

Tribhuvan University

**Valorization of Subaltern Historiography in Arundhati Roy's
*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English**

By

Prateek Paudel

Symbol No.: 572

T.U. Regd. No.: 6-2-240-72-2010

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

April 2018

Tribhuvan University

Central Department of English

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Valorization of Subaltern Historiography in Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr Prateek Paudel, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head

Central Department of English

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

I am much indebted and grateful to my respected supervisor Dr Tara Lal Shrestha, Lecturer at Central Department of English, T.U. for his guidance, inspiration and constant encouragement from the initial phase of thesis writing. Without his continuous supervision and scholarly guidance, this research work would never have come in this current form. In this regard, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to him for being such a cooperative supervisor.

I am also thankful to Prof. Dr Amma Raj Joshi, head of Central Department of English, for the approval of this research work. I would like to extend my gratitude to all other respected Lecturers, Professors and Faculty Members who inspired me to achieve my dream of being a graduate in Masters of Arts in English Literature. My special appreciation goes to my friends and well-wishers for their feedbacks and suggestions regarding my research work.

April 2018

Prateek Paudel

Valorization of Subaltern Historiography in Arundhati Roy's

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness

Abstract

This thesis is a critical discussion of Arundhati Roy's novel The Ministry of Utmost Happiness from the perspective of subaltern historiography. With the help of the reference from the text, the researcher finds Arundhati Roy challenging the mainstream official history and bringing the subaltern life as the subject matter. The major characters of the fiction belong to the dominated class: Anjum is a transgender character who is sexually marginalized; Saddam Hussain is marginalized due to his lower class. Tilottama is a semi-autobiographical exemplary subaltern character who is straightforward in making decisions of her life instead of living a dominated life. Roy brings various references from the history of Gujrat Riot, Assassination of Indira Gandhi, 9/11 attack, Kashmir insurgency and relates it to the organic life of civil society. She also presents various news reports and data regarding the problems faced by working class during Kashmir insurgency. She also brings various Hindu myths and poems in the fiction while describing the life of the subalterns. She takes along various news reports and data within the fiction making her work more authentic and trustworthy. She provides an alternative angle to view the history from the perspective of margins. It also concerns the national hegemony acted during Kashmir insurgency. The narration is in a fragmented form which is related to a fragmented life of subalterns. Hence, this fiction brings the issue of those shadowed subalterns that are neglected in the official history and calls for the inclusive historiography with the proper position for subalterns.

Keywords: Subaltern, Historiography, Transgender, Hijra, Alternative History, Socio-political Discrimination, Dalit, Kashmir Conflict

This research studies Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* as a representative text of subaltern historiography that highlights the subverted roles of the marginal group creating a departure from the mainstream history. The fiction presents struggle of a transgender subaltern character while adjusting in the Indian heterogeneous society. It focuses on the life story of a subaltern transgender character who lives a life with dual identity as male and female. It challenges the construction of mainstream official history. Looking back to the history-making process, most of them are found celebrating the roles of elite class people who hold power while construction of the official history, whereas the roles played by the margins are never brought into the consideration in the history-making process. Arundhati Roy, publishing this fiction, challenges the notion of official history that is dominantly power constructed. Bringing out the story of a transgender character of a small place in Delhi, a class discriminated Dalit character, condition of civil society during insurgency in Kashmir and role of margins in various historical-political incidents in India she highlights the subverted role of the subaltern community in the Indian society in particular whereas her broader concern is to provide voice to the overall voiceless subalterns in the Indian community.

Arundhati Roy, a Booker Prize winner writer came up with this fiction *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* after twenty years of her debut fiction *The God of Small Things*. This fiction consists of twelve chapters. The first halves of book deals with the life of transgender character Anjum and remaining explains the life of S. Tilottama relating her to Kashmir conflict. The plot begins in Old Delhi where baby boy Aftab is born with both male and female genitalia. His mother prays at the Dargah of Hazrat Sarmad Shaheed and asks for the strength to love him as she is afraid to accept the identity of her own child. As he grows up, Aftab develops

feminine qualities and eventually joins a gharana of hijras called the Khwabgah. After arriving at the Khwabgah, Aftab identity is changed to Anjum. Anjum expresses Ustad Kulsoom Bi her deepest desire to be a mother. This wish is granted when Anjum finds an abandoned girl on the steps of the Jama Masjid. The little girl holds her finger and offers her trust. She adopts the girl and gives her motherly affection and love. When Anjum returns from Gujrat she is totally a changed person. In the other hand, Zainab (the little infant girl) starts to call Saeeda her mother. Anjum has to leave Khwabgah due to the hijra tradition. She moves to a graveyard for shelter. This concludes the first part of the fiction.

After narrating the life of Anjum, the character named S. Tilottama is introduced in the fiction who finds Anjum's guesthouse in the graveyard. Tilo is presented as an architecture student who studied in Delhi. She falls in love with three different men in her college years namely: Naga, Musa and Biplab. This love stories of Tilo has consumed a large section of the fiction. The love story of Musa and Tilo takes us to Kashmir as Musa is presented as the Kashmiri character. The conflict in the Kashmir is represented in a realistic way. Roy includes the reports and experiences of the troubles and struggles that Kashmiri people have to undergo during insurgencies in Kashmir. Many stories of kidnapped children and people forced to abandon their homeland are included in this section. It gives the researcher idea about the miserable life of the Kashmiri people. The attributes provided by Roy to Tilottama is somehow similar to the writer herself. In this regard, we can call Tilottama as the semi-autobiographical character in the fiction.

