

Otherness in Arundhati Roy's "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness"

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into an examination of the marginalization process by closely analyzing Arundhati Roy's work, "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness." The objective is to uncover how Roy employs her artistic prowess to bridge the gap between marginalized segments and the mainstream, thereby attempting to rejuvenate the former glory of the Indian societal framework. Through the lens of oriental discourse, this study scrutinizes the novel, particularly emphasizing the strategic foothold achieved within the established system through acts of rebellious creativity, unconventional thinking, and alternative lifestyles. This study elucidates the intricate interconnections among the novel's multi-layered narratives, which lay bare the harsh realities of society, such as the dire circumstances faced by minority groups, the degrading existence of transgender individuals, the lackluster state of governance, the struggles of Naxalites, instances of rape, murder, social inequality, and preconceived biases. In "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness," Arundhati Roy explores societal categorization through the lens of "Otherness". Characters like Anjum embody the challenges faced by those deviating from societal norms, particularly in terms of transgender identity. The narrative extends this exploration to figures like Musaa and Talio, engaged in the Kashmiri conflict, highlighting a political form of "Otherness". The central aim of this research is to identify and delve into India's marginalized "Others," encompassing the impoverished, those deemed as "apostates," outsiders, and third-gender individuals, who are often subjected to subjugation or victimization. This study focuses on the theory surrounding the analysis of orientalist discourse and focuses on the "Otherness" of the novel's main character Anjum or Aftab who rejoice in their wretched condition and the survival creativity of these "Other" in their conditions of acute Precarity.

Keywords: The Other, Transgender, Poor, Inequality, Prejudice, Marginalization, Societal Precarity

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of "Otherness" by Said (1978) emerges as a result of a complex process where the dominant or centered group (referred to as "Us" or "Self") constructs the marginalized or out-group (designated as "Them" or "Other") through the act of stigmatization and differentiation. This formation of otherness, often termed "othering," revolves around the adoption of a mindset that dichotomizes individuals into the categories of "us" and "them." The out-group is understood solely as its opposition to the in-group, characterized by a perceived lack of identity, often rooted in the propagation of stigmatized and seemingly simplistic stereotypes. In this dichotomy, the in-group not only defines the "Others" but also establishes a distinct and superior identity

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for themselves. It is crucial to recognize that otherness and identity are intertwined facets of a single coin, with each entity existing solely in relation to the other.

Said (1978), in his renowned work "Orientalism," reveals that the Western perspective on the Orient depicts it as "mysterious," inert, passive, pitiable, underdeveloped, and deprived. He posits that the Western viewpoint about the East is largely shaped by literature, particularly the emerging literary form of the "novel." Said (1978) contends that this biased perception lacks a rational foundation. In "Orientalism" Said (1978) points out that marginalized individuals are essential, spoken about, and on behalf of, yet their voices are perpetually suppressed and excluded. It was the Orientalists who constructed the East as the "other." This very concept is mirrored in Arundhati Roy's "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness," wherein those in positions of power craft new definitions, identities, and labels for the less privileged, designating them as "the Other." The culmination of this process of othering is the creation of a "binary opposition," echoing Said's observations in "Orientalism." This binary opposition fragments the societal population into distinct segments, establishing the dichotomy of "the Self" versus "the other."

Arundhati Roy, acclaimed as the pioneer of Indian literature to secure the Booker Award with her debut novel "The God of Small Things" (1997), dedicated a decade of her life to crafting her second literary work, "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" (2017). This novel embarks on an internal journey spanning numerous years across the Indian subcontinent, traversing overcrowded and narrow cities, the labyrinthine lanes of Old Delhi, the expanse of the Kashmir valley, and beyond. "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" is a narrative that seamlessly melds reality with magic, offering a narrative that is unflinchingly raw, bitter, and profoundly agonizing. Roy paints a world that is harsh and brutal, yet within every corner of this brutality, hope and kindness persist. Her narrative skillfully plays with duality to convey a message - it juxtaposes innocence with wickedness, kindness with harshness, the world of the exiled "Others" with that of the third sex, and the "Duniya," or the "normal" world. Roy weaves a vibrant tapestry, interweaving the story of Anjum, a transgender individual once known as Aftab, and the tale of love between the modern Tilottama and the Kashmiri militant Musa. Within this narrative tapestry lie numerous holes, each one prompting reflection and further exploration as the reader delves deeper into the story.

Arundhati Roy's novel (2017), "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness," consists of twelve chapters, which can be effectively partitioned into two major segments. Roy dedicates this literary work to the Uncounseled, a reference to those residing on the societal fringes, enduring various forms of 'otherization'—be it local, social, political, national, or cultural. Through this novel, Roy aims to amplify the voices of voiceless individuals within Indian society, with a significant portion of the narrative stemming from the perspectives of the marginalized sectors of society. The novel unfolds through two central narratives. The first narrative delves into the life of Anjum, a transgender individual who was born as Aftab, and the marginalized sections of Indian society. The second narrative follows Tilottama and Musa, exploring Kashmiri politics, their love story, and the deteriorated state of the natural environment. The very beginning of the novel 's story is extremely destructive and we can estimate the level and extremity of destruction by the condition of poor "friendly vultures" who usually fed on dead are now died of diclofenac poisoning. This situation gets the attention of the reader to observe and explore how the city of Delhi runs and threatens all of its residents, animals and human alike. The plot moves towards a mysterious woman living in a graveyard who is able to converse with the ghosts of already extinct vultures, according to her, "weren't altogether unhappy at having excused themselves." (Roy, 2017).

In her novel "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness," Arundhati Roy weaves a tapestry filled with an array of "Others." These include Hijras, "apostles," political insurgents, the impoverished, women, foreigners, forsaken infant girls, and those relegated to lower status. The diverse spectrum even encompasses animals, birds, and trees, all of whom bear the brunt of injustice, inequality, exploitation, and prejudice. The novel serves as a poignant reflection of the rapidly evolving landscape of Indian democracy, characterized by the ascent of right-wing political ideologies, the precarious status of marginalized communities, ongoing turmoil in the Kashmir valley, and escalating environmental crises resulting from the relentless march of urbanization.

The research problem addressed in this study pertains to the denigration, marginalization, and oppression faced by certain groups of people, such as women, transgender individuals, "apostates," and ethnic minorities, on a global scale. Works of fiction frequently depict these groups experiencing various forms of prejudice, discrimination, and oppression. Drawing from Said's theory of Orientalism, this research centers on "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" as its primary subject, aiming to analyze the crises faced by characters within the novel and the portrayal of social injustices, shedding light on how differences and social disparities create tensions. Two primary research questions guide this study:

1. How does the main character Anjum as "Other" in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness who exist at the periphery of society are stigmatized, exploited, and discriminated by the ones who exist at the center of the society?

