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### Rhetoric of Trans-Identity and Trans-Nation: The Trans-Gender Fault Lines in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness

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#### ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: The research paper takes a nuanced look into the idea of gender as a spatial concept and how the political groundings exist within the very spatiality. The paper reconnoitres Arundhati Roy's delicate skill of employing her narrative *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* to reflect the narrative of Kashmir and the entire nation, as she works on the intersection of the political and the social fault lines. Main Findings: The paper looks into the struggles of transgender identity and the challenges of falling out of the gender binary, especially in a country like India. The struggle has been dealt with, through an in-depth parallel between a

person's struggle and the insufficiencies, with reference to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019, thus roping in a legal angle. Roy takes us to the treacherous politics of Kashmir, through the journey of a trans-woman from the utopian world to 'Khwabgah', the heterotopic premise of a graveyard, thus making the personal become political. Research Methodology: Both exploratory and the descriptive research methods are used for deriving the theoretical analysis and to extract the results. Methods for observations are primary and secondary sources. An attempt has been made to highlight the need of exploring alternative narratives in the current times of rickety media accounts. Implications of this study: The paper looks into how Roy sows hope amidst all the desolation of the subject matter that is bound to haunt but not leave the reader with a sense of hopelessness for humanity.

## 1. Introduction

The "In what language does rain fall  
Over tormented cities?" - Pablo Neruda

It is a miracle that Arundhati Roy came out with *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* after a hiatus of almost 20 years, since most had given up on the hopes of a second novel when Arundhati Roy finally released one in 2017. It was, of course, given that the story had to be nothing sort of a miracle. As Roy delicately intertwined the lives of trans-woman Anjum, born as Aftab in the house of Jahanara Begum and Mulaqat Ali, with the narrative of Kashmir, Indian politics, and the rebellious spirit of S Tilottama, many were left wondering about the congruency of this narrative.

However, if you were to look closely, the book aligns perfectly with Roy, as she provides a well-meditated literary dais for the margins to interact and those in margins to come forward. In the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, while story of S Tilottama and her three lovers, follows the violence of Kashmir, the question of militancy in the valley, and the ever pervading pain, death, and decay in the state, Anjum's story unfolds along the lines of her struggle with her identity, body, desires, and dreams. Born to a well-reputed family in Old Delhi, as Aftab decides to become Anjum and moves to the *hizra* household of Khwabgah, under the tutelage of Ustaad Kulsoom Bi at the age of 15, a lot changes.

This paper navigates Anjum's subsequent journey into the dream world of Khwabgah, its interaction with the outer world or *duniya*, as she calls it, and her unyielding search for home, happiness, and motherhood. Roy dexterously manages the amalgamation of theme of trans-identity and trans-nation and skillfully showcases the juxtaposition in the carefully camouflaged narrative that appears fragmented at first, but soon achieves the coherence. Ideas of gender identity, space and queer existence have been dealt with at length. Despite garnering a lot of criticism, perhaps because of its political intrigues, Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* has become a polysemic piece of literature that requires more detailed and careful reflection than it has hitherto received. The work navigates through the story of a trans-woman Anjum - her journey from the utopian world to Khwabgah, the heterotopic premise of a graveyard. Roy takes us to the treacherous politics of Kashmir. Roy provides a

well-meditated literary dais for the marginalized to interact and those in margins to come forward.

## 2. DISCUSSION

While it's advised to refrain from judging a book by its cover, perhaps an exception can be made in the case of Roy's second book for just like its cover, the story starts and ends at the graveyard, which can be deciphered as a metaphor for Anjum. She is a graveyard of suppressed dreams, desires, and fantasies, of memories of that English man who once met her at the red fort, called her beautiful, and took a picture of her. But the metaphorical beauty of her identity doesn't cease just there. She also happens to be both a heaven and haven for the distraught. She provides a welcome home to Saddam, despite the knowledge that he is concealing his true identity and that he is an outcast in the outer world. She also provides a safe home to Imam Sahib who is crippled, and more importantly, to Tilo and Zebeen, the ex-wife of a militant and the daughter of a naxalite.

