

**QUEER WOUNDS AND THE POST-COLONIAL CONDITION: EXPLORING
TRAUMA, IDENTITY, AND RESISTANCE IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD**

Submitted by

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing Master of Arts in English at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
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Abstract

This research study explains the themes of belonging, identity, queer feminist resistance and nationalism in a globalized world in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy. The novel presents a wide range of characters who live on the margins of Indian society. Like these characters there are many people facing this situation from different countries of the world. Anjum is a transgender Muslim woman and Tilo is a political woman. Their lives are shaped by violence, exclusion, and resistance. Roy raises question of the idea of fixed national identity and exposes the divisions that exist in a country. Through the characters personal stories, which is formed by religion, caste, gender or sexuality, and politics shows various difficulties. This research paper uses queer feminist theory, trauma theory, and post-colonial theory to examine how the novel portrays the struggles of those who do not fit into the traditional society. The study shows that Roy connects personal identity with state violence. Anjum's story challenges traditional gender roles, societal norms. It also highlights how queer individuals rejected from both nationalist and feminist spaces. Tilo's journey reflects the trauma and identity crisis which is caused by political conflict, particularly in Kashmir. This study also draws comparisons with other literary works, including *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh, *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie, *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf, *Imagined Communities* by Benedict Anderson and Kamala Das's poem "The Dance of the Eunuchs". These literary texts help to expand the understanding of nationalism and personal identity within a post-colonial context. These texts help us to rethink about the modern globalized world. By analyzing Roy's novel, this research paper shows that literature can unveil many unsaid and hidden truths about society and power. It shows many unfair occurrences. It can unveil the bitter histories. The novel also suggests that healing is possible through the courage to challenge racial power. It emphasizes the importance of empathy, justice, and multi-cultural communities offering a powerful critique of rigid national and social structures in contemporary India. It also highlights the how the renowned authors and critics supports and objects about her point of view.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	8
1.1 Statement of problem	10
1.2 Problems Addressed in the Study	11
1.3 Rationale	12
1.4 Background of the study	12
1.5 Theoretical Framework	14
1.6 Objectives	18
1.7 Research Questions	20
1.8 Research Methodology	21
Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review	23
2.1 Trauma of Post-colonial	23
2.2 Nationalism, Identity, and Exclusion	27
2.3 Literature Review	29
2.4 Comparative Literary perspectives	35
2.5 Narrative Strategies and Ethical storytelling	39
2.6 Scopes and Limitations	42
Chapter 3 Discussion and Analysis	43
3.1 Queer Wound and Embodied Trauma	45
3.2 Queer Lives Belonging	48

3.3 The Politics of Visibility and Survival-----	48
3.4 Spaces of Marginality and Resistance-----	49
3.5 Silence, Memory and the Ethical Witness-----	51
3.6 Intersectionality of Gender, Religion, and Class-----	53
Chapter 4 Conclusion-----	55
Works Cited-----	59

Chapter 1

Introduction

In contemporary globalized world full of violence, identity and belonging have become difficult day by day. It is happening especially for those individuals and communities who exist outside dominant social norms. Queer individuals experience different kinds of marginalization in post-colonial societies. Gender issue and sexuality shape Queer lives. Queer also face consequences of colonial history, religious conflict and state violence. This thesis efforts to explain how queer are affected by trauma in post-colonial periods and how a queer responds to resistance. The wounds created from colonial violence are still present in many post-colonial nations. This can be seen in rigid social hierarchies, authoritarian state structures, religious divisions and marginalization ideas of nationalism. Cultural realities are presented in post-colonial conditions. The wounds of colonial violence still carried after the end of colonial rule. Post-colonial conditions kept marginalized identities silenced and pushed them to the corner of the society. Traditionally Queer identities are questioned by norms of gender and sexuality which make them vulnerable in society. Queer lives in post-colonial societies or in the globalized world are frequently marked by trauma. This trauma is not limited to personal experiences. It is closely connected to larger systems of power which supports discrimination, social unacceptability, political violence and forced displacement. These experiences can create and described as queer wounds, emotional, psychological and physical pain. It is not being caused by a single reason. Continuous exposure to fear, loss and injustice can also create such trauma. In post-colonial periods queer often face trauma which becomes a part of everyday life. Thus, Queer identities are shaped by silence and survival strategies. The representative of the nation often ignored their pain. Higher authority of the nation focused only on unity, progress and development while excluding unacceptable truths. Only

sufferings cannot define queer experiences in post-colonial periods. It also shows how they survive in the crucial situation. This thesis also significance resistance. Resistance does not always receive the form of open protest or political action. It can present in many quieter ways, such as creating chosen families, reclaiming marginalized spaces, telling suppressed stories and declared identity in everyday life. These acts or challenges dominate the system. And it offers alternative ways of imagining belonging and community.

In a globalized world, these issues create further difficulties. Globalizations allow us to create the illusion of progress, freedom and inclusion, yet it often creates inequalities. While global queer community may promote visibility and rights. They do not always reflect only the realities of queer individuals in post-colonial societies. Cultural, religious and political differences explain how queerness is understood and being experienced. Therefore, it is important to search queer identity and trauma within specific historical and social contexts rather than through a universal lens or context.

This thesis brings together queer theory, post-colonial theory and trauma studies to explore how marginalized identities are formed under conditions of violence and exclusion. Queer theory shows to question the fixed ideas of race, gender and sexuality. Post-colonial theory exposes the power, nationalism and colonial histories can shape social structures. Trauma theory allows us to understand the effects which is running from a long-term and violence on individuals and communities. Together these approaches make a framework to explore to understand the queer individual's pain and the responses they make.

By focusing on queer wounds in post-colonial areas, this study tries to highlight the voices that are often ignored in traditional narratives. It shows that trauma is not only personal but also political. Queer individual faces resistance even in the most unpredictable places. However, the

thesis argues that understanding queer experiences of trauma and resistance is essential for making more modern and compassionate societies.

1.1 Statement of problem

Nationalism is often seen as something that brings people together. It makes a beautiful bond in between the people. But in reality, it can create deep divisions. The complexities for belonging, identity, and nationalism has been a major issue in the societies. It is shaped by historical conflicts, social hierarchies, and political ideologies. For these reasons people often underestimate about nationalism.

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness by Arundhati Roy is a novel that explores multiple themes such as political issues, identity issues, gender issues and social injustice, religion in contemporary India. It shows a vivid portrait of Indian society. It also explores India and Pakistan, Hindu nationalism, and the ongoing conflict in Kashmir. It shows the borders between old Delhi and new Delhi. These borders mainly exist within society, where divisions are created between people, and they are also experienced mentally through fear and exclusion, and physically through displacement, violence, and social separation.

The novel is mainly centered on Anjum, who is a transgender, and Tilo, who is a political activist. One of the important aspects of contemporary Indian society that comes across in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is the harsh societal hierarchy. It holds religious differences. Mainly Anjum the main character of this novel is born intersex and lives as a Muslim hijra. She was born as Aftab, the most-awaited son of her parents. From his childhood, Aftab feels different and does not fit into the gender expectations of his family and society. As time goes on, she understands his identity as a woman. But her actions lead to misunderstanding and rejections from the people and

society. In this situation, she leaves her home and joins the hijra community. She is named there as Anjum and lives in Khwabgah for many years. The hijra community gives her some sense of belonging as a human though Anjum continues to face discrimination from society. Her life changes completely after she visits Gujarat and faces violence against Muslims, which leaves her scared and emotionally hurt and vulnerable. When she goes for a visit to a Gujarati shrine, she gets caught in a massacre of Hindu pilgrims and subsequently tortured by the government that is against the Muslims. After this traumatic experience, she starts living in the graveyard. Later she creates the Jannat Guest House. This place becomes a safe home for others who are rejected from their home and society. She is very anxious and worried about her community in the novel. Through Anjum's life, the novel shows how marginalized people suffer pain and create their own spaces of care, support, and belonging.

The novel develops the plot with different other characters and challenging political settings. It shows the idea that nations are unchanging, and that are created by society. Through the stories and thinking of different characters the novel questions political systems and shows that the idea of the nation is created by society rather than being fixed or unchangeable. It gives an idea of the nation that it is not fixed but is created by society and it often excludes marginalized people. True belonging comes from personal feelings and relationships rather than from the nationalism or state. It presents the personal and emotional ideas of belonging that exist outside definitions of nationalism.

1.2 Problems Addressed in the Study

1. The novel shows the characters who live in the society but are often overlooked because of their identity, background, and belief. As Anjum, a transgender, and Tilo, a politically conscious woman, struggle to belong within state and nations. This research explores in understanding whether the novel portrays identity as fixed or not.
2. Anjum faces rejection in both the feminist and nationalist spaces. This research will address how queer feminism struggles for their rights and belonging.
3. The novel highlights sociopolitical conflicts in India, i.e., Kashmir conflict, Hindu-Muslim tensions, gender discrimination. This research will address how these conflicts make characters struggle for belonging.

