Queer Struggle, Defiance and Victory of Hijra in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

Rehmat Naseer[1]
Amna Umer Cheema[2]

[1]*Department of English Language & Literature University of the Punjab – Lahore Pakistan*
[2]*Department of English Language & Literature University of the Punjab – Lahore Pakistan*

Abstract

This paper examines the struggle of queer people through the perspective of the term Queer in Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness (2017). This paper aims to explore the persistent struggle of queer minorities in Indian society, their challenges to the cultural traditions of heteronormative society and their modes of resistance. The paper mainly focuses on the protagonist of the early part of the novel, Anjum, formerly Aftab, who is one of the socially abandoned transgender characters of modern India. The purpose of this research is to explore the queer subversion against the heteronormative ideals in Roy's novel and to show through Anjum's vision of queer resistance and utopia. In the novel, Anjum's choice of leaving her house and living in a queer utopia, fighting individually with the society throughout her life, establishing a small, but self-dependent community in the graveyard, and sheltering the minorities like "queers, addicts, orphans, Muslims and other dropouts from the society" (Zubair, 2018, p. 35), does not exhibit her defeat or helplessness, but her defiance and rebellion against the status quo. This act has also empowered her to redefine her life in the best possible way by creating an alternative Duniya where she could shelter "all people from different shades and shapes of life" (Raina, 2017, p. 837).

Keywords: Queer, Heteronormative, Hijra, Subversion, Resistance, Utopia, Minorities.

Authors E-mail: aminaumer@gmail.com

Introduction

Amidst the patriarchy in India, the issue of identity has also found representation in voicing the 'other' - transgender, among socially constructed gender identities. In contemporary India, these other gender accents have been denied the right to body and space; therefore, they have been variedly recording the social oppression, segregation and impact of violence within their economically and socially challenging environment.

Keeping up this spirit, once again, the writer and political activist Arundhati Roy's second novel, *The*

Ministry of Utmost Happiness (2017) lends literary space to these other voices. In her commitment to the small and humble, Roy has primarily focused on the physical and psychological oppression exercised on the displaced and marginalized groups of people. Amidst the political implications of Indian civil rights and Indian-held Kashmir, Roy has layered these stories of the oppressed minorities facing ethnic and sectarian hurdles.

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, the social injustice, cruelty and disgrace inflicted upon the others are expressed through one of the transgender protagonists Anjum (Aftab). Aftab undergoes a sexual transformation and becomes a female Anjum in her dreamy domain called khwabgah. However, soon her dreams fade away, but she carries the baggage of injustices and prejudices against individuals like her and moves on in a "Paradise Guest House" in the graveyard among the other oppressed segments - "queer, addicts, orphans … and other dropouts from the society" (Zubair, 2018, p. 35).

Anjum does not give up at any time and practices compassion for the vulnerable amidst instances of cruelty and hypocrisy of the normal Dunya. Her miserable life and survival strategies are not acceptable by the heteronormative society, which labels her and all the other living with her as abnormal. This paper looks at this so-called abnormal identity through the perspective of the term Queer - the strange and socially bizarre section of the society. Broadly speaking, the

Queer studies argue that gender is not biological, but a "cultural category" (Harari, 2014, p. 137), and those who come up to this cultural criterion are termed as normal, and others as abnormal or deviants. These binaries, consequently, generate a hierarchy that leads to the marginalization of the minorities. Unlike socially normal people, they are deprived of their due rights. With this perspective in view, the research highlights the life of the diminished segments of the society through the transgender character of Anjum, the plight she faces, and the alternative ways she has found to celebrate the queer existence of many like her.