After facing a terrible situation in Kashmir Tilo returns back to Delhi. Musa stays in Kashmir fighting against the law for the Kashmiri resistance. Musa himself faces the terrible loss in this fight but continues his revolt. Tilo, getting back to Delhi

goes to Anjum's Jannat for the shelter. Then the story moves forward to the marriage of Zainab and Dayachand.

This fiction carries various Indian political histories or events like Kashmir Conflict, Gujrat Riot, Assassination of Indira Gandhi, etc. But this presentation is quite different from the earlier official histories. Roy highlights the role and situation of the subalterns during those historical incidents. Those marginal issues that are neglected while the construction of the official history is brought into the limelight. The way of representation here is in an alternative way when we compare it to official mainstream history. She tries to give voice to that unheard or suppressed marginal category who are always socio-politically dominated in mainstream history. In this sense, Arundhati Roy is celebrating subaltern historiography through her fictional work.

The fiction also focusses on some environmental issues. Roy brings the issues of environmental degradation like the death of vulture due to diclofenac poisoning, genetic engineering carried out in food, etc. in the fiction. She explains how the scientific and technical advancement has directly hampered the life and health of the subaltern people. This signal to environmental degradation that is resulted due to activities of human beings.

This book also highlights the issue of untouchability to some extent. She brings a Dalit character named Saddam Hussain as the friend to the protagonist. Being neglected by the society as untouchable this character adopts the name of Saddam Hussain, tyrant Iraqi leader as a revolution against this discrimination.

Roy brings various statistical data and news reports regarding the socio-political impacts of various events in the life of subalterns. She brings the reports of kidnapped children in Kashmir conflict, impact of Gujrat Riot, 9/11 attack and

Assassination of Indira Gandhi. She brings various stories in the form of a book written by the character of the novel where she describes the terrible situation faced by Kashmiris during insurgency period. These data, news reports and factual evidence makes Roy's work more trustworthy and credible. She also includes various Hindi and Urdu poems according to the need within her fiction. *Gayatri Mantra* can be found used frequently in the fiction. Roy juxtaposes her non-fictional ideas to the fiction to make it more authentic.

Many critics have inspected *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* from different perspectives. Some of the critics are quite satisfied with what Roy has to offer through this fiction. Among these positive reviewers, some appreciate the fiction as identity-based work, while some call it as fiction that provides a place to social-political outcasts, some address it as the lamentation of the sufferer of Kashmir conflict, etc. There are also few critics who compare this fiction to Roy's earlier work and remains unsatisfied. In this regard, Charles Larson in his review of the book *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* published in *Counter Punch* points out that the book deals with the issue of *Hijra* who are considered "special or holy people" in one hand and on the other hand they are treated as the "objects of discrimination". He finds the fiction highlighting ambivalent treatment towards transgender in India.

Anita Felicelli on her book review for *Los Angeles Review of Books* states, "Identity is at the heart of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Not only India's identity, or Kashmir's identity, but also the identities of individual people, often those considered marginalized". For her, the identity issue as the major concern of Roy in the fiction.

Karan Mahajan in his review "Arundhati Roy's Return to the Form That Made Her Famous" in *The New York Times* proposes "Set in India in the present decade

(with backstories extending into the 1950s), it is a fiction about social and political outcasts who come together in response to state-sponsored violence”. Mahajan finds the fiction bringing back the history of social and outcasts of India.

Alex Clark on his book review “*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy review – a patchwork of narratives” for *The Guardian* explains “*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a curious beast: baggy, bewilderingly overpopulated with characters, frequently achronological, written in an often careless and haphazard style and yet capable of breathtakingly composed and powerful interludes”. Clark finds the baggy, bewildered, non-chronological and overpopulated in one hand but being all these the fiction has not missed being a breathtaking work with powerful interludes.

Tabish Khair for *The Hindu* in his book review states “What magic reveals, what magic hides” expresses “Not that this is a perfect fiction, or that it even deserves all the hyperbolic accolades being showered on it in certain quarters. But it is more experimental a work than Roy’s excellent first fiction, *The God of Small Things*, whose radical reputation was far in excess of its structure and style”. For Khair, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is not as stylish and properly structured as Roy’s earlier fiction *The God of Small Things*. For him the first work was excellent. He is quite skeptical about his review.

Seemita Das in her book review titled “*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a melancholic wail out of a war-torn land” for *Times of India* states “. . . I do know that this book is a lament - lament on the daily struggles for (dignified) survival borne by the scarred populace of war-torn Kashmir . . .”. Das regards the fiction as the lamentation of those sufferers who are directly affected by the Kashmir Conflict.