1.3 Rationale of the Research

This study aims to show how literature brings attention to the individuals who have experiences of being pushed aside and dominated by the society. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Arundhati Roy shows the lives of people who do not fit into traditional society because of their gender, identity, religion, or political views. This research shows how marginalized people find new ways to survive in the resistant society. They also have a hope in their heart for acceptance. Nationalism is defined as unity, but in reality, it also can cause injustice and separation. This research shows the idea of nationhood very closely. Sometimes nation can harm those who do not fit into majority's vision through open and silent violence.

1.4 Background of the study

Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* shows the survival, queer wounds, identity, and pain who are living on the margins in the society. It sets in a globalized world. Nationalism plays a major role in the novel. It shows how people see themselves and others within a country. It can

create a sense of unity, but it can also lead to divisions and decide who truly belongs and who is treated as an outsider. In India, nationalism is deeply connected to history, politics, religion, and social class. It causes multiple complications and a struggle for recognition. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Arundhati Roy explores the stories of people who do not fit into the modern societies and its ideas of national identity. For example, hijras, Muslims, Kashmiris, and others who faces discrimination and exclusion can be mentioned. The novel shows the world about the idea of a single and united nation often ignores or silences certain groups of peoples. Though there exist many different realities at the same time. By showing a divided yet interconnected world. Roy exposes the divisions that exist within society and raises questions about a national identity. It also raises questions about belonging and resistance.

In India, the nationalist movements have often resulted in the changes of cultural diversity, different beliefs, and opposing political views. The novel shows these conflicts especially in its depiction of Kashmir, a region that is shaped by political problems and identity crisis. Through the characters like Tilo, who suffers the impact of political violence, and Anjum, who creates a safe place for those who have been thrown out by society, the novel shows how social rejections and political violence affect people's lives and how they try to survive in the society. In Indian history Partition, Identity crisis, religious violence and various land conflict occurred. These incidences still affect people which is explained in the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Arundhati Roy. The novel portrays how these national incidences create pain, fear and betrayal for those who are treated like outsiders of the nation. Those people who face such incidence cannot claim any rights in the society. Roy reminds the reader that the past is alive among the wounds of those people.

In the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy, it can be seen that those people who are in power are often create the idea of the nation. People who have different political views, different gender and belongs to other religion are often treated unfairly. The novel describes the wounds of people who are unimportant in the society, like hijra or people from places like Kashmir to show how they are being pushed aside in the name of national unity. Caste problem, corruption, and the way women and queer people are unfairly treated are also discussed in this novel. Arundhati Roy uses different characters in her novel to describes that India cannot be understand in one way. Different people have different opinion and different experience in their life which are completely ignored or unrecognized.

Roy shows that the higher authority of the nation tried to suppress individual experience in the name of nationalism. The social inequalities, mental harassment, racism, and political corruption are addressed in this novel. This novel also highlights the history of hope and resistance in post-colonial periods around India. Roy helps us to see the importance of listening to those who feels like outsiders. Those who cannot create any bond with the peoples of the society. The novel suggests that real unity cannot happen unless everyone's story is heard and respected.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This research uses ideas from queer feminism, trauma theory, and post-colonial theory to study the primary text *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Arundhati Roy's novel reflects the struggle and pain of an entire nation. The novel is more than just a story. It is a reality check or eye opener for everyone because it shows the true situations of the nation and makes people understand the struggle and pain that are usually hidden. This novel shows that how people live on the edges of society, because of their religion, gender, caste, and political views. These people try to survive and to find the meaning of this world. These three theories will help to understand the way Roy

shows the suffering, identity and resistance in modern world post-colonialism in a globalized society.

Queer Feminism: Queer feminism shows how society's rules about gender and sexuality can limit people's identity. It challenges traditional ideas about gender and sexuality. In the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy highlights Anjum, a transgender woman who faces complications in society and challenges these societal norms and rules. Queer theory helps to show how writer challenges the fixed notions of sexuality, gender, and normality.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity from *Gender Trouble* (1990), argues that gender is not something we are born with, but something we perform through action, behavior, and language. In Roy's novel, Anjum is portrayed as different identities throughout her life. Like as a boy, as a woman, as a hijra, as a mother, and as a leader of a community. The transformation she makes shows Butler's idea that identity is fluid, performative, and can challenge social expectations.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Epistemology of the closet* (1990), shows how cultures and societies create boundaries in between normal and abnormal in terms of sexuality. It mainly demonstrates that sexual identity has been historically constructed and regulated. Roy's novel shows how queer and marginalized people live under local people's constant opinion and judgement. Anjum's life also reflects Sedgwick's idea that "closet" exists not only for sexuality but also for social identity and uprising voice.

José Esteban Muñoz in *Cruising Utopia* (2009), explores "queer futurity" which is the hope of building a world where queerness is being celebrated not hidden. The idea if this theory connects deeply with Roy's point of view. Jannat Guest House becomes a symbol like "utopia" where the

people who are unloved, wounded, removed or outcast can come together to create their own space and belonging. It shows resistance, community, and survival in a hostile world.

Trauma Studies:

Trauma theory explores how painful experiences; and violence affect people's belonging. It is not just personal experience; it is collective and situations of political and historical violence. Anjum faces many challenges as she tries to embrace her true self, where society misunderstands her. She experiences discrimination. It makes her self-acceptance harder.

Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the pleasure Principle* (1920), shows that trauma as something the mind make blank because it's very much painful to process. He argues that trauma surely returns through flashbacks, dreams, and repetitions. The idea is also known as "repetition compulsion." Roy characters like Anjum and Tilo represents this idea and keep returning to painful memories and cannot move forward. It takes time or sometimes might not being able to move forward. Trauma can be personal and historical both.

Cathy Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) explores that when trauma or something bad happens it is not understand fully, it comes later through memories, storytelling, situations, and dreams. In the novel, trauma returns in many different forms the partition of India, Kashmir conflict, Gujarat riots, and personal pain. The novel reflects the trauma theory. It comes back but not in order, just as memory which feels trauma.

Dominick LaCapra explores "acting out" and "working through" trauma. The meaning of "acting out" means being trapped in painful memories, on the other hand "working through" means finding ways to move on from them. In the novel, characters like Anjum and Tilo are caught

between these two states. Their struggles a lot to heal by creating new spaces of meaning care and resistance.

Judith Herman, in *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), shows the importance of rebuilding trust after trauma, memory, and community. This idea also reflects Roy's point of view perfectly that her characters find healing not stay in isolation but in shared community. Jannat Guest House becomes a place where people being recovered, where they wounded come together rebuild a sense of belonging. This theory helps to understand that the novel represents not only pain but also transformation.

Post-colonial Theory:

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, post-colonial theory shows how the history of colonial rule still affects today's world and people. It explores the ideas and divisions which are created during colonial times. Gender discrimination, religion, and power these long-lasting colonial effects challenges traditional ideas.

Edward Said's concept of *Orientalism* (1978), shows how the West creates false images of the East for dominating and controlling it. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, this idea appears through the ways in India's minorities like Muslims, hijras, Dalits, and Kashmiris are sealed as "others" within their own nation. Their identities are framed through stereotypes and exclusion, echoing as Said's idea of cultural domination.

Homi K. Bhabha's ideas of hybridity and the *Third Space* are very important for post-colonialism theory. Bhabha argues that post-colonialism identities are not fixed, they are formed, mixed, and changing in between the colonizer and the colonized. In the novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Anjum also lives in this "third space". She is neither a part of the country nor

fully outside it. Her life at the Jannat Guest House becomes a space of resistance where difference is being celebrated together.

Gayatri Spivak's idea of *Can the subaltern speak?* (1988), focuses on how marginalized voices, especially women and the oppressed, are often silenced in dominant systems. Roy's characters in the novel- Anjum, Tilo, Saddam, and others represent the "subaltern". They try to survive and raise their voices or just speak in a society that continuously removing them. Spivak's theory helps us to understand Roy's intention to give voice to those who are forgotten in the nation's narratives.

Intersection of Theories:

These three theoretical approaches together, this study shows that how this novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* connects queer feminism, trauma studies, and post-colonial theories. Roy's writing not only shows the pain, but also shows change. These three approaches together represents that sometimes pain becomes power.

1.6 Objectives

The main objectives of this study are to examine how queer identities are shaped by trauma within post-colonial societies and how individuals are being forced to leave the society for political violence and social exclusion. The study tries to explore the connection between trauma, identity, and acceptance in a globalized world. It focuses on how queer individuals survive the emotional and psychological pain due to nationalism, national authority, and social norms. The study also focuses on queer individuals make spaces of belonging and expresses resistance in everyday life such as survival, community building and relationships. This study also notes the development of marginalized communities and reluctance to express voices and how they are oppressed by people.