The Term and its Use:

The term, Queer was coined by the Italian feminist and film theorist Terresa de Lauretis. Her studies include a set of Western ideologies in which the difficulties of a strange life are depicted through the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) identities. The Queer studies deal with the sexual orientations in their deviation from the acknowledged bandwidth; they question the categorization of LGBTs by challenging the gender binaries constructed by society. The Queer studies highlight the disregard of queer personas in a heteronormative society. They bring forth the desires, emotions and cultural complexities involving asexual lives in contrast to the socially normal people. The Studies decenter the normal and highlight the sexual intersections being suppressed in the society. The Queer studies challenge the representation of identities in

society by bringing forth the biases, hatred, and subjugation of the other sexes. Teresa de Lauretis in "Queer theory: Lesbian and Gay sexualities: An Introduction" was the first to question such flaws in the social structure, which made us think over the concepts of gender and sexuality.

In the 1990s, Queer studies became an emerging discipline in the West for the empowerment of marginalized queer groups. The queer theorists - Michael Foucault, Gayle Rubin, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, among others, have discussed the complexity of sexuality, the expansive domain of its marginalities and its productive role in society.

In the South-Asian perspective, one of the critically popular other representation is of the transgender: the other sex called *hijra* that encompasses a wider diversity of gender non-normative. The term queer allows us to see the third gender as "Murat, a combination of the Urdu words mard (man) and aurat (woman)" (Jaffer, 2017, p. 6). *Hijra*s are categorized as third sex because they challenge the normative binary division and are "neither males nor females" (Enthoven 1997). However, "*hijra*s are generally male-born persons who describe themselves as emasculates or eunuchs from birth, wear feminine clothing, usually adopt feminine names and have a socio-cultural role." (Hinchy, 2014, p. 274) A South-Asian *hijra*, Bobby prefers to use the metaphor of "riding in both boats" (qt. in Pamment, 2010, p. 30) to define her gender identity. This gender ambiguity makes these characters more challenging than negligible beings.

The queer allows us to see the suffering - physical and mental torture - encompassing the lives of *hijra*s in South Asia. The queer identifies the pain of being scrutinized as a strange community: these people undergo "psychological agony that when people see them, they look negatively and pass comment" (Islam, 2020, p. 28). They experience differentiation based on gender and economic stratification.

The queer makes us see the ever-evolving nature of gender. Therefore, stable identities, such as man and woman, are not acceptable divisions. It makes us think of new ways of looking at the other, or the third sex. The aim is to identify the variable sexes, to see them in their difference, to reconcile the binaries, and overcome the politics of the majoritarian group. Thus, the emergence of Queer studies not only highlights their existential crisis but also puts forth the need to give equal rights and benefits to LGBTs. This is based on the argument that "gender is a cultural construct" (Islam, 2020, p. 28), and is not biologically determined: "clothing, mannerism, speech and language are all signs that bodies use to declare their gender to the world" (Islam, 2020, p. 32). Therefore, as members of society, regardless of socially acceptable sex and self-chosen gender identity, transgenders are not outcasts.

This queer group of *hijra*s seek bonding with their types to create their unique sphere of existence. They have "replaced the patriarchal family and

kinship group with a set of parallel social institutions, relations and practices that constitute a distinctive community that is not based on blood ties" (Jaffer, 2019, p. 188). In their queer groups, they have also generated a hierarchy where the *hijra*s are subordinate to their gurus; the guru-chela bonding is an alternative to the other-daughter relationship. In this way, they develop affinity and create a sense of community.

However, queer identities can choose any queer category "such as effeminate gay men, transsexual men (pre-post castration), transvestites and true hermaphrodites (rare)" (Kalra, 2011, p. 122). Moreover, at any time of their lives, they can leave one group to join another acquiring its characteristics. Hence, "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time" (Butler, 1988, p. 519). We need to acknowledge that queer minorities, specially *hijra*s are "situated between the poles of normativity and queerness", and this "gender ambiguity offers a form of productive power over mainstream society by preserving the mysterious aura of *hijra*s" (Khan, 2016, p.162).