Although the critics earlier provided the variety of perspective to the fiction from different point of view, researcher finds the issue of subaltern historiography quite interesting and relevant for present research which is being missed. Roy presents a different angle to various socio-political events that were always presented in an elitist way through official histories. There were always a number of marginal people who were directly or indirectly impacted by these events but their voices were never heard. For those unheard voices, Roy has provided an agency through this fiction. All the instances presented in the fiction like the Gujrat Riot or Assassination of Indira Gandhi, the major concern of Roy is not to highlight the context of the instances that have dominantly presented in the official records rather she provides the scenario of impact those incidents brought in the life of marginal. She picturizes the neglected section of the official history. Roy presents alternative history to various socio-political instances from the perspective of the subaltern. Collins English Dictionary defines Alternative history as “a genre of fiction in which the author speculates on how the course of history might have been altered if a particular historical event had had a different outcome”. The dictionary meaning of the word alternative history is also relevant in the case of this fiction. Roy celebrates the subaltern historiography that was ignored while preparing official history. Including these subaltern, issues may have created some alteration in the official history. Thus, as this fiction put forward the neglected issue of official history i.e. the issue of the subaltern, we call can it as a form of alternative history.

The fiction is about a transgender character living in India. Transgender communities are discriminately named, as *hijras* is India. P. V. Sharada in her journal “Subaltern Identity of Transgender: A Prospective of Indian Society” explains Indian term *hijra* used for the transgender as “The word ‘Hijra’ the Indian usage has

traditionally been translated into English as ‘Eunuchs or hermaphrodite’ where the irregularity of the male genitalia is central to the definition” (102). According to Sharada, the term *hijra* in India is a sexist discrimination against the transgender community where irregularity of their genitals is the central element. Anitha Chettiar in her journal “Problems Faced by Hijras in Mumbai with Reference to Their Health and Harassment by the Police” explains Hijra community in a more detailed way as:

Operationally defined, a hijra refers to a human person who appears to have characteristics of both the genders that are masculine and feminine. One who is predominantly physically male who may or may not have undergone castration (removal of penis and/or testicles), vaginoplasty, breast implants and has taken upon a feminine identity wearing female attire and claiming to be a part of the hijra community/cult with a hijra identity. (752)

As Chettair aforementioned, those transgender group living in India (dominantly males) who may or may not have gone through the castration process for removing the male reproductive part and implanting feminine reproductive parts and wearing feminine attires are people considered as Hijras in Indian communities.

The transgender community is the most marginalized community in India. Transgender people are discriminated and abandoned by the societies as they are beyond heterogeneity category. These transgender lives an alienated life as they are not given respect in society. Rajkumar Siwach in his journal Education of “Transgenders in India: Status and Challenges” asserts some major problems faced by Hijra community in India as:

The transgender community faces stigma and discrimination and therefore has fewer opportunities as compared to others. They are hardly educated as they are nor accepted by the society and therefore do not receive proper schooling

. . . They are forced into sex work which puts them at the highest risk of contracting HIV as they agree to unprotected sexual intercourse because they fear rejection or they want to affirm their gender through sex. (20)

Here, Siwach presents the pathetic scenario of the transgender people in India. The transgender people are highly stigmatized and discriminated in India. Due to unacceptance of the society transgender people are restricted from the chance of getting a proper education. These people are also forced into sex works as they have nothing else to do for the living. They live a life as an outcast in society.

This implies that the transgender group is the most vulnerable subaltern group in India. And so, the author also brings the issue of Indian transgender community in this fiction to highlight their marginal status. She highlights a different section of subaltern society in India that is not much talked about. These transgender subalterns are even being neglected in the overall subaltern category. It was high time to talk about these people, which is done by Roy through this fiction. The title of the fiction has an ironic nature as a researcher cannot find any glimpses of happiness inside it. It is all about the life struggles and hardships of marginal class characters. Therefore, the fiction represents the ministry of sadness and discrimination rather than the utmost happiness.

The first chapter of the fiction “Where do old birds go to die?” initiates with the life of Anjum in the graveyard. This is the last innings of her life. The second chapter “Khwabgah” takes us back to the birth of the same character Anjum. So, the fiction is presented to us in a flashback technique. With the birth of a hermaphrodite character in the family, Jahanara Begum is in the condition of a dilemma, either to accept or abandon it. The writer gives us seven types of thoughts that the mother may feel with the birth of a hermaphrodite character. This shows the confused state of her mind. In

the same chapter, Roy talks about Hazrat Sarmad Shaheed and his Dargah. Shaheed is presented as a Jewish Armenian merchant who had travelled to Delhi from Persia in pursuit of the love of his life. Then, he falls in love with a young boy which turn him into a bisexual person. For this, he is beheaded to death. Jahanara Begum could relate herself to Shaheed as she gave birth to a hermaphrodite child. Thus, in this confused state of mind, she is at the dargah for the path that Shaheed could lead her. Jahanara Begum inside the dargah states, “This is my son, Aftab, she whispered to Hazrat Sarmad. I’ve brought him here to you. Look after him. And teach me how to love him” (10). Begum is asking Shaheed to show her path for accepting her own child. She is so much scared even to accept the hermaphrodite identity of her child. Begum is anxious about the aftermath that could occur when the sexuality of her child is well known in Indian society. Transgender is regarded as a subaltern group in India as they are not provided proper respect and position in the society according to their sexual orientation. They are mistreated and provided dominating names like *Hijras* and *Kinnars*. Khushboo Hotchandani in her journal “Problems of Transgender in India: A Study from Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion” also explains the struggle of transgender people in Indian society as: “The journey of Transgender in a country like India is very struggling and sad. Even government is not formulating proper laws for the betterment of transgender community” (76). According to Hotchandani, the condition of transgender in India is quite a miserable. Even the Indian government has not formulated adequate laws to uplift this community. Showing a mother is unable to accept the sexuality of own child Roy presents us with how devastating is the condition of transgender and their rights in India. Transgender are treated as a subaltern group in India. If there was equality, then Janahara Begum would easily

accept the hermaphrodite identity of her own child. It wouldn't have been a big deal for having a transgender child in a family.