“She lived in the graveyard like a tree. At dawn she saw the crows off and welcomed the bats home. At dusk she did the opposite. Between shifts she conferred with the ghosts of vultures that loomed in her high branches. She felt gentle grip of their talons like an ache in an amputated limb. She gathered they weren't altogether unhappy at having excused themselves and exited from the story” (3)

What for the outside world is a mere stump, nurture lives in the graveyard? She ends up turning the entire graveyard into the Jannat Guest House, and all sorts of life are welcomed in her space. While the almost utopian image is evocative of the Garden of Eden, the idea can be better explored with the concept of space if you regard the graveyard as a heterotopic space as elucidated by Foucault. The experience of gender happens to be more spatial than biological. The likes of Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler have already established the fact that gender is performative and that this performance happens in a given physical space. The patriarchal hegemony of the nation points at a long-standing history of oppression and subjugation, two premises placed on the intersection of body and space. An easy understanding of this can be derived from the practices like denying entry into particular spaces to particular genders. The female body and autonomy, have been long controlled by levying various constraints on their physical presence. Roy has pointed out in the novel how women are neither allowed inside the inner chambers of the mosques, nor inside the premises of a graveyard. Tilo turns away in disgust when she is suggested to stay away from a friend's funeral based on the same grounds. Ironically, a graveyard is exactly where she ends up finding a home; possibly the only home that felt like one. “For the first time in her life, Tilo felt that her body had had enough room to accommodate all its organs... Instinct told her that she might have found a home for the rest of her life.” (305)

Anjum too finds her one true space, a place that is hers, a place where she absolutely belongs to, inside the pink walls and pistachio windows of a house made in graveyard. As Soja posits, postmodern feminism has a way of seeking

“consciously political grounding of critique and resistance in the spatiality of social life” (1996, 112)

Anjum says in the book:

“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. Is there anyone else you would like to invite? Everyone’s invited.” (2)

This is space talking. This is the liberation that comes from a safe space. It is explicitly positioned in the novel that the personal is political. All that happens in an individual’s personal space is directly or indirectly conditioned by social and political structures. In the novel, the life-world of gender and its corresponding relations is constantly constituted through the concrete as well as historically mediated actions of individuals.

Judith Butler has insisted that the body assumes a particular gender through acts which are time and again renewed and, consequently, revised. It is the same with Anjum. It starts with gossamere *kurtas* and *patialas* that mark the beginning of her femininity. Then comes the fulfilment of a long-held fantasy i.e. the disco red saree. However, the fantasy is so well realized that it leaves Anjum absolutely disillusioned and disgusted by a body that her soul can’t associate with thus leading the way for the sexual reassignment surgery. The hormone pills come next and right when she thinks that she has made peace with her woman while reaping the fruits of a chance motherhood, at 46, Anjum is hit by a misfortune that sends her back to her masculine past. Post the horrors of the Gujarat riots, she returns to Khwabgah dressed in a Pathani suit, with her hair all cropped and her woman all gone. However, it is only a matter of time and space before Anjum finds her femininity yet again. Soon again comes a phase when she rediscovers the woman is her, who this time in way more unabashed and unashamed than she ever was. Her hair is flaming orange now, her pathani suits all pastel, her blouses elaborately sequined, and her spirit mightier than ever.

However, the idea of ‘personal is political’ expands beyond that for Roy. Remember, she is the writer who donated the entire prize money from her Booker award in charity and though she continues to live on the royalty, a major part of it still goes away to significant causes that resonate with her as an activist. Roy’s activism, just like most of the endeavours she pursues, has always been passionate, diligent, and ideologically motivated. The revulsion for the idea of the appearances and body as being the yardsticks of an individual’s worth comes from within. Roy doesn’t shy away from writing:

“The mobs were armed with swords and tridents and wore saffron headbands. They had cadastral lists of Muslim homes, businesses and shops. They had stockpiles of gas cylinders...the police were often part of the mobs, and once the mobs had finished their business, the corpses no longer resembled corpses” (MUH 45).