Literature Review

In "*Hijra*s: The 21st Century Untouchables" (2017), a recent study on the status of *hijra*s in Indian law, Sapna Khatri laments the fact that the Rajya Sabha's 'Rights of Transgender Persons Bill' (2015) has made no difference to the lives of these others, as what is preached has never been fully put into practice. The social diversity India brags of still looks at the *hijra*s as another set of untouchables in their society (p. 389). The hypocrisy of the society expresses itself in its dual response of fear and loath for *hijra*s. Moreover, Khatri emphasizes redeeming the identity of *hijra*s by giving them social rights to public health and education facilities. In her view, they should not be ignored in parliamentary decisions.

However, this seems to be a far cry because of the persistent bifurcations in practice. In his review of the novel, Hassan bin Zubair highlights caste system in Indian society, that showers kindness and hatred among the likeable and the unlikable based on social status. Amidst this scenario, he finds the trans-community, among other 'dropouts' (Zubair, 2018, p.35), more vulnerable to be sympathized by the society at large. Therefore, the third sex will always be experiencing public violence and injustice. Nevertheless, Zubair is of the view that through the stark descriptions of disgrace inflicted upon Anjum, Roy wants her readers to get agitated and understand how the neo-liberal lords of India are persistently exploiting the marginalized groups in one garb or the other.

In the "Representation of 'The Other': Tracing the 'Otherized' Segments of Contemporary Indian Society in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*" (2019), Rizwan Mustafa and Zoya Jamil Chaudhry further delve into the

marginalization of the others and the binarism prevailing in the Indian society. They translate the bifurcations, in Edward Said's terms, as 'us and them'. The *hijra*s and other castrated members of the Indian society mark the social, cultural and political differences between the touchable and untouchables. Through the lens of Edward Said's concept of "Self" and "the Other", "Us" and "Them" and "Binary Opposition" they argue that *hijras* have been pushed away from the mainstream of the society into the graveyard and have been labelled as "the Other" because their "gender do not match with the majority of the people of society" (p. 495). The researchers highlight the fact that in this novel, "self is mostly at the background and the other is in the front suffering by identity problems" (p. 496) because of the social hierarchies, which suppress the weak groups to strengthen those in the majority. Rigoberto Gonzales shares a similar view by deliberating on the plight of each of the marginalized character, which "comes as a story of injustice from the pages of Indian history" (2017).

Gurpreet Singh (2017) looks into the religious and biological differences as reasons for Anjum's complex existence. Anjum is a Muslim and a transgender, and therefore twice the time more vulnerable in a community of Hindu majority observing class stratification. However, according to Gurpreet Singh, Anjum is able to defy her ill-luck by creating a physical space for her non-stereotypes - a haven for the orphans, low caste individuals, and other oppressed people.

This is why, Parul Sehgal views the atypical spaces in "Arundhati Roy's Fascinating Mess", as "a compendium of alternatives-alternative structures of kinship, resistance, and romance" (2017). The fact that Anjum comes close to other transgenders, she raises a child, and later moves to her paradise - the graveyard - "that can obliterate the divisions between the living and the dead" makes her a triumphant character. The real and fanciful space of the graveyard is a reward she earns out of "experience and endurance" (2017). In the backdrop of the civil rights issues in the novel, Swati Ganguly views this coming together of the have-nots, at the grave-yard, as the 'Grotesque hybrid existence' (2017, p. 135), making 'new marginalities' as a result of the vitriolic behaviours of the majority groups and the so-called champions of a national ideology. She looks at the discrimination of these queer people by breaking down the life of Anjum into four phases. Her life is thoroughly transformed through "her discovery of the Khwabgah, her deep attachment to the orphan girl Zainab, her travel to Gujrat in 2002 and finally, her decision to move away from Khwabgah to Jannat- the graveyard" (p. 134).

Being transgender in a hetronormative society made Anjum vulnerable and queer. But Anjum has fought with the situation audaciously, as Sarah Begley has reinforced this idea in her review that "Anjum has keen sympathy for women in dangerous spaces, whose bodies are used as shields", and through her own

exemplary life, she has proved that "women can use their bodies as a weapon too" (2017). Swapna Gopinath calls the khutbah and graveyard heterotopic spaces: 'heterotopias are typical spaces in a postmodern world, where fragmented individuals occupy carceral city spaces. These alternative grounds for the third gender, drug addicts, castrated men, lower caste people deny heterosexual spaces, which control their bodies.