1.6.1 General Objectives

The main focus of this study is to explain how the trauma affected queer individuals in post-colonial periods and to explore why queer identities resist from social marginalization and violence in a modern world.

1.6.2 Specific Objectives

- 1. Analyzing effect of trauma on queer individuals:** This study analyzes how trauma effects on queer individuals in post-colonial issues. It also focused on emotional, psychological, and social pain caused by discrimination and violence.
- 2. Effect of marginalized societies in post-colonial issues:** This study explores how colonial histories, nationalism, and national authority continue to impact social construction and marginalize societies.
- 3. Evaluating the relationship between identity and belonging of queer individuals:** The study evaluates the negotiation of the unacceptance and unrecognition of queer individuals in societies.
- 4. Inspecting the process of resistance for queer individuals:** The study describes the adjustment from acts of resistance for queer individuals such as community formation, storytelling and survival plan.
- 5. Questioning the dominant narratives against marginalized communities:** This study questions about the promotion of national narratives used against marginalized communities.
- 6. Experiencing trauma theory while reading queer wounds:** This study aims to explain trauma theory to understand the experience of queer wounds such as how repeated exposure to violence, identities and behavior.

7. Analyzing how globalization effect on queer individuals and post-colonial societies: This objective of the study analyzes how the idea of globalization interact with queer individuals and post-colonial societies.

8. Understanding queer lives in post-colonial societies: The study focuses to add to existing academic discussions by offering a subtle understanding of queer trauma and resistance within post-colonial frameworks.

1.7 Research Questions

This study is mainly based on one primary question and few secondary questions that help to explore the themes of Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The questions focus to understand the experiences of queer and post-colonial condition in today's global world. It also concentrates how Roy presents her storytelling and its characters.

Primary Research Question:

1. How does *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy portray queer wounds as a reflection of post-colonial trauma and how does these wounds lead to identity, healing, and resistance?

Secondary Research Questions:

1. How does Arundhati Roy show the connection between identity and state violence?
2. How do the characters deal with the gap between national identity and their personal? And how do these gaps affect their struggles for justice and belonging?
3. How does the novel *The Ministry of Utmost of Happiness* compare to other literary works that explore nationalism and identity in post-colonial context?

4. How does Arundhati Roy challenge traditional ideas about nation, gender, and religion by creating alternative spaces like Anjum's Jannat Guest House?
5. How does the novel focus on intersectionality and how different forms of oppression overlap to shape the characters struggles in post-colonial societies?
6. In what ways post-colonial and queer theories help to explore Roy's message of survival, love, and resistance in a globalized world?
7. How does the novel connect personal suffering to wider political violence and shows how the private and public wounds are connected?
8. How does the novel shifts narrative style which reflects characters' broken memories and emotional wounds?
9. How does Arundhati Roy turn the idea of the "wound" from pain into a source of healing in post-colonial world?

1.8 Research Methodology

This research will use qualitative textual analysis, focusing on close reading and interpretation of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and other literary texts.

Primary Source

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness by Arundhati Roy (2017)

Because of addressing the themes of queer identity, trauma, political violence, marginalization, and resistance within a post-colonial society, this book is selected as a main text. Through characters like Anjum and Tilo, this novel helps us to understand how personal suffering is connected to social and political challenges

Secondary Source

The Shadow Lines by Amitav Ghosh (1988)

This text is selected as a secondary text to support the arguments of borders, nationalism, memory, and identity in post-colonial contexts.

Imagined Communities by Benedict Anderson (1983)

This text is used as a theoretical text to explain how the idea of the nation is socially constructed rather than natural or fixed.

Home Fire by Kamila Shamsie (2017)

This novel is included to offer a comparative understanding of political conflict, identity, and the effects of state power and individual lives.

Orlando by Virginia Woolf (1928)

This text is chosen to help explore fluid gender identity and queer selfhood, which supports the analysis of queer identity in the primary text.

“The Dance of the Eunuchs” by Kamala Das {1965}

This poem shows how eunuchs perform a dance in public but hides deep emotion, pain, and social exclusion. It expresses how non-normative gender are made visible only as spectacle while being denied dignity and belonging.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This section examines the authors, critics' debates and literary works that help me in this study of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The themes like queer marginalization, post-colonial trauma, nationalism, displacement and resistance are presented in this text. To justify the importance of these themes, it is very important to analyze existing literatures across multiple perspectives, such as post-colonial theory, queer theory, trauma studies and literary criticism.

Both the original text and the secondary theoretical works are used in this chapter. Secondary sources like Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, and Kamala Das's Poem "The Dance of the Eunuchs" give critical points to analyze nationalism, borders, queer embodiment, and historical trauma. Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* explains us the relationship of how queer wounds connecting with post-colonial issues and the struggle of marginal societies.

2.1 Trauma of Post-colonial

The legacy of colonialism, partition and state-supported different violence shape post-colonial societies. Psychological and social wounds are formed. Scholars such as Frantz Fanon explained that colonialism damage identity among people and build up deep trauma among them.

The damage continues long after political independence. Individuals, communities and societies are influenced by trauma which formed emotional lives, social relationships, and national narratives. The nation India continues to colonial systems of control by policing, inspecting and rigid authority even after independence. To maintain law and order and national unity violence becomes normal and justified. According to this novel violence can be appeared in two different

ways-one is visible and another one is invisible. Military action, arrests, killings and riots are considered as visible violence whereas living with constant fear, silence, shame and psychological exhaustion are considered as Invisible violence. Anjum's trauma exists not only for violence but also for the denial of acknowledgement of her pain. This denial of acknowledgement unable to heal and turns trauma which is permanent.

Memory is shared between generations by generations where trauma is also shared. Thus, trauma also continues generations by generations. Individuals experience fear and grief from earlier generations. Stories of partition, communal hatred and political betrayal shape Individual's understanding. Even Individuals who have not directly experienced trauma and live under its shadow. So, this trauma which is build up naturally creates mistrust and emotional distance especially in marginalized societies.

Throughout the novel Arundhati Roy tries to explain that how state authority being quiet from ongoing trauma. "Security", "Development" and "National interest" words are used to justify violence and to cover any incidence against marginalized people. Trauma being dismissed as unfortunate when sufferings are described as necessity. The victim become silent which make them powerless, unseen and unrecognized. Roy suggests that public reactions are controlled and some death incidents are also treated as insignificant. This recognition of suffering explains the reasons of why marginalized characters carry deep emotional wounds that never heals.

One of the most important moments of historical violence in the novel is Anjum's experience during the Gujarat violence. Anjum goes to Gujarat with a hope for peace and belonging but instead she witnessed brutal riot against Muslims. She survives, but the violence completely destroyed her sense of safety forever. This trauma happens because she fails to protect minority lives. Violence is justified to happen in the name of religion and nationalism. Anjum's struggle is not only

physical, it is also emotional and psychological. After this incident she cannot live normal a life in the society. Her trauma makes her understand how violence reshapes a person's entire life. After the violence, Anjum decides to live in a graveyard which shows that her decisions are also connected to trauma. The graveyard becomes a space where the dead are treated kindly more than the living sideline. This occurs because society gives Anjum no place where she feels safe or accepted. Trauma pushes her out of the living world into a space meant for the dead. Roy uses this setting to show that post-colonial violence does not end with survival, it continues through isolation, fear and emotional imbalance. Anjum's experience during the Gujarat violence reveals how violence enters the lives of minorities not as an accident, but as a consequence of political a social failure. The state's inability-or unwillingness to protect Muslim lives turns violence into a lasting psychological wound. Even though Anjum survives, the trauma converts her understanding of the world, leaving her unable to trust society or the idea of national protection. Roy further discussed on the idea of trauma by showing how survival does not mean recovery. After witnessing mass violence, Anjum withdraws from social life and chooses to live in a graveyard. Anjum's choice express her emotional exhaustion and her losing faith in the living world. The graveyard becomes safer than society, which suggest that post-colonial violence has destroyed the place of belonging that an individual have. Here, Trauma is not only memory but a situation that everyone faces in their everyday life. Roy shows that when pain is ignored or denied by society, it becomes everlasting.

The Kashmir narrative describes this idea of ongoing trauma. Through Musa's story, Roy presents violence as routine and regularized. Families experience repeated loss, disappearances and fear creating a generation that grows up surrounded by grief. This trauma exists because it is treated as a political problem rather than a human space. Roy highlights how constantly military

are present and continuous surveillance remove any possibility of emotional healing. Trauma becomes natural, passed from one generation to the next, making it a collective experience rather than an individual one. Roy also shows how trauma develops when grief is controlled. Certain deaths are publicly grieved, while others are disregarded and justified. Marginalized people are denied to get the right to public sorrow, forcing them to grieve in silence. This unrecognition of suffering shows why trauma in the novel remains unsolved and how the refusal to accept pain becomes another form of violence.