However, people are not like peepholes. You cannot simply look into their homes to know their heart. Also, ideologies are nice but realities are sometimes

different. In the very opening of the book, Anjum is introduced as “clown without a circus, queen without a palace—she let the hurt blow through her branches like a breeze and used the music of her rustling leaves as balm to ease the pain.” (4)

But the author does not really leave it there, not with a set of broken images, not with a series of ellipses that need to be filled with effort for such is trans identity. The author takes upon herself the mighty task of building it for us, of filling the blanks, of completing it. Thus, the author goes on writing:

“Long ago a man who knew English told her that her name written backwards (in English) spelled Majnu. In the English version of the story of Laila and Majnu, he said, Majnu was called Romeo and Laila was Juliet. She found that hilarious. "You mean I've made a khichdi of their story?" she asked. "What will they do when they find that Laila may actually be Majnu and Romi was really Juli?" The next time he saw her, the Man Who Knew English said he'd made a mistake. Her name spelled backwards would be Mujna, which wasn't a name and meant nothing at all.” (5)

However, was Arundhati a hundred percent sure that it can absolutely ‘nothing at all,’ not just in pages but also in reality. Because Arundhati Roy’s Anjum is not just nothing. It seems like a certain echo of a certain someone, who actually lived. Those who have as much as heard about Mona Ahmed would know that. Those who ever chanced upon Dayanita Singh book *Myself Mona Ahmed* would know ever better. As soon as you read about the graveyard that Anjum encroached upon and then eventually made her own, pictures of Mona sitting casually on a grave come to your mind. It anyway happens to be one of those images that are hard to erase from your memory once seen.

But it is not just an image. Anjum and Ahmed both share Delhi as the birthplace of their stories. However, inspired as Roy’s Anjum might be, if she is an honest character, is a question that needs to be asked here. Mona Ahmed, one of the most iconic trans figures from India, is a huge name (and idea) to build your story upon. And the task gets all the more herculean when you have your grasp on the idea of gender happens to be a little loose and you happen to be a little susceptible to confusion in that regard.

In theory, it sounds like you have indeed struck gold when you decide to take inspiration from a haunting tale, from the story of someone like Mona Ahmed, from an imagery that does not leave you once it finds place in your head. However, committing to it is a difficult task. That said, it is entirely impossible provided you put in hard work which is to say that when you work on a trans person’s story you should at least be well versed with the gender umbrella. Unfortunately, Roy fails here. Here’s something Anjum says in the opening of the novel:

“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. Is there anyone else you would like to invite? Everyone's invited.” (5)

Sadly, it does matter, and while Anjum can be ‘everything,’ it is hard to posit that she is ‘nothing.’ That Roy’s grasp on the idea of gender is shaky, becomes very clear, from the following lines:

“In Urdu, the only language she [Jahanara Begum, Anjum's mother] 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.” (8)

It is rather sad that throughout her novel, Roy fails to address that the baby is Intersex not a ‘kinnar.’ As gender activist Gopi Shankar Madurai explains, ‘Intersex’ is an umbrella term used in a variety of cases, where a person’s reproductive or sexual anatomy does not match the typical definition of ‘male’ or ‘female’. They could have ambiguous external genitalia or internal reproductive organs, chromosomal variations other than ‘xx’ or ‘xy’, hormonal variations etc.

An intersex person is different from a transgender person; while intersex/sex characteristics are biological, transgender identity depends on a person’s experience of their gender. All human beings experience their gender differently, and you are cisgender if you identify with the gender you’re assigned at birth, and transgender if you don’t.”

Similarly, no one is born a ‘kinnar.’ People are born intersex or they are born with gender dysphoria. Becoming a ‘kinnar’ or ‘hizra’ on the contrary is their way of finding a community and both an intersex person as well as transwoman who was born as biological male can seek to join these ‘hizra’ clans. While the author does talk about the ambiguous genitalia, the body is immediately attached to the ‘kinnar’ identity which is as wrong as it gets. But it is just the beginning of the complications and this research work would remain incomplete without inspecting the narrative authority here. The question is simple: what happens when a cis person writes an LGBTQIA+ story? The truth is that it will always remain a ‘Mad Woman in the Attic Situation’ here until the queer folks take charge of their narratives. For now, Indian literature has nothing but autobiographies and biographies to offer, when it comes to queer narratives the biggest issue that arises here is that biographies are stories of a just person and those attached to them. However, fictional narratives, or, call them stories, if you must, have a more universal appeal, they address the masses and sadly Indian literature has a dearth of queer writers to take over that side of the narrative.