2. How does the main character Anjum as "Other" 'go against customs, test new and better ways of life, carve new space for themselves, and test new roles in the society of this novel?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The novel "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" reflects Arundhati Roy's distinct "political philosophy" that resonates throughout the text. The narrative predominantly addresses political subjects such as the Manipur Nationalist Movement, the displacement of Adivasi tribal communities, Maoist insurgency within Central Indian forests, the 2002 Gujarat Massacre, and the ongoing Kashmir conflict. Batra (2017) shares insights about the novel's nature, characterizing it as "undeniably a political novel." He expands on this, noting that the novel is intertwined with political figures and that its core is driven by prevailing "political issues that set much of the action in motion."

Sehgal (2017) in "Arundhati Roy 's fascinating mess" describes the novel as a "companion piece" to Roy's political writings. Through astute portrayals of notable Indian politicians like "The Poet Prime Minister" (Atal Bihari Vajpayee), the "trapped rabbit" (Manmohan Singh), the "Gandhian" (Anna Hazare), "Mr. Aggerval" (Arvind Kejriwal), and "Gujarat ka lalla" (Narendra Modi), Roy masterfully demonstrates the entwining of the narrative with the political realm and the theatricality of Indian politics over the past three decades.

Ganguly (2017) in "Arundhati Roy, The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" perceives the persistent and unbroken marginalities within the novel, asserting that it serves as an exploration of a grotesque hybrid existence that the Indian State has imposed on its citizens. Ganguly (2017) contends that Arundhati Roy adeptly unveils the corporate and state entities, which have sustained themselves through the exploitation of the nation's populace and resources, resorting to harsh measures to suppress resistance. According to her Roy empowers the left-wing liberal intelligentsia while disapproving of the conservative right-wing forces? In her essay,

Ganguly (2017) partially addresses the novel through the lens of binary opposition and marginalities, but this perspective falls short. This paper delves into the theoretical framework of "the others," with a primary focus on marginalities, as well as the concepts of "us and them," and "self and the other" as portrayed in "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness."

Khan (2017) discussed in his essay "The Truth Has a Habit to Prevail" that the narrative and terminology of Roy's novel "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" are fundamentally non-fictional rather than fictional. Many names and incidents are based on real people and events. He observed that Aggarwal represents Arvind Kejriwal (the Prime Minister of New Delhi, the capital of India). The character of Jalib Qadri is based on the real-life figure lawyer Adv. Jalil Qadri. Major Amrik Singh's portrayal directly corresponds to the actual Major Avtar Singh. Major Avtar Singh was notorious for his ruthless behavior as a military officer in the Indian Army. His xenophobic stance against the Kashmir freedom movement led him to commit acts of violence against numerous Kashmiri freedom seekers and innocent civilians. Similar to Russell's London or Jean-Paul Sartre's Paris, Jantar Mantar, a location in the Indian capital Delhi, served as a site for protests. Just as Dickens depicted the story of the celebrated French Revolution in his novel "A Tale of Two Cities," Roy uses her novel to tell heart-wrenching stories of human rights violations and the marginalized state of India. Roy doesn't present an American dream; instead, she offers a portrayal of Indian society's reality that remains hidden beneath layers of nationalistic fervor, radicalism, extremism, Hindutva, and the concept of a "rising India."

Ghoshal (2017) undertakes an examination of the novel from the vantage point of structure, stylistics, and plot. The novel engages in a non-linear narrative approach, shuttling back and forth across history. Ghoshal (2017) notes that the novel's tone and texture defy categorization, as it seamlessly transitions from flights of sarcasm and poetic moments to bewildering reports, seemingly bearing the imprint of diverse minds and hands. The plot of the novel is expansive, weaving together multiple narrative strands in a literary manner. Embedded within the novel are numerous "dreadful clichés" concerning the distinctions between the East and the West?

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This research finds its theoretical foundation in Said's construct of "The Self" and "The Other." In this framework, "The Self" enjoys privilege and dominance, while "The Other" is subjected to marginalization and subjugation. The novel is examined through the theoretical lens of "us" and "them," with "us" occupying the central socio-political position and "them" consigned to the societal margins. A crucial thematic element, "Binary Opposition," as articulated by Said (1978) in his book "Orientalism", assists in identifying contemporary "binarism" within Indian society. This concept underscores the suffering and distress experienced by minority groups under majoritarian regimes. The novel serves as a platform for shedding light on oft-overlooked facets of Indian society, where individuals frequently navigate transitions from better to more challenging environments, and sometimes even from the city to the graveyard. Additionally, Roy's narrative highlights the anthropocentric perspective of Indian society, where nature assumes the role of "the other."

Othring involves placing a group, individual, or object in the role of the "Other", shaping one's identity by exploiting this constructed "Other". As Bauman & Times (2007) explained, Individuals existing at the societal margins or periphery are seen as the marginalized populace. They are excluded from the mainstream, confined to incomprehensible margins. Those falling under this category are frequently isolated from community life, with limited means for survival and freedom. Their lives are burdened with confusion and frustration, as the culture and society they inhabit refuse to integrate them, preventing them from achieving normalcy in their lives. Conversely, those aligning with the mainstream majority find themselves in a position described by Bauman & Times (2007) as a "never-stopping and constantly dazzling spectacle of the city."

They have access to better, healthier, and more enjoyable prospects, as (Bauman & Times, 2007) adds, "The bigger and more heterogeneous a city, the more attractions it may support and offer..." (Bauman & Times, 2007). As a result, the gap between the central and marginal areas continues to widen. If the situation of marginalized groups remains unaddressed, the societal structure is inevitably at risk of collapse.

Gabriel (2012) delves into the intricate process of Othering, "Othering is the process of casting a group, an individual or an object into the role of the 'other' and establishing one's own identity through opposition to and, frequently, vilification of this Other. The Greeks' use of the word 'barbarian' to describe non-Greeks is a typical example of othering and an instance of nationalism *avant la lettre*. The ease with which the adjective 'other' generated the verb 'to other' in the last twenty years or so is indicative of the usefulness, power and currency of a term that now occupies an important position in feminist, postcolonial, civil rights and sexual minority discourses (Gabriel, 2012).

The process of Othering extends beyond mere scapegoating and degradation, stripping the Other of essential attributes shared with the 'Same': reason, dignity, love, pride, heroism, nobility, and, fundamentally, any claim to human rights. Whether the other represents a racial or religious group, a gender group, a sexual minority, or a nation, it becomes susceptible to exploitation, oppression, and even genocide through the denial of its inherent humanity. This is because, as articulated by philosopher Rorty (1998), "everything hinges on who qualifies as a fellow human being, as a rational agent in the only relevant sense – the sense in which rational agency is synonymous with membership of our moral community." (Rorty, 1998).

