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DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER NONCONFORMITY IN THE MINISTRY OF UTMOST HAPPINESS BY ARUNDHATI ROY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Samra Amjad
MPhil Scholar, Dept of Applied Linguistics, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.
Email: samraamjad259@gmail.com
Dr. Wardha Azhar
Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Linguistics, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.
Email: wardah.azhar@gcuf.edu.pk
Rubab khan
MPhil Scholar, Dept of Applied Linguistics, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.
Email: rubabkhankhan2000@gmail.com

Abstract:
This study explores the linguistic and discursive development of gender nonconformity in Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, with a particular focus on the character Anjum. While the novel has been extensively studied for its ideological and postcolonial themes, comparatively low attention has been given to how gender identity is constructed, questioned and acquired through language within the text. This study employs qualitative approach using Fairclough's three dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to investigate the representation of gender nonconformity in the ministry of utmost happiness by Arundhati Roy. This study analyzes how the linguistic patterns are anticipated to uncover deeper philosophical frameworks related to caste, gender, identity and religion is south Asia. The research aims to clarify how literary discourse constructs and debates gender nonconformity so making contributions to the field of applied linguistics, queer investigations and discourse analysis.

Keywords: *Gender nonconformity, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), linguistic patterns, caste, Arundhati Roy, religion*

Introduction:

Background of the Study

Gender and identity issues have always been at the forefront to literary and cultural studies. In contemporary South Asian fiction writers frequently use their work to challenge traditional ideas of gender, caste and belonging. Arundhati Roy has a distinctive position among these writers; her fiction combines poetry and ideology to give voice to those who are marginalized in society. In her second novel The Ministry of Utmost Happiness (2017), Roy tells the story of the character Anjum a transgender woman whose observations and life strongly questions traditional views of gender and identity. Roy employs Anjum to explore what it means to live outside of social norms and how language can serve as an avenue for resistance and self-expression.

Language is never neutral in literature. A helpful approach critical discourse analysis developed by Norman Fairclough's (1992, 1995), provides us with a useful way to uncover the relationship between language and power. CDA expose the ways in which certain linguistic patterns either

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endorse or contradict current ideologies. In a novel like Roy's CDA can expose how gender identities are produced, negotiated and sometimes refused through discourse.

Rationale of the Study:

The Ministry Of Utmost Happiness (2017) by Arundhati Roy presents rich extensive material to explore gender nonconformity in literature by offering complex portrayals of characters whose lives contradict traditional gender norms. Although novel has attracted significant scholarly attraction for its political, ecological and postcolonial aspects but its discursive construction of gender nonconforming identities has attracted fewer studies. The term discursive construction refers to the broader narrative and social processes that these linguistic forms employ such as the placement, legitimization and negotiation of the gender identities within ideological and cultural frameworks. This gap is crucial because discourse doesn't simply represent reality, but takes an active role in establishing a cultural awareness of oppressed identities.

Research Questions

1. What narrative choices are used to challenge gender binaries?
2. How is Anjum's gender identity represented through discourse strategies in the novel?

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the narrative choices that challenge gender binaries.
2. To explore how Anjum's gender identity is represented through discourse strategies in the novel.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Nonconformity

Gender Nonconformity encompasses to customary behaviors, identities and practices that differ from established expectations of male and female identity. It is a wide and multifaceted broad concept that includes transgender, intersex, queer and non-binary identities that challenge established gender stereotypes.

Discourse

According to discourse-analytic traditions, discourse is a form of social practice which creates personal identities, connections and knowledge system as opposed to language in use. Discourse do not merely describe the world, but it controls what is considered as a knowledge, how is allowed to speak, how people are positioned in the society. Discourse plays a dual role as a site of marginalization and resistance in the context of gender nonconformity.

Discourse Analysis (DA)

Discourse analysis provides a methodological framework for examining language as a social practice. DA focuses on how meaning is constructed in interaction, context, and culture in contrast to linguistic approaches which are only limited to grammar or semantics. It makes an assumption that discourse is ideological rather than neutral, affecting how individuals and groups are viewed in society. Through DA researchers can study how terms like gender, race and class are linguistically constructed.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis builds on DA which explicitly addresses power, ideology and inequality.