It gets worse when these writers try to take over even that part of the narrative. Nandini Krishnan’s *Invisible Men: Inside India’s Trans-Masculine Network* is one such book. In the book, Krishnan takes the ambitious task of narrating the real life stories on India’s transmen, the less explored part of the trans umbrella. And while the intent is noble it does not translate well on the pages. In fact, the book has been criticized by some of the people who initially interviewed for it. Gender activist Gee Imaan Semmalar writes in his criticism of the book “The author for the rest of the book transforms into a detective

constantly viewing and describing our bodies/gender expressions and giving her own unsolicited opinions on how ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’ we are, with a generous topping of caste prejudices.”

This is exactly the problem when a cis person writes about the world of trans person. “Like a character in a bad Manoj Night Shyamalan film, she looks at trans men to imagine ghosts of our past and conjures up images that violently deny our identities. She sniffs out her own perceptions of femininity in the faces of her “subjects”, according to the binarian gender system she is trapped by. She obsessively describes hormone treatments or surgeries we have undergone, and hands out her own progress reports of whether we “pass” as men or fail miserably,” Gee adds.

This is the point when this research draws from the idea of *Écriture féminine* as posited by Hélène Cixous in her 1975 essay "The Laugh of the Medusa". Thus, if for text to be truly feminist, one need to separate it from the traditionally masculine tones and modes of writing, the same applies for trans stories as well. To truly delve into the cultural, emotional, and psychological dimensions of the trans body, the need is for a trans language, a trans way of looking at it. And while Roy might have written a Booker winner, this is only her second book and the subject is too serious to give anyone a benefit of doubt here.

Profound as Roy’s language might be, it is not the language of a transwoman who finds her ultimate home in a graveyard. This is perhaps why parts of the book where she talks about Tilottama are way more convincing than the part where she describes Anjum. In fact, this is not even something that you can draw from an in depth critique. It is a fact lying just there. This is exactly why Tilottama’s story sounds way more realistic than Anjum’s. Both of them belong to the same time, in the same world, then even life together at a point and still it sounds as if they are worlds apart; one of them an intimate truth, the other, a mere sepulcher of a fantasy that was too far gone to be conjured back to life. Also, perhaps it would have been difficult to draw the distinction between the two, had it not been for the other, perhaps the readers could have made their piece with the fantastical world of Anjum had it not been for Tilottama.

Also, when it comes to men writing women’s stories, it was more about subjugation, repression, and discrimination. However, when it comes to cis people writing about trans narrative, it becomes a matter of acceptance, existence, and cognizance. When it is between men and women, the faultlines are navigated through resistance, however, when it comes to cis and trans, the faultlines are navigated through insistence. The reason is simple, for trans folks to be heard and accepted then need to begin by insisting upon their existence and as utopian as Khwabgah might be, it is outside its periphery that real life exists.

For some reason, Roy finds it extremely easy to introduce the ordinary into the topsy-turvy world of Anjum. And while she might go from Khwabgah to the graveyard, it is all the same. However, everytime Anjum has to be introduced to the outside world, the narratives get rickety and everything falls prey to the ever eluding device of magic realism. Roy’s magic realism is as obvious as a

ghost i.e. to say it touches and goes and all you can say is ‘yes, maybe it happened.’ The problem with the subtle use of this narrative technique is that it only adds to the already illusion of Anjum, of a woman, of a transwoman, of someone who once was a “man” but wasn’t really and all that falls in between. Roy could have used magical realism to her advantage here, but she hasn’t and there is no scope to sugar coat it for the writer.

