to the alienation of the ordinary people, empowerment of national middle class, neocolonialism, and racism. This article puts a special focus on the reasons behind the failure of the idea of Indian nationalism, and also aims at locating the fault lines of Indian national consciousness.

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### Methodology

To reach the goal of this paper, it adopts a qualitative style of research and analysis. In this process, a standard amount of previous literary works concentrated on Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* have been examined and brought under consideration. This article very meticulously studies Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* under Fanon's theory of "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" to find out the cracks and loopholes of the Indian national consciousness.

### Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this article is to uphold the pitfalls of Indian national consciousness. And this study has got the following specific objectives as well.

1. To find out the loopholes of the idea of Indian nationalism.
2. To unveil the reasons behind the failure of Indian nationalism.

### Conceptual Theory

Frantz Fanon has written a lot about the struggle and vulnerable situation of the decolonized countries. He has talked about the fault lines of national consciousness of a decolonized country in his theory of "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" in *The Wretched of the Earth*. For Fanon, the nationalism of a nation should be 'all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes' of all the people of a country (Fanon 119). The idea of nationalism should include all the people of a country irrespective of their class or social status, but Fanon says that the scenario of a newly decolonized nation often turns out to be the opposite. He states that instead of being an all-inclusive entity, the national consciousness of a newly independent country becomes a 'fragile travesty', as he says\_

"National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been." (119)

National unity is very important for harmonizing and pasting all the people of a country together for building a strong foundation for a nation. The idea of being all-embracing seems unattainable for a newly liberated country for its internal convolutions; because of this the expected national unity cannot be achieved.

Fanon has stated that the 'national middle class' lay their hands on the colonial power as soon as the country becomes independent. For them, nationalization simply refers to the shift of power, as Fanon says, "To them, nationalization simply means the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period." (Fanon 122) The national middle class thinks that the goal of nationalism is to take the ruling power into their hands from the colonizers. Fanon says that after the liberation of a country, the colonialism does not end rather it takes a new turn, where only the colonial master gets replaced but rest of the things remain almost the same- "...after the independence the white colonial master has been replaced by a dark skinned one, all else-especially the exploitation-remaining the same." (Nayar 109)The national middle class do not stick to the promises that they

made to the nation during the turbulent period, rather they are also found to start behaving just like the former rulers, as Fanon says, "But unhappily we shall see that very often the national middle class does not follow this heroic, positive, fruitful and just path..." (121) They start to exploit their own people the way the former rulers used to do. They want to possess all the posts of the European rulers: "The national bourgeoisie steps into the shoes of the former European settlement: doctors, barristers, traders, commercial travelers, general agents and transport agents." (122) It seems like the national bourgeoisie 'identifies' itself with the Western bourgeoisie (123). The Western bourgeoisie used to subjugate the natives in the most degrading manner, but the things seem to be even worse when the national bourgeoisie takes over the power and subjugates its own people- "...the descent into corruption and moral bankruptcy and the continued subjugation of the people by their own\_i.e., native\_masters." (Nayar 110) The mind of the national bourgeoisie seems to be like that of the businessman. It simply looks for its own profit, as Fanon says- "The psychology of the national bourgeoisie is that of the businessman, not that of captain of industry..." (Fanon 120)The national middle class seems to be opportunist, which simply thinks of its own profit and does not have any concern for establishing the true essence of nationalism.

Fanon has said that with the hands of the national middle class, there comes up neocolonialism or capitalism. With the transition of power from the colonizers to the national middle class there comes an end to the colonial period and a start of the neocolonial period. In this neocolonial period, nothing seems to be changed except the ruling class. The new ruling class is known as the national middle class. After taking on the power the national middle class discovers that it neither has 'sufficient material' nor has 'intellectual resources' (122). Due to that the national middle class looks towards the former ruling country for its sustenance. The national middle class plays an 'intermediary' role between the country and the former ruling country through harboring the idea of capitalism for its own survival and in this way the neocolonial era gets started\_

"...its mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists, prosaically, of being the transmission line between the nation and capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the masque of neocolonialism." (122)

The national middle class have nothing to do with the welfare of their native land, rather they simply think about their own profit. The national middle class are found to reinforce the colonial prospect on the people of their own country. Fanon has very harshly criticized the idea of capitalism of the neocolonial era. He says that the national middle class, who protested against the foreign governance of the country before the liberation, now they do not feel ashamed of investing in the foreign banks and making profit out of it- "...in the years immediately following independence, the bourgeoisie does not hesitate to invest in foreign banks the profits that it makes out of its native soil." (124)After the independence of the country they become desperate to make business policies with the former colonizer for their own interest.

