

LANGUAGE OF RAIN FALLING ON TORMEDNTED CITIES: DELVING INTO SUBLEYRNTY OF TRANSGENDER BY ANALYSING *THE MINISTRY OF UTMOST HAPPINESS*

Saira Rashad¹, Dr. Musarrat Azher², Samrina Sana³ Dr. Tayyaba Yasmin⁴

ABSTRACT

The research at hand is an attempt at doing the postcolonial analysis of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) by Arundhati Roy from the perspective of subalternity. By staying within the realm of postcolonialism this research uses Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1988) as its framework and Maggio's "Can the Subaltern be Heard?" (2007). Spivak is of the view that dominant discourse of standard political, ideological and historical narrative does not allow the subaltern to speak rather perpetuates its silence. Maggio complements her work by suggesting that despite its silence the subaltern can be heard through the phenomenon of translation. This study attempts at examining both postulations by doing a detailed analysis of the character of Anjum and many other transgender characters in the novel. The research questions related to the silence of subaltern and its translation have been answered by doing a detailed textual analysis of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. This study elucidates the system in place which is responsible for the silence of the subaltern and an attempt at overcoming that silence via translation. This research is significant as it brings into light those strategies that are used for the marginalization of a weaker group, in this case transgenders. Hence, it is a humble contribution in making this world more just by exposing the injustices being done.

Key Words: Subaltern Studies, Dominant Discourse, Silence, Translation, Transgenders

INTRODUCTION

The research at hand is a postcolonial analysis of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* of Indian author Arundhati Roy (2017), by delving into the realm of subalternity. Close reading of the text has been done for the sake of interpretation and understanding the contentions of the author which aims at bringing into light the plight-ridden condition of the oppressed groups. The postcolonial study of this novel is beneficial in the sense that it talks about the forgotten and downtrodden section of the society i.e., transgenders, that are toiling under the burden of having to live a problematic life.

Arundhati Roy, in the novel has dealt with a large number of issues. For example, she talks about the rights of transgenders, issues faced by Dalits, who are lower caste people in India, struggle of Kashmiris, and different left-wing movements. All of these categories fall in the domain of marginalized groups that are thrown at the margins of the society and have a problematic identity. Tyson (2006) states that Bhabha considers postcolonial studies at an attempt to understand the personal experiences of those people who have been disregarded by history, transgenders are on such example. On the other colonialist ideology does not involve the subjugation of an entirely different people residing in an alien territory rather suppression of minority group by majority also believes in the doctrine of colonialism. Hence, despite the advent of de-colonization, the ones who cannot be ascribed for having the binary genders of either male or female, are made to suffer as their existence is challenged.

¹Lecturer in English, Higher Education Department, Punjab, Pakistan

²Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Sargodha, Pakistan

³Visiting Lecturer, Department of English, University of Sargodha, Pakistan

⁴Lecturer in English, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan

Essentially, postcolonial critical theory deals with those writings that serve as a colonial version based upon colonizers' experience in the colonized lands and how certain people with a more authentic voice try to write back in an effort to resurrect their lost and compromised identity, being members of the colonized nations. (Ashcroft, 1989). In this case the researcher argues that although Arundhati Roy belongs to India that has a big name on the canvass of postcolonialism, and its colonial legacy lingers deep but not every single time it is the foreigners hailing from far off lands that make the people bear the brunt of their powerlessness rather the oppressor can be part and parcel of the same society as the victim's. For example, the transgenders are already living in the same dynamics of society, economy and politics, as their fellow male and female counterparts, but in a *cisnormative* society it is the discriminatory treatment which causes them to experience different kinds of psychological, social and economic pressures, as *cisgender* is defined in opposition to transgender.

Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) is regarded more like the bible of the decolonization movement. The process of decolonization does not entail only freeing of the territory occupied rather it is also the psychological freedom. The colonized subjects should stop feeling that they are inferior or may be superior hence no one has any right to encroach upon the rights of others.

Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* reflects upon the idea that certain minority groups are othered, at times even being denied space in discourses. Glossing the politics of being a transgender she delves into the life experiences of one single character and how that one person moves around their community. She has successfully pointed out the lexical gaps that exist even in defining their gender. She seems to be taking us into the inner lives of these characters and open a window in the psychological tribulations that they experience as one transgender puts it as "Indo-Pak war" that constantly goes on and is never likely to be over.