Lacan (1998) observed how "self" forms in the early stages of childhood when a child begins to anticipate his face in the mirror. The child first considers himself to be "Other" and misidentifies him/herself as a subject, and later maintains this perception in the eyes of others. Therefore, there is an interesting link between the theory of alienation and the other. Othering is a procedure that can be applied to oneself, thereby allowing one to know oneself as an unknown person. In fact, Lacanian theory sees this "self-otherness" as a way to establish symbolic order. He proclaims that the unconscious is an unknown person in us. For example, a man has no choice but to silence or kill the "woman in him".

Thibierge & Morin, (2010) notes, "that there is a fundamental flaw in the perception or image dimensions, —upholding an image or a meaning always turns out to be precarious and under threat This is why, in psychosis – regardless of the apparent solidity of certain delusional edifices, where there is an attempt to suture this fault- a complete collapse of the subject's imagery coordinates is always liable to occur, that is, a complete collapse of what we call recognition." (Thibierge & Morin, 2010).

Levi-Strauss (1992) asserts that throughout human history, two strategies have been applied to deal with others, deviants, foreigners, or strangers. One is to take them into account the restrictions between the "us" and "other" and the second strategy is to deny and exclude (—spit!) them by establishing strong boundaries and higher institutions that remain inaccessible. These strategies can be done experimentally in many situations. Finally, Levinas (1979) establishes his moral philosophy on confrontational encounters with other human beings rather than relying on abstract ethical rules and takes the moment of this instance with others.

Said's influential work "Orientalism" delves into the construction of Western representations of the "Orient" and their utilization in legitimizing colonial dominance. This study's objective is to uncover the power dynamics and cultural stereotypes interwoven within the portrayal of Muslim culture during the colonial era (Said, 1978). Said (1985; 1994), in "Orientalism" and in "Culture and Imperialism" found that Western identity and culture were essentially forged by the logic of Othering one that degrades "Other" as primitive, black,

uncivilized, non-believers, oriental, female, etc. The basic trait of otherness is to reject others in their own voice, deny the possibility of speaking for themselves, and instead attribute qualities, opinions, and perspectives related to their own culture and identity. In these pessimistic views, the other is directly or indirectly starved of any power to human rights as the transmitter of miasma and pollution. It is for this cause that the Other is frequently referred to with numerous metaphors denoting containment, impurity, and sub-humanness, 'virus', 'leeches', 'pest', 'swamp', 'vermin' etc. The existence of this dehumanized Other commonly is indicated with metaphors of invasion and infection, such as 'marauding', 'swamped', 'inundation', and 'swarms'.

Spivak (1985) was the first person to practice the concept of otherness in an efficient way. Spivak used this concept in Derrida's evaluation as early as 1980, but it wasn't until 1985 that it was systematically used in her essay, "The Rani of Sirmur".

This study centers on the exploration of Orientalism and its implications for the dynamics between "self" and "other". The concept of "Otherness" has often been examined through the lens of general orientalist practices. Echoing the binaries of "us" and "them," Edward W. Said (1978) contends that in perpetuating the inevitable chasm between these two groups, the dominant "us" perpetuates a sense of superiority. This self-assumed superiority bestows upon them the authority to dominate, oppress, and, in various ways, colonize the "them," maintaining precise governance and control. Said discerns that while the term "Others" is mentioned and represented, it is persistently excluded and silenced. Within this framework, the researcher investigates the circumstances that lead to their marginalized status and explores their adaptive strategies for survival. The primary focus lies in understanding the attitudes directed toward transgender communities as marginalized groups within the novel, those systematically pushed to the periphery of mainstream society in ways that defy simple explanations. Anjum, a transgender woman, grapples with societal prejudice, highlighting the challenges faced by transgender individuals and responding by establishing a unique community.

Numerous facets of this novel have been subject to exploration. Despite its recent publication, extensive analysis has been conducted on this literary work. Diverse scholars have embarked on journeys of uncovering the novel's multifaceted nature. However, there exists a relative dearth of research pertaining to Edward Said's theoretical framework of "self" and "other." This research paper introduces a novel perspective to the interpretation of this literary piece, contributing a fresh dimension to the main character Anjum. The paper undertakes a critical evaluation of existing reviews while also addressing gaps in the current discourse. Furthermore, it facilitates an examination of how Arundhati Roy skillfully interweaves contemporary social and political issues into the narrative, offering a platform for the transgender community as a marginalized to voice their experiences.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The research employs a qualitative approach, according to the definition, focusing on the "meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things" (Lune & Berg, 2017). This qualitative method allows for a more intimate and equitable interaction between the researcher and the researched, aligning with the emphasis made by (Stanley, 2013). Primary data for this research are collected from selected passages of the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* through textual analysis, a method highlighted by Caulfield (2023) as one that aims to connect the text to broader social, political, cultural, or artistic contexts. "Textual analysis is a broad term for various research methods used to describe, interpret and understand texts. All kinds of information can be gleaned from a text – from its literal meaning to the subtext, symbolism, assumptions, and values it reveals." (Caulfield, 2023). The methods used to conduct textual

analysis depend on the field and the aims of the research. It often aims to connect the text to a broader social, political, cultural, or artistic context. Secondary data are gathered from various sources such as research articles, web journals, research papers, opinions, and writings from different authors and critics addressing the research problem at hand.

It's important to note that only the English version of the novel is analyzed in this study, and no translated versions are included in the analysis. The primary goal of data analysis is the acquisition of relevant insights. Through a meticulous examination of the text, the researcher grapples with the challenge of uncovering the suppression of fundamental instincts and aspirations among marginalized individuals. These lives are often marked by enduring societal suffering. Furthermore, the analysis explores how these marginalized individuals, despite enduring othering, suffering, and humiliation, manage to discover avenues for cultivating their own happiness and extending this sense of empowerment to others who share similar experiences.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In Arundhati Roy's "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness," the narrative unfolds within the complex tapestry of a society marked by the existence of multiple individuals designated as the "Other." Roy's deliberate and strategic use of both content and form serves as a powerful counterbalance to prevailing expectations and prejudices. This nuanced approach allows her to effectively portray the diverse stories of characters labeled as the "Other," while simultaneously acknowledging and embracing their differences and otherness. As the novel grapples with the struggles faced by marginalized groups such as women, transgender individuals, "apostates," and ethnic minorities, it delves into the denigration, marginalization, and oppression experienced on a global scale. Drawing inspiration from Said's theory of Orientalism, this analysis aims to explore how "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" addresses the crises of its characters and depicts social injustices, illuminating the tensions arising from differences and societal disparities.