Considering the characterization within fiction, most of the characters around whom the main story with it is woven are socially, politically, culturally as well as sexually marginalized individuals. Saddam Hussain, whose original name is Dayachand, is a young Dalit man born in a family of skimmers. He goes around riding his pet pony rescuing discarded pets and doing odd jobs. He is also found plotting the revenge of his father's death who was falsely accused of stealing and killing cows. Anjum, the hermaphrodite protagonist, identifies herself as a woman and takes pleasure in nurturing and motherhood of a child whom she adopts. She lives in Old Delhi Gharana of hijras called Khwabgah with fellow trans-women. Later, she makes the city graveyard her home which she later turns into graveyard-guesthouse naming it Jannat. Anjum's gets her sense of history from her father Mulaqat Ali who informs her about their family history i.e. how they are related to Mughal dynasty. She also receives lots of love and affection from her mother Jahanara Begum as a child. Ustad Kulsoom Bi who runs Khwabgah of the Delhi Gharana provides the identity of Anjum to Aftab after joining the gharana. Khwabgah is the shelter house for the trans-women who were sexually marginalized in the society. Later, Anjum upgrades the graveyard guesthouse and provides the families with shelter and funeral for the marginal class. The guest house also becomes a shelter for abandoned and injured animals. Musa, another important character of the fiction, being highly victimized in the Kashmir insurgency doesn't stop his revolution for free Kashmir. This shows how marginal are creating space for themselves in the heterogeneous elite society. They are turning their pain and suffering into their strength and creating their own private

space. Therefore, the characterization in the fiction is also the important element to present the subaltern historiography.

Javed Ahmad Raina in his review “*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Book Review: A Chronicle of Death and Resurrection” states:

From its hyperbolic title to its cumbersome exopause, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is everything that Roy’s first fiction, *God of Small Things* (1997) is not. The book actually begins from its very cover page with the picture of a marble grave and the setting. The book’s dedication- “to, the unconsolated,” sets its subject matter- to sooth those whose narratives have only been ‘buried under years of silence’ and ignored by the ‘pages of the hegemony’s history’, a history entrusted upon the marginal. To re-write this history through the voices of victims, she has proved herself to be an extraordinary historiographer and an intelligent story teller. (45)

For Raina, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a rewritten history from the perspective of marginal. He finds this fiction quite different from her earlier fiction *The God of Small Things*. It includes all those elements that the earlier work has missed out. He celebrates this book for being able to bring out the ideas that were buried for years from the hegemony history. Researcher supports the ideas of Raina about the book. The fiction has been able to bring out the long-lost marginal history. Roy brings the incidents from the official history like Gujrat Riot but she does not explain the causes and consequences of the Gujrat Riot rather she explains the impact of it the life of a transgender marginal character Anjum. Roy provides subaltern perspective to the historiography.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” analyzes the ideas of various theorists to find out if subalterns can speak or not. After a long

discussion, she comes to an end of her essay and answers the question raised by her title as “Subaltern cannot speak” (104). For Spivak, marginal are the people whose voice is subverted by the dominant class. Subalterns require some agency through which they can convey their voice. This fiction is an agency for the subalterns. The voice of subaltern characters like Anjum and Saddam Hussain who are socially and politically marginalized is narrated by Arundhati Roy. Taking marginal as the characters of the fiction itself is the attempt to provide agency to the voiceless subalterns. Anjum is a marginal trans-woman who is socially marginalized due to her sexuality while Saddam Hussain belongs to the Dalit community discriminated due to the hierarchical caste and class system. Beside them, there are also a number of minor marginal character like Nimmo Gorakhpuri, Musa, Zainab are also provided with the agency through this fiction. Providing agency to the margins, Roy has presents their history to the readers.

Hegemony is also an important factor for the domination of subalterns. James Lull in his book *From Media, Communications and Culture: A Global Approach* defines Hegemony as “Hegemony is the power or dominance that one social group holds over others. This can refer to the ‘asymmetrical interdependence’ of political-economic-cultural relations between and among nation-states” (33). For Lull, hegemony is the irregular dependence between politics, economics and culture between and nation or states. Andrew Wells in his journal “Hegemony: Explorations into Consensus, Coercion and Culture” explains Gramscian concept of “coercion and consent method of hegemony” as:

Hegemony can be understood as the means (the cement) employed to establish and reproduce relations that cohere the organized dominant social group (a ruling class) and impose effective control over the subaltern classes –

hegemony organizes leaders and led. The means to organize the leaders and led can be separated (at a first approximation) into coercion and consent – force and persuasion. (2)

Wells explains the concept of Gramscian cultural hegemony and clarifies the idea of consensus, hegemony through persuading ideas on dominant class and Coercion i.e. using force for hegemony. In the book, Roy also shows how the nationalist parties are implying the coercion and consent method to hegemonize the Kashmiri civil society? Thomas R Bates further clarifies the concept of Gramscian coercion and consent method of hegemony in his journal “Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony” as:

Public opinion is strictly linked to political hegemony. It is the point of contact between civil society and political society, between consensus and force. The state, when it wants to initiate an unpopular action, preventively creates the adequate public opinion; that is, it organizes and concentrates certain elements of civil society. (360)

Here, Bates explains that public opinion is linked with the political hegemony. An individual cannot speak beyond the political hegemony that surrounds him/her. When the state wants to take unpopular action, it takes the way of adequate public opinion and concerns on civil society. Government is always a concern that the civil society may revolt against the actions that are to be initiated. Thus, politics is always concerned about the upcoming reactions of civil society before taking any actions.