Sushree (2018) has also conducted a research study on the novel and tried to capture the workings of Roy's mind as an author and underpin the multi layered and multidimensional aspects of the narrative. She is after shedding light upon the phenomenon that how marginalized groups face prejudice, injustice and discrimination at the hands of society. Amit (2017) deliberates upon the fact that novel concerns itself with presence and absence in history. For example, how the transgenders have been written out of the history; remembered as forgotten ones and lastly, how they grapple with their present existence.

The present research strives to answer the following questions:

- How dominant discourses workout effectively in denying the subaltern any voice?
- Can the subaltern be heard through the phenomenon of translation?

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- To highlight that how subaltern is silenced and represented in a certain light
- To find out if there is any way possible to hear the subaltern through the phenomenon of translation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research adapts the essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Spivak, 1988) as framework to highlight that different groups in the form of subaltern are oppressed. The researcher, in the current study, has partially used this essay as a framework contending that although the subaltern is denied any voice and an access to revisionist history, they can still be heard through special measures of translation. For that matter the essay by Maggio "Can

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the Subaltern be Heard” (2007) has been used. Hence, it is possible to at least catch the essence of the plight of the subaltern.

Subaltern Studies can essentially be categorized as social theory which is anti-colonial and anti-bourgeois and it takes up the task of representing marginalized, the deprived, and those tribes who are often left out in the national history. Guha (1998) in an attempt to explain the aim of *Subaltern Studies* states,

The aim of subaltern studies is to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian Studies, and thus help to rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work in this particular area. (p. 48)

Yadav (2011) has conducted a research on Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, keeping in view the idea that how subaltern is represented in literature. He has given a comprehensive account of Subaltern issues viz-a-viz dominant discourses. Jooste (2015) has conducted a study on African American women explaining how they face sexual violence and live in poverty.

CAN THE SUBALTERN SPEAK?

Gayatri Spivak is an important figure in postcolonial tradition and a leading critic, in her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) she talks about the marginalization of women, which can further be extended to other oppressed groups. Subaltern is an important term used by Spivak in her writings, she has borrowed it from Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist, he uses it to for those who are considered inferior and lack any class consciousness. Just like most of the feminists, Postcolonial critics try hard to give the *silenced others* a voice of their own but Spivak (1988) contends this is far from being materialized, as no matter how benevolent the efforts may be, they merely perpetuate the very act of silencing.

CAN THE SUBLATERN BE HEARD?

Maggio (2007) has complemented Spivak's theorization in his essay, “Can the Subaltern be Heard”, laying emphasis upon the idea of translation via communication. In contrast to this Spivak suggests that subaltern does not even consent to oppression because there is no communication between the subaltern and the hegemonic power which eventually coerces and deceives the subaltern into oppression. While Maggio suggests that although not an exact and well refined system of communication exists but a semblance of it is in place somehow. He suggests “.... that these limits can be (partially) overcome.” He has based his argument upon the fact that the terms of engagement implied by Spivak suggest a liberal-independent subject who is actively speaking.” That is why it seems possible, “....that one can understand cultures by translating the various conducts of their culture. On this basis I argue that the title of Spivak's essay might be more accurately stated as “Can the Subaltern Be Heard?” (Maggio, 2007)

This frame has partially been adapted as in this research it is not the western discourse that is unable to duly represent and understand the third world subaltern. In spite, this thesis argues that dominant discourse of a *cisnormative* society that caters to both males and females, provided their genders are strictly decided and uncontested, but the same discourse is unable to accommodate a third gender and hence denies that any voice and agency. Maggio (2007) contends that, “....declaring the subaltern silent is the initial stride toward an “unsilencing” of the subaltern. Yet, after a thinker has awareness of the unique silence of the subaltern, then a translation can take place.” Hence a genuine effort can be made to hear them as he adds, “The subaltern speaks all the time: We are simply unable to hear them.”