4.1 Stigmatizing Experiences of the Character “Anjum” in the Ministry of Utmost Happiness

Anjum's Arrival in the Graveyard

Anjum, a transgender woman, a central character introduced within the novel, has taken up residence in a graveyard situated behind a government hospital. In the early months of her stay, she grapples with the challenges of coexisting alongside junkies and homeless individuals. She faces a significant amount of scorn from the other denizens of the graveyard, who mockingly label her as a "clown without a circus, queen without a palace" (Roy, 2017, p. 3), but when she made an elderly blind Imam named Ziauddin her friend, others in the graveyard left her alone. The names used by graveyard residents to make fun of Anjum underscore her position in society. With the plot moving readers grasp the magnitude of alienation that Anjum is facing at the hands of society. During the conversation between Anjum and Imam, the reader notices that Anjum clearly belongs to transgender community that is specifically excluded from traditional norms and customs. Hindus are traditionally not cremated, so the Imam's assertion that "even the Hindus among you." (Roy, 2017, p. 6). People like Anjum are not cremated and inform readers that she fits into a group of people who are not supposed to deserve even the traditional transit ritual from this world.

Anjum, a transgender woman, initially faces scorn and mockery in the graveyard where she resides. The residents label her as a "clown without a circus, queen without a palace," emphasizing her marginalized status. However, her friendship with an elderly blind Imam named Ziauddin provides her some reprieve from societal disdain. Anjum's introduction highlights the immediate challenges and stigmatization she faces as a

transgender individual. Her connection with Imam Ziauddin signifies the potential for understanding and acceptance even in the face of societal prejudices.

4.2 Jahanara's Struggle with Aftab's Tran Sexuality

After the mysterious and othered presentation of Anjum 's identity, the plot finally moves to reveal more about her. Anjum holds the fourth position among five siblings, the initial three being females. During Anjum's birth, the midwife presents her to her mother as a male child, sparking immense joy in Jahanara Begum, who had nurtured the desire for a son and had already settled on the name "Aftab." Nevertheless, as the sun graces the day following Aftab's birth, Jahanara picks up her infant son, only to be confronted with an inescapable and harsh revelation regarding his transsexuality. "The next morning, when the sun was up and the room nice and warm, she unwaddled little Aftab. She explored his tiny body – eyes nose head neck armpits fingers toes – with sated, unhurried delight. That was when she discovered, nestling underneath his boy-parts, a small, unformed, but undoubtedly girl-part. Is it possible for a mother to be terrified of her own baby? Jahanara Begum was. Her Mother first reaction was to feel her heart constrict and her bones turn to ash. Her second reaction was to take another look to make sure she was not mistaken. Her third reaction was to recoil from what she had created while her bowels convulsed and a thin stream of shit ran down her legs. Her fourth reaction was to contemplate killing herself and her child. Her fifth reaction was to pick her baby up and hold him close while she fell through a crack between the world she knew and worlds she did not know existed." (Roy, 2017, p. 7, 8).

Jahanara's strong desire for a son highlights the significant degree of male gender preference prevailing in her society. Furthermore, Jahanara is so traumatized, when she sees her son as intersex that she intends to commit suicide and kill her baby too. When she realizes that Aftab is intersex, her whims of killing the baby herself reveal the stigmatization, discrimination, and exorbitant intolerance prevailing in her community. She thought that having a child who is and always will be unable to fit into the unendurably stigmatized and strict gender categories is better than not having that child at all. Eventually, Jahanara decides to hide her baby's gender. However, she decides to take the little Aftab to the holy place. Normally, she doesn't go to this specific shrine, but in this particular context, she senses a strong designation to that shrine in this situation. "perhaps she was drawn to the strange people she had seen camped there when she used to walk past on her way to Meena Bazaar, the kind of people who in her earlier life she would not have deigned to even glance at unless they 'd crossed her path. Suddenly they seemed to be the most important people in the world." (Roy, 2017, p. 9). Individuals she previously considered unworthy of attention suddenly become the most significant figures in her world. At this moment, Jahanara's decision to visit the shrine holds great significance. Roy suggests that shrine visitors belong to an othered and socially marginalized group, as evidenced by her description of them as a kind that Jahanara typically avoids acknowledging. Jahanara's swift shift in perspective, viewing them as "the most important people in the world," indicates that Aftab's birth has already begun to alter her relationship with the societal hierarchy. She sees her son as one of them and is now more attracted to the exiles of society. It's noticeable that Jahanara wants Aftab to be traditionally masculine above all else, but as Aftab develops his behavioral instincts and enthusiasm for singing, his feminine nature rather than masculine one has been revealed.

Jahanara's initial joy at the birth of what she thinks is a son turns to despair upon discovering Aftab's intersex identity. The narrative portrays the deep-seated male gender preference in society and Jahanara's extreme reactions, including contemplating suicide. This section underscores the societal pressure for traditional gender roles and the severe consequences of deviating from these norms. Jahanara's struggles reflect the broader issues of gender expectations and discrimination.

4.3 Aftab's Early Years and Influences

Jahanara reached a pivotal juncture in her life when concealing Aftab's gender reality became untenable, compelling her to confide in her husband, her long-endured companion in suffering. Upon learning the shattering truth, Mulaqat (father of Aftab) concluded that he and his wife needed to consult Dr. Ghulam Nabi, a "sexologist," regarding Aftab's situation. Dr. Nabi's determination was that Aftab did not technically fall under the category of Hijra, a term of paramount importance throughout the novel. Dr. Nabi's elucidation of Hijra is as follows: "a female trapped in a male body" (Roy, 2017, p.16). Yet, as the narrative progresses, this conventional understanding of gender continually faces challenges.

Mulaqat resolved that Aftab should undergo gender-affirming surgery and, in the interim, endeavored to share stories of his Mongol ancestors with him, while also amassing funds for his son's surgical procedure. "Simultaneously, he embarked on the cultural project of inculcating manliness in Aftab. He passed on to him his love of poetry and discouraged the singing of Thumri and Chaiti (Expressive genres of North Indian semi-classical music, capturing love, devotion, and the essence of spring through emotive vocals and melodic compositions). He stayed up late into the night, telling Aftab stories about their warrior ancestors and their valor on the battlefield. They left Aftab unmoved. But when he heard the story of how Temujin – Changez Khan – won the hand of his beautiful wife, Borte Khatun, how she was kidnapped by a rival tribe, and how Temujin fought a whole army virtually single-handedly to get her back because he loved her so much, Aftab found himself wanting to be her." (Roy, 2017, p.17). Mulaqat's primary endeavor was to instill a sense of masculinity in Aftab, attempting to persuade his son of the advantages associated with a male identity as opposed to a feminine one and trying to kill othered existence within his son but Aftab's desire to be a warrior queen underscores her true gender identity regardless of his father's stigmatized practices. "While Aftab's siblings all go to school, Aftab stays at home, observing the neighborhood. One day he sees a tall, thin woman—wearing bright lipstick, gold high heels and a shiny, green satin 'salwar kameez' and, again, wants to be her. Aftab follows the fascinating woman all the way down the street until she enters a house with a blue doorway. He is intrigued by her in part because he knows that if she was really a woman, she wouldn't have been allowed to dress that way—she would have had to wear a burqa or at the very least a head covering. Aftab longs to be her, to have her graceful walk and stylish clothing—for—it was not Aftab's girlpart that was an appendage." (Roy, 2017). Aftab's contemplation that a cis-gendered woman like her would not have the freedom to dress as she desires challenges the reader's perception of Hijras as solely marginalized, stigmatized, oppressed, and discriminated against. This perspective sheds light on the fact that Hijras, in certain contexts, hold more power and agency than cis-gendered women, allowing them greater opportunities for self-expression. Thus, the margins of society are not exclusively sites of injustice and oppression; they also serve as spaces of empowerment. Aftab's upbringing involves conflicting efforts by Mulaqat Ali to instill masculinity. Despite these attempts, Aftab's inclination towards a feminine identity becomes evident. The narrative challenges stereotypes as Aftab admires a cis-gendered woman who defies societal expectations. Aftab's journey complicates the notion of fixed gender roles, highlighting the fluidity of identity. The contrast between societal expectations and personal identity is vividly portrayed.