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Fairclough's influential three-dimensional model provides a systematic framework:

1. **Textual Analysis** – examining vocabulary, grammar, metaphor, cohesion, and other linguistic features.
2. **Discursive Practice** – considering how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed.
3. **Socio-Cultural Practice** – situating discourse within broader ideological, institutional, and political contexts.

The study of gender nonconformity in Indian literature is important for several reasons. First it shed lights on the conflicting cultural positioning of transgender and non-binary communities in South Asia. Traditionally, Hijras and third-gender individuals have performed widely accepted customary responsibilities, but they also encounter discrimination, impoverishment and everyday institutional exclusion. Furthermore, gender nonconformity is strongly connected to wider sociopolitical problems in India. By examining gender nonconformity characters in literature, scholar can develop a greater awareness of how these connections are depicted and how excluded groups maintain legitimacy in contexts of oppressive systems.

Gender Nonconformity and Marginalized Identities

Minhas and Anwar (2022) investigated the language employed by Arundhati Roy in the ministry of utmost happiness to strengthen excluded groups, most notably unconventional people and the marginalized. The study examined the discourse tactics and word usage of Roy to challenge the current social systems employing Antconc and Norman Fairclough's three dimensional model of critical discourse Analysis (CDA). The results reveal how Roy's argumentative language functions as counter-discursive tool that enables marginalized individuals to reclaim their respect and reject discrimination. The study emphasizes how Roy's narrative style undermines marginalization, rethinks identity and illustrates the sociopolitical effects of discourse.

Babar and Ahmed (2023) examined the theme of otherness in the ministry of utmost happiness by Arundhati Roy. The study explored Roy's representation of gender nonconformity, cultural discourse and societal categorization using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework and antconc. The study critiques the system of government structures and unfair practices that perpetuate the marginalization of impoverished individuals and transgender while highlighting their struggles and resilience. The authors demonstrate how Roy's story questions conventional cultural norms by emphasizing the relationship between marginalized groups and their inventive resistance. The study fails to adequately address the interconnected nature of "otherness" across the caste, religion and impairment which restricts its scope even that it effectively highlights the lives of the marginalized people. The present study expands this discussion by specifically examining how discourse establishes and negotiates gender nonconformity in the novel.

Trauma, Resistance, and Identity Formation

Rhema and Senthamarai (2024) investigated the traumatic experiences of transgender people in the ministry of utmost happiness concentrating on the Anjum's battles with gender identity, social exclusion and healing. The study examined Anjum's healing journey and her potential role as a support system for others while highlighting her emotional, psychological and physical distress through the lens of trauma theory. The paper provides a significant substantial psychological viewpoint on Anjum narrative but risks limiting trauma to a single individual and emotional state rather than making it difficult to contextualize within wider sociopolitical framework of religion, caste and state violence that also assist to the marginalization of

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transgender community. Although considerable research had been taken on the ministry of utmost happiness the discursive construction of gender nonconformity is still insufficiently examined which this study seeks to address via Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework.

Suman and Ranjan (2024) offer an extensive examination of women and transgender characters in the ministry of utmost happiness through the contrasting frameworks of the new woman and subalternity. The paper highlights the severe circumstances faced by marginalized communities, highlighting their gradual development into strong agents of resistance against societal discrimination. By comparing marginalized characters with those who symbolize emancipation, the study demonstrates how Roy redefines subaltern and gender identities in Indian society. Although thorough research has been carried out on the ministry of utmost happiness, the discursive construction of gender nonconformity remains underexplored which this study investigates with the help of Fairclough's CDA model.

Ecology, Spatiality, and Belonging:

Sarkar (2022) applies a bioregional cosmopolitan framework to analyze Anjum's identity through the mutual dependence of human and nonhuman groups redefining the term "home" as diverse and inclusive. It defines the notion of transceology which combines ecological awareness with transgender and academic research to examine social, culture and environmental inequality. His analysis points out Anjum's exile and later resting in the graveyard where her identity is subsequently connected to the natural environment. Both studies highlights the breakdown of dualism whether it is between gender and biological species (Sarkar) or between ecology and heterogeneity Kumar(2023) and place Anjum narrative as a "line of flight" that seeks liberation from restrictive social and naturalistic frameworks. These reading contribute to the thematic recognition of kinship and gender; they often neglect the linguistic representations of these themes_ a component this research explores through systematic and discourse analysis.