The political as well as the social fault lines are carefully and, interestingly, quite unabashedly revealed in Roy’s novel. For her, the idea of a trans identity is not just confined to Anjum or Khwabgah. Just like Anjum is trans, so is Musa, so is Tilo, so is Kashmir, and so is the nation. For Roy, it is not in the body but rather in the spirit. In the case of Tilo, apart from her gender, her spirit is no different from that of Anjum, she is characterized as a woman “who didn’t seem to have a past, a family, a community, a people, or even a home” (Roy 2017, 155).

In the novel, Roy creates Foucaultian spaces “capable of juxtaposing in a single real place, several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.” (Foucault 1984, 6) This is where the narrative finds its harmony. A pastiche of places, ideologies, and individuals as it might be, it all comes together in Roy’s exploration of the idea of various trans identities and their existence in the “subversive spaces” of their own making. Interestingly, a cemetery features in Foucault’s theoretical work as a significant heterotopia which serves a very specific function.

He writes:

“The cemetery is certainly a place unlike ordinary cultural spaces. It is a space that is however connected with all the sites of the city, state or society or village, etc., since each individual, each family has relatives in the cemetery. In western culture the cemetery has practically always existed” (Foucault 1984, 5).

A major function of heterotopias is also resonated in their functionality as well as their rules of accessibility. It presupposes a system which has both opening and closing that leads into making it isolated as well as accessible. As Foucault observes:

“In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public space. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to the rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures” (Foucault 1984, p. 6)

Thus, heterotopias in the postmodern world, are typical spaces for the unconsolated and fragmented individuals where they take over carceral cityspaces. From the hegemonic world of Khwabgah to the more open and less structured one of Jannat Guest House, Anjum is seen making a transition from one heterotopia to another. The graveyard in many ways, also becomes a symbol for what Soja refers to as the “third space.”

As Soja Posits:

“Thirdspace is the space where all places are, capable of being seen from all angles, each standing clear; but also a secret and conjectured object, filled with



illusions and allusions, a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood, an ‘unimaginable universe.’ Everything comes together in thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history” (1996, 56–57).

Thus, a zoo, a graveyard, a guest house, a swimming pool, a militant’s wife, a naxalite’s daughter, trans individuals, various castes and religions, all co-exist in Roy’s “third space.” Interestingly, while everything in this space might appear desolate, hopeless, and dystopic, it is not really the case. In fact, hope is one of the most integral themes in the book.

The hope here is manifested through spaces, a sprinkle of magic realism, but most importantly, in the small things that one often misses out on. Ustaad Kulsum Bi finds it in the easily missable chuckle of the transgender courtesan at Red Fort’s Light and Sound show. For her, “To be present in history, even as nothing more than a chuckle, was a universe away from being absent from it, from being written out of it all together.” (51) The author finds it in a dung beetle as the novel concludes: “He was wide awake and on duty, lying on his back with his legs in the air to save the world in case the heaven fell. But even he knew that things would turn out alright in the end. They would, because they had to.” (98)

Tilo and Musa find it in the crack between life and death that the angels leave open in celebration of their love, a story that has been written with the kind of finesse that has the quality of excellent cinematography. Saddam finds it in matrimony and Anjum finds it in motherhood. Motherhood, in fact, comes across as an important theme in the book owing the disregard with which the entire idea has been treated in the recently passed Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019. Just like a plethora of other rights, trans folks in India have never been given the rights to adopt. Thus, no wonder that Anjum is left with no option but to literally steal a baby. When she first sees little Zeeben, wailing in the dustbin, her instinct automatically guides her to protect that child. However, the crying infant soon starts attracting attention and there are suggestions of handing her over to the police. Anjum knows that this is her only shot at having a baby and can never be realized if she is put up for adoption.