4.4 Anjum's Life in the Khwabgah

Aftab often spends extended periods outside a building referred to as the "*khwabgah*," which translates to "dream house." The *khwabgah* carries multiple layers of significance within the narrative. Firstly, it symbolizes a realm of Aftab's aspirations, a space previously unknown to her, where she can express her identity freely—something she had never envisioned to be possible in her acknowledged reality. Secondly, the term "*khwabgah*" is laden with distinct connotations and serves as a representation of divergence from other

spaces in the story. *Khwabgah* stands apart from mainstream society, existing almost as a parallel universe—a dreamlike world for individuals deemed unconventional and alien in the eyes of the so-called normative society.

Nimmo, a member of the *khwabgah*, holds a contrasting perspective on Hijra identity compared to Aftab. While Aftab finds beauty, elegance, charm, and loveliness in the expressions of the *khwabgah* residents, Nimmo perceives herself and her fellow community members as categorized individuals deprived of the capacity for happiness. Their marginalized identities render them incomprehensible to mainstream society. According to Nimmo, being a Hijra parallels the internal conflict of the India-Pakistan divide. She asserts, "for Hijras; '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). For Nimmo, the challenges Hijras face do not solely stem from society's stigmatization but from an inner turmoil between their male and female identities.

Aftab's initially optimistic view of the *khwabgah* and Hijra life reflects his naiveté. However, as his body begins to behave in ways that contradict his gender identity, he starts to grasp the depth of Nimmo's internal struggle. This realization prompts him to acknowledge her profound conflict. His decision to distance himself from the conventional world of "*Duniya*" signifies his full acceptance of his marginalized identity. He embraces both the challenges and joys that come with this experience, embodying a profound acceptance of himself as a marginalized individual.

Aftab's decision to live in the *khwabgah* and leave his own home stands in contrast to Jahanara's unwavering devotion to her son, highlighting the stark difference in acceptance between them. This is in contrast to Mulaqat Ali, who resists acknowledging Anjum. Jahanara's example underscores how embracing social differences can lead to greater social connections, whereas Mulaqat's adherence to societal norms isolates him from his own child.

As Aftab transforms into Anjum, she becomes the most renowned Hijra. Journalists and NGOs covet her story, often assuming that her traditional Muslim family mistreated her. However, they are surprised to learn that her parents deeply loved her, and she herself had been the one to display cruelty toward them. In the *khwabgah*, Anjum is able to freely express her desired appearance. She adorns herself with feminine attire, pierces her nose, styles her short hair into braids with extensions, and wears elaborate dresses. The *khwabgah* becomes a metaphor for embracing one's authentic self, challenging societal norms. The internal conflict among Hijras mirrors broader societal divisions, providing a nuanced portrayal of marginalized identities.

4.5 Anjum's Transformation and Ambiguity

Anjum's decision to undergo gender-affirming surgery with Dr. Mukhtar, who has treated many *khwabgah* residents before, results in physical changes, but the unexpected alteration in her voice introduces ambiguity. The narrative explores Anjum's struggle with societal expectations and her desire for a conventional life. On Anjum's 18th birthday, Kulsoom Bi throws a celebration for her. That night, Anjum dreams of being a new bride on her wedding night and experiences an orgasm in her sleep. When she awakens, she dons a new red sari. Troubled by her experience, Anjum confides in Kulsoom Bi. She comforts Anjum, describing Hijras as vessels inhabited by "a Holy Soul." Encouraged by Kulsoom Bi, Anjum contemplates undergoing gender-transition surgery, as she's assured that such a decision isn't against Islamic beliefs. Kulsoom Bi's optimistic and affirmative portrayal of the Hijra identity stands in stark contrast to Nimmo's analogy of the internal conflict between India and Pakistan that she shared with Anjum. Kulsoom Bi's perspective reflects a celebration of the Hijra identity, rooted even in her Muslim faith. Her need to reassure Anjum that surgery aligns with Islam highlights the existence of doubts within their community. Kulsoom Bi has shaped her

interpretation of faith to be all-encompassing, embracing the diversity within her community rather than excluding any part of it.

The removal of her penis brings about a significant improvement in her physical well-being. Additionally, Dr. Mukhtar provides Anjum with tablets that modulate her voice. This modification, however, results in a peculiar and raspy quality, often resembling a dialogue between two conflicting voices rather than a single one. "that undeeepen her voice but also give it a peculiar, rasping quality, which sometimes sounded like two voices quarreling with each other instead of one." (Roy, 2017, p. 29). In her transformed state, characterized by her "patched up body parts" (Roy, 2017, p. 29) and the medication altering her voice to sound like "two voices quarreling with each other instead of one" (Roy, 2017, p. 29), the notion that Hijras experience their own internal version of the India-Pakistan conflict is further emphasized. This inner conflict is a perpetual battle within themselves. Anjum's initial aim with the surgery was to achieve a feminine appearance and experience, yet the unexpected effect of the pills on her voice places her in a state of ambiguity, residing between various worlds and identities. As a result, she is now unfit to fit into any particular category of this world. Anjum lived for 30 years in the khwabgah then she left her dream world to make a new world.

Anjum grapples with her aspiration to lead a conventional life in the "Duniya," yet she ponders whether such a life is "reasonable on the part of someone like herself" (Roy, 2017, p. 30). This suggests that Anjum's decision to exist beyond the confines of the Duniya is not solely a rejection of reality, but also a response to the rejection of her very existence. Zainab holds a special place in Anjum's heart, whom she encounters on the steps of a mosque one day, a forsaken child. Anjum's profound connection to Zainab stems from the fact that, unlike everyone else, the Baby doesn't deny her or consider Anjum to be strange even after facing being rejected by her family at such a young age. It is because she wasn't exposed to the rasping norms and rules of normalizing or de-normalizing yet.

