

# Borderland Identity: A Critical Discourse Analysis of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017)

Masooma Ishtiaq M.Phil. Scholar, University of Lahore (UOL)

[masoomaishtiaq456@gmail.com](mailto:masoomaishtiaq456@gmail.com)

Shazir Hassan M.Phil. Scholar, University of Lahore (UOL)

[shazirbukhari@gmail.com](mailto:shazirbukhari@gmail.com)

Dr. SaeedurRahman Lecturer Department of Economics Ghazi University Dera Ghazi Khan

[srehman@gudgk.edu.pk](mailto:srehman@gudgk.edu.pk)

## Abstract:

This research aims to investigate the idea of borderland in the relation of its characters in the Arundhati Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* with the critical analysis of Gloria Anzaldua theory of borderlands. In her book *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) she describes her experiences in the Rio Grande Valley between Texas and Mexico. Anzaldua portrays loss of mingling of two different cultures she also throws light on the product of the amalgamation of different cultures because she is one of those kinds of product in her society. She says, "Culture is made by those in power" (16). Cultures and traditions are made by those who are economically and physically strong. Physical borders are less harmful than invisible borders which meant to be the mental borders and these mental borders are the product of our societies.

Key words: Borderland, Identity, culture, Utmost Happiness

## Introduction:

Arundhati Roy is an Indian writer and humanist activist. Her novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) is published after twenty years of her first debut novel *The God of Small Things* (1997). *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is based on the sensitivity of the minorities and untouchable who are marginalized in our countries. This novel is a representative of the borders between old Delhi. These borders exist inside of the society as well as outside physically and mentally. It depicts indigenous people's displacements in old Delhi, where they are trying to maintain status quo, trying to keep solidarity with society and imagining the state of happiness.

Roy creates a huge vacuum of words which sucks the ultimate reality of the world in her fiction. Story revolved around so many major and minor characters like Nimmo, Musa, Saddam, Tilobut the main character is Anjum, and she is the one who is leading all the others with her. They live in old Delhi and struggle for their survival. Story reflects Anjum who was born as 'He' in Delhi first as Aftab, a long awaited son of his parents later became 'She' and 'Hijra' in the language of the world. The chaotic discrimination of the surroundings for her leads towards isolation. She eventually builds a guest house in graveyard for her and for others and she calls it a 'Jannat' guest house. A graveyard is also a border between living and dead. Being a Hijra and the society in which he lives claiming him as an inferior and an unclean item. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is not about a single identity it is a depiction of whole community of transgender. The novel is a reflection of the subaltern's position in the society. Society is playing role as a filter with the help of making brutal system of cast. This novel tells us about the sufferings, the wave of hatred for the community of transgender by society and describes the picture of the least possibility of the survival for these people. Roy writes such an accommodating novel even for minorities.

## Statement of Purpose:

This research aims to investigate the identity as a vagabond in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Roy is portraying a fearless broad canvas of borders visibly and invisibly in old Delhi. The basic research problem is, while living in a post-modern era, in the era of technology, society is becoming liberal by making others cultures and communities marginalized. We are making our voices louder by making other lowers. As *Borderlands* book by Anzaldua, says that "Culture is made by those in power" (16). Cultures and traditions are made by those who are economically and physically strong. Physical borders are less harmful than invisible borders which meant to be the mental borders and are the product of our societies.

## Objectives of the Study:

Borderland Identity: A Critical Study of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017). The main objective of this research is to explore the relationship of physical borders and psychological borders under the light of Anzaldua study on *Borderlands*. The purpose of this research is to dissect the novel in that way where culture demonstrates the development of identity. Identity that is already socially constructed how society is more enhancing institutionalized barriers. Religion cast and genders, how they are working as a barrier. This research is also highlighting the ways of escapement for the contemporary settings of the society. How does Anjum collect her roots and trying to maintain her? How do the desires put Anjum in a mainstream to be a

normal human Being? This will help to throw light on the surviving strategies for these marginalized people. This research explores the cultural and heritage value in the writing of Arundhati Roy.

**Research Questions:**

1. How does a society construct the borders?
2. What is the importance of institutional barriers of culture for developing borderland identity?
3. What is the ultimate reality and survival apparatus of untouchables in this novel?