In this fiction, with the introduction of S. Tilottama, the issue of Kashmir insurgency and the clash of civil society and politics ongoing there is presented. Roy presents us with different stories and reports regarding the condition of the Kashmiris during the insurgency period. In the chapter “The Tenant” of the fiction Roy brings number of stories of Kashmir like “The Old Man and his Son”, “The Perfect Murder”,

“The Braveheart”, “The Fiction Prize Winner”, etc. in the form of extract from Tilottama’s book *The Reader’s Digest Book of English Grammar and Comprehension for Very Young Children*. These stories present how the Kashmiri people are suffering the insurgency. Here, people are shown being under the hegemony of the government. The political hegemony made Kashmiri people very helpless. The government is taking actions like insurgency, Curfew etc. which the civil society is unable to cope. In the name of insurgency people are being killed and kidnapped, lots of people are being homeless and there is always a silent terror flying in the air of Kashmir. Thus, this fiction has also voiced against the political hegemony (Consensus and Coercion method) that is acted upon the civil society.

In the first chapter Gudiya states Ustad Kulsoom Bi about the ancient history of *hijra* community bringing a myth from epic *Ramayana*. Gudiya narrates:

Once Gudiya tried to tell her that Hijras had a special place of love and respect in Hindu mythology. She told Kulsoom Bi the story of how, when Lord Ram and his wife, Sita, and his younger brother Laxman were banished for fourteen years from their kingdom, the citizenry, who loved their king, had followed them, vowing to go wherever their king went. When they reached the outskirts of Ayodhya where the forest began, Ram turned to his people and said, “I want all you men and women to go home and wait for me until I return.”

Unable to disobey their king, the men and women returned home. Only the Hijras waited faithfully for him at the edge of the forest for the whole fourteen years, because he had forgotten to mention them. (51)

Using this myth from Hindu epic *Ramayana*, Roy highlights that even ancient myths have given proper place for *hijra* community. But in the present modern world transgender are considered subalterns. The sexual discrimination has set transgender

to live abandoned life in the Indian society. This myth also emphasis on how once loved and respected hijra community has turned into a socially excluded community. Sarena Nanda in her journal article “The Hijras of India: Cultural and Individual Dimensions of an Institutionalized Third Gender Role” signifies the role of hijras in Hindu mythology as “The link between the Hindu theme of creative asceticism and the role and power of the hijras is explicitly articulated in the myths connecting them to their major point of religious identification” (4). Nanda highlights religious identification that Hindu mythology has provided to hijras. In the fiction, Roy brings this mythical story from *Ramayana* to show how transgender are connected even in the eastern myth? She is presenting irony that the hijra community that was given identity in the ancient Hindu myths are considered subaltern group in the modern time. Thus, the use of myth is an approach of the author to challenge the existing role of a transgender in the Indian community. Among all the ancient myth she chooses the one highlighting the issue of transgender which also make it a part of subaltern historiography.

Saddam Hussain (Dayachand) is one of the major characters carrying the issue of subalternity in the fiction. He is presented as the untouchable class person having a family profession of skinning. Hussain father is falsely accused of killing a cow. The skinners were not killing cows for the skinning rather they used to skin the dead animals. As skinners was a victim of class discrimination in the Indian community, his father committed suicide due to the high pressure of Hindu organizations. Dayachand gets influenced by Iraqi tyrant Saddam Hussain and uses his name as an identity. Dayachand explains to Anjum about using the name of Saddam Hussain as “I want to be this kind of a bastard. I want to do what I have to do and then, if I have to pay a price, I want to pay it like that” (60). Dayachand wants to take revenge with

those Hindu nationalists who pressured his father for suicide. The term “pay a price” refers to the price for making his father suicide. Dayachand is fascinated by the bravery of Saddam Hussain. Thus, he wants to fight to those Hindu activists as Saddam Hussain did. Stephen Morten in his book *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason* clarifies the idea of Spivak as:

Spivak’s theory of subalternity is still relevant as people suffer in the name of gender, class and creed. As change is the only permanent thing in the world, the subalterns should continue to make their position clear before the authorities. It is only when the authorities heed to the pleas of the subalterns that the new dawn of life may be enjoyed by the subalterns in its fullness.

(145)

Here, Stephen Morten explains that Subalternity is still relevant in the present context. People are still discriminated regarding class and gender. In the fiction, Dayachand is presented as the class-based subaltern of the present time. Regarding clarifying the position, here Dayachand has created his position as Saddam Hussain and planning to take revenge with the authorities for leading his father to suicide due to the false accusation. Therefore, the issue of Dayachand has also emphasized the concept of positionality of subalterns within the fiction.

