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Abstract: *Beauty in the world of art is one of the most celebrated ideas. In this paper, Arundhati Roy's novel The Ministry of Utmost Happiness is analyzed with reference to one of its major character, Anjum, an ugly transgender. Adopting the theoretical framework of Halberstam (2005) this paper argues that the physical appearance, either ugly or beautiful, shapes the attitudes of people towards each other. People, who are considered ugly according to social standards, suffer harassment and abuse at various stages of their life in different ways. Therefore, this paper contends the popular social perception that equates the absence of harmony and beauty in the appearance of an individual with the absence of the humane soul and morality of character.*

Key Words:

Beauty, Transgender, Morality, Narrative Analysis, Ugliness, Abuse, Stereotype

On Being Ugly: An Analysis of Arundhati Roy's Beauty Norms in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

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Introduction

The concept of beauty, despite all the complexities and ambiguities is widely understood and studied. The beautiful and the attractive hold upper ground in all aspects of life especially in the world of art, culture, media and Literature. Beauty in these fields is often termed as 'aesthetic appeal' of the work (Kyo, 1953; Elert, 1979; Goldman & Waymer, 2014). Trend of beauty and beautiful protagonists in works of art and fiction is quite common throughout the history of literature. Due to these trends of beauty in literature and media many researchers explored the effects of these beauty standards set by media and art on the lives of common people specially women (Kyo, 1953; Saluja & Karan, 2016; Kellner, 1995). The representation of beauty, beautiful protagonists and leading characters is quite common in world literatures and not only in particular culture or society.

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The standards of beauty have negative influences on people identified as ugly; ugliness as a more complex subject has been explored by a few researchers in case of its aesthetics (Kuplen, 2013). The ‘paradox’ of ugliness and aesthetics when studied concluded that “ugly is the lack of harmony, organization and melody” (Kuplen, 2013, p.278). The formula of ugliness is used by a few novelists and fiction writers to bring in ‘authenticity and originality’ however the characteristics of such literature are quite similar and so are their purposes.

The ugly characters are often portrayed as the villains, not only in literature but other forms of art such as Movies, TV shows and therefore we witness on the screens a rush of beautiful faces and attractive features when it comes to protagonists or “leading roles” (Rickman, 2003; Lorand, 2000). Due to these media portrayals of protagonists, ugly characters and ugliness is often associated with moral corruption or immorality. The negative character traits of human beings are often perceived to be originating from the unsymmetrical appearance and physical imbalance of their features.

This paper examines the stereotypical portrayal of an ugly character, a transgender (hijra) named Anjum in Arundhiti Roy’s latest sensation “The Ministry of Utmost happiness”. Through physical appearance and ugly portrayal of her protagonist Roy (2017) tends to challenge the social standard of morality, often associated with physical beauty. Even though, the character of Anjum is portrayed as a stereotyped Hijra, the analysis of her personality traits and her gestures would provide an insight to her character and moral standards. The analysis would further help drawing conclusion that physical beauty cannot guarantee a wonderful soul and similarly ugliness of face does not necessarily entail the presence of ugly soul and character.

Literature Review

Transgender is a term which is defined by many theorists in genre of gender studies despite all the complexity and fluidity it contains. It is not possible to define transgender in a compact definition of few words and terms as this term “has been used in so many different contexts and has acquired so many nuanced implications” that it is quite difficult to make a single definition meaningful for all (Sheridan, 2009, p. 1). Despite all the research and advancement in field of gender studies there are still the “layers of mystery that surround the phenomenon” (Sheridan, 2009, p.1) the mystery which surrounds this phenomenon is because of the fact that “word transgender is an umbrella term that covers a wide variety of ideas and manifestations, all relating to gender and its remarkable potential for unique personal expression” (Sheridan, 2009, p.1). Similarly, Stryker & Whittle (2006) in their book define term ‘Transgender’ in context of its ‘limitations and political agendas’. In their argument regarding the definition of term ‘transgender’

they claim that gender is more than a theory, “it is lived, embodied, experienced, performed and encountered” therefore its complexity is established.