"The warring factions inside Anjum fell silent. Her body felt like a generous host instead of a battlefield. Was it like dying, or being born? Anjum couldn't decide. In her imagination it had the fullness, the sense of entirety, of one of the two. She bent down and picked the Mouse [baby] up and cradled her in her arms, murmuring all the while to her in both her quarrelling voices." (Roy, 2017, p. 30). From the passage, readers can observe the acceptance of two othered bodies to each other and becoming a source of smoothness in the battlefield of identities and that Anjum desires to help others, but she fears that, because of her Hijra identity, they will reject her help and will question her very existence. Anjum's transformation highlights the complexities of identity and the challenges faced by those who exist between societal categories. The unexpected consequences of surgery symbolize the ongoing internal conflicts within Anjum.

4.6 Anjum's Relationship with Zainab and 9/11 Impact

Moving forward, Anjum exposes certain aspects of her alienated existence in the novel. Her inclination to reveal her life's truths to Zainab, even though the child is too young to fully grasp them, signifies her longing to be acknowledged, recognized, and comprehended for her authentic self. Paradoxically, despite being surrounded by individuals who share her identity, she remains misunderstood by her peers who share her experiences. This desire to communicate her feelings might stem from her lack of close familial bonds and understanding, prompting her to establish a close relationship with her newfound child. Her belief that Zainab can navigate the harsh realities of violence mirrors her own childhood experiences, which extended beyond the typical challenges faced by a child of her gender. "After 9/11 —Every day Anjum, new to the news, watched TV reports about bomb blasts and terrorist attacks that suddenly proliferated like malaria. The Urdu papers carried stories of young Muslim boys being killed in what the police called 'encounters', or being caught

red-handed in the act of planning terrorist strikes and arrested. A new law was passed that allowed suspects to be detained without trial for months. In no time at all the prisons were full of young Muslim men. Anjum thanked the Almighty that Zainab was a girl. It was so much safer". (Roy, 2017).

Anjum's appreciation for Zainab being a girl is another instance in the narrative that challenges societal stereotypes regarding the superiority of males over females. Meanwhile, Zainab's health deteriorates, prompting Anjum to seek guidance from a Muslim religious leader, who advises her to visit the Hazrat Gharib Nawaz shrine in Ajmer. Consequently, Anjum decides to accompany Zakir Mian until Zainab's condition improves. Zakir Mian is an old friend of her father, and he is "too old to be embarrassed about being seen traveling with a Hijra" (Roy, 2017, p. 43). He suggests that they visit the shrine of the Urdu poet Wali Dakhani, someone cherished by Mulaqat. Anjum's relationship with Zainab reveals her yearning for familial bonds and acceptance. The narrative critiques societal biases during times of political unrest, emphasizing the intersectionality of identities.

4.7 Exploitation of the Character “Anjum” in the Ministry of Utmost Happiness

As the political right gains influence in her country, Anjum, the resilient Hijra (transgender), becomes a poignant symbol of vulnerability and rebellion. In an intimate moment outdoors with Saddam and Biroo, their loyal companion, Anjum shares the cherished "*Flyover Story*," leading to an unexpected revelation that she was "*born to be a mother*" (Roy, 2017). This revelation becomes a vulnerable confession, shaping Anjum's defiance against societal norms and expectations. Yet, the feasibility of such a role is immediately questioned by Saddam, who pragmatically introduces the element of "Reality." Frustrated by his realism, Anjum challenges him, asserting that once individuals fall from societal grace, they continue to descend while supporting others in their shared descent. The profound declaration, "*We don't really exist*," (Roy, 2017) becomes the core of Anjum's philosophy, unraveling the exploitation she endures and the rebellion that defines her involvement with Funeral Services and the creation of the Jannat Guest House.

Positioning herself as detached from the norms of the Duniya and conventional society, Anjum boldly claims to have already "fallen" beyond the boundaries of conformity. The term "fall" carries poignant undertones, implying not a descent into oblivion but a deliberate divergence—a "failure to conform" to societal expectations. Anjum's self-characterization becomes an act of rebellion against the limitations imposed by a conformist society, a reclamation of agency in defining her identity. In the face of Saddam Hussain's narrow assumptions about her potential for motherhood, Anjum defiantly suggests that her rejection of societal norms should not restrict her maternal aspirations. This exchange becomes a poignant moment of resistance, challenging the restrictive confines of societal expectations and highlighting the exploitation embedded within those expectations. As Anjum and Saddam return indoors, their shared feeling of detachment, described as being "a pair of astronauts," (Roy, 2017) symbolizes their profound disconnection from the real world and the societal norms that govern it.

4.8 Character “Anjum” Discriminative Experiences in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness

The struggle between the poor and the government causes the city to break out of tension in the novel, in what is supposed to be its "renewal" summer. "Scores of young reporters roam the streets of the city; they were asking urgent, empty questions; they asked the poor what it was like to be poor, the hungry what it was like to be hungry, the homeless what it was like to be homeless. '*Bhai Sahib, yehbataaiye, aap ko kaisa lag rahahai ...?*' 'Tell me, brother, how it feels to be ...?'" (Roy, 2017, p. 99). In this passage, Roy's ridicule of young journalists is the beginning of a serious criticism of the role of the media in exploitation and discrimination. It is evident at this moment that the reporters have no sincere interest in helping the poor;

instead, they continue to explore their narratives of struggle and hunger in order to maximize audience attendance. This kind of journalism is melodramatic and can do little to minimize the hardships of the individuals covered in the stories. In this tumultuous "renewal" summer, Roy sharply criticizes the media's exploitative role, as young journalists, devoid of genuine empathy, perpetuate narratives of poverty and hunger for sensationalism. Anjum's presence at the protest signifies a stark contrast between genuine activism and opportunistic posturing. The filmmakers' lack of interest in understanding Anjum's perspective highlights the shallowness of their documentary, exposing the superficiality of those exploiting the struggles of the marginalized.