El Habib Louai explains the concept of subaltern historiography and official history from the perspective of Antonio Gramsci in his journal “Retracing the concept of the subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical developments and new applications” as “Gramsci became interested in the study of the subaltern classes of consciousness and culture as one possible way to make their voice heard instead of relying on the historical narrative of the state which is by the end, the history of the ruling and dominant classes” (5). Here, Louai explains including of issues of

subalterns in history is the way to make their voices heard. Historians should not rely on the official history as it is a history of ruling and dominant class. Roy includes the subaltern's historical narrative in her book creating a departure from official history. For example, we can take the issue of Gujrat Riot brought within the fiction. Roy doesn't explain what the reason of outcome of the Gujrat riot in a grand manner was rather she describes what was the impact of Gujrat Riot on Anjum (subaltern transgender character). Anjum is presented as the victim of Gujrat Riot. The impact of Gujrat Riot on Anjum is explained by Roy as:

His inquiries led him to a small refugee camp inside a mosque on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, where he found Anjum in the men's section and brought her back to the Khwabgah. She had had a haircut. What was left of her hair now sat on her head like a helmet with ear muffs? She was dressed like a junior bureaucrat in a pair of dark brown men's terry cotton trousers and a checked, short-sleeved safari shirt. She had lost a good deal of weight. (46)

This section of the fiction explains the condition of Anjum who is long lost and found after Gujrat Riot. Mansoor while his trip to Gujrat finds Anjum at a refugee camp in the very miserable situation. After that Anjum is brought back Khwabgah where his daughter Zainab is afraid of her appearance. Anjum does not explain what happened to her after the Riot. This shows Anjum was traumatized by the Riot. Zainab, in absence of Anjum, gets motherly care from Saaeda and starts calling her mother instead of Anjum. She calls Anjum "Big Mummy". This incidents breakdown Anjum emotionally as she was emotionally devoted to Zainab as a mother. In this section of the novel, Roy relates Gujrat Riot to the life of a marginal character. What were the consequences caused by Gujrat Riot to a life of Anjum? Thus, Roy tries an alternative

approach to narrate the history which departs her from elitist history. This is underscoring the subaltern historiography within the novel.

This fiction also celebrates the subaltern bodies. It is a book about all kinds of bodies. There are the bodies that are considered misfits in the societies. One of the main characters is a Muslim transgender who is transforming from male to female. She goes from being Aftab to Anjum. There is also the body of the tiny black female baby whose coming is celebrated as if she were a goddess. This takes place in the concluding section of the book. Black females are generally regarded as the double marginalized due to their race as well as sexuality but Roy through her fictions rejoices the transgender as well as black female body type challenging the heterosexual normativity and racial discrimination. Regarding the representation of the body, Philip Hancock in his book *The Body, Culture and Society: An Introduction* explains:

By the close of the twentieth century, the body had become a key site of political, social, cultural and economic intervention in relation, for example, to medicine, disability, work, consumption, old age and ethics. In short, the body has come to be recognized as a contested terrain on which struggles over control and resistance are fought out in contemporary societies. That the body has emerged in recent years as a key problematic in the social sciences is indicated, for instance, by the proliferation of books and journals, conferences and other media dedicated to a sociological analysis of the body. (3)

Here, Hancock explains how the bodies are considered in the twenty-first century. He explains that the bodies in the contemporary time are struggling over control and resistance. The rise of the issues regarding bodies in various books, journals and conferences have made the issue problematized and brought into the discussion. Roy

also tries to bring the issue of body politics through the representation of different body types through her work. She highlights and valorizes those body types that are considered misfits in the contemporary society. She implies that every body type has a specific role in the functioning of the society. Therefore, a representation of the subaltern body type is also an attempt by Roy to put the limelight on subaltern bodies that is neglected by mainstream history.

The plots in the fiction are in the fragmented form. The first plot about Anjum is not that relatable to the second plot around S. Tilottama. The first plot talks the life struggle of a transgender character whereas the second plot deals with the life of Tilo where the major matter of concern is Kashmir Conflict. Roy deliberately brings such fragmented plots in the novel to present the fragmented lifestyle of the subaltern. The incidents taking place inside the fiction are also not in a chronological way. This makes the reading of the book quite complex for the onlookers. Similar kind of fragmentation regarding subaltern history is explained by Antonio Gramsci in his masterpiece *The Prison Notebook* as:

The history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of ruling groups; it is therefore can only be demonstrated when a historical cycle is completed and this cycle culminates in success. (35)

For Gramsci, history of subalterns is always in a fragmented form means they are not in a linear pattern as the official history. The unification tendency of the subaltern historiography is interrupted by the ruling class people. The roles of subalterns are always devalued and excluded in the history-making process. We can find some glimpses of subaltern history only after the completion of official history. Therefore,

as Roy, Gramsci is also making an argument on the inclusion of the subaltern historiography in the process of creating mainstream history. Subaltern should be provided with proper roles and importance as they are also the part of society, performing significant roles in the historical events. The life of characters like Anjum and Saddam Hussain should also bring into the unification with mainstream history. Thus the fragmented nature of plot also highlights the subalternity.