Fanon has put emphasis on the fact that racism is also one of the biggest loopholes of national consciousness. The distinction between the elite-class and the lower-class does not diminish even after the end of colonial era, rather it seems to be even more intensified than before. It seems like the nation has directly fallen down to the pit of racism from the height of nationalism: “From nationalism we have passed to ultra-nationalism, to chauvinism, and finally to racism.” (Fanon 125) After independence, the elite class starts to look upon others with hatred, and the inter-racial feeling which was existent before the colonial period suddenly pops up again, as Fanon has said, “Old rivalries which were there before colonialism, old inter-racial hatred come to the surface.” (128) Even after the independence, the lower-class people remain marginalized. The national middle class does not take any initiative to bring a change to their fate\_

“The elites, now as then, remain distant from their subjects. their repeated use of the rhetoric of national good as Mistry so superbly shows, often conceals deep social inequities, and the poor are sustainedly marginalized even in postcolonial nations.” (Nayar 110)

Fanon states that due to this kind of discrimination among the people of elite-class and lower- class, there emerges the racial tension. All the ideal thoughts of nationalism seem to be crippled and twisted under the blow of racism- “African unity takes off the mask, and crumbles into regionalism inside the hollow shell of nationality itself.” (Fanon 128) Fanon has also mentioned the fact that different religious views also give birth to racial tension. Forgetting about the national unity, people start fighting against each other in the name of religion, as Fanon has said, “Inside a single nation, religion splits up the people into different spiritual communities...” (129) Fanon says that these problems exist in the postcolonial countries due to the narrow nationalism of the national leaders. They utterly fail in terms of embodying each and every one under the banner of nationalism.

### **Textual Analysis**

Arundhati Roy has depicted the complicated socio-political state of India in her *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. She has drawn the picture of an India which seems to be far away from the idea of nationalism. The notions that India used to possess before the independence seem to be faded away in the recent time. Nationalism is an idea which puts emphasis on equality and compassionate nature of all the people of a nation\_

“Fostering national unity requires action along several lines: creating a broadly based sense of common cultural heritage, strengthening agreement on shared, national goals, and increasing national, as opposed to regional, loyalty.” (Crane 1)

Nationalism is the notion of inclusion of all the people of a nation irrespective of their ethnic and religious identity, but Roy believes that the idea of nationalism of India has turned into a rotten thing. Indian nationalism has been deviated from all of its elevated ideas; it has turned into nothing but a mockery of the concept of nationalism. This article concentrates on the pitfalls of Indian national consciousness that have been depicted by Arundhati Roy in her *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*.

In this purpose, this text has been analyzed through Fanon's theory of "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" in his *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Fanon believes that national consciousness should be all inclusive, where all the people irrespective of their class and social position will be included and involved. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Arundhati Roy has showed that the idea of Indian nationalism has not been successful in terms of including and involving everybody in the development of the country. The national middle class and the leaders of India seem to alienate the lower-class people of the society. They hardly have any concern for the lower-class people of the society. For instance, Roy has depicted how the transgender women (Hijras) of India get humiliated every now and then due to their sexual and social identity. Being humiliated in public places has become a common phenomenon for them: "True, it was only a routine bit of humiliation for Hijras, nothing out of the ordinary, and nothing at all compared to the tribulations others endured during those horrible months." (Roy 35) Through the life of Anjum, Roy has portrayed the general state of transgender women in the Indian society. Anjum is not accepted in the society for being a Hijra. She gets mocked, stoned, and tortured due to her gender identity\_

"She didn't turn to see which small boy had thrown a stone at her, didn't crane her neck to read the insults scratched into her bark. When people called her names\_ clown without a circus, queen without a palace\_ she let the hurt blow through her branches like a breeze and used the music of the rustling leaves as balm to ease the pain." (03)