The novel encompasses the shattered story of a transgender, her identity crisis, her quest for happiness and her victorious residence in a graveyard. This research paper studies her character through her queer position and the space she acquires to further reinforce the shallow ideals of a cruel society, which persists in separating the atypical beings from their essential rights. Anjum's transition from this literal Duniya to the "Paradise Guest House" highlights the miseries of all the queer groups, and their struggle to find alternative ways to channelize their lives in more meaningful ways.

Research Methodology

The method of this research is qualitative. The primary source for the data was *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. In this fiction, the focus is particularly on the transgender identity of the protagonist Anjum. Her character is seen as a representation of the consistently oppressed community in India. Her suffering, struggle and alternative narrative of existence are studied through the broader concept of the term Queer. The study observes the strangeness of this other gender and its subtle efforts in creating a new space within the heteronormative society of India. The purpose is to acknowledge this trans-community and accept their physical and social demeanour, as equal to the socially normal individuals.

Data Analysis

In all the societies of the world, there are specific spaces for different genders and there is a social role for each sex. But it is only for those who fit in the binaries of the society, while those who have challenging identities are not given any status or prestige. Such complex groups are pushed to the peripheries of the mainstream community and are "thrown into the abyss of misfortune and suffering" (Raina, 2017, p. 830). Owing to a crucial identity, "the term transgender includes all those people whose internally felt a sense of core gender identity does not correspond to their assigned sex at birth in which they were raised" (Raina, 2017, p. 831). Due to this fact, they are deprived of the right to live and pursue their choices.

According to Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, the queer matter of the existence of Anjum's life begins with her birth, which awaited a son. The parents longed for the son, as "their first three children were girls". Materializing their hopes, they even decided "they would name him Aftab" (Roy, 2017, p. 7). Hence, Aftab was a blessing for his parents, until they faced his queer truth. The happiness suddenly faded away

when Jahanara Begum discovered that under the male sexual parts of Aftab, there was "a small, unformed, but undoubtedly girl-part" (Roy, 2017, p. 7). This discovery had led Jahanara Begum into a realm of confusions and ambiguities because she thought that everything in this world is either "masculine or feminine, man or woman" (Roy, 2017, p. 8). Jahanara Begum realized the fragmented existence of the child with the doctor's revelation: "Aftab, he said, was a rare example of a hermaphrodite, with both male and female characteristics, though outwardly, the male characteristics appeared to be more dominant" (Roy, 2017, pp. 16-17). The dehumanization of the different status of Aftab lands himself in the middle of nowhere, and the only word that exists for him is a *hijra*. Although, Jahanara Begumcarried her baby to the dargah of Sarmad Shah as "in real life, the mother goes to mosque, dargah, temple to get the solution of her child's real identity" (Islam, 2020, p. 30), but even the mystics had no cure for her plight. Hence, when Aftab's parents came to know that his illness was not an illness, but a part of his existence, which cannot be recovered, they disowned him. Thus, he headed towards the Khwabgah, leaving his family and the literal Dunya behind. Aftab did not belong to the well-defined physical and spatial patterns, therefore, he chose to explore the alternate spaces.

Studies have revealed that the life of a *hijra* is affected by "various stressors that affect the mental health of *hijra* individuals, including discomfort with their sexual identity or orientation, coming-out processes, and pressure

from family" (Kalra, 2011, p. 125). The queer realization begins with the anatomy of gender trespassing the limits of body and space. The house no more remains an abode for the queer Aftab, but a space of termination and exit for defying laws of the society and its narrow comprehension of knowledge. "In leaving their (*Hijra*s) paternal families and because of their inability (in some cases, refusal) to procreate, they disrupt the patrilineal system" (Pamment, 2010, p. 30). However, their exit is not a relief but becomes a crucial path of greater complexities in the process of exerting new spaces and being themselves.