Dash (2021) investigates the portrayal of the third gender in the novel the ministry of utmost happiness by Arundhati Roy concentrating on Anjum's battle against prejudice, identity and social marginalization in India. The research uses feminist and queer conceptual frameworks to define Hijra as historically excluded individuals who live against conventional gender norms. Dash highlights how Roy shows Anjum's transition from Aftab to Anjum as an argument with male dominated conventions, rigid gender roles and societal prejudice highlighting themes of migration, resilience and self-determination. The analysis additionally emphasizes the symbolic significances of places like Khwabgah and the graveyard which serve as alternative locations for gender nonconforming people to feel like they are part of something. Consequently it fails to analyze how gender nonconformity is discursively and linguistically constructed through storytelling, pronoun usage, naming patterns or narrative representation- a gap that this study fulfills through Critical Discourse Analysis based on Fairclough's framework.

Theoretical Studies:

2.3.1 Judith Butler's Theory of Gender Performativity:

Utami, Siwi, and Suryani (2022) analyze gender performativity in the animated movie Brave by Pixar employing the theoretical strategy of Judith butler (1990). Butler contends that we are not born with a particular gender but rather it is acquired through repetitive behaviors, which are influenced by society's norms and standards. Merida displayed male dominated performativity by participating in activities like hunting, horse-riding and fighting in contrast to conventional royals who symbolize feminity, class and luxury. The results highlight how

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Merida's character is against conventional gender norms which undermines and challenges the binary notion of male power and feminity in media culture. By portraying Merida's performance as a defiance of conventional gender norms, the study helps contribute to the broader discussion of the power of social conventions to legitimize or oppose established gender perspectives. The qualitative bibliographical techniques used in this research highlight the requirement to investigate media depictions as platforms that question and reconfigure societal perceptions of gender identity.

Saraswati and Engliana (2023) utilized Judith butler theory of gender performativity to examine karitini, the princess of java to observe how the performative actions of the main character question the society norms and promote the equal rights for women. This paper highlights the butler concept that gender is not a fundamental identity but a set of routine behaviors that are dictated by power and social dynamics. The authors analyze karitin opposition to patriarchal standards such as her condemnation of early marriage and support for education showing how vulnerability may serve as an agent for societal transformation and self-determination. Karitini's performative revolt exposes the debated power of gender-specific performances challenging established standards.

Methodological Studies

2.4.1 Critical Discourse and Corpus-Based Approach:

Bilginer and Yuvayapan (2023) utilized Van Dijk's (2001) theoretical framework to analyze astrological predictions published in woman's magazines in English, Turkish and German cultural contexts. Their research showed how linguistic choices and pronoun usage transmit gender and cultural stereotypes that impact how society thinks about women's roles. This study shows how conventional discourse both conveys and reproduces ideological assumptions about gender even though it has nothing to do with Roy's story. The conceptual connection is significant as it illustrates how CDA can be utilized to point out fundamental gendered ideas throughout a variety of societal and literary ideas

2.4.2 Comparative and Interdisciplinary Designs:

Lertlaksanaporn (2020) dismissed Arundhati Roy's the ministry of utmost happiness for its representation of transgender identity in contrast to Trace Peterson's poem After Before and After. The study employed the theory of schizoanalysis of Deleuze and Guattari to investigate the notion of deterritorialization and how transgender community operates in diverse society through discursive actions, wish through transversal relationships. The paper acknowledged Anjum as a significant character in Roy's novel but claimed that her portrayal is somewhat generalized and has no sufficient depth in depicting transgender issues and success. Peterson's poem, in contrast was steadfast in conveying a more optimistic and freeing perspective of what it signifies to be hybridized moving rather to the story of self-determination and freedom from societal norms. This comparative approach contributes to the comprehension of Roy's research by placing it in a broader global discussion on gender nonconformity.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present research utilized a critical discourse analysis design and employs Fairclough's (1992, 1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The chosen literary text's linguistic and discursive portrayal of gender nonconformity could be thoroughly examined thanks to the qualitative method. A methodical framework for analyzing how gender identity is created, represented, and negotiated through textual elements, discursive practices, and larger

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social and cultural settings was offered by Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis model. This method also made it easier to investigate how language both reflects and perpetuates cultural norms, power dynamics, and ideological presumptions related to gender identity.