Anjum never let her be affected by this kind of humiliation because she believes in equality. To her, social identity of an individual is not a big deal\_ "She didn't see the problem with either Hijras or Chamars." (85) The mockery that she receives from the society could never break her spirit except the time when she survived a riot as a "butcher's luck". The Hindu protestors did not kill her in a religious riot just because killing a Hijra might bring bad luck to them. This made Anjum feel terrible\_

"But Anjum never forgot that she was only a Butcher's Luck. For the rest of her life, even when it appeared otherwise, her relationship with the Rest-of-Her-Life remained precarious and reckless." (66)

It becomes really difficult for Anjum to accept that someone would not kill her just because she is a transgender woman, and apart from this she does not have any other reason to give someone so that s/he does not kill her. This makes her feel really insignificant and humiliated. The society makes her feel like she is not a part of it. Anjum cannot get over the fact that she is living a life which is given to her as a butcher's luck, and this means that she is not equal to any other Indians. Due to this she feels like she is excluded from the society.

Again, the disadvantaged people of the Indian society seem to be disregarded and excluded. They live a very shabby and impoverished life in India. The national leaders are not very much conscious of the miseries of the poor people. For instance, in the different cities of India, those who cannot afford a living are instructed to be evicted from there\_

“‘People who can’t afford to live in cities shouldn’t come here’, a Supreme court judge said, and ordered the immediate eviction of the city’s poor. ‘Paris was a slimy area before 1870, when all the slums were removed’, the Lieutenant Governor of the city said... ‘And look at Paris now’.” (98)

The government does not hesitate to kick out the poor from big cities to make those cities look more sophisticated, despite being aware of their helplessness. The national middle class and the political leaders do not bother about the poor, homeless people\_

“Though people are citizens and freedom are guaranteed by the Constitution, people still feel as if they reside in a foreign land. They could not align with the ethnically diverse society. Thus, they seek independence and isolation from their own country.” (Suleman 2)

They consider these poverty-stricken people to be a nuisance. They want to get rid of these people at any cost so that they can breathe in India the way they would have breathed in Paris. When these vulnerable group of people try to protest against this kind of injustice, they become mercilessly tortured and their belongings get crashed and destroyed by the government, and many of them get killed in this havoc as well\_

“There were too many of them to be killed outright. Instead, their homes, their doors and windows, their makeshift roofs, their pots and pans, their plates.... their marriage certificate, their children’s schools, their lifetime’s work, the expression in their eyes were flattened by yellow bulldozers imported from Australia.” (Roy 99)

It seems like the government has charged those ‘State-of-the-Art machines’ to erase all the traces of those unprivileged people to clean the tinge of poverty from India (99). Due to this kind of exclusion of the voiceless and impoverished people of India, the national unity of India remains unattained.

According to Fanon, the national middle class do not stick to their principles after the independence of the country. Before the independence of the country, they used to motivate the mass people to work and fight for the liberation, but after the achievement of the independence they simply turn their faces away from the ordinary people. The national middle class focus on their own profit forgetting everything regarding their great promises to the nation, which is one of the biggest pitfalls of the national consciousness for any nation. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy has focused on the fact that the promises that were made by the national leaders of India were not achieved even after 73 years of independence. In this text, it is found that the national leaders are simply involved in making their own fortune. They do not seem to have the slightest concern for the ordinary people of India. Roy has depicted how the politicians gain the sympathy of the ordinary people through their soft talks. The politicians know all the arts of wining over the hearts of the common people\_

“...made stirring speeches in his old-man-baby- voice, which, although it sounded like a pair of balloons being rubbed together, seemed to touch the very soul of the nation. Like a magician at a children’s birthday party, he performed tricks and conjured gifts of thin air.” (Roy 103)

The politicians try to gain the concerns of the Hindu supporters through exploiting and torturing the Muslims of India. This kind of practice goes completely against the concept of Indian nationalism. For winning the election the politicians shamelessly emphasize on the termination of the Indian Muslims, since they believe this will bring them all the votes of Indian Hindus\_

“The Chief Minister with cold eyes and a vermilion forehead would go on to win the next elections. Even after the Poet-Prime Minister’s government fell at the Centre, he won election after election in Gujrat. Some people believed he ought to be held responsible for mass murder...” (63)