Breaking stereotypes through changing garbs and sensitivities towards a gender performance shows the advent of Aftab's transference to a freer zone of independence, along with converging conflicts and epithets. "Ordinary women in Shajahanabad wore burqas or at least covered their heads and every other part of their body except their hands and feet. The (*hijra*) woman Aftab followed could dress as she was dressed and walked the way she did only because she wasn't a woman. Whatever she was, Aftab wanted to be her" (Roy, 2017, pp. 18-19). Aftab was attracted towards queerly dressed bodies of *hijra*s from the very early stage of his life and that was natural because he had that tendency (Roy, 2017, p. 17). The very first time Aftab sang, he was ridiculed for his queer voice when other kids bullied him for being "He is a She. He is not a He or a She. He is a He and a She. She-He, He-She Hee!" (Roy, 2017, p. 12). He was given this bitter realization

that he was "born in a wrong body with the wrong sex" (Kalra, 2011, p. 122). Such an understanding would generally lead *hijra*s to "constantly seek crevices in established gender norms" and "suffer from the violence of being constantly bombarded with reminders of their gender difference" (Jaffer, 2017, p. 10). However, this ridicule became Aftab's strength to move on in life, and away from those who had no regard for cultural diversity.

During the journey of Aftab to Anjum and being Anjum to Anjuman, she calls herself:

"I'm all of them. I'm Romi and Juli, I'm Laila and Majnu. And Mujna, why not? Who says my name is Anjum? I'm not Anjum, I'm Anjuman. I'm a mehfil, I'm a gathering. Of everybody and nobody, of everything and nothing. Is there anyone else you would like to invite? Everyone's invited" (Roy 2017, p. 2-4).

Anjum sees herself as a plural being who can become one and many, man and woman, Muslim and non-muslim, good and bad, pious and fearless at the same time. This dichotomy within herself expresses her physical and mental resistance as a survivor, rather than being a perpetual victim. In an instance of street protest being documented, Anjum tells the documentary makers about this unique plurality of her kind: "We've come from another world" (Roy 2017, p. 110). In this way, Anjum realizes the importance of peripheral, and bordered lives, which can make constructive use of their divisions in the process of

becoming one and another. In doing so, they play their part in showing solidarity with those in distress.

Aftab's exit from Duniya takes her to the other worldly Khwabgah: an alternative world, away from the charms and ugliness, beliefs and practices, and hierarchies and politics of the normal world. Here, Aftab, as Anjum lived in a "multigenerational joint family of other *Hijra*s" (Seghal, 2017). After entering into the khutbah, Anjum realized that this is the place that God has reserved for her and others like her."Finally the day dawned when he entered that ordinary broken-down home as though he was walking through the gates of Paradise" (Roy 2017, p. 20). Aftab experiences a sense of inclusion through acceptance into a space like Khwabgah. The place is in a dilapidated condition and is typically representative of the othering that marginalises the other genders. "The Khwabgah was called Khwabgah, ... because it was where special people, blessed people, came out with their dreams that could not be realized in the Duniya." This is a queer space of reality and imagination, a place of weaving dreams outside the sphere of uncivilized behaviours. Although, an ugly space, conditioned to agree with the lives of *hijra*s and other outcasts.

In this sense, there is beauty in the ruins of Khwabgah because it elevates those who come devastated in these ruins. "In the Khwabgah, Holy Souls trapped in the wrong bodies were liberated" (Roy, 2017, p. 53). There she met Kulsoom Bi, the guru of this *hijra* gharana and many other queer or

ambiguous identities. Anjum's plurality desired for being a mother and live a normal life, as she once says to Saddam Hussain that she was born to be a mother knowing that this was somewhat impossible for her; she asks herself "were ambitions such as these, on the part of someone like herself, reasonable or unreasonable" (Roy, 2017, p.30). When desires are left unanswered, the characters show their struggle to accept reality and defy it at the same time for remaining unresolved. The Khwabgah was an entirely new world where each living creature was having his or her interpretation of the queer, as Nimmo Gorakhpuri says "it was an experiment. He 'God' decided to create something, a living creature that is incapable of happiness. So, he made us" (Roy, 2017, p. 23). She further reveals her inner dilemmas and queer feelings in her view that "the riot is inside us. The war is inside us. Indo-Pak is inside us. It will never settle down. It can't" (Roy, 2017, p. 23).