Analytical Framework

The novel was analyzed using Fairclough's (1992, 1995) three-dimensional model of CDA which defined discourse as both product and a process of social interaction. The analysis established in three dimensions:

1. Textual Analysis (Description) – this level included a close examination of linguistic features such as modality, transitivity, pronouns and evaluative adjectives to figure out how gender identities were established in the text.
2. Discursive Practice (Interpretation) – this dimension investigated the development and interpretation of discourse in the narrative, emphasizing on the role of linguistic and narrative choices in negotiating gender identities.
3. Social Practice (Explanation) – at this level literary and discourse based findings were connected to deeper societal, cultural and political concepts such as those associated with gender norms or even relationships and exclusion in postcolonial society.

Analysis:

Textual Analysis:

Gender Nonconformity:

Example: Anjum's self-description:

"I'm all of them, I'm Romi and Juli, I'm Laila and Majnu. And Mujna, why not? Who says my name is Anjum? I'm not Anjum, I'm Anjuman. I'm a mehfil, I'm a gathering. Of everybody and nobody, of everything and nothing."

Analysis:

This statement from Anjum indicates an awareness of identity as fluid rather than rigid in a fixed or binary gender identity. Romi and Juli, Laila and Majnu,' says Anjum, serves multiple roles at the same time demonstrating the fluid nature of identity and the rejection of fixed labels. "Anjuman" (a gathering) is a representation of diversity of identities rejection of the singular male or female gender identity. Here Anjum develops a queer identity that challenges the conventional norms of gender identity in society. This corresponds to Judith Butler's concept of performative gender where gender is not a natural characteristic but an aspect of performance. Anjum defines gender as a normative performance, one that is executed and displayed through actions and rather than being established by biology and social conventions by fulfilling different roles.

Example: Aftab's reaction to his body:

"His body had suddenly begun to wage war on him. He grew tall and muscular. And hairy."

Analysis:

This is an important event when Aftab's body begins to question his gender identity. The phrase "wage war on him" shows that gender change for Aftab is not simply a biological event but an intellectual and mental conflict. His body is changing and he feels alienated from it, particularly as he controls with the struggle of hair and the development of male-dominated physical characteristics. This points to the confusion between his designated gender and his own self of identity, pointing out the inner struggle frequently encountered by those who fail to conform to conventional gender norms.

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Example: Anjum's role in the **resistance** movement at Jantar Mantar:
"'We've come from there … from the other world.'"
Analysis:

Anjum's statement "We've come from there … from the other world," is a powerful metaphor for her role as both an outsider and an intruder to the prevailing society. She is contrary to the conventional gender system and the expression highlights her nonconformity. The other world is the marginalized space where gender nonconforming people Anjum are dismissed crossing various realms of opposition and denial. Anjum's identity is not merely a matter of gender flexibility but also of religious ideological resistance linking her identity to different ways of existence.

Example: Saddam Hussain's description of **Ishrat**:
"He squished her breast. She slapped his hand away. 'Don't. They cost a lot. I'm still paying my instalments."
Analysis:

Saddam and Ishrat's conversation indicates that gender roles in a relationship laden with both judgment and opposition. Ishrat's disapproval of saddam's touch suggests a layered power relationship in which she asserts power over her own body. Her reference to the expense of her breasts indicates to the exploitation of women's bodies often viewed as commodity in a materialistic sense. This demonstrates how gender nonconformity can be linked to financial abuse and stereotyping even in close relationships.