Another theme that explores the queer struggles with the legal structures on the country is the idea of home and belongingness. Out of the many flaws of the recent Transgender Bill, a major one remains in how the Bill takes away the rights of community living, from the Trans folks. The Bill explicitly hints that in situations where the family fails to support a trans individual, they’d be given shelter in rehabilitation centres. As regressive as the idea of putting a segment of the queer community into rehabilitation centres, like they suffer from some sort of perversion or need healing from who they are, happens to be, it also denies them a safe space. Khawbgah is literally a ‘Khawab’ i.e. a dream for its residents. Especially for Anjum, it is a magical space that lets her be all

that she is. Roy writes, “In the Khwabgah, Holy Souls trapped in the wrong bodies were liberated.” (53)

The struggles with legality are again reiterated through trans struggles with the body. Anjum has to undergo a series of painful and mostly useless procedures in her quest of womanhood. One of the premises of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019, makes it rather complicated (mostly impossible) for a trans person to identify as one without showing any proof. However, Roy captures in the simplest albeit effective manner - how Anjum is already a woman before these procedures, how Anjum is a woman before the surgeries, how Aftab is a woman before he becomes Anjum. It is reflected in his fascination with Bombay Silk. The desire that runs through his body as he sees her in the market for the first time, a desire not to get her but to be her.

These are the pains and struggles that come from the social perception of a queer identity and further reinforced by flawed laws and regulations made under the idea of heteronormativity as means of propagating sexuality that is “politically conservative.” The struggle is time and again reflected in the story. The essence, meaning, and the spirit of the word *hizra* continues to change throughout the book. Nimmo Gorakhpuri refers to the entire idea an “experiment.” Later it becomes the sight of rebellion, of an ongoing war, of Indo-Pak. While this does appear to be a deliberate exercise, little can be held against Roy for the same. Scourge through the queer theoretical narratives and the appearance of any gender beyond the reigning one of the homosexual identity appears almost as frequently as the trans courtesan’s chuckle from Red Fort’s Light and Sound show. There is a consequent pain that runs deep through the novel. The embarrassment of Anjum’s existence, in fact, ends up making her immune to it at various points in her story.

“She didn’t turn to see which small boy had thrown a stone at her, didn’t crane her neck to read the insults scratched into her bark. When people called her names - clown without a circus, queen without a palace - she let the hurt blow through her branches like a breeze and used the music of her rustling leaves as balm to ease her pain.” (3)

The pain has a way of returning to her though. She is in a constant rebellion with her body. The euphoria of finally wearing a disco red saree is unlike any other for her. However, she is immediately pulled back to reality as her boy, the biology rebels with her appearances, the pain is maddening, she howls like a wolf because it’s her entire existence, something that the *duniya* fails to understand. She finds it really traumatizing to recover from the grounds on which her life was spared during the Gujarat Riots. The words of the mob keep ringing in her ears: “don’t kill her brother, killing Hijras brings bad luck.” (62)

### 3. CONCLUSION

Beyond everything else though, Roy’s novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a sincere appeal to read into alternative narratives. “Who is the hero of this story (274),” Tilo repeatedly asks in her short stories. When Anjum reads about the 9/11 attacks, owing to her lack of understanding of anything beyond the dilapidated walls of Khwabgah, she blames it on Saeda thus showing us that

more often than not, it is our lack of understanding that makes us look at things in a certain way. It can also be interpreted as a caustic commentary of the flag bearers of our narratives, their intentions and their authority.

Roy creates Foucaultian spaces, capable of juxtaposing in a single real place, several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. A pastiche of places, ideologies, and individuals as it might be, it all comes together in Roy's exploration of the idea of various trans-identities and their existence in the "subversive spaces" of their own making. Roy's novel is a sincere appeal to read into alternative narratives. Thus, towards the end, when the landlord decides to dig into all the narratives that he can land his hands on, after being inundated by the other side of the story, it comes across as a wise move and something that is crucial in today's age and time of skewed stories and flawed media narratives. As Miss Jebeen innocently asks her father "Can you tell me a real story?" (239), one is made to wonder what even is a real story and that's exactly where Roy proves her prowess as an author. Roy makes you think, she makes you wonder, and most importantly, she makes you question.

Roy makes an attempt to highlight the need of exploring alternative narratives in the current times of rickety media accounts. This paper looks into how Roy sows hope in our heart, amidst all the desolation of the subject matter that is bound to haunt, but not leave the reader with a sense of hopelessness for humanity. The reader's heart is full of hope and curiosity, eager to know more about the unspoken words and the hidden facts about the representations and conflicts. Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* can work as a source of inspiration for other researchers who wish to investigate and delve deep into the complexities of the trans-gender and the trans-nation theory.

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