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy illustrates post-colonial trauma through historical events such as the Gujarat riots, The Kashmir conflict and systematic marginalization of minorities. Characters like Anjum, the Hijra protagonist, embody multiple traumas and violence for their gender or we can say for their nonconforming bodies. Roy's fragmented and non-linear narrative explains the aftermath of the trauma, emphasizing that wounds are on-going and there is no path to have a solution. This narrative approach is similar to trauma theory, which recommends that storytelling can be hampered by trauma.

Secondary texts also support this illustration such as Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* explores the trauma of Partition and imagined borders, while Shamsie's *Home Fire* explores trauma through state surveillance, citizenship laws and social projection. Both of these novels portray Roy's trauma within historical, political and social structures, explaining that queer wounds are formed by marginalization and collective violence.

2.2 Nationalism, Identity, and Exclusion

Post-colonial societies are shaped by a theme of nationalism used by nation's authority.

Nationalism is only used for belonging those who fit in the formed norms. Critics argue that nation cannot be an imagined community where certain identities are featured and others are being removed or ignored from the society. In the name of national unity, queer individuals, religious minorities and ethnic minorities are often face exclusion and violation.

In Roy's novel, Anjum's life shows how exclusion can affect. Anjum's identity is furnished socially invisible and reflecting how nationalism enforces conformity. Marginalized characters like Muslims, Dalits, Kashmiri's experience anarchy, riot, violence and displacement. Critics argue that the authority of the nation works not just politically but also psychologically. This actually defines that whom to be considered as legal and whom to be considered as illegal. The authority of the nation acknowledges who belongs to the society and who are not. Belonging is based on fixed ideas of religion, gender, loyalty and behavior. Those who challenge or exist outside these ideas are treated as threats to national conformity. The fear of difference created by the society led exclusion, surveillance and punishment. Exclusion mainly happens from the belief that the nation must be strong and pure. Diversity is more dangerous compared to exclusion. Thus, the voice of queer individuals and minority religious are considered as problems which need to control or remove. Anjum's identity was challenged by gender norms and religious expectation. This challenge makes her vulnerable. Roy emphasizes how nationalism depend on emotional control. It is expected that citizen love the nation in some specific ways and being loyal without pointing out any kind of injustice. The individuals who show doubt or criticism are tagged as unpatriotic. This emotional pressure from the nation state bound people to hold their pain and keep silence their experiences. The limit of nationalism is being exceed in everyday social behavior. Not only

state is responsible for the violence but also ordinary people who supports nationalist ideas are responsible for violence. Neighbors, crowds and institutions are also used as a tool of exclusion by the authority of the nation. This explains how nationalism are connected in our daily life and shapes attitudes and policies.

Roy further reveals that identity becomes rigid and reduced under nationalism and the impact of nationalism on marginalized societies. Individuals are considered only as Muslims, Hijras, rebels, traitors rather than as complex human beings who need justice. This consideration make easy for the national authority to justify cruelty. When an individual is tagged a marginalized label, he or she lose the importance of their sufferings. Lastly, the novel tries to explain that how exclusion produce resistance in the society. When the marginalized characters are refused to get space, they create their own belongings and society. These alternative society are known as marginalized society who challenge the idea that the nation is the prime source of identity and belonging. Through this, Roy suggests that survival itself becomes an act of resistance. From childhood, Anjum (before Aftab) feels different. Her family loves her but is confused and freighted of social judgement. Society teaches them that gender difference is shameful. This exclusion happens because nationalism supports fixed ideas of gender and family. Anyone who does not fit these ideas is seen as abnormal. Anjum learns early that her identity does not belong in the normal traditional norms. The Khwabgah gives Anjum temporary shelter, but it is still a marginal space. Hijras are allowed to exist only in limited roles-performing, blessing weddings or begging. This happens because the nation tolerates difference only when it is controlled. Though Hijras are seen but they are not respected in a society. They are included only on society as by terms but never is treated as equal citizens.

The relationship of Musa and Tilo is watched, questioned and treated with suspicion. Tilo is seen as disloyal to the nation just because of the relationship with Musa. Nationalism demands loyalty in every situation which led to exclusion in a society. If anyone displays connectivity to resistance or questioning authority is treated as dangerous. An independent woman is also suspected because of the relationship with marginalized people. Roy explains that all death is not equal for the society. The deaths of Muslims, Kashmir's or marginalized people are ignored whereas the deaths of soldiers are publicly honored. The reason behind the discrimination is nationalism is the main parameter of whom lives matter most to the society. Novel characters like Anjum and Musa are forced to mourn privately. The mourn which deepens their wounds increase the trauma.

2.3 Literature Review

Nationalism, identity, and belonging are the central themes in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy. There are many concepts in literature that are connected to these themes. Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, and Kamala Das's poem "The Dance of the Eunuchs" searches how national identity is built, and how it forms personal experiences and belonging. These literary works reveal the way nationalism refers to identity struggle and belonging.

In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson explains that nations are created by people's beliefs. It is not formed by itself. He calls a nation an imagined community because most of the people of a nation will not meet each other and they are not known to each other but still they feel connected and share a sense of belonging to the same community. Anderson's concept provides a foundational theoretical work for understanding nationalism in post-colonial societies. He shares

that the nation is an imagined political community which is created through shared language, history, narratives, symbols, and emotional attachment. Scholars widely apply this theory to post-colonial literature to show how national unity is constructed by excluding difference. Anderson's theory helps to explain specific events in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The denial of the society to identify Anjum's rights and the harassment of Hijras shows how nation is imagined in exclusionary terms. In Arundhati Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Benedict Anderson's idea of the nation helps to understand why Anjum and other third gender people are pushed out of society. The people of the nation expect people to follow fixed ideas about gender identity, religion, and culture. Those who do not fit with these things, they are often removed and ignored completely from the society. However, the novel demonstrates how emotional attachment to the nation enforces conformity. Roy connects national identity with queer sufferings showing those who do not fit with nation's image are deeply wounded.

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Anjum, a hijra faces refusal from society and the community. The novel also critiques nationalism through the Kashmir conflict, where Tilo and Musa face state violence from nationalist control. In the novel, Roy portrays many aspects of Indian nationalism and also shows how can people take advantage by using nationalism. Anjum is alone in the society and the whole community is against her. People can use nationalism in a good way and a bad way too. In the novel, Anjum is a transgender woman. She faced both racial and gender identities. When she was born her parents named her Aftab. Anjum feels she is a girl but her parents want her to behave like a boy. She joined the Hijra community too. Hindus and Muslims fight for India's identity all across India. Anjum accepted her gender very gracefully as a transgender woman. She faced many societal injustices and had to adapt to new societal rules for her. Firstly, she is transgender and secondly, she is Muslim, for this reason, no one accepted her.

She faced much violence from her family, community, and society. Anjum's decision for her transition shifts many obstacles in her journey. No one was ready to accept her with her own identity. He also faced nationalism and an identity crisis based on religion. Anjum's life is deeply carry out by the Gujarat riots. She travels there and set off a victim of communal violence and aggression. However, she gets through physically but the experience leaves her emotionally broken. This makes a turning point for her. She loses the faith of the idea of safety, home, and national protection. She makes distant from the society and create an alternative survival in a graveyard. She creates her own community for the abandoned and rejected people like her. This graveyard becomes a powerful symbol of resistance to continue life among death. Through Anjum Roy shows how queer and minorities are being pushed to the margins of the nation, yet still create spaces of care and solidarity.

Tilo is a woman, who exists outside traditional norms of feminist, marriage, and nationalism. She feels emotionally distant, independent, and politically aware. Musa, who is a Kashmiri freedom fighter rooted for injustice. Her love for Musa, a Kashmiri freedom fighter makes her in conflict with the Indian state. Tilo experiences many interrogations, suspicion, and surveillance. She is being punished only for her political associations but also for not accepting to conform to social expectations of womanhood. Tilo's story connects with Anjum, which shows how women and queer individuals suffers differently but deeply in nationalism. Roy tried to explain through the character Tilo the resistance and the cost of loving someone can be labeled an enemy of the nation.

Musa also experienced the harsh reality of Kashmir which is later turned into trauma. Musa involved in a state violence and become a part of resistance movement. As a result, he had to move away from his family member. He experiences full of grief, anger, loss and depression. Roy wanted

to explain how a dispute of nationalism turns turn regions into a permanent violence through Musa's story.