Example: The **Baby Seal's past** and memory:
"When the Baby Seal grew older, when she was (say) crowded around an ice-cream cart on a burning afternoon, one among a press of schoolgirls clamouring for an orange bar, might she get a sudden whiff of the heady scent of ripe Mahua that had infused the forest the day she was born?"
Analysis:

This passage illustrates gender nonconformity in the baby, seal's insufficient connection to the usual gender-specific role of a school-girl. While schoolgirls are usually seen as emblems of young innocence, childhood and feminine roles in a conventional, heterogeneous society the baby seal does not fully adhere to this role. The difference between her current identity and her past role in a forest environment, where she grew up by distinct beliefs is apparent in her gender nonconformity. The imagery of Mahua tree symbolizes for roots being taken off and this refers to her internal struggle about her identity.

Example: Tilo's refusal to conform to societal expectations:
"'I'm not marrying anybody. I want to be free to die irresponsibly, without notice and for no reason.'"
Analysis:

Tilo's disapproval of marriage as a manifestation of traditional gender identity is an explicit form of rebellion against the patriarchal standards which defines women's life by means of marriage. In many societies women are required to marry and to fulfill duties that are established in relation to man. Tilo's rejection to conform gender nonconformity, her right to express herself outside of family challenges the patriarchal view of womanhood.

Example : Miss Jebeen's identity and insistence on being called **Miss**:
"Ever since she was old enough to insist, she had insisted on being called Miss Jebeen. It was the only name she would answer to."

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Analysis:

Miss Jebeen's emphasis on being known as Miss is her way of challenging conventional gender roles. In a society where woman are usually defined by their family surnames the title of "Miss" puts her into a role of self-identification. This is an obvious instance of gender nonconformity as it violates the typical gender conventions that typically involve woman being tied to their father's name or being called as Mrs.

Example: Tilo's connection with the poem:

"When I die, I want this to be my epitaph."

Analysis:

Tilo's connection with the poem composed by Dr. Azad Bhartiya and her wish for it to be her memorial is a symbol of her refusal to adjust to the conventional gendered expectations of her mortality and legacy. Women are frequently anticipated to leave behind an inheritance via conventional signs such as marriages, families and reproduction. Yet, by choosing a monument that connects her identity to revolt and rebellion, Tilo show her deviation to these conventional markers. The poem itself resonates with the themes of demise, especially the struggle against social norms and solidifies Tilo's ambition to be recognized for her resistance rather than her apathy as woman.

Discursive Practice (Social Context & Power Dynamics):

Discourse of Marginalization:

Example: Anjum's experience with societal cruelty:

"She didn't turn to see which small boy had thrown a stone at her, didn't crane her neck to read the insults scratched into her bark."

Analysis:

Anjum is continuously excluded due to her gender nonconformity. The insults directed at her are linguistic markers of marginalization, strengthening social disapproval of those who do not conform to the binary gender roles. But Anjum's silence her unwillingness to respond to the insults is a powerful act of marginalization. She reclaims her power and determination by not being distracted. The tree metaphor is that of development, stability and protection form external violence. This response is an instance of marginalized individuals, resisting not through struggle, but refraining from engaging in the judgment and violence that society imposes on them.

Example: The **teasing** at Aftab's school:

"He's a She. He's not a He or a She. He's a He and a She. She-He, He-She Hee! Hee! Hee!"

Analysis:

This mocking reveals how Aftab is excluded and disregarded by his classmates. He is marginalized because he fails to fit into conventional gender norms. The ridicule laughs and the usage of such terms as "She-He" demonstrates how society views those who challenge the binary gender norm. This act of verbal attack refers to the violence that gender nonconforming people endure and this is not only physical but verbal. This mock is a response to the societal custom to classify individuals into male and female class with little room for flexibility.

Example: The **evictions** and **displacement** of poor people in the city:

"Surplus people were banned."

Analysis:

The term "surplus people" devalues the poor making them disregarded in a society that priorities prosperity over the welfare of its most disadvantaged communities. In the setting of gender nonconformity such language, illustrates how gender nonconforming people are

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frequently rendered irrelevant or unnoticed in a society's discourse. Such communities are methodologically erased, the outcome of gender stereotypes that connect esteem to conformity.

Example: Dr. Bhartiya's hunger strike and his marginal position:

"I am here on the footpath… all these people from every corner of India come here with their dreams and demands. There is nobody to listen."