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section aims at analyzing and examining the selected excerpts of text from Arundhati Roy's fiction, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017). The postcolonial theory has been used as an umbrella category while it has further been narrowed down to Subaltern Studies. Ashcroft, et al (1989), propose that Post-colonial theory is concerned with the issues like:

Slavery, migration representation, resistance, suppression, difference, gender, race, place and responses raised against the influential master discourse of imperial Europe such as linguistics, philosophy and history and fundamental practices of writing and speaking supporting, sustaining and establishing all the patterns of discrimination and exploitation. None of these is Post-colonial but together they form the complex fabric of the field. (p. 315)

The chosen text is also concerned with the representation and identity politics particularly from the lens of dominant discourse which has also been called as influential discourse of imperialism. Hence, the analysis is mainly focused upon the subaltern's plight as someone who has been denied any voice, power or agency which means a problematic representation is their fate and it done via language. While the later part deals with the idea that it is still possible to hear the subaltern speak, as an attempt at their representation.

Role of dominant discourse in denying subaltern any voice

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness begins with the dedication of "To, The Uncolsoled" and then goes on to tell a sprawling tale filled with so many characters, each experiencing a different shade of life.

Just about every resistance movement is embodied in a character, and the lives and struggles of these characters intersect. The queers, addicts, Muslims, orphans, and other casualties of the national project of making India great again find one another and form a raucous community of sorts. And this novel—this fable—is as much for them as about them; it commemorates their struggles and their triumphs, however tiny. You will encounter no victims in this book; the smallest characters are endowed with some spit. (Sehgal, 2017)

Hence, the novel is not only about a character or two whose life stories follow a linear narrative rather it is about all those who are toiling under the burden of life in a changing India.

This study is based upon this idea propagated out by Tyson (2006) that colonist ideology is basically the one that cannot only subjugate any population elsewhere on the globe rather it also gives legitimacy to the subjugation of minority population within a nation's borders. As Simon Featherstone states that, "In postcolonialism it [the crisis] is a truism that touches upon the crucial issues of representation and upon the economic and ideological control of production and reproduction of narratives of 'other' cultures (p. 48). In this study's case the narratives of 'other' in actuality are different minority groups.

Where do old birds go to die?

The novel starts on a mysterious note where an unknown person is compared to a tree and how s/he has chosen to abandon the world and has found a place which can be described as a margin between the living and the dead, yes, it is a graveyard. Gradually the identity of that character is revealed and right on the onset the character's name is discussed, the strongest mark of one's identity, between Anjum and a person who happens to know English.

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“Her name spelled backwards would be Mujna, which wasn’t a name and meant nothing at all.” (P. 2) Spivak (1988) chooses to look at post-colonial studies as an instrument which struggles to liberate the *other* and then empower the same *other* to not only experience but also articulate those parts of itself which do not tend to fall in the sphere of the dominant discourse. Here the dominant discourse is of Laila and Majnu, a very famous folktale in the subcontinent which basically talks about ‘normal’ man and woman and their eternal love for each other. While Anjum does not fall into any category of either a man or woman, that are society’s two dearly accepted binaries for gender s/he is told that she means ‘nothing’ and her existence amounts to none.

Later on, the actual backstory of Anjum come Aftab starts to unroll when his/her birth is discussed. Begum Jahan Ara has three daughters so when a son is born, she is ecstatic and he is named as Aftab. But the tragedy befalls when the mother discovers that her baby does not possess a strict gender as his/her genitals are found to be dubious. In fact, due to the fear of societal pressures she does not reveal it even to her husband. Her fear stems from that strong binaries of gender that dominant discourse caters to.

In Urdu, the only language she knew, all things, not just living things but *all* things—carpets, clothes, books, pens, musical instruments—had a gender. Everything was either masculine or feminine, man or woman. Everything except her baby. Yes of course she knew there was a word for those like him—*Hijra*. Two words actually, *Hijra* and *Kinnar*. But two words do not make a language. Was it possible to live outside language? (p. 8)

Actually, dominant discourse is the political, institutional, and ideological rule of power which has been reinforced by tradition and societal approval, in other words it is the status quo or standard historical political narrative that tend to define reality. Moreover, the signifier points towards the signified hence, identity is granted. In this case Jahan Ara Begum is dissatisfied with whatever signifier she has been provided with. She finds them to be inadequate. The question asked by her at the end is where it becomes evident that dominant discourse denies space for existence to any anomaly which is a transgender in this case, hence a subaltern who cannot speak as it does not exist. The same dilemma is observed when Aftab finally starts moving around in the society and gets called.