The politicians seem to be aggressive and desperate for holding the power, and they do not hesitate to be involved in mean activities for that. The Indian politicians are often found to say that they will be ‘avenging centuries of Muslim Rule’ (81). This shows the sick mentality of the politicians, who want to disregard the Indian Muslims for their political achievements. In India, almost all the persons who hold different important posts of India are dishonest and corrupt. Roy has talked about a lot of scams in India. She has said there is not a single field, which is not corrupted in India. Through these scams, the politicians and the businessman make a pile of illegal money\_

“The summer of the city’s resurrection had also been the summer of scams- coal scams, iron-ore scams, housing scams, land scams, dam scams, irrigation scams, arms and ammunition scams, petrol-pump scams, polio-vaccine scams, electricity-bill scams, school-book scams, god-men scams, drought-relief scams...in which politicians, businessmen, businessmen-politicians and politician-businessmen had made off with unimaginable quantities of public money.” (101-102)

Again, it is found that the compensation money for the people who have been the victims of an earthquake is looted by the immoral collectors\_ “These are the Latur earthquake victims whose cash compensation has been eaten up by corrupt collectors and tehsildars.” (131) In this text, Roy has also contemplated on Kashmiri movement. She has unmasked the group of opportunists, who are making business out of this volatile situation of Kashmir. Those opportunists do not want any resolution to the turbulent situation of Kashmir, since they are making a lot of money out of it. At a certain passage of the text, Naga, a reporter takes an interview of a Kashmiri militant. He says to Naga that the Kashmiri militants purchase weapons and ammunition from the Indian Army: “We have everything here now. Training, weapons... We buy our ammunition from the army.” (229) Upon this, Naga becomes really surprised then that boy says that no one wants this war to end, since everyone is happy and satisfied making a huge amount of money on the dead bodies of young Kashmiris\_

“They don’t want the militancy to end. They don’t want to leave Kashmir. They are very happy with the situation as it is. Everybody on all sides is making money on the bodies of young Kashmiris.” (228)

This shows that the national middle class and the leaders of India are simply involved in the race of holding power and making their own luck. They do not have

any concern for the rights and welfare of the ordinary people of India at all. This is a reason of failure of the idea of Indian nationalism.

Fanon has addressed neocolonialism or capitalism as a pitfall of national consciousness. Neocolonialism refers to the transition of power from the colonizers to the national middle class. In this neocolonial period, the national middle class takes all the posts that were previously occupied by the colonizers. After taking on the power the national middle class discovers that it does not have any resource or money to run the country successfully. Due to that the national middle class looks towards the former ruling country for its sustenance. In the name of development and capitalistic boom the ordinary people of the country and the country herself suffer a lot. In Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, she has shown how capitalism is creating a bar in the way of implementing the idea of Indian nationalism. India has become 'world's new favorite superpower' (Roy 96). On TV shows, music videos, in foreign newspapers and magazines, at business conferences and weapons' fairs, at economic conclaves and environmental summits, at book festivals and beauty contests everyone is chanting the name of India like anything (96-97). Everyone is interested to know and come to India. All the chains of international brands are available in India now\_

“Across the city, huge billboards jointly sponsored by an English newspaper and the newest brand of skin whitening cream (selling by the ton) said: *Our time is now*. Kmart was coming. Walmart and Starbucks were coming, and in the British Airways advertisement on TV...” (97)

India's name is spreading all over the world like a bush fire. It has become a center of new attraction in the global market. It seems like Bombay is Indians' New York, Delhi is the Washington and Kashmir is the Switzerland (99). India looks like a new penny due to her new industrial boom, but Roy has bitterly criticized the boom of capitalism in India. Due to the global investments, a lot of industries have been established in all over India. Due to this many people have been evicted from their living places and the environment of India has been polluted by the chemicals and carbon dioxide that have been produced from the newly established industries and factories\_

“On the city's industrial outskirts, in the miles of bright swamp tightly compacted with refuse and colorful plastic bags, where the evicted had been 're-settled', the air was chemical and the sweater poisonous.” (100)

The ordinary people suffer a lot due to the capitalist ventures in India. For instance, in this text there is a reference to the Bhopal Gas-leak tragedy in India\_

“On the night of 2nd December 1984, a gas leak incident occurred in Union Carbide India Limited (a pesticide plant) located in Bhopal, the capital city of Madhya Pradesh in India.” (Maurya and Kumar 831)