As transgender is rather a complex phenomenon to be defined in few words (Sheridan, 2009; Stryker & Whittle, 2006), Transgender Studies is an academic field that deals with the study of aspects of human sexual diversity and subjective gender identity. Whether it is the medical (Ekins & King, 1996) or socio cultural and political aspect (Hines, 2007; Hines & Sanger, 2010) of ‘transgender studies’ there has always been a lot of confusion regarding the true meaning of transgender/trans sexual. One of the reasons for this confusion is the fluidity of gender and inclusion of physically intersexual in the field of study (Ekins & King, 1996; Cornwell, 1999). Rather than all its complications and confusions transgender is one of an important area in the field of gender studies explored through various lenses by many theoretical as well as medical perspectives (Kenagy, 2005; Kessler & McKenna, 2006; Lev, 2004; Freund, Steiner & Chan, 1982)

Hill (2002; 2005) worked on the socio-cultural behavior of people regarding sexual orientation and transgender. Along with the impact of culture on construction of gender, the daily abuse and violence faced by transgenders is the main argument of Hill’s (2002) research. This research titled ‘genderism, transphobia and gender bashing’ dealt with the cases of violence and severe forms of physical and emotional abuse faced by trans-people based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. In similar studies Lawrence (1999) and Lombardi et.al (2001) identified and analyzed various hate and bias crimes against transgenders to understand their oppressions and sufferings. These studies like many others (Moran & Sharpe, 2001; Moran & Sharpe, 2004; Nelson & Krieger, 1997) highlighted the lower upstanding, inferior position and lack of opportunities for transgenders. The discrimination and hate, often in the form of physical and psychological abuse is again result of their identification as transgenders.

Even though many researchers have researched in the field of ‘transgender studies’ (Whittle, 2002; Brooks, 1998; Blight, 2000) most of the discussion regarding their life and experiences is found in social sciences and psychology. Halberstam (2005) in her book titled *In Queer Time and Place* discussed in detail the ‘Representation of Transgender bodies in Contemporary Arts’. The representation of transgender’s in art and literature is one of the most important aspect as there is need for contextual study of these characters, which often suffer oppression from society due to their stereotypic representation and wrong perceptions of people around them.

In her book Halberstam (2005) has theorized the physical appearance of transgenders, their socio-cultural identity and impact of their identity on their lives. Variables of ‘gaze’ and ‘visual materials’ have been used by her to illustrate the impact of people’s perceptions on the lives of transgenders. The stereotypes associated with transgender effect the way we look at these people and thus shape

our judgements on their characters, life styles and moral standings. A very comprehensive study by Gazzola & Morrison (2014) established through its findings that the “negative cultural stereotypes about transgenders also evidenced greater levels of trans prejudice” (p.76). Which then becomes the cause of oppression, violence and hate crimes.

As hate crimes and prejudice is studied by many researchers of social sciences, criminal justice and psychologists (Meyerowitz, 2002; Green, 2000; Benjamin, 1954) there is a need for research based on the representation of transgenders in literature and art. The following study will not only discuss stereotypic image of Transgenders and its representation in literature but also try to establish the moral characteristics portrayed by the fiction writer Arundhati Roy. This paper will conclude that the morality of transgenders cannot and should not be judged only by their physical appearance, as ugliness which they bring is only physical and do not necessarily resides inside their souls. Identification and analysis of moral characteristics of Transgender character ‘Anjum’ in the selected fiction *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is the main objective of this paper. Research

Research Questions

1. How does the physical ugliness effect the circumstances of Anjum in Roy’s Fiction *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*?
2. What are the moral characteristics of Anjum, the Transgender protagonist in Roy’s Fiction?

Methodology

The theoretical framework for this paper has been derived from Halberstam (2005). In her book *In a Queer Time and Place* she talks in detail about Transgender Bodies and Subcultural lives. However, the chapter which is developed into the framework for this paper is “Technotopias: Representing Transgender Bodies in Contemporary Art”. The reason for this selection is its relevance to the objectives of the paper and direct linkage to the concerned issues. This framework of study is applied, and analysis is supported by this theoretical framework.

For a methodological and analytical framework, the model of narrative analysis (Herman & Vervaeck, 2005) has been adopted. Narrative analysis is one of the well-established method of textual analysis specifically in literary genre. The five elements of narrative i.e. Events, Actants, Setting, Characterization and Focalization are studied in relation to each other for the analysis of text. Using these methodologies, the research questions are answered.