**Research Frame Work:**

This research underpins the idea of Borderlands in the relation of identity in the Arundhati Roy's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. This research deals with Gloria Anzaldua theory of borderlands. In her book *Borderlands/LaForentra*(1987) she describes her experiences in the Rio Grande Valley between Texas and Mexico. Anzaldua portrays loss of mingling of two different cultures she also throws light on the product of the amalgamation of different cultures because she is one of those kinds of product in her society. She says, "Culture is made by those in power" (16). Cultures and traditions are made by those who are economically and physically strong. Physical borders are less harmful than invisible borders which meant to be the mental borders and these mental borders are the product of our societies. Anzaldua used a word for herself "cultureless". Through her book '*Borderlands/La Forentra*', she describes about visible and invisible borders according to her "the border that separates the safe from the unsafe, distinguished us from them" (3). She tells us that she has not encountered only physical borders but sexually, politically and psychological borders. Furthermore Anzaldua describes the "New Mestiza Consciousness; the mestiza is a product of cross breeding, designed for preservation under a variety of condition" (81). Mestiza is a struggle of borders, an inner war (78). Anzaldua describes the confusion between cultures. She explores the causes and destruction of racism in the society of Mexico as well as the discrimination between male/female, homosexuality and other genders.

**Literature Review:**

Arundhati Roy has already been widely read in the literary world. She has maintained a remarkable place for her fiction in the circle of renowned writers. Arundhati's novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* has already been making a place for research in the mainstream since its publication 2017. Many articles and critical comments has been published and delivered by so many magazines and in journals as well. SushreeSmita Raj is a research scholar in North Orissa University Odisha. She is in her article *A Study on Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2018) gave a general view on Roy as a writer and about her novel she says, "*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a complete satire aiming to attack the ways of patriarch society and where a transgender beg for their place, women are raped and bound to seize their lips, abandoned lives of dalits and Hindus and Muslims war" (Raj 6).

Basically she talked about gender and inequality of the society. The waves of hatred for minorities created discriminated culture among same people of the same society.

JaveedahmadRaina a scholar of Kashmir *Transgender Marginalization and Exclusion: A study of Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) explores the various aspects and barriers of transgender community and how the society treating to them.

"Transgender is in its origin a disjunction between one's feelings of who one is or is not and how one is or has once been perceived, recognized and understood by others" (Raina 831). He explores identity issues in Delhi where Anjum is living a life of inhumanity. Society is making an environment of discrimination for minorities. This research paper is somehow relevant to borderland identity.

Angelo Monaco PhD scholar, University of Pisa describing *The Ministry of Utmost happiness Fantasy and history in postcolonial India: the case of Arundhati Roy's anti-global novel* (2018) Roy's narrative is constructed of images of history and myth that make the present a complex amalgamation of past moments. "The disordering of time is not simply a postmodern self-reflexive"(Monaco 60). She talks about interweaving of Roy magical realism in her novel with the touch of historical reflections. She highlights the streaks of Post colonialism in the novel.

PriyankaTewari *Creating Herstory: Female Rebellion in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things and The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*(2018) in her article she writes about issue regarding woman in India society as Roy wrote her both books *The God of small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Tewari talked about the discrimination in the society and what is the condition of the modern India. Furthermore she highlights the ways how female gender is mistreated. She did a comparison of her both novels. Further she talked about gender discrimination in Delhi.

Dr. Syed WahajMohsin Assistant Professor of Integral University Lucknow, writes in his article *Environmental Concerns in Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness: A Critical Study* (2017) "Roy energetically aspires to make this planet more sustainable"(Mohsin086). He explores in his article that Roy is deeply connected to nature and earth no matter how much circumstances become worst she makes them

sustainable. On the surface and deeper level their characters get success in surviving whatever their surviving strategies are. Roy depicts nature frankly in her writings. This article is much concerned about the relationship of the characters with environment and nature.

R. Kalpana *A Stylistic Analysis of Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2018). She explores in her article stylistic techniques of Arundhati Roy. The amalgamation of nature in her writing, switching of language urdu to English some translations and including a poem in fiction makes her novel remarkable. The feminism in Roy finds a very strong expression in the line the use of compound adjectives such as "woman-with-a-husband" speaking to a "woman-without-a-husband" referring to Ankita and Tilo, clearly bring out the feminist voice in her" (Kalpana 21). This article may lead a helpful way in deep textual analysis.