So many people have lost their lives and there are many who have been injured in this tragedy. For gratifying the greed of the capitalists, it is always the ordinary people who suffer the most. After this tragedy, the company has again got started with a new name. Here, Roy has raised a very vital question that is, the way the

capitalists have started a new company all over again from a wreck, can they instill a new spirit of life within those victims in the same way? The answer is no. It is not that easy for those people to forget that incident and start a new life all over again\_

“It took them three weeks. That Gas-Leak company has a new name now, Dow Chemicals. But these poor people who were destroyed by them, can they buy new lungs, new eyes? They have to manage with their same old organs, which were poisoned so many years ago.” (Roy 130)

The poor people are the pyre of capitalism. They work hard for their livelihood under the capitalist masters. They seem to be exhausted because of their inhuman toil in a capitalist society. They work in different construction sites. The buildings seem to be growing faster than a forest. It seems like their eyelashes and lungs have become pale with the stone dust of the construction site\_

“The men were tired from their day's work on the building site, their eyelashes and lungs pale with stone-dust from cutting stone and laying floors in the multi-storey shopping centres and housing estates springing up around the city like a fast-growing forest.” (256)

Due to the rise of capitalist economy, the environment is becoming polluted. Under the light of capitalism, the men look 'grey' and grasses look 'metal blue' (257). On the surface, the new India seems to be a volcano of prosperity where the economy is growing really fast, but if one looks into the core of India then one will find that the majority of Indians are suffering from poverty and indigence, as Roy has said, “Families cooked on the street, cutting onions, boiling potatoes gone gritty with dust on small kerosene stoves. They hung their washing on tree guards and railing.” (137) Roy has called capitalism 'poisoned honey', which people swallow like bees (129). The national leaders cannot completely discard the practices of the colonial period even after the independence of the country. Since they do not have money and sufficient resources so they always look for the help from the former governing countries, as Dr. Azad, a radical protestor against the corruption of India says\_

“Foreigners only see what they want to see. Earlier it was snake charmers and shadhus, now it is the superpower things, the Bazar Raj. We sit here like caged animals, and the government feeds useless little pieces of hope through the bars of this iron railing.”(133)

The foreigners have dominated India in the colonial period but even after India's independence they have maintained their dominance covertly over India due to the national leader's reliance on the foreign financial support for running the country without any difficulty. Only the national middle class and leaders of India are being benefited from a capitalist economy, whereas the ordinary people are living a life of poverty. This is increasing the discrimination between the elite-class and the ordinary people of India, which is an impediment in the way of establishing national unity.

The existence of racism in a country has been noted as a pitfall of national consciousness by Fanon. After the liberation, the national middle class and leaders become very much reluctant and apathetic towards the working-class people. They start to look upon the ordinary people with hatred. Due to this there takes place so

many conflicts and fights among the people of a newly independent country, which certainly goes against the concept of nationalism, since nationalism preaches about unity and equality among the people of a country. Racism of India has been a very important topic of discussion in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Racism refers to discrimination or prejudice by an individual or community against a person or a group of people on the basis of their racial or ethnic identity\_

“Racism postulates the existence of discrete ‘races’, and attributes a negative evaluation to one or some of these putative ‘races’ (usually, though not always, the ‘race’ or ‘races’ to which the person articulating the racist ideology does not regard himself or herself as belonging).” (Miles and Brown 8)

Racism is a very prevalent issue in India. In India, the political leaders of different political groups spread the propaganda that Muslims are really evil and they should be treated the way Hitler treated the Jews in Germany: “Some of its supporters and ideologues openly admired Hitler and compared the Muslims of India to the Jews of Germany.” (Roy 41) The Muslims of India are both politically and socially detested. In India, the Muslims can be arrested on the basis of any suspicion. There is no requirement of evidence to detain a Muslim- “A new law was passed which allowed suspects to be detained without trial for months. In no time at all the prisons were full of young Muslim men.” (42) In India, Hindus are much safer than Muslims in a mob situation. For instance, in this text Anjum is found to teach Gayatri Mantra to Zainab, her adopted daughter, so that she can return home safely from a mob situation\_

“Over the course of a week she taught Zainab to chant something that nobody in the Khwabbagh could understand. Anjum said it was a Sanskrit chant, the Gayatri Mantra. She had learned it while she was in the camp in Gujrat. People there said it was good to know so that in mob situations they could recite it to try to pass off as Hindu.” (47)