Textual Analysis

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, an unconventional piece of fiction by Arundhati Roy unfolds with an unconventional setting, i.e. a graveyard, the place mostly stand for the dead is habitat of the major character of this novel, Anjum. Anjum is introduced in the first few lines of the novel as she “lived in a graveyard like a tree” (Roy, 2017: p. 1). The metaphor of ‘Tree’ is used to describe Anjum as she was the one who “endured the months of casual cruelty like the tree would” the term ‘Casual cruelty’ used by Roy suggests the hard life experiences and lifelong sufferings of the main character introduced in the first few paragraphs of the text. The cruelty which she was exposed to be ‘casual’ as it has been part of her life for a long time and she must have grown used to of the fact that she was fated to suffer abominably. After years of resistance she “didn’t turn to see which small boy had thrown a stone at her and didn’t crane her neck to read the insults scratched into her bark” (Roy, 2017: p. 1).

Even though these forms of insults and physical hurt caused to her by people is termed as ‘casual cruelty’ the readers are introduced to several other forms of cruelty Anjum must face and go through with life everyday which might be impossible to endure for any human being. Other than the physical hurt caused by others, and the insults thrown at her casually by random people she was also called names by passing people. People called her a “clown without circus, queen without palace” as she did not fit in her surroundings. Anjum unlike others was not able to fulfill the requirements of normality, she had an appearance which seemed to remind people of a ‘clown’, a laughing stock for people something they enjoyed looking at and feel disgusted. However, Anjum’s reaction to these insults represents her peaceful nature, “she let the hurt blow through her branches like a breeze and used the music of her rustling leaves as balm to ease the pain” (Roy, 2017: p. 1). The way she handles her pain and absorbs all the hurt inflicted upon her by people she does not have any introduction with speaks about her passiveness and non-aggressive character.

While the narrative unfolds when Anjum is a grown woman and lives in a graveyard, the next chapter takes us to the very beginning of her story, the life she was supposed to have only if she could have been ‘normal’. In the next chapter another interesting fact is revealed regarding the truth behind Anjum’s Miseries, as she once used to be ‘Aftab’, a name which was given to ‘him’ by her parents, when she was born. It was a boy finally “after three girls. They were waiting for their Aftab for six years” (Roy, 2017: p. 1).

Everything about the new born baby was normal until his mother discovered the horrible truth, a truth which had her terrified, she was terrified on her discovery. Roy deliberately asks a question from her readers “is it possible for a mother to be terrified of her own baby?” (2017, p.1). Mothers, which are assumed to be in love with the idea of their child can never be believed to be afraid of their own new

born child, but Anjum's mother was when she found the ugly truth. The truth of Aftab's sexuality shook his mother and on finding out that the baby she is responsible to bring in this world is a transgender she "recoiled from what she had created" (Roy, 2017, p. 2). It was horrible for her to think that she had created a monster, an ugly being which in no way can have a good life. She even decided to "kill herself and her child", the ugliness that child brought in this world could not have tolerated by the people in any way, killing such an ugly being is rather better as compared to raising him/her as nothing but shame and ridicule could find its way to the parents of such an ugly being.

Rather than the forced struggle of Aftab's parents she could not become a male, his sexuality was a hurdle his parents could not overcome. He wanted to be 'Bombay Silk', the "tall, slim hipped woman wearing bright lipstick, gold high heels and a shiny green satin salwar kamiz" (Roy, 2017, p. 18). The ugliness others found when they saw Aftab was the reason he felt attracted towards Bombay silk, he did not only admire her but wanted to become her. He also wanted to cover up his ugliness, the most prominent thing in her being with the glittering dresses and shiny shoes, he wanted to apply that make up, so he could hide the ugliness his face offered, which offended his fellows and compelled them to call him names and abuse him. The woman in green dress seemed to be above all those who mocked him and called him a "he-she".

A young innocent boy, Aftab did not know what was so different about him, what kind of ugliness he offered to his fellows which seemed to offend his fellows. The physical imbalance excluded him from all kinds of circles, and he knew he never did and never will belong in the world around him. The lack of acceptance of his ugliness and mockery of his fellows pushed him towards the 'Khwabgah', the place where all the dejected lived. He knew it was the place he was destined to live in as he belonged there with all those rejected, bruised souls who tolerated the unusual stares and gazes of people passing by him. He sat there day and night as "it was the only place in his world where he felt the air made way for him" (Roy, 2017, p. 19). It was the place where all those beautiful souls hid their ugly beings, the place where he would be respected for what he was truly, a place where he can stop pretending and stop trying to fit in. his ugliness was accepted there without any judgement and he knew this was the only place which could give him the respect he never had or would get from the world he came from. The physical beauty of Bombay silk did attract Aftab but, it was the concept of getting rid of his ugliness which forced him to follow Bombay silk.