The Shadow Lines by Amitav Ghosh displays how artificial borders are created by partition which lead to deep emotional separation. Tridib, an intellectual and sensitive character, believes in imagination beyond borders. He argued the narrator that the places are connected to the people which can not be divided from people's emotion. Nationalism can lead to violence instead of putting people together are proved from Tridib's tragic death during communal riots. Tridib was brutally murdered in a riot while trying to protect his family member. The character Tha'mma shows a traditional form of nationalism. Tha'mma experience the reality of partition which challenged her belief. She was born in Dhaka and believed this place as her homeland. But right after the partition, this place becomes another country with another identity. She had to move from Bangladesh to India. Tha'mma who trust in nationalism and clear border had to cope up with a new culture with new society. The nation becomes scary for her. However, Tha'mma belief are challenged when violence unfolds to society. Her family was divided by a border which never existed before. She struggled to communicate her own family members. This experience pushes her to admit that nationalism does not always unite people of a country. Partition in the name of nationalism creates divisions among people and deep scars.

The Gujarat riots, Kashmir conflicts, and other events in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* shows how imagined divisions create sufferings for people. Both of the novel portrays that trauma is not personal but produced by historical and political forces. Roy's character and Ghosh's characters faces identity crisis for history and geography. Ghosh emphasizes nationalistic sides through memory and personal narratives. On the contrary, Roy includes how queer or gender-nonconforming people are affected even more harshly when society is split by religious conflict.

In *Home Fire*, Kamila Shamsie shows how immigrant communities are often treated as outsiders. They try to fit into the society by sacrificing many things. The novel highlights three siblings to explore nationalism. Isma, the eldest one works very hard to follow the rules and be accepted by society. But she faces problems because of her background. Her brother Parvaiz feels lost by joining ISIS in Syria. The realization of his mistakes wanted him to leave everything and come back home, the British government takes his citizenship and refuses to let him return home. Unfortunately, he dies at the border. It shows how nationalism can be harsh. His sister Aneeka is one of the key characters in the novel. She is a brave woman who fights for her brother. She openly challenges the system of the society. When the government stops her brother from his entry, Aneeka refuses to accept the decision and she openly starts protesting. Her anger drives her to seek Eamonn, the son of a powerful British politician's help. Though she falls in love with him but she uses her relationship to fight for Parvaiz's rights. It shows how deeply nationalism impacts personal relationships. Isma tries to live safely with state expectations but Parvaiz seeks belonging and is manipulated into extremism. His death highlights how marginalized youth are pushed towards violence by alienation. Aneeka fights for her brother's dignity, showing how the state controls who is allowed to mourn.

In Roy's novel, Anjum and other marginalized individuals faces same situations. The novel portrays social and political structures that decides whose life are grief able and whose sufferings are noted. By connecting Shamsie's novel of citizenship with Roy's novel of marginalization from community and society, reader can relate and understand that how queer trauma connects with political and legal exclusion. Roy transforms Shamsie's legal focus into a broader social, religious, and gender marginalization.

Orlando by Virginia Woolf challenges traditional ideas about gender, identity, and fixed ideas about gender. Orlando's transformation questions the rigid male or female binary. He is privileged in society as a man and feels oppressed as a woman. The novel remarks how women have been erased from literature and power structures. Orlando begins life as a man and later becomes a woman, living across centuries. This transformation is accepted without punishment or trauma. Orlando continues life freely, with wealth and safety altogether. Orlando tries to show socially constructed Anjum's sufferings. So, Anjum's experience is sharply connected to this transformation. Woolf portrays that gender can be flexible and openly expressed when society does not punish people for breaking the norms of gender. On the other hand, the harsh reality of queer still present in post-colonial societies are shown by Roy's novel.

Roy's novel displays a much difficult life compared to Woolf's novel. Anjum faces social rejection, violence, and constant exclusion because of her hijra identity. Anjum's experience shows how third gender peoples are being treated in a nationalist society in a post-colonial period. Woolf's *Orlando* narrates that the main character Orlando's gender change openly without any sufferings. Roy's novel narrates that queer people life is limited and difficult. At the same time, Roy shows that queer identity becomes a form of strength as Anjum survives by creating alternative societies. By noticing this, readers can understand that Woolf's work shows us to understand queer identity as a space of resistance even when life is formed under oppression.

Kamala Das's poem "The Dance of the Eunuchs" shows that public presence of marginalized gender. The moves of queer individuals are very energetic though their hearts are filled with sadness. They perform because society allows them existence only as entertainers. They do not feel any fulfillment of love, or belonging. Their bodies are visible, but their humanity is ignored. Kamala Das depicts eunuchs dance performance in public, which shows deep emotional

pain and social exclusion. This poem shares the hidden trauma of queer lives by showing eunuchs are made visible as spectacle while society completely denied to give them dignity and social recognition.

Anjum's early life is also similar like this. Both are hyper visible yet socially invisible. However, Roy goes further by showing Anjum's growth, community, and resistance, which is absent in the poem. Anjum shares the dual presents and marginalization depicted in Roy's novel by adding different layers like political views, historical context, social norms, and resistance. The graveyard community becomes a space for survival to her. It brings belonging and transforming queer marginalization into a site of collective agency. The context of Das's poem and Roy's novel are similar, which represents the queer sufferings in Contemporary English Literature.

2.4 Comparative Literary perspectives

A comparative literature perspective helps us to make us understand that *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* more clearly by placing it beside other literary works that deal with identity, belonging, resistance, and violence. Instead of reading only Roy's novel, comparison will help us to see how similar problems appear in different societies, times, and literary traditions. This method shows how writers respond differently to shared human experiences such as sufferings, exclusion, and the search for dignity. One of the major areas of comparison is how history enters personal life. In Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, historical events like partition shape family relationships and individual memory. Violence occurs quietly but deeply affecting emotions long after the event has passed. History as something that directly enters people's daily lives through riots, military violence, and political conflict. It causes really physical and emotional suffering. While Ghosh put importance on memory and imagination, Roy emphasizes on survival within ongoing pain by showing that history is alive with normal people. The idea of borders can be

compared. In *The Shadow Lines*, borders are invisible but powerful. It creates fear and separation. Roy expands this idea by showing that borders are not just geographical but also social and emotional. It is shaped by gender, religion, and caste. These invisible boundaries decide safety, control movement and behavior, and punish those who cross them. As a result, the human being formed such place where power operates, fear takes root, and personal identity is shaped every day.

Citizenship, belonging and identity are also treated different ways across the novels. In Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*, belonging and identity is fairly connected to local law and state authority. Acceptation and rejection are based on legal status and political loyalty for individuals. A vital situation is explained in Roy's novel where marginalization happens even without formal punishment. Marginal people have to go through social rejection, silence, and fear. This comparison helps a reader to see that exclusion does not always obey local law. It can be ruled through everyday behavior and attitudes. According to Roy's novel, ordinary people, schools, and offices involve to decide who is accepted and who is not. Simple actions like doubting someone, staying away from them, or silently judging them can slowly push people out. However, this type of behavior makes exclusion seem normal and hard to escape.

Kamala Das's poem "The Dance of the Eunuchs" shows an earlier literary image of gender discrimination point of views. The poem shows eunuchs as emotionally empty figures, which forced to perform for society. Roy builds upon this image but transforms it. Anjum is not only a symbol of pain, she is also a thinking, feeling, and acting individual. Comparison shows a literary shift in literary work. It starts from describing suffering to exploring agency. Roy portrays queer characters inner lives and futures, not only wounds.

Gender identity provides another important point of comparison. Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* shows gender change as natural and accepted within the fictional world of the novel. Orlando's identity does not lead to social punishment. Roy presents the opposite reality in his text. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, gender discrimination shows abuses, violence, and exclusion. Comparing these two texts highlights how freedom depends on social conditions. Woolf imagines a world where gender freedom is possible whereas Roy shows the consequences when society refuses to accept that freedom. This comparison helps readers to understand that suffering does not come from identity itself but from society's reaction to it.

Resistance takes different forms throughout the novels which becomes clear through comparison. Roy presents a quieter form of resistance while some texts portray resistance as loud and political through protests and rebellion. In her novel, resistance emerges through acts of care, shelter and collective survival. Anjum's graveyard community resists exclusion by continuing to exist. Though this resistance may appear small, the comparison reveals its strength. This also challenges the belief that resistance must always be dramatic or violent.

Another point of comparison is how storytelling handled time. Woolf experiments with centuries, Ghosh moves between past and present through memory while Roy uses short break time to mirror broken lives. Trauma disrupts the flow of time which making the past return again and again. This shows that narrative form is closely tied to theme. The authors shape time to convey emotional truth not just chronological events.

Place also plays an important role for everybody. While many novels use cities or homes to represent stability, Roy chooses unstable spaces like graveyards. Graveyard is a conflict zone that also serve as temporary shelters. These formations reflect the uncertainty of marginalized lives.

Compared to other texts, Roy's places stand out as spaces of both loss and possibility which explaining how people create meaning even in places formed to erase them.