“At first people were amused and even encouraging, but soon the snickering and teasing from other children began: *He’s a She. He’s not a He or a She. He’s a He and a She. She-He, He-She Hee! Hee! Hee!*” (p. 12)

In order to engage with the consciousness of subaltern Spivak uses Deconstruction’s methods and strategies as tools. She exposes the absences and gaps within nationalist, colonist historiography as here too Aftab is being mocked for not being able to clearly whether be a ‘He’ or ‘She’. Spivak claims that within the framework of dominant discourse, no voice or power is granted, because that is the only the meta narrative available. The individual is to be represented within that discourse of hegemonic power and the functional transformation. Then Semiotics comes into play here because for every signified entity to be acknowledged there has to be a signifier, but because the signifier is absent so there is no representation. Hence, subaltern cannot represent itself owing to the lack of vocabulary and needs to be represented. Absences are there in the form of lexical gaps so there is no single term for Aftab people can settle with and his identity remains a challenge, forever.

Aftab faces the same predicament and is unable to describe when he gets fascinated by Bombay Silk “...because she wasn’t a woman. Whatever she was, Aftab wanted to be her.” (p. 19) There is a denial of voice within discourse so no identity, agency or voice can be reclaimed as the dominant discourse cannot give agency for talking. Further away from the

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mainstream makes subaltern far outside from the dominant discourse. In the tradition of Marxism, subjectivity is taken as class consciousness and it is acknowledged that parts are not continuous, that is why they cannot be coherent with each other. That ends up making the subject inherently dislocated and full of contradictions. As one Hijra puts it "The riot is inside us. The war is inside us. Indo-Pak is inside us. It will never settle down. It can't," (p. 23) When an attempt is made by the hegemonic power and dominant discourse to try to tidy up these contractions and to make sense of the subject, it turns out to be an impossible task and that is why and how the subject is rejected as non-sense. Which eventually entails the process of othering.

The same problem manifests itself when Anjum observes that "...sometimes sounded like two voices quarreling with each other instead of one. It frightened other people, but it did not frighten its owner in the way her God-given one had. Nor did it please her." (p. 29) Spivak does not agree with a unified model of subject, which is traditional in nature, she brings in the Marxist claim that posits that the subject is profoundly divided, hence along with subjectivity agency is also divided. That is how it never gets possible for a subaltern to assert that agency which has already been divided.

The term *Vertreten* has been discussed by Spivak which implies a total understanding of the subject being "represented." It shows as if the representative controls the total "agency" of the subject and can completely "fill in" the space of subaltern. On the contrary, *dartelling* talks about representing in the form of a "constituency." "[I]t is not about giving voice but is concerned with constituting, working for, representing for and with, the marginalized group." Like the Western approach towards the subaltern is to speak for them or silently allow them to speak for themselves. Spivak says that both strategies result in silencing the subaltern. In the similar fashion when the reporters try to speak for Anjum and they try to 'stand in for' and do not share her story the way she wants to tell rather they tweak it according to their own dominant discourse.

When Anjum announces that

She wanted to be a mother, to wake up in her own home, dress Zainab in a school uniform and send her off to school with her books and tiffin box. The question was, were ambitions such as these, on the part of someone like herself, reasonable or unreasonable? (p. 30)

Here Spivak's ideas are resonated as the 're-presentation' that is understood only in the form of its functional transformation. The individual is to be represented within that discourse of hegemonic power along with the stamp of societal approval and the functional transformation. A Hijra is supposed to live a peculiar life and not like any other man or woman they choose to be. That is why when she tries to transform her function, her identity and representation as a Hijra is questioned and it is considered outside the bonds of normalcy and reason propagated by dominant discourse.

The novel time and again registers instances where the subaltern has been questioned in terms of its existence like Anjum feels this way when she has to travel alone "...harassment and humiliation (of being seen as well as of being *unseen*) that she would have to endure if she traveled back on her own from Ajmer." (p. 43) As the colonist ideology operates on the premise that the 'alien' nation is 'different' and this difference is directly translated into inferiority. In the same way Anjum is perceived as different and less than human. Just as for the colonizer, the colonized *other* does not count, on the other hand it

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rather becomes invisible like an erasure has been put upon that. In the same manner Anjum is there, but not there.