Other than the acceptance which he knew he will only get at Khwabgah, the ugliness of people residing inside Khwabgah attracted him. The ugliness he saw in himself and people reminded him about day and night was in abundance there. It was not the place for transgenders but for the dejected ones as the "most masculine person in the Khwabgah did menstruate" (Roy, 2017, p. 21). She was a woman, a woman named Bismillah. Roy describes Bismillah as the 'most masculine'

member of that small community which consisted of all the downcast people of society. Other than masculinity, which is one of the worst traits any woman can possess she “was a small, wiry, dark woman with a voice like a bus horn” (Roy, 2017, p. 21). The description of Bismillah again reflects on the ugliness which is associated with all these qualities, especially if found in a woman. Loud voice an unlikely quality any woman can possess, with dark complexion and short height. She was a specimen for one of the ugliest women if not the ugliest of all.

The standards of beauty in South Asia require women to be feminine and femininity is equivalent to delicacy, tenderness, fair complexion and soft voice which is so tender that it is hardly audible. The more delicate and invisible a woman is the more beautiful and delicate she is considered. However, Bismillah on the other hand was a loud, noisy, dark woman. Therefore, it is no surprise that she was thrown out of the house by her husband who blamed her for “not being able to bear child” (Roy, 2017, p. 21). She was an immoral woman who lived with ‘hijras’ and dealt with the costumers, the respectable men who came to visit those hijras in ‘Khwabgah’.

Other than a woman, who was too masculine to live in a world of men and women, there was a man “who liked to dress in women’s clothes”, he called himself Razia. A man lived in Khwabgah as an ugly sight of man dressed as a woman was not tolerable for the people from outside world, the world where one must be man or woman, good or bad, beautiful or ugly. Other than these few exceptions transgenders lived there, Nimmo Gorakhpuri, the youngest one among them is again described by Roy in a very interesting way. Nimmo was

“Short and chubby with thick, curly hair, stunning eyebrows curved like a pair of scimitars, and exceptionally thick eyelashes. She would have been beautiful but for her fast-growing facial hair that made the skin of her cheeks look blue under her makeup, even when she had shaved” (Roy, 2017, p. 22).

The description of Nimmo is quite interesting as she seems to be a beautiful person however she is not even close to what is called beautiful in this continent of the world. The physical traits of her body, her face all combined to present a lack of balance. ‘short and chubby’ two undesirable traits for both men and women were used to describe Nimmo, even though she had beautiful eye brows and eyelashes no one had time to notice those details as the blue skin of her face must have been considered no less than disgusting. If her hair were thick, the curls they possessed ruined the beauty and left her with a physique no more than of a joker.

Roy being polite described her physical appearance as if it was the combination of both beauty and ugliness whereas according to the beauty standards of people all around the world nothing less than perfect is beautiful. If someone has big nose or small eyes they are asked to fix it if they want to seem presentable however in Nimmo’s case a thing or two about her appearance were acceptable with a range of ugly traits which would subject her towards the cruelty of the world, ridicule and painful existence.

This was the reason that Nimmo, a young girl had her fair share of abuse and knew much about life and its ugliness as she was supposed to know at that age. She asked Aftab “do you know why God made Hijras?” which is a question for all the readers as well, that way God such a lover of beauty and aesthetics has created a creature so ugly that it disgusts all its fellow creatures. The answer she herself gave was heart wrecking and explained a thousand emotions of suffering and pain Nimmo had been through during her short life which she lived with the appearance she had. She explained her existence to Aftab as an experiment of God, an experiment conducted by God Himself as “He decided to create something, a living creature that is incapable of happiness” (Roy, 2017, p. 23). Therefore, according to Nimmo God created her and all her fellow beings, ugly and distasteful sights to witness so they must live in this never-ending misery for life time.

Beauty and ugliness being a natural element is either given to you by God as a blessing in other case you must suffer the circumstances of your ugliness which will not only be limited to your physical appearance but considered to be enveloped your soul too. The hatred and disgust Nimmo, Bismillah, Aftab and many more like them endured for their lifetime is the cause of that ugliness they bring with them wherever they go. The absence of physical appeal is a drastic disadvantage as they have been resented by all, kids throw stones at them, men mock them, call them names boys chase them and women turn their heads in disgust when they pass by them. Nimmo further explained that the reason they can never be happy is that “for us the price rise, and school admissions and beating husbands and cheating wives are all inside us. The riot is inside us. Indo-Pak is inside us. It will never settle down. It can’t” (Roy, 2017, p. 23).