Analysis:

Dr. Bhartiya's position on the footpath is a symbol of his exclusion in the societal and political framework. The footpath is a place of exclusion where traditional society pulls away those with non-traditional identities including Dr. Bhartiya. His remarks about fantasies and expectations highlight the lack of awareness of excluded people looking for acknowledgement but ignored by those in power. This encourages the concept of gender nonconformity as a form of political advocacy in which marginalized people struggle for their freedom to exist independent of social conventions.

Example: The description of the **poor neighborhood**:

"The city grew less sure of itself. The slow chase threaded past two hospitals so full of sickness that patients and their families had spilled out and were camped on the roads."

Analysis:

This passage is a representation of the exclusion of the poor and ill that are not provided by adequate medical care. The image of hospitals filled with sick patients stands out dramatically with the portrayal of the wealthy city emphasizing the unequal distribution of assets. The streets are an area of resistance and people like gender discordant figures are forced to the limit.

Example: The Baby Seal's lost connection to her past

"Had her past been erased forever?"

Analysis:

This rhetorical inquiry is a representation of a Baby's seal loss self-identity and dislocation. The denial of her past corresponds to the exclusion of gender nonconforming people who are frequently required to give up their past identity in order to adapt to culturally accepted classifications. This is not just the elimination of memory but the loss of autonomy, liberty and resilience. The social frameworks that gender nonconforming people encounter might force them disregard and reject aspects of their trues elves just to endure or to avoid aggressive opposition.

Example 1: **Miss Jebeen's death and burial**:

"She was buried right next to her mother, Begum Arifa Yeswi. Mother and daughter died by the same bullet. It entered Miss Jebeen's head through her left temple and came to rest in her mother's heart."

Analysis:

Miss Jebeen's awful death illustrates the way women are excluded in a society where the brutality of war affects the civilian more than anyone, especially gender nonconforming women like Miss Jebeen. The reality that she and her mother passed away together, killed by the same sniper, is symbolic of the way women lives are frequently caught in the midst of societal conflicts and of how their corpses are utilized as collateral harm. Miss jebeen's death further highlights the intersectional nature of gender and assault, in which women are not only survivors of gender-based assault, but also target of broader political struggles.

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Example: The **graveyard as a site of refuge**:
"The graveyard...had turned into a zoo – a Noah's Ark of injured animals."
Analysis:

The graveyard is thus an excluded place which is restored and transformed by its residents. It is portrayed as a heaven for the excluded people of the normative society like the gender nonconforming characters. The zoo metaphor suggests that these people are like the animals, living beyond the conventional structures and frameworks of power. The graveyard becomes a place where excluded identities whether related to gender, class, caste can live freely. But this also implies that they are socially excluded as they have no other places to go and they have to build their own world.

Example: **Anjum's act of prayer** and **redistribution of flowers**:
"She bent down and picked up one of Roshan Lal's flowers from Begum Renata Mumtaz Madam's grave and put it on Comrade Maase's grave."
Analysis:

The shifting of flowers from one grave to another by Anjum is a symbol for exclusion. In numerous cultures, gender nonconforming people like Anjum are excluded or erased from the prevailing narrative. However, in this small yet significant act, Anjum asserts her existence and opposition to the silence that is imposed upon gender nonconforming people. The flowers are emblems of survival and mourning but in Anjum's gestures they also become symbols of excluded voices that are often ignored. Her act of reorganization is an act of repression, as she is recovering and redefining herself in a world that tries to marginalize her.

Socio-Cultural Practice
Ideological Construction of Gender:
Example: Anjum's declaration on her identity:
"I'm all of them, I'm Romi and Juli, and I'm Laila and Majnu. And Mujna, why not?"
Analysis:

Anjum's acceptance of multiple identities challenges the ideological presumptions of gender norms a framework on which society relies to categorize people. She rejects categories embedding both Laila (traditionally female) and Majnu (traditionally male). This subversion confronts the societal construction of identity and gender, where people are restricted by the limiting sexist roles of male and female. Anjum's statement of "Mujna" additionally shows that gender identity can be subjective and unbiased. She disregards the concept of claiming to be the identity that corresponds to the cultural expectations.