Anjum, Saddam Hussain, Ustad Hameed, Nimmo, and their companion Ishrat, a visiting Hijra from Indore, saw a protest and went to support the poor at the protest sight where dishonest politicians were staging the hunger strike only for their beneficial sake and where everyone is trying to take advantage of the situation and circumstances of others at the same sight. Nimmo has derived all of them to the site that Saddam thinks is one huge scam, but Anjum insists they're going to learn something. She is insistent on the prospect of sending Saddam from activist to activist to collect data on what is being protested and why. Ustad Hameed, meanwhile, has no interest in what's being talked about, and young Ishrat spends the whole time taking selfies. At one point, a couple of filmmakers making an anticorruption documentary are filming protesters saying on camera, "Another world is possible." Instead of saying this, Anjum says, "We've come from there... from the other world". (Roy,2017, p. 110). The filmmakers didn't bother to find out what Anjum was saying because they didn't know what this meant and they only filmed the favorable situations for their documentary which will be according to their understanding and perception. In this moment, the filmmakers 'lack of interest in understanding what Anjum really means to say is an indication of their own shallowness, their lack of honest interest in the reasons being protested. In trying to convince everyone to say; "Another World Is Possible 'in whatever language they spoke. For example, if their mother tongue was Hindi or Urdu, they could say, 'Doosri duniya mumkin hai ... 'They set up their camera while they were talking and asked Anjum to look straight into the lens when she spoke. They had no idea what Duniya meant in Anjum 's lexicon. Anjum, for her part, completely uncomprehending, stared into the camera. 'Hum doosriDuniya se aayehain, 'she explained helpfully, which meant: We 've come from there ... from the other world". (Roy,2017, p.110).

As Anjum says that she and her group have come from "the other world," readers understand that the documentarians are asking their audiences to imagine the sense that she has come from the greater, varied world. This is true in a way: Anjum comes from a narrow society where the caste system, corruption, and other kinds of injustice are literally non-issues. At the sight of the protest, the promoters of *Gujarat ka Lalla* (the colloquial term for the then-Chief Minister of Gujarat) were telling the mothers that "Muslim terrorists do not deserve human rights" (Roy,2017, p.115). At this point, the followers of Gujarat ka Lalla let their non-extremist masks slip a little bit when they announce, fundamentally, that there are no human rights for Muslims. It is utterly ridiculous to withhold human rights from any group of people, but since Muslims have been so dehumanized in the eyes of the religious rights of India, the followers of Gujarat ka Lalla are unable to see how absurd this assertion is. The fact that at an event that is meant to be a protest against various injustices, Anjum suffers injustice suggests that she is so excluded from society that even there she is not considered deserving of expression.

At the end of the novel Anjum has succeeded in building a powerful community around Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services and her achievement shines through it can be seen when in the novel so many people assembled to welcome a complete stranger in the middle of the night it shows the depth of their promise to hold each other and to survive together.

Roy introduces readers to the severe discrimination and class deprivation in which Delhi's people live by explaining Ishrat and Saddam's journey through the city. The amazement of Ishrat that people have driveways for "gardens for their cars" suggests that she thinks it is needless to have such a vast amount of room. The affluent luxury neighborhoods contrast greatly with the public hospitals mentioned by Roy, which do not even have ample room for all of their patients, while some people have "gardens" for their vehicles. The fact that patients need to procure unofficial copies of the prescription indicates their apparent lack of financial privilege.

4.9 Anjum's Tapestry of Otherness: A Comparative Exploration with Tilo, Saddam Hussiam and Rubina

In this nuanced analysis, we delve into Anjum's narrative, weaving a rich tapestry that draws comparisons with the experiences of Tilo. Each character, in their unique way, grapples with the complexities of otherness and societal marginalization. Anjum, a resilient Hijra, builds a sanctuary at Jannat Guest House, carving out her space on the fringes of society. Drawing parallels with Tilo, the illegitimate daughter of a Christian mother and Dalit father, we unravel the common threads of dissent against societal norms. The title encapsulates the essence of this analysis, inviting readers to explore the intersections and distinctions in the lives of Anjum and Tilo as they navigate the labyrinth of societal expectations and carve out their identities amidst adversity.

Tilo was the Untouchable child of an untouchable father and a Syrian Christian mother. Her mother, to cover her sin, gave her new baby girl to an orphanage and then went back and adopted her. Tilo emerges as a passionate freedom fighter of Kashmir. Being deprived of the important requirements of life like home, proper upbringing, and parents, she turns to be rebellious against the established norms of society. Casteism and racial discrimination are also very much prevalent in Tilo 's story who is "the Other", an unusual, rambling woman and the protagonist of the second section of the novel. Tilo 's effort to resist the established authority can be traced to her own terrible history. Tilo has strong ideological and physical relations with Kashmiri freedom fighter Musa Yeswi. She also adopted a baby girl, who was born in Central Indian jungles to another resistance fighter Revathy. Her name was Miss Jabeen the Second, illegitimate daughter of Revathy. Tilo being the daughter of a Christian mother and a Dalit father is another "Other" in Indian society, who dissents against the social elimination of Christian and Dalit-born Indians and shows struggle and resistance through her antinormative character.

The remaining stories in the book focus on detailing occasions of corruption and violence on behalf of predominantly the Indian army, and also local militant groups in Kashmir. Innocent civilians are shot by unknown gunmen, framed for murder, jailed, and tortured by police. An entry titled Khadija says, "Reads simply, In Kashmir when we wake up and say Good Morning 'what we really mean is Good Mourning'". (Roy, 2017, p. 279). The penultimate entry, titled nothing, written by Tilo in the first person, reads; "I would like to write one of those sophisticated stories in which even though nothing much happens there's lots to write about. That can't be done in Kashmir. It's not sophisticated, what happens here. There's too much blood for good literature". (Roy, 2017, p. 283). Tilo's interpretation of the story she told about Kashmir seems to be Roy's delicately veiled comment on the meaning of her whole book. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, like Tilo's Reader's Digest, attempts to tell a tale in which there is so much killing, violence, desperation, and confusion that it will be difficult for it to be a sophisticated story "in which nothing happens." This, in turn, challenges the lack of action as a criterion for good literature for, if this is the case, only literature about subjects that are less urgent than the egregious violence faced in many parts of the world can be considered "good".

Tilo herself couldn't be happier to leave the real world behind, where she has always been an outcast, alien, and outsider, though Anjum believes that Tilo would like a space that is close to one she will find in Duniya. The fact that she feels at home at Jannat means that inside, she is as distinct as Anjum from conventional society. In the eyes of conventional Indian society, the comparison between Kashmir and Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services derives from the fact that all these locations are marginalized and oppressed in mainstream society but somehow survive in their own finest ways.