Reality is constructed via discourse from the position of culture and politics and Spivak opines that the truth is most contested and questioned notion that is why it gets fabricated by hierarchical forces. That is why it does not account for the subaltern who are denied the representation through influential discourse. So Anjum says to Saddam that “This place where we live, where we have made our home, is the place of falling people. Here there is no *haqeeqat*. *Arre*, even *we* aren’t real. We don’t really exist.” (p. 84) The concept of (non)existence is highlighted once again.

“Police? We’re going to give her to the *police*?” Anjum said in both her voices, separate, yet joined, one rasping, one deep, distinct.” (p. 118) This happens when Anjum with her aides goes to Jantar Mantar (New Delhi) to observe all the hue and cry over the anti-corruption campaign. She finds a baby girl there who has been abandoned and now the question of her patronage arises. Then Anjum voices out her concern when it is suggested that baby should be handed over to the Police. Anjum meets the following reaction, “The solidarity of her “We” was an embrace. Predictably, it was met with an immediate insult.” (p. 118) The general public there, that has been given solid grounds for their identity owing to their strictly defined genders, feels indignant that an *othered* member of the community has tried to identify with them. Another person comments that “Who gave these Hijras permission to sit here? Which of these Struggles do they belong to?” (p. 119) The Hijras and other downtrodden members of the society have been denied any space and they are ripped of any sense of belonging. “This is a space for serious politics, not a circus ring.” (p. 121) They are dismissed, not worthy of any serious business that is taken care of by the normal people of the world.

Anjum’s plight as somebody who has not been accommodated by the dominant discourse is quite apparent when Roy draws her comparison with Mr. Aggarwal,

She, who never knew which box to tick, which queue to stand in, which public toilet to enter (Kings or Queens? Lords or Ladies? Sirs or Hers?). He, who believed he was always right. She, who knew she was all wrong, always wrong. He, reduced by his certainties. She, augmented by her ambiguity. (p. 122)

Spivak denies that there is a unified model of subject, instead it is inherently dislocated and full of contradictions. That is how Anjum has been shown to be augmented by her ambiguities. It is at this point when the hegemonic power tries to tidy up these contractions in order to make sense of the subject. It turns out to be an impossible task hence the subject is rejected as non-sense. Which eventually entails the process of *othering*. Similarly, Biplab Das Gupta comments about Anjum that, “It’s two people with three voices. Strange the place.....an older man. Older woman. Man. Woman-man. Whatever.” (p. 206) He also does not have a category to fit Anjum in as she is not accommodated by dominant discourse, unable to dig a signifier for her he is confused about her identity. He adds, “The woman-man speaks to me in a voice that sounds like two voices.” (p. 207)

Can the Subaltern be Heard Through Translation?

Maggio (2007) suggests that “The subaltern speaks all the time: We are simply unable to hear them.” It means even the Spivak has proposed the idea of subaltern who is actively speaking but there is a lack of hearing. The essay by Spivak “Can the Subaltern Speak? (1988) presents that the concept of the colonial as well as Western “subject” and she

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concludes that Western dominant discourse has limited ability to interact with different cultures. This study has adapted her framework and suggests that the dominant discourse of status quo and standard historical political narrative of the hegemonic power is unable to give voice to subaltern which is Anjum, the transgender. Maggio (2007) is of the view that these limits can be overcome, although partially, through the phenomenon of translation. He has clearly stated that the translation of subaltern must not impose the modes of dominant discourse for communication and has to be dealt with very sensitively.

Language of Rain Falling on Tormented Cities

Maggio (2007) claims that the terms of engagement given by Spivak imply that there is a liberal-independent subject who is always actively speaking. There is no one, empathic enough, to hear otherwise the subaltern is not inaccessible. He says this can be made possible through the readings of their peculiar cultures. It entails that all actions committed by subaltern have a communicative role and translation can be done by trying to understand different conducts and manifestations of that very culture.