The Hindus of India treat the Muslims in the most brutal way. In this text, Arundhati Roy has referred to a riot in Ahmedabad, where Hindus brutally slaughtered and killed the Muslims, Anjum was a survivor of that riot\_

“After a few months of the riot, Anjum was found safe, living in a refugee camp. When she was found, she was manly dressed and had a haircut like a man. She had also learnt to chant Gayatri Mantra.” (Maurya and Kumar 832)

Anjum has been traumatized after experiencing the truculence of the riot. She cannot forget how the Hindus have tortured and killed the Muslims in that riot\_

“She tried to un-know what they had done to all the others- how they had folded the men and unfolded the women. And how eventually they had pulled them apart limb from limb and set them on fire.” (Roy 61-62)

This kind of treatment of the Muslims in India by some extremists shows their destitute state. They suffer and get humiliated by the Hindu fanatics due to their religious and ethnic identity, which completely goes against the national consciousness of India. Roy has also projected light on the caste system of India. Roy sees the caste system of India as an obstacle in the way of establishing the goals

of nationalism as well. Roy has described the miserable situation of the Dalits in India. Dalits are the lower caste who are considered as untouchables\_

“Dalits are traditionally lower caste people who are regarded as untouchables and are discriminated socially, economically and politically. The Dalits make up what are known in India as the scheduled castes, the scheduled Tribes and the backward classes. Therefore, these groups are classically known as the shudras or the slave.” (Bagde 27)

The Dalits are considered to be of the most inferior caste in India. They do all the mean jobs of the society. For instance, in a certain passage of the text there is found the treatment of Suresh Balmiki, who belongs to the Dalit caste. In India one can easily sense from his name that he belongs to the Untouchables and performs the meanest job of the society- “...Suresh Balmiki who, as his name makes clear, belonged to what most Hindus overtly, and the government covertly, thought of as the shit-cleaning caste.” (Roy 114) This shows how the Dalits are mistreated in the Indian society. In this text, Roy has portrayed the life of a lower caste Hindu man, whose name is Dayachand. The people of his caste collect the carcass of a cow when it is dead. The Hindu farmers of the upper castes do not want to defile themselves by touching the carcass of a cow- “This was what our people did. When cows died, upper caste farmers would call us to collect the carcasses because they couldn't pollute themselves by touching them.” (86) Like any other day, Dayachand and his father were going to pick up the carcass of a cow from a farmer. When they were returning home, they met a police man who claimed a large amount of money from them to let them move forward. They requested him to understand their grievances, but the police man did not listen to them, and in the contrary, he assembled some Hindus and bruted that Dayachand and his father had killed a cow. The mob got enraged and they started to beat Dayachand's father brutally. After a while Dayachand's father breathed his last breath due to the brutish torture\_ “...all together, like an army convoy. How they splashed through puddles of his father's blood as if it were rainwater, how the road looked like a street in the old city on the day of Bakra-Eid.” (89) This again shows that the upper-class people always look at the lower-class people with the eyes of hatred and disrespect. In this way, Arundhati Roy has meticulously criticized the caste system of India. Because of the caste system, the Hindus from the lower caste like Dayachand and his father always become the scapegoats. She has also expressed her utmost disgust towards the people who always try to instigate contentious issues such as caste system in India to make their own fortunes. The existence of extreme level of racism like is one of the reasons behind the failure of the national consciousness in India.

### **Conclusion**

Arundhati Roy has fearlessly criticized the socio-political problems of India in her *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. In this article, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* has been critically examined under Fanon's theory of “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness” in his *The Wretched of the Earth* to reveal the pitfalls of Indian nationalism. Indian nationalism has its ground on unity and equality, but due to some of the pitfalls of Indian nationalism, the objectives of the Indian nationalism are not

being achieved. After studying Roy's, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, it is found that the leaders or national middle class of India have failed to include everyone in the process of re-building the nation, which has been a pitfall of the national consciousness. The greed for power and excessive focus on capitalism of the leaders of India are also responsible for the failure of the idea of nationalism. Since the leaders and national middle class of India run after different posts and money, they become deviated from the goals of nationalism. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, it is found that racism is an obstacle to attain the national consciousness in India as well. Racism gives birth to discrimination and ethnic conflict, which is definitely an impediment in the way of establishing unity and equality in India.

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