Nalini Iyer a scholar *Narrating a Fragmented Nation: Arundhati Roy's Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2018) in her article she looks Ministry of Utmost Happiness through the perspective of postcolonial nation which is fragmented and dispersed in different sections. In her abstract she describes the fragmented identities which are major characters of this novel as well articulate a postcolonial nation's history from the perspective of the marginalized. "Anjum, a hijra, Saddam Hussain, a Dalit, and Tilottama, a maverick young woman are among the main characters in this sprawling narrative whose tales intertwine to capture the failure of the secular democratic nation state (Iyer 163). This article is also throwing light on the psychology of the characters as well as the psychology of the society and role of state.

The views of the critics which are mentioned above are primarily based on feminine view and stylistic techniques and psychological aspects. So, this is very important to highlight the borderlands view with the connection of the identity to explore the idea of dichotomy of the self. This idea and research problem would become a source to open the other important aspects and critical approaches for Arundhati Roy fiction. This research provides a new dimension to critically evaluate above mentioned text *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* in a new perspective of borderlands theory by Anzaldua.

#### **Research Methodology:**

Borderland Identity: The Critical Study of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) is a qualitative research. It focuses on analyzing literary text data qualitatively and study of original work intensively. Gloria Anzaldua's theory of Borderlands will be used to analyse the text primarily in a theoretical frame.

#### **Discussion:**

Borderland Identity is an important research through various aspects. This research gives a new dimension to analyse *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. It deals with the impact on the development of identity of institutional barriers through theoretical aspects and that how the character can live or survive in the worst circumstances of life. Anjum being a Muslim born in Delhi that is more dangerous identity today this research also throw a little bit light on the current circumstances of the India and their strategies of dealing with Muslims identities. The major significance of this research is that it provides a brief description of how the subject deals with double oppression being neither man nor woman and belonging to a third gender. The novel deals with the relation of physical borders but also deals with the invisible borders within the society of old Delhi. It is pertinent to mention here that this research also throws light on the private and public lives of the characters as well as their psyches to deal with the society in present circumstances. This idea and research problem would become a source to open the other important aspects and critical approaches for Arundhati Roy's fiction. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) by Arundhati Roy is a mirror of history and shattered layers of identities tangled in borders. This is a portrait of historical border's reflection from the Indian subcontinent, old Delhi to the new ways of the valley of Kashmir. The story revolved around the major character Anjum born as Aftabonce in Delhi in a Muslim home later became 'Hijra' in the language of 'Duniya. Having a label of untouchable these people are marginalized and forced to live a life of an "other". This "other" has created a border in society in which those marginalized individuals are living. Being molested and discriminated by others they are in the struggle of recognizing the components of their existence, looking for a habitat to survive. For them, within their society, borders exist not only geographical level but also in sexual, political and psychological level. This research underpins the idea of borders not only on physical level but also throws light on invisible borders which are the product of institutionalized society in which cast, religion, education and gender is included. The aim of this research is to reveal the relationships of the minorities or untouchable with the border lands of society. This research will also investigate the tension between borders in the light of Gloria Anzaldua theory of borderlands in her semi-autobiographical book *Borderlands/La Forenta* (1987) in which she says, "the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country- a border culture borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them" (3). Anzaldua describes the confusion between cultures. She explores the causes and destruction of racism in the society as well as the discrimination between male/female, homosexuality and other genders. This kind of setup in the society creates borders.

Furthermore, Anzaldua says that borders can be created anywhere in the society, when two or more cultures trouble each other when the space between two communities or culture shrinks with intimacy. Anzaldua's theory of borderland indicates the culture trouble within the same countries. She says, "We shiver in separate cells in enclosed cities" (20). Roy is trying to treat minorities on the level of humanity. She talks about center and marginal in her novel. This research will analyse the structure and institutionalized barriers for the subaltern's identities for the development of borders in the society. This research will also investigate the character analysis of the minorities and restricted behavior of the society for transgender. This research study would throw light on the makeup of identities of untouchables and their isolating relationship with society and other communities.