Spivak argues that an attempt at essentializing the subject is responsible for perpetuating epistemic violence against the subaltern. This is apparent when the man who knows English says to Anjum that her name spelled backwards would mean Majnu who was a very famous character from a folklore of the subcontinent but then he negates it and says that her name is nothing and it signifies nothing. This is how he annihilates her identity as he is trying to essentialize her subject through the dominant discourse at his disposal. But as Spivak proposes, (1999) "There is no more dangerous pastime than transposing proper names into common nouns, translating, and using them as sociological evidence." (p. 334) That is why she says that all the transcendental logic of culture is essentially imperialistic in nature. But on the other hand, Anjum as subaltern cannot be wholly dismissed as non-sensical as she asserts herself by saying,

It doesn't matter. I'm all of them, I'm Romi and Juli, I'm Laila and Majnu. And Mujna, why not? Who says my name is Anjum? I'm not Anjum, I'm Anjuman. I'm a *mehfil*, I'm a gathering. Of everybody and nobody, of everything and nothing." (p. 2)

She makes this point that although the common nouns and other vocabulary available cannot accommodate her being but it does not mean she is obliterated completely.

When Jahan Ara Begum questions whether it is possible to live outside of language because she is unable to place her new born in clear cut category of gender still there is an echo. "Naturally this question did not address itself to her in words, or as a single lucid sentence. It addressed itself to her as a soundless, embryonic howl." (p. 8) This proves that there is an answer for what subaltern has to say, if an effort is made to hear them through their own discourse. The embryonic howl is soundless but it is there, and needs interpretation.

Every subaltern does not speak the same language and each one of them has a specific identity of its own. Anjum also does not bow down and internalize the dominant discourse that does not give her any space, instead she "...began to rewrite a simpler, happier life for herself. The rewriting in turn began to make Anjum a simpler, happier person." (p. 34) This practice of rewriting the past is also an attempt to reclaim one's identity. Anjum as a subaltern has her own discourse that she shares with the likes of her own, "She learned to exaggerate the swing in her hips when she walked and to communicate with the signature spread-fingered Hijra clap...Only another Hijra could decode what was specifically meant by the specific clap at that specific moment." (p. 27) Maggio suggests that whoever is interested in studying the cultural practices of subaltern on daily culture, then one must look at the repetitive tasks that are done by those people every day.

When Anjum starts to explore her body while on her journey as transgender she realizes certain realities. For example, she is not happy when she has a wet dream as a man

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while she has fully embraced the identity of a woman. At this point Ustad Kulsoom Bi tells her that transgenders are considered holy souls which means they are different but at the same time diverse. "In the next hour Anjum learned that the Holy Souls were a diverse lot and that the world of the Khwabgah was just as complicated, if not more so, than the Duniya." (P. 27) Here Spivak's idea that the subaltern is not homogenous is resonated. Anjum tries to essentialize herself as a woman and that turns out to be problematic as she is unable to reconcile other parts of her body's functioning that do not align with that essentialized self. She is able to embrace her identity only when she fully acknowledges that she cannot be accommodated via dominant discourse's ideology. Moreover, the world *Duniya* means the world of ordinary people, and stands as a binary to the place where Anjum with her lot lives. This explains how they have a culture of their own and need specific spaces to be accommodated.

Subaltern, although not accommodated viz-a-viz dominant discourse, is still there. Spivak (1988) proposes that subaltern can only speak if they know how to speak in a language which has widely been recognized by the hegemonic power and dominant culture of the society. Their communication's reason and rationale are mediated by the ideological supermarket that does not take subaltern as a consumer. This is how the subaltern is forced to compete in a bazaar of ideas which question even their existence as the oppression of the subaltern is never acknowledged. When Ustad Kulsoom Bi says, "Our Rulers trusted us enough to put their wives and mothers in our care. Once we roamed freely in their private quarters, the zenana, of the Red Fort." She is trying to commemorate the time when Hijras had acknowledgement as individuals of worth. With the change of time the placemat of transgender also saw a shift. "They're all gone now, those mighty emperors and their queens. But *we* are still here." (p. 49) It is now that they are thrown at the margins of society, silenced and toothless in terms of power. But her historic allusion serves as a reminder that is possible to hear the subaltern if once an attempt is made to familiarize with their ways.

