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Transgender Marginalization and Exclusion in Arundathi Roy's *The Ministry of the Utmost Happiness*

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Abstract

This article aims to examine how Anjum, the protagonist of Arundathi Roy's 2017 book The Ministry of the Utmost Happiness, reflects transgender discrimination and identity crises. The degree to which a person possesses feminine or masculine characteristics that fit the socially prescribed description of a male or female is known as their gender identity. One psychological feature of an individual that reflects their sexual inclinations is their gender identity. The Ministry of Utmost Happiness is a work of fiction that centers on Anjum, a transwoman who is trying to establish herself in Delhi. It has the powerful voice of the LGBT community in contemporary India. With varying historical backgrounds, this book reflects a number of prevalent forms of discrimination in Indian society, including caste-based discrimination against Dalits, discrimination against Muslim minorities based on religious prejudice, gender identity-based discrimination against transgender people, discrimination against women based on male dominance, and national identity crisis based on multiethnic alienation that causes identity crisis in the dislocated and disoriented people. Due to their inability to fit in with the prejudiced society, victims of discrimination have personality disorders and feelings of alienation, which are indicative of identity crises. It is explained how the study of personality using queer theory is applied to Anjum's character in Pursuit of the True Self. The hijra character is constructed and used in fictional literature as a focal point for broader anti-sociality as well as a symbol of deviance. While trying to live in a society that is becoming more and more marginalized, Hijras continue to struggle for their rights.

Keywords: Trans-gender discrimination, Sexual orientations, trans-woman; LGBT; identity crisis; Hijras

Introduction

Traditions and practices, diverse cultures, and a mix of groups make up the society we live in. In order to preserve social order, people must continue to be together. Nonetheless, society draws boundaries between individuals according to caste, religion, language, gender, and other characteristics. The "transgender community," often known as the "third gender," is one of the several disadvantaged groups that is entirely erased from the current societal structure. Since they don't follow the rules and conventions of society, their situation is constantly a source of contention. One of the main factors influencing a person's place in the established social

structure is their biological sex at birth and the recognized behavioral patterns associated with their gender. However, these people are socially isolated because to their inconsistent performance in connection to their biological gender and gender manifestations. As a result, they deteriorate throughout their lifetimes. Because they do not fit into the established social framework, they are left behind and stay invisible in society, which causes serious harm, particularly to their identity.

Anyone whose internally felt sense of fundamental gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth or in which they were reared is considered "transgender." The term "transgender" refers to a disjunction between one's perception of oneself and one's identity and how one is or was previously viewed, acknowledged, and understood by others. The experience of being transgender complicates one's connection with one's body and with other people. In the process, it also raises concerns about identity boundaries, consistency, and stability.

People who identify as transgender are those whose identities are not related to their biological sex; as a result, they are not like the stereotypes of men and women. They don't fit the stereotypical gender norms in terms of identification and conduct. They endure social, legal, and financial challenges because they are the underprivileged segment of Indian society. Their access to public areas, healthcare, and education is limited. The Ministry of Utmost Happiness is a novel that takes us on a close-knit tour through the Indian terrain over many years. It deals with a variety of these individuals and examines their predicament when they encounter the outside world. The narrative shifts from the congested Old Delhi districts and the new city's roadways to Kashmir's highlands and valleys and beyond. The book is whispered and contains intricate similes and sporadic references to religious texts. The novel's heroes and heroines are primarily regular individuals who are marginalized and damaged by their society, unlike the epic heroes. After going through many ups and downs, they are eventually saved and put back together by loving deeds.

Booker Prize winner Arundhati Roy's 2017 book, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, takes a close look at what the future holds for hijra. Although expressing concerns about how other non-binary gender expressions may affect the distinctive identity of hijras, potentially resulting in the replacement of hijras by trans identities without the accompanying third-gender and community-based attachments, the novel is incredibly understanding of the fact that this change is a component of a broader negotiation of social space rather than a critique of the category's duplication. Anjum, the primary hijra character in the book, must operate in a blatantly violent and identity-stifling environment supported by right-wing Hindutva ideologies. Although she ultimately succeeds as an individual in rejecting her reduction to a Hinduism symbol and in founding her own community of marginalized people, there is still uncertainty surrounding the larger category of "hijra" as a socially acceptable grouping. This hulking and sprawling tale has two main stands: One follows Anjum, a hijra, as she unfolds a tattered Persian rug in the municipal cemetery where she resides. She and her business have a hope that is solely focused on reviving the breath that was lost years ago. Anjum was born intersex, with both male and female genitalia, and during her prime, she coexisted with a group of transsexual women. She has a complicated gender history.