Dipesh Chakrabarty explains the influence of west in the history-making process of India. Here, west represents the elite class who always suppress the subaltern voice in the history-making process. Chakrabarty in his journal "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian" Pasts?" explains the role of the subaltern group in the history creation as:

The idea is to write into the history of modernity the ambivalences, contradictions, the use of force, and the tragedies and the ironies that attend it. That the rhetoric and the claims of (bourgeois) equality, of citizens' rights, of self-determination through a sovereign nation state have in many circumstances empowered marginal social groups in their struggles is undeniable-this recognition is indispensable to the project of Subaltern Studies. (21)

Chakrabarty highlights the importance of marginal social group that is undeniable from the history. The modern historiographer includes ambivalences, contradiction and tragedies of the modern time but their concern is always on the bourgeois class. The struggle of the marginals is always shadowed in the historiography. Therefore, the recognition of marginal social groups' struggle in mainstream history should be the major project of subaltern studies. Roy, with her fiction, follows the same lineage of Dipesh Chakrabarty. Bringing the characters from the subaltern social groups like

Anjum and Saddam Hussain, she tries to highlight the subverted roles of the subaltern in mainstream historiography. She highlights many historical events where these subalterns play significant roles. The struggle of Anjum to adjust in the society where her sexuality is taken as a curse and the hardships Saddam Hussain has to face due to the class discrimination is the major concern of Roy within the fiction. Thus, as Dipesh Chakrabarty suggest, Roy avoids the ambivalence, tragedies and contradictions of the elite class and put forward the life struggle of the marginal social group along with it. She presents the historiography from the perspective of the marginals providing them proper recognition.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay collection *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* claims for the re-inscription of the mainstream history and provide subaltern with the positive subject position. Spivak in her essay suggests:

It is this spirit that I read Subaltern studies against the grain and suggests that its own subalternity in claiming a positive subject-position for the subaltern might be re-inscribed as a strategy of our times. What does such re-inscription do? It acknowledges that the arena of subaltern's persistent emergence into hegemony must always and by definition remain heterogeneous to the effort of a disciplinary historian. The historian must persist in his effort in this awareness, that the subaltern is necessarily the absolute limit of the place where is narrativized into logic. (207)

Spivak highlights the role of disciplinary historian. The history-making process should be homogeneous in nature that is inclusive of the subaltern history as well. The subaltern historiography must not be neglected during historiography. She is against the hegemonic nature of the mainstream history which lacks the position for subalterns. She wants historians to be aware of the necessity of subaltern

consciousness during historiography. Subaltern voice should be narrated through the history as the dominated cannot speak for themselves. We can relate this concept of Spivak with Arundhati Roy in the fiction. Roy has provided proper subject-position to the subalterns through her fiction. As a writer and historiographer in this fiction, Roy highlights the role of margins as a disciplined historiographer. Spivak suggests for the re-inscription of the prevalent history from the perspective of the subaltern. Roy is doing the same, bringing various socio-political events from the history and narrating it from the viewpoint of subalterns. Therefore, as per Spivak suggest Roy provides proper subject-position to the subalterns as a disciplinary historian.

Arun Patnaik in his journal “Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony” quotes the concept of Gramsci of creating historical bloc as: “He has drawn attention to the importance of cultural and intellectual factors in historical development, to the function of great intellectuals in the organic life of civil society or of the state, to the moment of hegemony and consensus as the necessary form of the concrete historical bloc” (356). Patnaik suggests the concept of creating a concrete historical bloc. Gramsci is concerned about the cultural and intellectual factors in the historical development. To create the concrete history, we need to include the organic life of civil society along with the hegemony and consensus. Excluding the “organic life” of civil society will make the history incomplete or one-sided. Linking with the concept of Gramsci, Patnaik advocates for the inclusion of subaltern history during the creation of mainstream history. Arundhati Roy follows the path of inclusion in her fiction. She includes the organic life of the civil society like the life of S. Tilottama, Saddam Hussain and Zainab who are the members of civil society. She connects the history of marginal along with the mainstream historical events creating a concrete

historical bloc. Thus, juxtaposing the organic life of civil society along with mainstream nationalist history Roy ensures the position of subaltern in historiography.

The setting of the Fiction has also played significant role to establish it as the form of subaltern historiography. There are three major settings in the fiction: Old Delhi, Kashmir and Graveyard. Life of Anjum is related to Old Delhi and graveyard whereas, the life of Tilottama is linked with Kashmir. These setting are not grand as the mainstream history rather includes the livelihood of subaltern class. Thus, selecting the setting as the living place of working class, Roy departs herself from classical elitist historiographers.

To sum up, the fiction provides a proper position to the subaltern class. The writer herself is a civil right activist and her characters employed in the text are also rebellious. Major characters like Anjum, S. Tilottama and Saddam Hussain are quite rebellious regarding their position in the heteronormative society. Furthermore, Tilottama shares her attributes with the author herself making her a semi-autobiographical character. These characters are presented being marginalized through the various dominations like gender domination, class domination and political domination that are prevalent in the society. This fiction is about a transgender issue, a political satire, or a historical fiction but from every perspective, it addresses the subaltern issue.

As a transgender character, Anjum tries her best to adjust in the society that regards trans-sexuality as a sin. From the childhood, he faces various obstacles due to his sexuality. Repeatedly she is broken down but keeps moving. Another major character Tilottama is presented as a carefree character that is straightforward in taking life decisions. She is somewhat opportunist regarding decisions. Tilottama represents a strong and rebellious member of the subaltern group. Like Tilottama,

Saddam Hussain (Dayachand) is also quite rebellious. He is presented victimized by the class-based domination. He develops a revengeful attitude towards the Hindu nationalists who dominated him being skimmers and led his father to commit suicide due to the false accusation of killing a cow. All these subaltern characters are struggling to secure their position in Indian heterogeneous and hegemonically guided society. They are securing a proper position for themselves, turning the discrimination as the path to explore and develop a strong self.