Example: The interaction between Aftab and **Nimmo Gorakhpuri**:
"'D'you know why God made Hijras? It was an experiment. He decided to create something, a living creature that is incapable of happiness. So he made us.'"
Analysis:

Nimmo's statement is a sign of political construction of Hijras in South Asian society. Hijras are frequently viewed on the edge of society and gender, neither man nor woman. Nimmo accepts this view assuming herself to be member of environment build by God to endure suffering. Her words highlight the excluded and depressing persona given to the Hijra. This is the Khwabgah!" But in reality, Aftab dismisses this view later on when he says, "This is the Khwabgah!" he fails to embrace a lost identity.

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Example: Anjum's interaction with the **Bhopalis**:
"Anjum sent her envoy – His Excellency, Plenipotentiary, Saddam Hussain – from group to group to get a quick low-down on where they were from, what their protest was about and what their demands were."
Analysis:

Anjum's participation in the protests illustrates her multifaceted identity as she is not only gender queer but also an activist who actively participates in social justice. She is a negotiator and this highlights the intersectional identity of her identity, where gender and political overlap. The Jantar Mantar protests show the ways in which gender nonconforming individuals like Anjum may oppose established power by getting involved in political and social movements.
Example: Dr. Bhartiya's questioning of his caste and identity:
"What caste am I? That is your question? With such a huge political agenda as mine, you tell me, what caste should I be? What caste were Jesus and Gautam Buddh? What caste was Marx?"
Analysis:

Dr. Bhartiya's denial to embrace caste is a symbol of resistance against the traditional social classifications that typically serve to dictate not only social status but also gender roles. He references Jesus, Buddha and Marx to question the idea that a person's social status determines their value or sense of self. By aligning with such radical characters, Dr. Bhartiya challenges not only the discrimination of caste but also the gendered prejudice that is ingrained in such systems.
Example: The woman's contemplation on the baby:
"She could not remember when last she had been this happy. Not because the baby was hers, but because it wasn't."
Analysis: Example: The Baby Seal's struggle with her past:
"Might she get a sudden whiff of the heady scent of ripe Mahua that had infused the forest the day she was born?"
Analysis:

The Mahua tree is deeply liked to concepts of nature, movement and liberty all of which challenge fixed and contradictory gender norms. The baby's seal refusal to sense the Mahua tree is a metaphor of how gender incompatible people often cut from their natural environment. The Mahua tree can symbolize the start of gender fluidity, where gender roles were not completely established in binary concepts but were viewed as fluid.
Example: The **"cultural" expectations** placed on Tilo by Naga's family:
"Naga's mother, who lived alone on the ground floor of the big house (his father, Ambassador Shivashankar Hariharan, had died), advised him to let Tilo go. 'She won't be able to manage on her own, she'll beg you to take her back.'"
Analysis:

It is obvious here that Tilo is being pushed into a traditional view of gender roles as spouse and friend. Naga's mother's assertion that Tilo will not have the ability to take care of herself can be taken as the general view of woman as being reliant on men in patriarchal cultures. This is a sign of the political conception of woman as requiring men's protection. Tilo's opposition to this mentality in her freedom demonstrates her gender nonconformity and rejection of traditional gender roles enforced on women.

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Example: The treatment of women in the context of war:
"Women would have to learn to dress appropriately."
Analysis:

The statement is symbolic of the male-dominated enforcement gendered fashion standards and how these views are established within radical movements. The strict, gendered norms of armed groups correspond to a shift towards stricter definitions of freedom with patriarchal power controlling women's freedom over their appearances and ways of expressing themselves. The demand for women to be dressed properly is an evidence of gender bias within the extremist movement, a movement that still continues to subjugate women in its struggle for freedom by instructing them how to appear in society.

Example: The notion of the **"People's Pool"**:
"Anjum mooted the idea that Jannat Guest House should have a swimming pool. 'Why not?' she said. 'Why should only rich people have swimming pools? Why not us?'"
Analysis:

The 'People's Pool' is an intellectual perspective that does not consist of class-based limitations and social systems. By questioning why common swimming pools and other luxurious places should be limited only to rich, Anjum represents a broader philosophy of equality. This swimming pool is turned into a symbol of how excluded identities may seize their power back and assert their entitlement to their privileges that are typically reserved for rich. Anjum's idea is an opposition to class boundaries and an expression of her faith in the capacity of marginalized groups to create spaces of respect.This moment of postponement over the baby corresponds to the political establishment of womanhood and motherhood.