Untouchables and those who are unwashed masses are prohibited to be treated on the human level. They are the result of the border production of the society. Anzaldua introduced the New Mestiza consciousness in her book *Borderlands* which is a survival strategy for her. According to her, "the mestiza is a product of crossbreeding, designed for preservation under a variety of condition" (81). Mestiza is a struggle of borders, an inner war (78).

*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is an outspoken sketch for lost identities. Anjum as mentioned above is a broken identity looking for a place to survive in the chaotic society. Many of Anjum's community lived in Khawbgah. They were looking for satisfaction and a survival place not equality. Being molested they were ashamed of their selves. Hopeless Nimmo in Khawbgah sitting with Anjum says, 'a living creature that is incapable of happiness. So he made us' (23). Further she indicates about invisible borders in her city. 'The war is inside us. Indo-Pak is inside us' (23). These above mentioned ideas about identity and borders in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and Anzaldua theory of borderlands will give a striking map for research in the Roy's novel in a new way. No research has been done from this perspective of borderland in the field of English Literature. Hence it provides a new look to demonstrate identity in the relation of borderlands under the light of Gloria Anzaldua theory of borderlands.

She describes herself through the approach of this discrimination that "as a mestiza I have no country" (102). Being raised as hybrid identity she preferred to homosexuality. This kind of setup in the society creates borders. The research deals with the makeup of identities of untouchables in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and their isolating relationship with society of old Delhi and other communities. It also throws light on the surviving strategies for these marginalized people in the multicultural society such as Anjum character and others untouchables.

### Conclusion:

While concluding the topic under discussion it is pertinent to mention here that *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy represents the picture of the chaotic society of India. It is a representative of the borders inside of the self as well as settled outside physically and mentally. This research has been done in the prism of historical reflections. It depicts indigenous people displacements who are trying to maintain status quo, trying to keep solidarity with society. Borderland Identity: A Critical Study of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* consists on these aspects. This research keenly developed the novel within the dimension of borders and identity.

---

### Work Cited List

Anzaldua, Gloria. *Borderlands/ La-Frontera- The new Mestiza*. San Francisco. 1987. *Ebookcollection*.

Retrieved from:

file:///C:/Users/nm/Documents/gloria-anzaldua-borderlands-la-frontera\_-the-new-mestiza-aunt-lute-books-1987.pdf

Iyer, Nalini. "Narrating a Fragmented Nation: Arundhati Roy's *Ministry of Utmost Happiness*". *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 76; April 2018, pp. 163-173; ISSN: e-2530-8335.

Retrieved from:

file:///C:/Users/nm/Documents/12%20Nalini%20Iyer.pdf

Kalpna. R, "A Stylistic Analysis of Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*". *Studies in Literature and Language*. Vol. 16, No. 2, 2018, pp. 19-21. DOI:10.3968/10257.

Retrieved from:

file:///C:/Users/nm/Documents/structural%20analysis.pdf

Monaco, Angelo. "Fantasy and history in postcolonial India: the case of Arundhati Roy's anti-global novel". *From The European South*, Vol. 3. 2018, pp. 57-70.

Retrieved from:

file:///C:/Users/nm/Documents/5.Monaco.pdf

Mohsin, Syed Wajah, "Environmental Concerns in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*: A Critical Study". *The Criterion: An International Journal in English* Vol. 8, Issue-VI, December 2017 ISSN: 0976-8165.

Retrieved from:

file:///C:/Users/nm/Documents/IN11.pdf

Roy, Arundhati. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. India. 2017. Print.

Smita Raj, Sushree. A study on Arundhati Roy's "*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*". *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Translations Studies*, Vol. 5. no.2, 2018, pp. 3-6.

Retrieved from:

file:///C:/Users/nm/Documents/3-6%20SUSHREE%20SMITA%20RAJ.pdf

Tewari, Priyanka. *Creating Herstory: Female Rebellion in Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" and "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness"*. CUNY Academic Works, 2018.

Retrieved from:

file:///C:/Users/nm/Documents/Creating%20Herstory\_%20Female%20Rebellion%20in%20Arundhati%20Roy\_s%20The%20God%20o.pdf