In fact, the cover page of the book opens with the scene and an image of a marble tomb. The intention of the book, as stated in its dedication "to the unconsoled," is to comfort individuals whose stories have simply been "buried under years of silence" and disregarded by the "pages of the hegemony's history," a history left to the marginal. She has shown herself to be an exceptional historian and a perceptive storyteller by using the voices of the victims to recreate this history.

"Where Do Old Birds Go to Die?" is the opening chapter. The novel opens with Anjum being described as someone who "lived in a graveyard like

a tree" (Roy, 2017: p. 1). The tree has been likened to Anjum. The tree could represent a spontaneous development. It may also represent her will to live in defiance of all the forces that transport her between the poles. She disobeys the vultures who hovered above the tree's tall branches. The vulture's poisoning serves as a metaphor for how Indian society has been tainted by a history of dishonest and venal politicians, religious intolerance, and rivers of death, blood, and unjust treatment. As time goes on, we discover that she is referred to by several names, including Magnu, Romeo, and Anjum, and that a past is forced onto her through these monikers. Despite this, she seems unconcerned about it, saying, "It doesn't matter." I am Laila and Majnu, I am Juli and Romi, I am all of them. Why not, Mujna? I'm Anjuman; who says my name is Anjum? I am a gathering, a mehfil. Of everything and nothing, of everyone and no one.Roy,(4). One of the novel's subjects, the hijra—transgender or third-gender people—is presented to the audience in the first four chapters.

The novel starts in what seems to be the 1950s when Jahanara Begum, a housewife from Delhi who has waited six years—through three daughters—for a boy child, goes into delivery and is immediately informed by the midwife that her desire has been granted. Her son is hers. The happiest night of her life was that one. She examines "his tiny body—eyes, nose, head, neck, armpits, fingers, and toes—with sated, unhurried delight" after waking up and taking the baby out of his wrap. At that point, she found a little, immature girl-part nestled behind his boy-parts. Her heart tightens. She urinates on her leg. She has a hermaphrodite kid.

Jahanara believes that perhaps the girl aspect will go away. However, it stubbornly stays there month after month, year after year, and as Aftab, the boy, gets older, he becomes distinctly girlie.He could sing Thumri and Chaiti with the grace and skill of a courtesan from Lucknow. She brought her child from Dargah to Dargah and hospital to hospital in an attempt to treat her from the incurable illness. The singing is discouraged by his father. He stays up late teaching the kids about men's valiant actions, but when Aftab learns how Genghis Khan defeated an entire army on his own to save his lovely bride from the thugs who had taken her, all he wants is to be the bride. The only form of treatment that could rid the family of the shame was "male masculinity." Therefore, in order to survive in a world that does not accept his mixed nature, Aftab, who had a remarkable skill and love for singing from a very young age, had to transform into a hydra-headed creature and take on a variety of guises. The next evening, Aftab received a green Khwabgah dupatta and was introduced to the customs and laws that officially constituted him as a Hijra community member. Roy, 25.

He learns that she is in Bombay Silk and that seven other people who are similar to her are housed in her home, which is known as the House of Dreams: Bulbul, Razia, Heera, Baby, Nimmo, Gudiya, and Mary. Almost all of them were born male, and they all aspire to be women or believe they are already. Some people have undergone genital surgery, while others have not.

Their primary source of income is prostitution. Aftab believes that if he can't be like them, he will die. He eventually gets access to their home by performing errands for them. They allow him to move in the next year when he becomes fifteen. He adopts the name Anjum and joins the community as a full member. Neither he nor she hear from his father ever again. Every day, her mother brings her a hot dinner, and the two of them occasionally meet at the neighborhood shrine: little Jahanara in a black burqa and six-foot-tall Anjum wearing a spangled scarf. Aftab continued to take music lessons until he was nine years old. He could learn a melody after just one listen and had a lovely, genuine singing voice. People were first amused and even supportive, but soon after that, other kids started ridiculing and snickering. "He is a she. He is neither He nor She. He is both He and She. He-She Hee, She-He! "Hey!" Roy, 12.

Aftab quit attending his music courses and refused to attend school as the taunting become intolerable. These instances, which often affect transgender persons, prevent them from exercising their fundamental right to education and life. For

Aftab, the music is a metaphor for the fantastic, limitless world beyond. His songs serve as a metaphor for the wonders he can work, and the taunts from the public are theSocio-religious dogmatism that blames his or her gender for limiting his or her inventiveness. Now trapped in the traditional male-female divide, Aftab starts to look for his true social position.