This never-ending war within these socially rejected beings is not only the war of two genders they must fight through but the war between right and wrong, good and bad, moral and immoral, negativity and positivity, life and death. Each moment they must face someone, someone from the normal world, a pretty face, they must think weather they should hide their face or not. Everywhere they get mocked, or a naughty boy throws stone at them they must go through the painful decision of whether to stop or fight back. To accept the defeat which they were born with or to stop and try to win. This war of weather to choose the right path or to go for the wrong one which they are already accused of is the most difficult one. Other than this war of morality and immorality, good and bad there was the physical war which was the cause of this internal riot, the war of two sexes within one body. Aftab a young boy raised by parents as a male, lover of singing and admirer of beauty came to know what Nimmo once told him in its true sense. When he turned fourteen

“His body began to wage war on him. He grew tall and muscular. And hairy. In a panic he tried to remove the hair on his face and body with Berol- burn ointment that made dark patches on his skin. He then tried Anne French Crème hair remover that he purloined from his sisters” (Roy, 2017, p. 24).

The way he wanted to perceive his sexuality was altered and now he was stuck with his hairy body, a body he had to shave to appear the way he wanted. The shock of turning into a monster was reckoning for him as he further harmed himself to hide his ugly physique from everyone around him. His hairy face was not something he wanted to show to anybody including himself as he was already a laughing stock for his age fellows.

Even though this drastic change broke her spirit there were other more dreadful changes which effected not only her physical body but effected his mental state to a large extent. He lost his self-confidence and went deep into the rabbit hole when

“He developed an Adam’s apple that bobbed up and down. He longed to tear it out of his throat. Next came the unkindest betrayal of all- the thing he could do nothing about. His voice broke. A deep, powerful man’s voice appeared in place of his sweet, high voice” (Roy, 2017, p. 24).

The voice tore through and broke him hard, it split his soul into several pieces. Even though voice carried special place in life of Aftab, the sweetness of voice is one of the most important traits of beauty. Beautiful faces possess beautiful sounds, at first the comparison of Bismillah’s voice with that of a ‘bus horn’ was significant as voice is the way towards relationships and mean of human interaction. A beautiful voice adds as much to the overall personality and beauty of a person as a beautiful appearance and face. When a person opens mouth unbalanced or disoriented sound coming out of it ruins the whole impression that is the reason that it is considered unlikely for a beautiful person to have ugly, loud and torn voice as much as it is considered impossible for an ugly person to have a beautiful voice.

As voice generally has an important role to play in characterization of a person as an ugly or beautiful one, however for Aftab it had much more to do with his self-esteem, his confidence and his passion which he lost when his voice turned against him. All three of these were crushed as it was the only thing which he knew he was good at and defined him as a person. Singing had a major role in keeping him sane and after losing her rhythm he was not the person he used to be any more. He grew self-hatred due to this incident and

“[H]e was repelled by his voice and scared himself each time he spoke. He grew quiet and would only speak as a last resort, after he had run out of other options. He stopped singing. No amount of persuasion, not even from Ustad Hameed himself, could coax a song out of Aftab” (Roy, 2017, p. 24).

Due to the psychological impact of this change even after Aftab turned into Anjum she went through a series of surgeries and used a lot of medicines to regain her original voice, which was quite impossible. The voice which was gained after medical treatment “sounded like two voices quarreling with each other instead of one. It frightened other people, but it did not frighten its owner in the way her god given one had” (Roy, 2017, p. 29).

Another important character in Roy's narrative is that of Zainab, a three-year-old child Anjum found in front of a mosque. She was lost or might be deliberately left there to be found by a God fearing being who would take care of her. The physical description of Zainab, when Anjum found her gives way to the conclusion that she was not a beautiful child, even though most children are beautiful she is described as "a painfully thin mouse of a thing" (Roy, 2017, p. 30). She was not healthy, fair, and clean or smiling the qualities which make any three-year-old adorable were all absent in her. Her description as a mouse indicate towards her dusty appearance, her rustic complexion and physique. She was crying however when Anjum offered her finger "she glanced up briefly, grasped it and continued to cry without pause" (Roy, 2017, p. 30). This gesture of trust and respect which Anjum was never used to of brought the moment of completion and deep satisfaction.