The comparative approach also notices the differences in how community is imagined. While nationalist narratives often define community through shared similarities, Roy challenges this by creating communities based on difference. Compared to other writings, Roy's communities appear inclusive and flexible. It is grounded in shared care rather than shared identity. Another key aspect is the role of voice. In other works, marginalized characters are not verbally strong to speaking for themselves. Roy gives them a voice and comparison shows how rare and powerful this choice is. By allowing marginalized characters to speak, she reformed literary space itself.

Finally, a comparative perspective reveals how everyday life becomes political. In many texts, politics is shown through governments, laws, or large-scale events. But in Roy's novel, ordinary acts such as walking in public, dressing differently, or loving someone is considered "wrong". Comparing this to other works reveals that politics is not limited to formal institutions but deeply shapes personal life.

Another angle can be discussed by comparing how pain is expressed to others. Some characters freely express anger or grief while others remain silent due to fear. Roy shows that how emotional suppression can become a survival strategy. This becomes understandable when compared with other texts where characters are allowed to speak or protest. This comparison displays how social conditions decide whether pain can be disclosed or remain hidden.

Comparative reading also highlights unequal vulnerability. Not all character's face danger in the same way. Some factors like gender, class, religion, and location determine who is exposed.

Roy's novel makes this imbalance visible by focusing on already unstable lives. Compared to other works, this perspective shows that vulnerability is socially constructed rather than naturally provided. The role of care and emotional bonds becomes another important aspect. While Roy highlights shared care as a means of surviving marginalization, some texts emphasize on individual strength. Relationships become tools for endurance in a hostile environment are revealed through comparison.

Roy's novel has a global impact can be understand through comparative literature. A comparative literature perspective deepens our understanding of the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. It is deeply rooted in contemporary realities but its themes resonate with struggles across the world. It explains how Roy's work involves with challenges. Marginalization, surveillance and identity are not limited to one single nation. By comparing Roy alongside with other writers, we understand that how queer wounds, post-colonial trauma, and resistance are represented differently across different societies. A wider human condition while remaining grounded in local history are allowed to speak through comparison Roy's novel. This approach can make the thesis very strong. Roy's novel prove that this approach is not only socially important but also literarily significant, offering new ways of imagining identity, belonging, and survival.

2.5 Narrative strategies and Ethical storytelling

When writers create stories about suffering, violence, and people living on the edges of the society, they make both a political statement and ethnic choice. Researchers who study post-colonial and queer literature ask critical questions such as how should these stories can be told, who has the right to share stories and who are listening. These questions matter because writing about trauma can easily become unfair if authors are not extremely careful. Instead, stories should

be told in ways that respects and honor the dignity of people whose lives have been shaped by violence and exclusion.

Many scholars who examine *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* observe that Roy deliberately avoids glorifying pain. She does not make suffering look beautiful or dramatic. Instead, her writing slows down moments of suffering, allowing readers to truly feel the weight of loss rather than rushing through it quickly. This careful storytelling represents an ethical choice. It creates genuine empathy instead of shallow pity.

When we read about Anjum's struggle and experiences, Roy does not want readers to feel sorry about her. She wants us to understand what she experiences practically. In globalized world, we found ourselves surrounded by stories of suffering. We see them on social media and news reports and various form entertainment. Sometimes those stories become just another thing to consume without any real engagement. We scroll them quickly, feel sad for a moment, and then move on. However, Roy refuses to let that happened with her novel. She makes us sit with the discomfort. She does not give us happy endings that makes us feel better.

Critics focus on how ordinary daily life becomes meaningful in texts about oppression. While many stories focus on dramatic events like protests and violence. Roy's work shows that every moment carries significant. Simple conversation, shared meal can develop a deep understanding among people. Those reveal how oppression operates quietly, slowly shaping people's habits, emotions, and choices. Small moment often communicates more than dramatic scenes. When Anjum carefully chooses which streets to walk down or decides when to stay silent, these choices reveals constant require for survival. This is not dramatic but utterly exhausting. Roy shows us that this exhaustion through accumulated small moments throughout the negative.

Critics examine human mind, space and location as records of history. From historical point of view, we observe human mind carry stories other than documents. Scars, illness, and fear become visible signs of past violence. In Roy's novel, human reflect long histories of neglect, discrimination and survival. Marginalized bodies are treated as disposable by society though they continue to exist and remember.

Many scholars note that traditional family structures often fail marginalized individuals. Parents reject their queer children. Religious communities expel those who do not conform straight gender. The nation excludes citizens who do not fit certain categories. As a result, characters in the novel create new forms of belonging based on care rather than blood or social approval. Critics view these relationships as deeply political because they challenge dominant ideas of family and society. In Roy's novel, care appears through shelter, companionship and shared vulnerability. Scholars argue that these small acts of care help characters survive in hostile environments. They also recommend that such relationships imagine new ways of living together beyond national or social boundaries.

I think this is one of the key points of the novel. Anjum formed a community in a graveyard. It is a place meant for the dead. But for her and others who join her, this becomes a place where they can finally live. They care each other not because they are related or because they have all been rejected. This creates bonds that are actually stronger than any normal family relationship.

Critics examine how physical spaces shape identity and experiences. The graveyard illustrates this transformation. For society, graveyard represent ending, but for Anjum's community, this space becomes a place of new beginnings where society does not threaten them. This demonstrated creative ways marginalized people survive.

Critics discuss how emotion functions as a socially rather than personally. Feelings like fear, shame, love, and hope shaped by social conditions and power structures. Roy's novel shows how shared pain creates connections while fear isolates people. Fear does not exist only within individuals but spreads throughout communities. When one person becomes targeted, everyone sharing similar identities sense that fear, shaping how entire communities behave.

These critics perspectives reveal that *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* proves both politically important and formally complex. Critics describes that storytelling itself functions as resistance. Writing about marginalized lives challenges dominates narrative preferring silence. Literature crates space for complexity and discomfort. By refusing neat ending, Roy's novel challenging readers to questions power, identity, and belonging long after finishing the book.

2.6 Scopes and Limitations

The research limitations of this research paper are:

1. This study primarily research on *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and may not fully represent similar themes in other literary works.
2. Nationalism, identity, and queer feminist concepts are critical and deeply affected by history, culture, and politics. So, it is hard to cover every aspect in one study.
3. This research paper is based on textual analysis, which could make a limit of its practical applications.
4. The research uses qualitative methods. Its findings may apply to other literary works beyond the selected texts.
5. Each people understand literature differently and their point of view is also different. So, readers may have different views on the themes of the novel.

Chapter 3

Discussion and analysis

Arundhati Roy's novel brings marginalized people together who are being pushed to a corner of society. It explains how the characters deal with identity, belonging and resistance in India. This novel is still very relevant in today's world. In recent scenario such as the April 2025 attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir by some terrorists highlights ongoing violence and tension caused by extreme forms of nationalism.

Roy shows that identity is not fixed. People are more than their religion, gender, and nationality. Identity can be a way to fight back. For example, Tilo does not follow traditional roles of women, such as she lives independently, refuses marriage, and becomes involved in political issues. The Pahalgam incident shows that, it can be very harmful when people are labeled in strict ways, which can lead to violence and division. Roy shows that Identity is not an abstract concept, but it is a site of vulnerability. In the novel, peoples who do not the society such as Anjum, a transgender Muslim woman, and Tilo, an independent woman who is involved with politics are targeted and excluded both from socially and politically.

State violence is portrayed in various forms. Anjum's suffering during the Gujarat riots shows that communal riots are often state enabled or ignored. Similarly, Tilo and Musa's involvement in Kashmir exposes the reader to the militarized nature of the states of India. Here political incidents and Muslim identity are often treated as criminal threats.

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, some of the characters feel that they do not belong to the country where they were born in. They are being forced to choose between safety and authenticity. The idea of national identity, which means being a loyal person or proper Indian often

clashes with who they really are. This gap creates a lot of pain, confusion, and struggle for them. Anjum was born with Aftab identity but later on he identifies himself as a woman. Both her family and society reject her. She makes an effort to be herself in the world. However, she encounters loneliness, violence and rejection. Ultimately, she constructed her own house in the cemetery, which serves as a haven of security and support for those just like her.

Musa and Tilo also faces many encounters from the society. Tilo shrink to live by society's expectations for women. She stays single, stays away from having children, and participates in political causes. Despite being viewed as strange or abnormal constantly, she prefers to live by her convictions rather than social pressure. Musa also is feeling weird and confused between his Kashmiri identity and the Indian state. His support for Kashmir's independence runs counter to Indian nationalism's ideas. Because of these dissimilarities between their national and personal identities. The book's main characters feel terribly alone and rejected. However, they also encourage children to rebel and create new era of justice via protest, love, and community. They undoubtedly design compact yet useful areas where they can live freely and securely.