Here, Aftab was forced to leave "Duniya" and become Anjum, the leader of the home and a follower of Ustad Kulsoom Bi. In one of her conversations with Anjum, Kulsoom Bi explains the suffering of Hijras by asking: What did the ordinary Duniya people know about what it's like to live a Hijra life? What did they know about the sacrifices, the restrictions, and the discipline? Jinns and ghosts at the cemetery didn't worry Anjum at all since she was so lonely and upset. She appeared to be a corpse. Her feelings have been completely destroyed. But in order to live and thrive, she valiantly battled against all the bad forces both inside and outside of herself. The fort of desolation gradually shrank to a residence of reasonable size. It turned become a sanctuary of familiar, comforting grief—dreadful yet dependable. Anjum started grooming herself once more. She got rid of her facial hair, dyed her hair bright orange, wore Pathan outfits, and put on weight. In the cemetery, she constructed a modest home with a little kitchen. No municipality official had the strength to take her away by force. They were afraid of being cursed by a Hijra, just like everyone else. Anjum gradually started to construct apartments around her family' graves and enclose them. She started renting them out to destitute tourists. Jannat (Paradise) is the name Anjum gave her guest home. Along with her pals, she celebrated Eid and Diwali in a most pretentious way in her paradise.But in order to live and thrive, she valiantly battled against all the terrible powers both inside and outside.

Anjum's persona is developed over the span of sixty years. The work allegorically addresses many of the current concerns with its ramblings and in-depth historical and political narratives from the partition to the present. The bandicoot was now a bride in the latter chapters, and Jahanara Begum's boy had become her daughter. Apart from that, though, not much had changed. Roy, 415 The novel's other female characters also bear the brunt of this. Roy is excellent at explaining the distinctive Hijaras' physical attributes, look, and clothes, as well as their mannerisms, religious practices, and customs. He also believes that the Hijaras are favored in the eyes of God. No hijra is content, yet they are constantly unhappy.

Many people have battled to support themselves throughout their lives, much as Anjum, who was born as Aftab. They are attacked and made fun of for just being, not only because they don't fit into any certain gender. They are disowned by their own families, as was the case with Anjum. Her father, Mulaqat Ali, and his wife, Jahanara Begum, opted to send her to Khwabgah, a specific institution for persons like her, after realizing there was nothing they could do about her condition. The lives of people like Anjum are made even more challenging by these limited perspectives.

A long-standing subculture in India is made up of hijras, or persons who identify as female while being born male and who dress and behave like women. They have undoubtedly faced discrimination, but as a "third sex," they are finally beginning to gain acceptance.Regarding their poetical purpose in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, Indian storytelling has a history of favoring imagination, metamorphosis, and vibrant colors, dating back to the Mahabharata. Hijras are part of this custom. Pin-striped suits are often not worn by those who are fighting for the right to be women rather than males.

They dress in green-satin shalwars and golden sandals. They also perform Bollywood movie songs and manicure their nails at Roy's "House of Dreams." They also serve as the predominant metaphor for sadness throughout the book: "Are you aware of why God created the hijras?" Nimmo, Anjum's roommate, asks her one day. It was a test run. He made the decision to create a living being devoid of the capacity for happiness. Nimmo claimed that whereas

the Indo-Pakistani war and the Hindu-Muslim riots were perceived by the majority as external events, the Hijras saw the struggle as an ongoing internal state.

As a result, India itself is what the hijras in this book most strongly symbolize.She is the ideal representation of India's situation. Anjum will not dispute her older, Nimmo, but she eventually learns the truth on her own. The House of Dreams throws a lavish celebration for her eighteenth birthday. The city is filled with Hijras. She donned a sari for the first time in her life, but that night she had a profound trauma and identity crisis as her masculinity took over her body.She despised herself for giving birth to a male. She was calmed by Ustad Kulsoom Bi. After giving her a tranquilizer, one of her roommates puts her to bed.Anjum purchases a red "disco" sari with a backless top for the event.

She had a dream that night that she was being married and was a new bride. When she woke up in anguish, she discovered that her lovely dress, which resembled a man's, was an expression of her sexual satisfaction. She has genital surgery to address the anguish of being a man and her inability to handle macho traits and displays, but her new vagina never functions properly.Her final orgasm occurs that night in Sari. But sex is the least of her issues. Aftab began to comprehend his mind's desire to be a lady by the time he was fourteen. He became tall, hairy, and strong. He used Burnol, a burn ointment that left black areas on his skin, in a rush to try to get rid of the hair on his face and body. He furrowed his brows. Adams Apple is the name he developed. His voice cracked. It made him feel repulsed. He became silent. He ceased to sing. As long as his parents were alive, he was allowed to stay at home. He soon lost that privilege as well. Aftab entered a different realm for good when he was just fifteen years old. Aftab became Anjum, a disciple of Ustad Kulsoom Bi, once the procedures and laws were put in place to legally admit him into the Hijra community. After that, Anjum could finally put on the clothing she had always wanted to wear. She acquired the trademark spread-fingered Hijra clap as a means of communication. She said that the term "Hijra" refers to a body where the holy soul resides.