Anjum had gone through different surgeries and medical treatments to tilt towards femininity, but she only succeeded in getting a "patched-together body" (Roy, 2017, p. 29). At the age of forty-six, "she announced that she wanted to leave" (Roy, 2017, p. 29) the Khwabgah, and then she entered another world of "an unprepossessing graveyard, run-down, not very big and used only occasionally" (Roy, 2017, p. 58). This transition shows her continuous quest for placing her selfhood in real space and time. The purpose brings her close to mother nature and gives her the courage to defy the abnormal nature of the societal norms.

When the word spread around about the graveyard guest house, it gradually became a "hub for *hijra*s who, for one reason or another, had fallen out of, or been expelled from, the tightly administered grid of *hijra* Gharanas" (Roy, 2017, p. 68). Anjum shared this space only with those who deserved it: Imam Ziauddin who was expelled out of his house, Saddam Hussain who was chamar - an 'untouchable', and injured animals like Biru and Payal. "They sleep between the headstones, plant vegetables, create a new kind of human family that can obliterate the division between the living and the dead" (Seghal 2017). Over time, she also commenced funeral services, but they were available only for those "whom the graveyards and Imams of the Duniya had rejected" (Roy, 2017, p. 81). Thus, in no time "Jannat Guest House" became an ideal place consisting of "People's Pool, People's Zoo and a People's School" (Roy, 2017, p. 400). This place was a combination of real and unreal, life and death, a collection of sorts recognized and embraced with no foul intentions.

The queer groups "suffer multiple forms of marginalization as they are excluded from the domains of citizenship, economy and society" (Jaffer, 2017, p. 6). Through the queer character of Aftab, who survived as Anjum, Roy shows that she has not only resisted the hurdles that came her way, but she has endeavoured to subvert many traditional norms of the Indian society.

Being a queer, Anjum has become a cherished character who has gained victory in many ways and has defeated her ill-luck. She made a home for herself, where everyone else had the rights to attain and religious tolerance to exercise. Anjum becomes successful in establishing a ministry of utmost happiness, as in the closing scene of the fiction "she looked back at Jannat Guest House with a sense of contentment and accomplishment" (Roy, 2017, p. 438). Roy has been convincing, as "*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* opens up a space for alternative support networks and new family structures, unconventional refuges, and homes such as graveyards as places of shelter, protection and belonging" (Mendas & Lau, 2019, p. 78).

It is this graveyard where Anjum finally finds peace and satisfaction, and here she becomes an emblem of victory. Roy acknowledges this in anticipation: "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 her rustling leaves as a balm to ease her pain" (Roy, 2017, p. 1).

Conclusions

This paper has highlighted the concept of queer identity embodied in the character of Anjum, a *hijra* in contemporary India, who has undergone physical maltreatment and social discrimination. It has shown Anjum's struggle towards self-assertion within a culturally and religiously complex society. Her character exhibits the queer space, where identities merge and converge, to contest the gendered way of living, rather than embracing it. Anjum's life emphasizes how "gender is not a biological reality but a culturally informed training of the body" (Butler 1999). This is why Anjum's multiple roles in varied relationships: as a sister, mother, host and guardian show the range and extent of constructive social structures a third gender is capable to host. Although, "traditionally, people's concept about gender is either male or female. But transgender is a recognized identity and people have to come out from the traditional concepts, celebrate and accept *hijra*" (Islam, 2020, p. 36). In acknowledging their conflicting demeanour, we need to recognize the fluidity of social identities and the experience of a hybrid culture.