Arundhati Roy's novels often discussed the problems of nationalism and identity. Additionally, it is helpful to compare it with other literary texts or novels that search for post-colonial concepts of identity, belonging, and acceptance. An intersectional approach makes Roy's novel special. Because she looks at identity not just in terms of politics or religion, but also in terms of gender or sexuality, class, and caste. The characters she expresses in her novel are not just victims or heroes. They are real fighters who protects quiet and creative way.

In Jhumpa Lahiri's work *The Namesake* which discuss about Indian identity in foreign countries like diaspora. But Roy center of attention only on the people in India, especially those pass over of national pride and power. In *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh shows partition

across India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh which created trauma among different societies. On the other hand, Roy explores the modern nationalism which continues to divide and harm people in India. Both novels use nonlinear storytelling to show memory, history, and personal identity all are connected. Ghosh's novel focuses more on memory and imagination, but Roy focuses on direct political resistance. Roy includes queer feminist, and religious minority voices, which are not in Ghosh's novel. In Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* talks about personal stories and the larger history of post-independence India. His novel is more focused on the partition of India and Pakistan, and it is told from the point of view of one man, while Roy explores a wider range of characters like women, queer, and Muslim. She focuses more directly on modern political events. They both use magical realism and history to show political events to shape individuals lives. Roy's writing style is more fragmented. However, Rushdie is more humorous and symbolic.

Roy criticizes some forms of nationalism which creates enemies out of those are different. In the novel, Muslims, Kashmiris, Dalits, and transgender peoples are often treated as outsiders of the society. The Pahalgam attack, which killed 26 civilians, including tourists, was linked to a group opposing India's policies in Kashmir. This incident made tensions between two countries. This conflict shows how nationalism can be controlled or excluded, and can lead to violence and war.

3.1 Queer Wound and Embodied Trauma

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Arundhati Roy presents queer wounds as deeply incorporate, social and historical. The novel does not explain trauma simply as internal, private experience. In the novel Anjum, the Hijra character shows the strength and potential she have to carry the wounds which is imposed her by society, religion, her own family, and the state. These wounds have become everyday experiences and tragedy. In Roy's novel, she explains that almost

every gender's concept has already moved on in post-colonial but queer strategy's remain the same.

Anjum is a very powerful character in the novel. She becomes the role model of the novel for expressing and experiencing trauma. From her childhood her identity becomes her biggest problem in life. For her identity, she has to face rejection, marginalization, and confusion etc. These pain is not progress in just one day. It is happening for very long period. From family rejection, state exclusion, social problems, and pain unfolds the social realities. By watching all of these trauma, some people starts thinking that what is happening in the society is correct. Because they do not see the realities and the sides of good and bad things. So, queer wounds are not established in one day. Roy show that it is not only just accidental, it is structural too. Arundhati Roy does not provide any relief or moral closure. Because she wanted readers to feel these discrimination. To be witness of Anjum's condition, exclusion from the society. These things shows the modern world or globalized world suffers for the colonial conditions.

Anjum's trauma is mainly both personal and political. Her religion and caste also makes difficulties for her and make her vulnerable. Roy's representation shows that queer bodies are already sites of state and societal regulation, where survival requires both physical caution and strategic social navigation. Trauma is mainly a rigid idea of gender in this novel. It is mainly shaped by deeply gendered structured system historically. Anjum's hijra identity challenges societies fixed male, female gender binary. This challenge itself becomes a reason of her sufferings. Roy does not tries to put pressure on the readers or does not wants to prove anything regarding Anjum's identity. She wants to think the readers about the reason behind Anjum's sufferings only because of her identity.

Globalization does not heal queer trauma. It is connected with international laws and human rights discourse. These discourses promise the people of nation to protect the queer individuals. But in reality the expectation does not stand out. So, Roy shows these perspectives how Anjum's sufferings increase day by day, while gender diversity is continuously discussed in the modern globalized world. It shows that global awareness is not always give guarantee to protect the people of the nation. The globalization spreads the progressive ideas, and the ideas of human rights. But the society does not follow the rules for the people equally. For these reason, people like Anjum remain vulnerable while global progress and many problems are being discussed.

In the novel trauma is carried through memories. Like Anjum's present life suffers mainly for the negative feelings she felt, everything she has seen, and felt from her childhood. And it is not stopping but increasing day by day. So she continuously feeling this and cannot forget anything easily. Anjum not only just suffers her pain, she survives these incident and take stand for other who is facing problems like identity like her.

In a globalized post-colonial world, where identities are constantly classified and examined, this becomes itself meaningful. In my point of view, Survival does not always have to be loud, it mainly challenges the system. By showing embodied experience, Roy forces readers to resist the reality that trauma is not a symbolic condition that can be easily resolved through policy or recognition. Trauma is mainly an ongoing regular process which is not an past experience. It is not only happens in just a major events. It is a everyday social attitudes and continuous experience of daily life. This idea is the central idea of the study. Queer trauma cannot be separated from post-colonial realities. It is not fulfilling the ideas according to the rules which is discussed in globalized world. So this making complexities in queer individuals life and social hierarchies.

3.2 Queer Lives Belonging

Arundhati Roy shows in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* that, people like Anjum lives like an outsider of a nation and society. It is not just law or politics; it becomes a system of a nation from a very long period. For queer people like Anjum, exclusion does not happen loudly, it is a silent, neglect, and a social judgement. In this nation, Anjum is also a citizen like others but she is not socially accepted by nationalism demand. People like her queer individuals are being removed from the society and nation because of their gender nonconformity, religion, and caste.

Belonging in the nation is also unequal for the queer people. Those who do not fit into the society are treated as threat. Queer individuals feel everyday like an unknown in the society and faces many ignorance regularly. Queer and religion become the symbol of disorder. However, when queer belonging is denied in the society or a nation, but they have no opportunities to leave the society feels vulnerable. Because they do not have any other space to live. They are treated as an outsider, being judged and pushed to the margins.

Moreover, Anjum belongs to the nation but as she is denied from the society to accept her gender identity. Survival itself becomes a form of resistance in society or nation, which refuses her belonging.

3.3 The Politics of Visibility and Survival

Visibility is the main problem in this novel. It is both necessary and dangerous for the queer individuals. Anjum's queer identity makes her visible in the society. This identity makes her feel insecure and faces violence. Though she is visible through her identity to face clashes, but she remains invisible when it is the time for her rights, protection, and recognition.

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy shows that the novel's society is full inequality, power, and fear. It is not a safe environment for the people like Anjum. In the urban sides and local sides both are not giving space of freedom to queer people. The society is giving no opportunities to the queer peoples. The modern globalized societies still facing the post-colonial powers. They constantly dominate queer individuals. The urban city gives no support to the people like Anjum. Anjum's fear is justified because she comes from many scary real experiences. She collects memory of violence and exclusion from the society. Fear is not only a personal feeling but something every day recalls the horror experience. It makes marginalized people isolated. From this people learn, share, and survive to be safe. Fear is not a weakness of a person. It is a strength and response to a social environment. Fear controls human behavior by indirect force.

However, the urban city is not completely hopeless in the sense of resistance. Marginalized people can create hidden space for their livings. Though these spaces are fragile but important. Survival mainly depends on community and adaptability, but not power. Globalization promises freedom but fail to show in action. It is dangerous for the people who do not fit in social norms.

3.4 Spaces of Marginality and Resistance

In this section, Arundhati Roy shows how physical spaces in her novel reflect social exclusion but also become places where people resist unfair treatment. The graveyard in the society is more than just a location. It represents an in-between space where normal social rules are paused, allowing alternative communities to form and grow. Anjum and other marginalized characters bonds based on mutual support, share experiences, and the need to survive together. They form communities outside of formal institution that have failed to protect them.

This demonstrates that resistance in the novel does not always mean big protests or confrontations. Instead, it often happens through small-scale, everyday acts that are relational and personal. Care is not presented as just a private emotion but as a social practice with political meaning. For marginalized people, especially queer individuals like Anjum, care becomes a way of surviving in a world that constantly denies their protection, recognition, and belonging.

Anjum's life after leaving the society illustrates how relationship can be made outside traditional family structures. The Khwabgah and later the graveyard community become spaces where belonging is redefined. These communities are formed not through blood relations or legal recognition but through shared vulnerability and mutual care. Roy portrays that such bonds are not weaker than traditional family ties, in fact, they are often more dependable because they are based on choice, empathy, and survival. The novel further explores how care resists towards person to person. By remembering the death, sheltering the displaced, and nurturing the abandoned Anjum's community refuses the logic that some lives are disposable. These acts show the value where society has denied it. From my point of view, this represents a quiet but powerful form of resistance against nationalist and global structures that rank lives according to usefulness or conformity.