Example: **Tilo's desire to be remembered through poetry**:
"When I die, I want this to be my epitaph."
Analysis:

Tilo's ambition to be recalled through humorous poetry and her unusual epitaph challenge conventional gender norms of how women should be honored. Women's histories are frequently constructed on the framework of family and domestic status, but Tilo challenges such discourses by choosing a history of rebellion and struggle. This emphasizes her gender nonconformity because she wants to recognize not because of her execution of gender roles but for her political and personal rebellion.

Discussion:

This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis Fairclough (1992, 1995) three-dimensional framework to examine how gender identity, marginalization, and power are discursively constructed in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness. Rather than treating language as a representational tool, the analysis conceptualizes discourse as a constitutive mechanism through which ideological meanings are produced, stabilized, and contested. The discussion integrates corpus-assisted quantitative evidence with qualitative CDA interpretation and situates findings within gender performativity theory (Butler) and critical discourse theory (Fairclough), thereby foregrounding the ideological production of gendered subjectivities.

Discursive Construction of Gender Identity

From a critical perspective, this performativity is not unrestricted; it is constrained by dominant ideological formations that determine the legitimacy of identity categories. The instability observed in naming practices and identity attribution indicates that discourse operates

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simultaneously as a site of subject formation and ideological regulation, where only certain identity configurations achieve discursive intelligibility.

Socio-Cultural Semiotics of Gender

Gender is further embedded within broader socio-cultural semiotic systems encompassing caste, religion, and nationalism. These structures function as discursive regimes that regulate identity intelligibility and define normative subject positions. However, the text simultaneously exposes the instability of these regimes by foregrounding hybridized identities that exceed categorical classification. Cultural scripts, ritualized practices, and symbolic narratives are revealed as ideological technologies that produce gendered meaning rather than reflect pre-existing identity truths.

Theoretical Positioning and Scholarly Contribution

While consistent with Butler's theory of performativity, this study extends existing scholarship by demonstrating that performativity is not merely iterative but structurally constrained by ideological discourse systems. Unlike prior CDA studies that emphasize representation, this analysis foregrounds the generative capacity of discourse in producing ontological effects. Accordingly, the study contributes to critical discourse scholarship by integrating corpus-assisted linguistic evidence with ideological critique, thereby advancing a more empirically grounded model of discursive identity construction in literary contexts.

Theoretical Synthesis of Identity Formation

Identity construction in the novel is best understood as a dynamic process of discursive negotiation situated at the intersection of ideology, language, and social structure. Gender identity is neither fixed nor purely performative in an unrestricted sense; rather, it is regulated through ideological constraints that delimit the range of intelligible subject positions. This dynamic produces a continuous tension between discursive stabilization and destabilization, resulting in an ongoing reconfiguration of gendered subjectivity.

Conclusion:

Gender identity in the novel is represented as fluid, shifting, and context-dependent rather than fixed or stable. Characters such as Anjum and Tilo are associated with multiple identity positions that change across different narrative contexts through naming practices, descriptive variation, and role reconfiguration. The analysis also reveals consistent patterns of marginalization, where gender nonconforming identities are positioned in socially and spatially peripheral environments such as excluded or liminal spaces. These representations suggest a systematic pattern of othering within the narrative structure. Furthermore, the findings show that power relations are embedded within cultural, religious, and institutional frameworks that influence how identities are named, classified, and represented in the text. The data also highlights the presence of alternative spaces within the narrative where identity is reconstructed outside dominant social norms, indicating variation in how power is distributed and negotiated through discourse. Overall, the qualitative findings demonstrate that gender identity in the novel is constructed through dynamic and context-dependent linguistic and narrative processes. Identity is consistently represented as fluid rather than fixed, and is shaped through the interaction of discourse, marginalization, and socio-cultural influences. While the findings are significant in highlighting the constructed nature of identity and exclusion, the interpretation of qualitative data remains inherently subjective, and alternative readings are possible. Additionally, although the analysis captures broad discursive patterns, some micro-contextual variations may not be fully represented.

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