References

Begley, S. (2017). "*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is Worth the 20-Year wait." Book Review. The Times. Retrieved from https://time.com/4800799/arundhati-roy-the-ministry-of-utmost-happiness/.

Butler, J. (1999). Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York. Routledge.

Butler, J. (1988). "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." TheatreJournal. 40 (4), 519-531. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/32078

93.

Chaudry, Z. J. Rizwan Mustafa. (2019). "Representation of 'The Other': Tracing the 'otherized' Segments of Contemporary Indian society in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*." A Research Journal of South Asian Studies, 34(2), 489-504. Retrieved from http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&profile=ehost&scope=site&authtype

Enthoven, RE. (1997). The Tribes and Castes of Bombay. Bombay. D. K. Publishers Distributors.

Gangulay, S. (2017). "Arundhati Roy: *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*." IIUM Journal of English Language and Literature. 11(2), 133-137. Retrieved from https://journals.iium.edu.my/asiatic/index.php/AJELL/article/view/1087.

Gonzales, R. (2017). "Rigoberto Gonzales on Arundhati Roy's '*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*': dazzling but imperfect." Los Angeles Times. Retrieved from https://www.latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/la-ca-jc-roy-utmost-happiness-20170727-story.html.

Harari, Y N. (2014). Sapiens: A Brief History of Mankind. Penguin Random House.

Hinchy, J. (2014). "Obscenity, moral contagion and masculinity: khwajasiras in public space in Colonial North India."Asian

Studies Review, 38(2), 274-294. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2014.901298

Islam, R. (2020). "Exploring Identity and space of *Hijra*: Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness. Journal of African and Asian Social Sciences and Humanities, 6(1), 26-38. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333039328_Exploring_Identity_and_Space_of_Hijra_Arundhati_Roy's_The_Ministry_of_Utmost_Happiness

Jaffer, A. (2017). "Spiritualizing Marginality: Sufi Concepts and the Politics of Identity in Pakistan." Security and Culture in South Asia, 3(2), 1-23. DOI: 10.1177/2393861717706294.

Kalra, G. (2011). "*Hijra*s: the unique transgender culture in India."International Journal of Culture and Mental Health, 5(2), 121-126. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/17542863.2011.570915.

Khan, F. A. (2016). "Khwaja Sira Activism. The Politics of Gender Ambiguity in Pakistan." Transgender Studies Quarterly, 3(1-2), 158-164. DOI: 10.1215/23289252-3334331

Khatri, S. (2017). "Hijras: The 21st Century Untouchables." Washington University Global Studies Law Review, 16 (2), 387-409. Retrieved from https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/

cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1619 &context=law_globalstudies/

Mendes, A C. Lisa Lau. (2019). "The precarious lives of India's Others: The creativity of precarity in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*."Journal of Postcolonial Writing, 56(1), 70-82. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855. 2019.1683758

Pamment, C. (2010). "Hijraism: Jostling for the third Space in Pakistani Politics."The Drama Review, 54(2), 29-50. DOI: 10.2307/40650610.

Raina, J A. (2017). "Transgender Marginalization and Exclusion: A study of Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*."The Creative Launcher, 2(4), 829-837. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.n et/publication/340261433_Transg ender_Marginalization_and_Exclu sion_A_study_of_Arundhati_Roy' s_The_Ministry_of_Utmost_Happ iness.

Seghal, P. (2017). "Arundhati Roy's Fascinating Mess." The Atlantic. Retrieved from: https://www.theat lantic.com/magazine/archive/2017 /07/arundhati-roys-fascinating-mess/528684/

Singh, G. (2017) "Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* gives Voice to the other India". Georgia Straight. Retrieved from https://www.straight.com/news/92 8861/ministry-utmost-happiness-gives-voice-other-india.

Zubair, H B. (2018). "*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*."Book Review. International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation. Retrieved from https://publication.ijllt.org/publica tions/290148/the-ministry-of-utmost-happiness-by-arundhati-roy-a-book-review.