Globalization complicates the politics of care. In a world driven by efficiency, competition, and individual success, care is often undervalued. Roy shows these critics global priorities by centering characters whose lives revolve around sustaining one another rather than achieving economic or social advancement. She presents care as an ethical point to global systems that privilege profit over people.

Roy also uses these relationships to critique the failure of formal institutions. When the state, religious rules, and social systems abandon marginalized people, care fills the gap. However, this does not mean care replaces justice. Rather, it exposes how survival becomes dependent on

informal networks. The narrative does not agree to show the romanticize this dependence. Instead, it reveals the cost of a society that leaves care work to those who are already vulnerable.

3.5 Silence, Memory and the Ethical Witness

Another crucial theme in this research is that silence is not as a weakness, but as a complex response to trauma and oppression. Many people assume that speaking out about injustice is always the right choice and that silence indicated acceptance or defeat. However, the novel teaches us that this assumption oversimplifies the difficult realities facing marginalized people.

For individuals living under constant threat, speaking about their experiences can bring additional danger rather than relief or justice. When society punishes people for who they are, taking about trauma can make one more vulnerable to further attack. Silence in these context becomes a survival strategy. It represents a calculated decision to protect oneself rather than a failure to resist oppression. Understanding this helps us appreciate the difficult choices marginalized people must make every single day.

The thesis paper shows that silence carries meaning even if it does not produce words. Silent memories still exist and unspoken pain still matters. When people choose not to speak, they are often making practical judgement about safety, about who deserve to hear their stories, and about what kind of response they can reasonably expect. These decisions deserve respect rather than judgement from those who have never faced similar dangers.

This becomes important when we consider how globalized affects storytelling and visibility. We live in an era where image and stories of suffering can spread around the world almost instantly through social media, news outlets and digital platforms. Many people assume this increased visibility leads to better outcomes for those who suffer. However, the research doubt

on this helpful presumption. Just because millions of people around the world can see someone's pain does not mean anyone will actually take meaningful action to address the underlying cause of that suffering. Global attention often treats human suffering as entertainment or emotional content to be consumed and then forgotten when the next story emerges. This creates a disturbing situation where people's real trauma becomes material for others to feel briefly sad about before moving on with their comfortable lives.

The author of the novel demonstrates awareness of these problems through how she chooses to tell her character's story. She does not provide graphic descriptions of violence, instead she focuses on the emotional and psychological aftermath of trauma. Like how people rebuild their lives, showing the courage to continue existing when the world tells you that you should not exist. This approach asks readers to engage more thoughtfully rather than simply react emotionally and then forget.

By refusing to turn suffering into spectacle, the writer respects her character's dignity while also challenging readers to think critically about the systems and structures that creates suffering in the first place. She wants readers to understand not just the certain people experience pain, but why they experience it. She also tries to portrait who benefits from their oppression, and what it would actually take to create meaningful change. This represents a more ethical way of representing trauma that contrasts with media who often exploits suffering for profit or attention.

Memories also plays a vital role in this discussion. The novel claims on the importance of remembering people and events that powerful institution would prefer to erase. In this contemporary world, where news cycles change rapidly and public attention spans grow shorter. When we remember those whom, history tries to forget, we honor their lives and challenge the narratives that exclude them.

3.6 Intersectionality of Gender, Religion, and Class

An important contribution of this thesis involves explaining how different type of discrimination and oppression work together to create disadvantages for certain people. This concept often called intersectionality, which helps us understand that people do not face just one type of unfair treatment in isolation. Instead, multiple forms of discrimination can overlap and interact for creating unique challenges.

The novel illustrates this through its main characters, particularly Anjum, who faces discrimination on multiple ways. As a transgender woman, she confronts prejudice based on her gender identity. As a Muslim in India, she experiences religious discrimination. As for a lower economic class, she faces the challenges of poverty and limited access to resources. These difficult aspects of her identity do not exist separately. They combine and interact in ways that make her situation more complex and difficult than facing any single form of discrimination alone.

Understanding this interconnection matters for practical reasons. When we develop policies, and programs intended to help marginalized people, we must recognize these overlapping challenges. A program that only addressed one aspect of discrimination will not fully help someone who faces multiple, intersecting forms of oppression. For example, protecting transgender right is important, but if those protections do not also consider how religion, class, caste, and other factors affect people's experiences, they will remain incomplete.

The research makes clear that we cannot understand someone's experiences by examining just one part of their identity, while ignoring the rest. A transgender person who is wealthy and belongs to a dominant religious group will face very different challenges than a transgender person who poor and belong to a religious minority. Both face discrimination based on gender identity,

but their overall experiences differ significantly because of these other factors. Recognizing these differences prevents us from making overly broad generalizations about what marginalized groups need or experience. This intersectional understanding also applies to how we think about global advocacy and international human rights work.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

This research study explores important ideas about literature, especially focusing on queer lives experiences in countries that were once colonized. This study looks closely at Arundhati Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, examining the characters like Anjum and Tilo to understand bigger issues about society, identity, and survival.

Firstly, this study puts queer experiences at the center of the conversation instead of treating them as side notes. In most of the post-colonial literature studies, queer characters appear briefly or are used as symbols. This research shows that queer lives actually reveal the deepest problems in nationalism, history, and globalization. By paying attention to character's like Anjum, we can understand society in a different and more complicate way. We see conditions and failures that might otherwise remain hidden.

Secondly, this study offers a new way to think about resistance. Usually, when we think about resistance, firstly what comes to our mind is the image of protest, revolution, and fighting back openly. But this research shows that resistance look different for marginalized communities. For them, Sometime resistance is simply continuing to live when society wants you to disappear, sometimes it is creating small communities where people care for each other and sometimes it is telling stories that others want to silence. This quieter form of resistance deserves more recognition in literature.

We often think of trauma as something that happened in the past, like a historical event that is over. Then people either heal from it or they do not. But Roy's novel shows that trauma does not work that way for marginalized communities. It is not a single event that you can overcome

and leave in the past. Instead, it is an ongoing process. Trauma lives in the face someone feels when walking down the streets. It exists in the silence when people cannot speak about their experiences. It shows up in the daily choices people make to stay safe. These understandings challenge two common narratives. First, it challenges nationalist stories where nations claim all bad things happened in the past and everything is better now. Second, it challenges international organizations that want to measure progress and declare problems solved. But reality is much more complicated and messier. Justice is not a single moment when everything gets fixed. It is a continuous process. As recognition and acknowledgement must happen again and again, not just once.

This study uses a comparative approach, reading Roy's work alongside other writers from different times and places. This helps us see patterns we might not have noticed before. Some forms of oppression appear in different contexts with different details, but they share similar structures. Some survival strategies show up across different cultures. This kind of comparative work helps us to understand both what is universal and what is specific to particular situations. This study also contributes to conversations about globalization and its effect on marginalized communities. Global visibility can help by connecting marginalized communities with each other with resources. But it can also increase surveillance and create new forms of danger. When the whole world is watching, people sometimes become targets in new ways.

Some tensions remain unsolved in this study, and perhaps they should stay away because they reflect real complexity in life. One big question is about visibility and safety can be raised, when queer people are visible and out in front of others, they might feel unsafe and uncertain about how to proceed. However, there is a question of hope mixed in with this uncertainty. Some readers might feel depressed because the suffering in the book is real and heavy. On one hand, we

understand people wanting hope and happy ending. On the other hand, false hope can be dangerous, Roy's refusal to provide a comfortable, neat ending might actually be more respectful to people who live these realities every day. Not everything can be wrapped up nicely, and acknowledging this is important. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* closely, Roy does something powerful. The novel refuses to let us look away from people that society tries to hide. Through Anjum and Tilo, we see how nationalism can hurt those who do not fit in its narrow definitions. We see how identity becomes both a burden and a source of strength.

When marginalized people create their own communities, share meals, and for each other, they are challenging a system that wants them to disappear. This is not dramatically resistance with protest and speeches. It is quiet, everyday resistance that keeps people alive. Roy also teaches us that some wounds do not heal completely. The trauma that queer people face in post-colonial societies does not just goes away with time or good intentions. It stays with people, shaping how they move through the world. But this does not mean all hopes is lost. Hope exists in the connections people make with each other, in the stories they tell, and in the spaces, they make for themselves.

This research shows that literature matters because it gives voice to experiences that official historical ignore or erase. By bringing together queer feminism, post colonialism theory, and trauma learning together, this thesis helps us understand how power works in society and how people resist it in various ways. Roy's novel reminds us that true belonging comes from fitting into society's expectations. Instated, it comes from the acceptance and compassion. People should not have to change who they are to deserve dignity and respect. This study opens conversations that go beyond one book or one author. It connects to larger questions about how we study literature, understand queer lives, and think about societies shaped by colonialism. By centering

queer experiences and recognizing different forms of resistance, this research contributes to the honest ways of understanding our world.

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