Spivak (1988) talks about the uses of signifiers which help in representing an intended signified. She suggests that there are lexical gaps because subaltern's certain aspects are obliterated and cease to exist just because they are not documented owing to the lack of vocabulary and syntax. This study on the other hand talks about how those presences and absences in history have been played with, by the author. Ustad Kulsoom Bi gets very excited by even a brief mention of court eunuchs in a show, that the Hijras who reside in *Khawabgah* all go to watch together. It is about the late Mughal history and is aired at historic Red Fort of New Delhi, "The moment passed in a heartbeat. But it did not matter. What mattered was that it *existed*." (p. 51) Roy's emphasis also suggests that the subaltern do exist and their assertion needs to be paid attention to, no matter how fleeting does that feel.

The very presence of subaltern is consolidated by their everyday culture and ways of living, despite their absence, due to lexical gaps, from the dominant discourse. Kulsoom Bi narrates the story of Sita and Ram, gods from the Hindu mythology, who leave their territory and everybody follows them. Ram says, "I want all you men and women to go home and wait for me until I return." All the men and women go back to their homes, because they have been explicitly addressed. "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." (p. 51) But the comment from Anjum comes as a reassuring gong when she says "So we are remembered as the forgotten ones?" This entails that there are instances present even in the dominate discourse which fleetingly capture the subaltern's presence and voice.

Spivak contends that the native informant exists on the margins, hence, cannot explain the distance between the two worlds, which have been dubbed as *Duniya* v/s *Khwabgah*, is immense. Any attempt to fill that gap by relying on the dominant discourse is only going to

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turn into constant disruption. That is why Roy quotes that, “Ordinary people in the Duniya—what did they know about what it takes to live the life of a Hijra? What did they know about the rules, the discipline and the sacrifices?” She points out that their struggle is different and they have to push through the bonds of the society a lot more than others. Once even Kulsoom Bi was forced to beg for alms at the traffic light. The important thing to notice here is their tendency to bounce back and keep on.

That they had built themselves up, bit by bit, humiliation by humiliation, from there? The Khwabgah was called Khwabgah, Ustad Kulsoom Bi said, because it was where special people, *blessed* people, came with their dreams that could not be realized in the Duniya. (p. 53)

By drawing this dichotomy of Duniya/Khwabgah Roy tries to show that subaltern have a world and culture of their own. That is why people residing in outside world, who rely on the vocabulary of dominant discourse will not be able to understand and eventually respect them.

Additionally, Roy problematizes the question of identity when she writes that, “The question of what would happen if the Holy Soul were a man trapped in a woman’s body was not addressed.” (p. 53) Transgender, especially in the sub-continent, choose to identify themselves with the women instead of the men and the rationale goes that it is easy to stay in the guise of a gender who is weak as it helps in keeping a low profile. That is why Roy highlights that despite the efforts of subaltern to be seen the vulnerability of women is still there. Because a person, whose sexual identity is contested, cannot stretch the limits by attempting to be a man.

The world of subaltern is a unique one where they have their own parallel engagements and ways of living. Moreover, it has the flexibility to accept the likes of it. Anjum, after shifting to the graveyard and being surrounded by other outcasts of the society starts a service and names it *Jannat* which in local language means paradise, a heaven on earth. “The one clear criterion was that Jannat Funeral Services would only bury those whom the graveyards and imams of the Duniya had rejected.” (p. 80)

Always the translation takes place at the margins of discourse hence, it acts as a kind of “midway” point when one is engaged in an intellectual dialogue. This midway point demands the coming out of the traditional bonds and be at a space which is inhabited by subaltern and where its own habits of language are in currency. Hence, Jannat guesthouse is a place where Anjum along with her fellow subaltern live and one has to move there to hear them speak. Roy writes, “When the sun grew hot, they returned indoors where they continued to float through their lives like a pair of astronauts, defying gravity, limited only by the outer walls of their fuchsia spaceship with its pale pistachio doors.” (p. 90) This description of the graveyard, a sanctuary and home to subaltern of the novel, actually depicts that how the subalterns have a place of its own that defies general principles of the ordinary world i.e., gravity. Roy has shown it to be a parallel world and there are many references in the novel that celebrate this, “Another World Is Possible” (p. 90) can be taken as the midway point where ideally translation of the subaltern is possible.