In parallel to Tilo's intricate narrative, Anjum's experiences in "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" add another layer to Arundhati Roy's exploration of marginalized identities and spaces in Indian society. While Tilo's life is entwined with the Kashmiri struggle for freedom, Anjum, as a transgender woman, embodies a different facet of societal Otherness. Anjum's character, with her unique journey from a graveyard to establishing the Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services, mirrors Tilo's quest for unconventional spaces. Tilo's connection with Musa Yeswi finds a counterpart in Anjum's experiences, both navigating a society that often views them as outsiders. The adoption of Miss Jabeen the Second by Tilo and Anjum's endeavor to create a haven for the marginalized highlight their shared commitment to embracing those deemed societal Others. The pervasive corruption and violence detailed in Tilo's entries resonate in Anjum's world as well. The struggles faced by innocent civilians in Kashmir parallel the challenges encountered by Anjum and her community. Anjum's unique perspective provides an alternative lens through which to view the violence and desperation inherent in Tilo's narrative, further amplifying Roy's commentary on the harsh realities faced by those on the fringes of society. Just as Tilo challenges conventional notions of good literature by presenting a tale saturated with urgency and violence, Anjum, too, disrupts societal norms by carving out a space for herself and others in the Jannat Guest House. The comparison between Tilo and Anjum becomes a powerful lens through which to examine the varied ways in which individuals dissent against social norms and navigate their distinct forms of Otherness. In the eyes of conventional Indian society, the parallel experiences of Tilo and Anjum underscore the broader theme of survival amid oppression. Their distinct but interconnected narratives symbolize the resilience of marginalized individuals and the unconventional spaces they create to find solace and identity in a society that often marginalizes them.

The depiction of Anjum, the resilient Hijra, in "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness," intricately aligns with Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, providing a lens through which to understand the dynamics of representation and marginalization. The initial section of the analysis sheds light on Anjum's vulnerability and rebellion as the political right gains influence. This vulnerability becomes a poignant symbol of the exploitation and discrimination faced by the transgender community. Anjum's revelation about being "born to be a mother" becomes a pivotal moment that challenges societal norms and expectations, setting the stage for a nuanced exploration of her defiance against the mainstream narrative. Anjum's confrontations with societal norms and her self-characterization as someone who has deliberately "fallen" beyond the boundaries of conformity. This act of deliberate divergence becomes a powerful form of rebellion against the limitations imposed by a conformist society. The shared feeling of detachment between Anjum and Saddam symbolizes their profound disconnection from societal norms, emphasizing the exploitation embedded within those expectations. The discriminative experiences faced by the transgender community in the novel. It critiques the role of the media in perpetuating exploitation and discrimination, drawing attention to Anjum's active participation in protests and the superficiality of those exploiting the struggles of the marginalized. Anjum's declaration that "We've come from there... from the other world" underscores the alienation experienced by the transgender community, even in spaces meant for protest against injustices. The creation of the Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services as a powerful act of resistance and community-building. Anjum's success in assembling a powerful community highlights the depth of their promise to hold each other and survive together. The analysis

underscores how Anjum's narrative parallels the broader theme of survival amid oppression, resonating with the marginalized identities explored by Said in his critique of Orientalism. The comparative exploration with Tilo, emphasizing how both characters grapple with the complexities of otherness and societal marginalization. Tilo's story, intertwined with the Kashmiri struggle for freedom, aligns with Anjum's experiences, creating a rich tapestry that invites readers to explore the intersections and distinctions in their lives.

Bringing these sections of analysis together, the portrayal of the transgender community in the novel becomes a microcosm of the broader Orientalist discourse. Anjum's journey, from vulnerability to resilience, challenges the predetermined roles imposed by the mainstream community, reflecting the power dynamics inherent in the Orientalist perspective. The creation of alternative spaces, such as the Jannat Guest House, becomes a form of resistance against the Orientalist gaze that seeks to confine the transgender community within narrow boundaries. In essence, "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" serves as a compelling narrative that not only depicts the struggles and triumphs of the transgender community but also invites readers to critically engage with the Orientalist perspective embedded in societal structures. Anjum's defiance, resilience, and community-building efforts urge a reevaluation of societal norms, fostering a more inclusive understanding of identity and belonging. Through this analysis, the novel prompts a nuanced exploration of how marginalized groups resist, find spaces for themselves, and challenge the mainstream narrative, offering a powerful commentary on the intersections of literature, identity, and societal expectations.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" through the lens of Orientalism reveals profound insights into the stigmatization, exploitation, and discrimination faced by the main character, Anjum, as the "Other" existing at the periphery of society. Anjum's journey serves as a microcosm of the broader Orientalist discourse, unraveling the power dynamics and societal norms that perpetuate the marginalization of transgender individuals.

The first research question explored Anjum's experiences of being stigmatized, exploited, and discriminated against by those at the center of society. Through Anjum's vulnerability and resilience, the novel vividly illustrates the oppressive forces that seek to confine individuals like her within predefined societal roles. Anjum's revelation about being "born to be a mother" becomes a poignant moment of defiance, challenging the normative expectations and sparking a nuanced exploration of her identity. The shared feeling of detachment between Anjum and others, symbolized by being "astronauts" in their own right, underscores the profound disconnection from societal norms and the exploitation embedded within those expectations.

The second research question delved into how Anjum, as an "Other," goes against customs, tests new ways of life, carves new spaces, and experiments with new roles in the society depicted in the novel. Anjum's deliberate divergence from societal norms becomes an act of rebellion, reclaiming agency in defining her identity beyond the limitations imposed by a conformist society. The creation of the Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services stands as a powerful testament to Anjum's resistance, demonstrating her commitment to building alternative spaces for marginalized individuals. Anjum's success in assembling a powerful community around these spaces highlights the transformative potential of dissent and the ability to survive and thrive on the fringes of society.

Through the perspective of Orientalism, the novel guides readers to critically engage with the power structures embedded in societal norms. Anjum's defiance challenges the Orientalist gaze that seeks to confine the transgender community within narrow boundaries, urging a reevaluation of established norms. The novel, through Anjum's narrative, encourages readers to question and dismantle the oppressive forces that perpetuate

discrimination against the "Other." The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" serves as a compelling exploration of identity, resistance, and survival amid societal expectations. Anjum's journey, framed within the Orientalist perspective, becomes a guide for readers to navigate the complexities of societal norms, advocating for inclusivity, and emphasizing the importance of carving out alternative spaces for those marginalized at the periphery of society. Through Anjum's narrative, the novel challenges readers to reconsider their own perspectives, fostering a deeper understanding of the diverse ways individuals resist, create, and thrive in the face of societal expectations.

This research underscores the significance of employing the theoretical framework of Otherness to dissect Aujum's narrative. Aujum's portrayal as a transgender individual allows for an in-depth analysis of the layers of discrimination faced by the community. The limitations of this study lie in its focus on Aujum; however, the applicability of the Otherness framework can be extended to other characters in Roy's body of work. Future research could explore how Aujum's Otherness theory applies to characters beyond Tilo, offering a comprehensive understanding of marginalized voices in Roy's literary realm. As we navigate the complexities of Aujum's journey, we unearth broader insights into the pervasive nature of othering in contemporary society. The limitations of this study lie in its focus on a single character, and future research could expand this framework to encompass a broader spectrum of characters within Roy's works. The significance of this analysis lies in its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of the complexities of Otherness, offering a theoretical lens that can be applied to unravel the narratives of other characters in Roy's literary repertoire.

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