In this way, bringing the organic life of subaltern characters in the fiction and relating it to the socio-political historical events like the Gujrat Riot, Assassination of Indira Gandhi and Kashmir insurgency, Arundhati Roy provides a subaltern historiography. The mainstream history has always neglected the organic life of marginals and excluded them from history but Roy bringing the sexual subaltern and class-based subaltern in her fiction and presenting their life relating it to the history, advocates for the inclusion of the subaltern in historiography. The inclusion of the subaltern historiography with the mainstream historiography will lead to the concrete and whole historical bloc. Therefore, in this fiction, Arundhati Roy, through characterization, plots and settings valorizes the subaltern historiography challenging the power driven elitist historiography.

Works Cited

- "Alternative History." Collins Dictionary, 2017. Collins Dictionary.
www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/alternative-history. Accessed
02 Feb. 2018.
- Bates, Thomas R. "Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 36, n. 2, 1975, pp. 351-66.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for
'Indian' Pasts?" *Special Issue: Imperial Fantasies and Postcolonial Histories*,
vol. 18, n. 37, 1994, pp. 1-26. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2928652.
- Chettiar, Anitha. "Problems Faced by Hijras in Mumbai with Reference to Their
Health and Harassment by the Police." *International Journal of Social Science
and Humanity*, vol. 5, n. 9, 2015, pp. 752-59.
- Clark, Alex. "*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy review – a
patchwork of narratives." *theguardian.com*, *The Guardian*, 11 June 2017,
[www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jun/11/ministry-utmost-happiness-
arundhati-roy-review](http://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jun/11/ministry-utmost-happiness-arundhati-roy-review). Accessed 16 July 2017.
- Das, Seemita. "Review of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*" *timesofindia.com*,
Times of India, 30 May 2017, [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com
/articleshow/58910772.cms](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/58910772.cms). Accessed 16 July 2017.
- Felicelli, Anita. "Outside Language and Power: The Mastery of Arundhati Roy's *The
Ministry of Utmost Happiness*." *lareviewofbooks.org*. *Los Angeles Review of
Books*. 21 June 2017, [www.lareviewofbooks.org/article/outside-language-
and-power-the-mastery-of-arundhati-roys-the-ministry-of-utmost-happiness/#!](http://www.lareviewofbooks.org/article/outside-language-and-power-the-mastery-of-arundhati-roys-the-ministry-of-utmost-happiness/#!)
Accessed 16 July 2017.

- Gramsci, Antonio. *The Prison Notebooks: Selection*. International Publishers Co, 1971.
- Hancock, Philip, et al. *The Body, Culture and Society: An Introduction*. Open UP, 2000.
- Hotchandani, Khushboo R. "Problems of Transgender in India: A Study from Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion." *International Research Journal of Human Resources and Social Sciences*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2017, pp. 73-80.
- Khair, Tabish. "What magic reveals, what magic hides." *thehindu.com, The Hindu*, 10 June 2017, www.thehindu.com/books/arundhati-roy-the-ministry-of-ttmost-happiness-review/article18910916.ece. Accessed 16 July 2017.
- Larson, Charles. "Review: Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*." *counterpunch.org, Counterpunch*, 16 June 2017, www.counterpunch.org/2017/06/16/review-arundhati-roys-the-ministry-of-utmost-happiness. Accessed 16 July 2017.
- Louai, El Habib. "Retracing the concept of the subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical developments and new applications." *African Journal of History and Culture*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2012, pp. 4-8.
- Lull, James. *From Media, Communications and Culture: A Global Approach*. Columbia UP, 1995.
- Mahajan, Karan. "Arundhati Roy's Return to the Form That Made Her Famous." *nytimes.com, The New York Times*, 9 June 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/06/09/books/review/arundhati-roys-return-to-the-form-that-made-her-famous.html. Accessed 16 July 2017.
- Morten, Stephen. *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Polity Press, 2007.

- Nanda, Sarena. "The Hijras of India: Cultural and Individual Dimensions of an Institutionalized Third Gender Role." *Taylor & Francis Online*, 4 May 2009, tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1300/J082v11n03_03. Accessed 2 Apr 2018.
- Patnaik, Arun. "Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony." *Economic and Political Weekly: Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 36, no. 21, 1975, pp. 351-66.
- Raina, Javed Ahmad. "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, Book Review: A Chronicle of Death and Resurrection." *New Man International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, vol. 4, no. 11, 2017, pp. 44-46.
- Roy, Arundhati. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Penguin Random House India, 2017.
- Sarada, P. V. "Subaltern Identity of Transgender: A Prospective of Indian Society." *International Journal of Research - Granthaalayah*, vol. 4, no. 9, 2016, pp. 101-104.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the interpretation of Culture*. Ed. Nelson and Grossberg. Illinois Press, 1988. pp. 271-313.
- . *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. Routledge, 2006.
- Siwach, Rajkumar. "Education of Transgenders in India: Status and Challenges." *International Journal of Research in Economics and Social Sciences*, vol. 6, no. 11, 2016, pp. 15-24.
- Wells, Andrew. "Hegemony: Explorations into Consensus, Coercion and Culture." *Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, vol. 6, no. 5, 2012, pp. 1-10.