Anjum refers to herself and her accomplice, as people from another world, owing to their lack of acceptance through the dominate discourse and ‘normal’ ways of society. She says, “They had no idea what “Duniya” meant in Anjum’s lexicon. Anjum, for her part, completely uncomprehending, stared into the camera. “Hum doosri Duniya se aaye hain,” she explained helpfully, which meant: We’ve come from there...from the other world.” (p. 110) She has a vocabulary and lexicon of her own. In order to hear that and then translate the translator must try to find out the presuppositions of the language which is spoken by the subaltern. Moreover, the communicator’s cultures also need to be understood for the hearing to fulfill its purpose.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher of the present study has done the analysis from the perspective of postcolonialism and has concluded that Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is an emblematic text that is well informed in the politics of identity, dominance and resistance and gives a deeper insight into subaltern studies and how they are most pertinent to the contemporary era. One of the primary questions dealt with the idea that how dominant discourse act effectively in denying subaltern any voice. The second question was complimentary to the first question as it delved deeply into the possibility of listening and interpreting the culture of subaltern through translation.

One of the fundamental goals of postcolonial literary canon is to unmask the colonist ideology hidden in the discourse that is responsible for constructing the identity and it sees that how colonizers were able to downgrade the status of the colonized and hence build the ideological justifications for subjugating it, by assigning it the inferior identity of *other*. It is also established that even after the actual decolonization the empire's ghost still haunts the once colonized nations and they have indulged into neocolonialism. As Tyson (2006) points out that colonist ideology also entails that people from the same nation can end up colonizing their own fellows. The same has been observed in the novel and present study has been able to foreground that transgenders, although members of the same community, are meted out different treatment which is responsible for their *othering*, hence they have been designated as subaltern.

Dominant discourse is standard political historical narrative that helps people navigate and make sense of the world around them. Spivak (1988) in her hallmark essay has suggested that this influential narrative of imperialism does not allow the subaltern to speak rather it is responsible for its silence. transgender as a subaltern has to suffer cultural violence which is hailed from the quarters of main historical, cultural and political narratives circulated in the society. This study has argued that although Spivak puts the case of women subaltern back in the colonial India but her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak" can be partially adopted and see how transgender and Kashmiris have been denied any voice, agency or power.

In order to answer the question that how dominant discourse works effectively in denying subaltern any voice the researcher has highlighted pertinent instances in the text. For example, Anjum, the *Hijra*/transgender does not have a proper category assigned for its gender, there are lexical gaps, that not only challenges 'his' existence it also makes 'her' identity problematic. Roy has shown how all the people around her are unable to call her he/she, man/woman and many even contend with 'whatever', with a sense of dismissal. This depicts that subaltern has to live at the margins as Anjum's entire existence is based on the idea of a present absence. There are numerous textual references that mention that how *Hijras* are there, but not there. Moreover, transgenders are unable to live a simple life of a normal person and they have a divided self, which Spivak has pointed out to be class consciousness and subjectivity of the subaltern. Anjum is unable to adopt a baby and live like a mother and Nimmo, another transgender, calls this inward warring self as no less than belligerence between India and Pakistan. The study has argued that all of this proves that life and peculiar existence of subaltern cannot be catered by the dominant mainstream discourse which ironically takes away its ability to speak.

The last question pertains to whether it is possible to hear the subaltern who has been silenced or at least to get the gist of what the subaltern would say if an attempt was made to hear them. Maggio (2007) has presented the idea of translation as he states that although the Spivak's subaltern has been denied any voice it still is actively speaking only there is no one

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to lend an ear. He has suggested that if every day culture's repetitive tasks and subaltern's own way of communication is taken into consideration then at least an echo of what the subaltern has to say can be captured. This has been highlighted by the researcher that transgender, being a separate category of subaltern as each has its own culture an identity, navigate the world through its own discourse and it is shared by ingroup only. That is how it is shown that transgenders have set up a parallel world other than the ordinary world and live according to their own sense of identity. Finally, this particular novel can be studied from any other offshoot of postcolonial theory other than subaltern i.e., Said's Orientalism and Bhaba's concept of homelessness.

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