In order to improve her vagina and eliminate her male portion, Anjum had to get surgery. Even so, being mothers was something they had always wanted to achieve. Anjum treated a child abandoned on the streets like her own daughter after picking her up. She gave her the name Zainab. After a few weeks, Zainab started referring to Anjum as "Mummy." Zainab satisfied everyone's wish for a kid in the haveli. She was clothed, showered, had her air oiled, braided, and given toys, dresses with puff sleeves, and shoes that squeaked. She makes the decision to leave the haveli at a specific moment. She was not followed by any of the other women. She was forced to leave by herself since they were scared to cross their boundaries. After a brief ten-minute trip from Khwabgarh, Anjum found himself in a different reality. It was an unimpressive cemetery that was dilapidated, small, and rarely utilized. She moved between two graves with her possessions. Her sorrow shielded her in that environment. Around her, a lot of voices imitated the idea that murdering Hijras would bring misfortune.She exited the haveli's secure walls for this purpose. She suffered more humiliation than she could have imagined.

Anjum was a savage, untamed ghost that haunted every resident's spirit and dijjin for months. She stopped coloring her hair and groomed herself. Hairs on the face grew. She stopped hiding her manhood with the inexpensive hormone injection. Because of societal dread, Aftab's mother has hidden his identify as a third gender from the day of his birth. His physical appearance is the primary cause of this. His mother conceals it from her own spouse because of worry that there is an unfinished girl half beneath his boy parts. After seeing his body, his mother becomes traumatized since she is aware that everything, living or dead, has a gender in Urdu, the only language she is familiar with. But in the instance of her child, it presents a problem because "Hijra" is the only term that can accurately describe the child's gender.

Even in this century, there are still strong overtones that a person may only be labeled as male or female, and the majority of Indians are unaware of the meanings of terms like "transgender," "transsexual," etc.Even the terminology used in our culture is divided.His mother's analysis of her child's place in society's standards may be seen in the following words: Everything, including clothing, books, pencils, musical instruments, carpets, and other items, had a gender in Urdu, the only language she understood. It was all either man or lady, male or female. Everything was classified as either male or female, masculine or feminine.

Through her remarks, Roy harshly critiques how societally built body conventions cause rifts in an infant's existence. Even Aftab's mother, Jahanara Begum, prays to God to teach her how to love a child who will never be accepted by society because of his physical indifference. She prayed for the girl's portion to get well and always sought to keep Aftab near her. Because of his perceived physical inadequacy, Aftab's mother was aware of the social limits that prevented him from enjoying school and all other joys of life throughout his early years. Even Aftab's voice turned into a cause of apathy in the community. His voice was a girl's lovely, genuine singing voice.

His voice was first praised by others, but later on, other kids in his music class began making fun of and taunting him for it.To find out Aftab's sex, his parents took him to a sexologist. The doctor claims that although he was not a Hijra, he may be considered one for practical purposes. However, he was born with traits that were both masculine and feminine. The physician referred to Aftab as a "Hermaphrodite" and recommended surgically removing the female portions. However, it was also made apparent that despite the dominance of his masculine features, he could always have feminine traits. By clothing him in masculine attire and regaling him with tales of heroes and warriors, his parents attempted to instill boyish traits in him. These examples from the book all demonstrate how Aftab's family fears that he would be alienated by society because of his physical inadequacy.

Conclusion

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness demonstrates Roy's narrative's ambitious breadth by ending the story in this manner. The novel offers the prospect of cohabitation, although in fragmented and seemingly unconnected fragments until the very end, hinting at the optimism that "things would turn out alright in the end" (438). Thus, Roy's story of caution and transformation takes place in a transitional area. Despite being openly political, the novel's blending of myth and history, fact and fiction, shows how storytelling is still a potent tool for expressing important truths about a fractured world. Although the novel tactfully avoids answering the question of whether the usurping of third-gender identification under the trans label will actually cause the hijras to completely vanish, it does examine concerns about this possible outcome.Being transwomen will not be the ideal or full form that a hijra identity aims to achieve, and Anjum is utilized as the voice of thirdness, attesting to the notion that this has never been about wanting to become or become women. The vast majority of these chances have been utilized to associate the third gender with negativity, extremeness, and subversiveness by authors that operate inside the binary paradigm and are frequently from the West. Here, Roy provides her hijra character a chance to consider the beneficial bonds formed by people in these roles. Roy doesn't go into detail in her remark, but that makes sense considering that she is a binary-gendered author. Although discussing the lived experience of hijras has never been the focus of this thesis, it is sufficient to state for the sake of the argument that such instances highlight the orientalizing, sensationalizing constructedness of the way that thirdness is conceptualized by the writers in question, as opposed to potentially more nuanced and positive readings of their communities that could come from those within them.

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