The struggle Anjum was used to of while talking to someone was not needed to persuade little Zainab for trusting her, she trusted her despite all the ugliness her face offered and did not stare at her as if she was something unusual, an extra ordinary rather abnormal being. She treated her like a human being, a person who offered help when she needed it and she took it generously without any doubt. She did not look at her too long or tried to understand her, she trusted Anjum's inner goodness the morality she carried and love her heart held within an instant. While Zainab being a young dirty girl, with no physical appeal and complexion of a mouse was not given any attention by the crowd which surrounded her. She was presumed to be a beggar or a homeless girl as no one came to her rescue. Her ugly appearance could not present her as a child who belonged to a respectable, well off family, or even a child who had parents at all.

She was rejected as so was Anjum, she took her to be her own daughter and loved her more than she thought she could ever love someone. Not only Anjum but everyone else in the Khwabgah showered her with unconditional love, they all loved her and soon she was one of them, in the land of ugly and deserted ones. While Anjum was called 'Mummy' "other residents were called 'Apa', Ustad Kalsoom Bi and Bismillah became 'Badi Nani' and 'Choti Nani'. The mouse absorbed love like sand absorbed the sea" (Roy, 2017, p. 32). This simple event gives us insight to the morality and soft natured aspect of these beings which are mostly known for sexual corruption and immorality.

Another instance which adds to this claim is that of the 'flyover incident' which is narrated by Anjum herself. As Anjum recalls, the police broke up and all hijras were physically abused by the police officers when their drivers tried to drive away. Driver was beaten while all the transgenders were "dragged out of the matador, kicked on their backsides as though they were circus clowns and instructed to scam, to run all the way home if they did not want to be arrested for prostitution and obscenity" (Roy, 2017, p.35). Even though they were physically assaulted, called names and tormented Anjum recalls it as a "routine bit of

humiliation for hijras, nothing out of the ordinary” (Roy, 2017, p.35). Such an event which have tendency to disturb the psychological health of any living being called ‘ordinary’ is quite significant.

It further entails the fact that these people are used to of the fact that they can never deserve the respect which is the right of every human being. However, the way they were treated by the policemen indicate their lack of respect in the society. Other than the serious allegations of prostitution and obscenity they are treated as ‘circus clowns’, due to their physical attire and faces covered by makeup they are humiliated on regular basis. Being part of society, they are never accepted for who they are, not only their sexualities are targeted but their physical attires as well. As these hijras are perceived as dirty, ugly beings therefore they are treated as prostitutes, no one expects them to be honorable and possess self-respect as they were born as a mistake, thee ugly beings with ugly souls.

Another attempt to represent the beauty within ugliness is Zainab’s passion for animals. While everyone wants a healthy and beautiful pet, Zainab’s true passion was

“[T]o free all the half-bald, half-dead white chicken that were pressed into filthy cages and stacked on top of each other outside the butcher shops, to converse with every cat that flashed across her path and to take home every litter of stray puppies she found wallowing in the blood and offal flowing through the open drains” (Roy, 2017, p.36-37).

The list of these filthy animals goes on as goats, and even rats are the ones who are loved by Zainab. Zainab’s love and passion for these discarded beings is another hint towards society’s prejudice and brutality for ugly creatures. While beautiful cats, dogs, chicken are taken as pets no one considers the lives of filthy stray dogs and cats as important. Their deaths are as insignificant as their lives which we fear them and do not even want to see them around us. The lives of ugly people are no different specially the discarded ones like Zainab herself and her godmother Anjum. Their sufferings have no impact as their lives are as insignificant as those filthy creatures everyone want to revoke without an ounce of sympathy. Those animals deserve humiliation, misery and brutality because they were born with an ill fate.

Despite all the humiliations, wrong allegations, unkind words of people, hijras more than anyone have tendency to understand the sufferings of others and emotional suffering of bind repressed. As they are asked to hide their true selves from the society, and never to show their real ugly selves as they are unacceptable therefore they have strong feelings of empathy for others. When Anjum forced by her motherly instinct tried to save Zainab by changing her attire into that of a boy, the matter was not taken lightly. Ustad Kulsoom Bi, the manager of Khwabgah called a meeting where it was made clear that “forcing a little girl to live as a boy, is to incarcerate her, not liberate her. There is no question of that happening in Khwabgah. No question at all” (Roy, 2017, p.54). The deep understanding of

humanity and their empathy for a little kid establishes the fact that unlike the generalized perceptions, the ugly creatures are not devoid of humanity.

Even though these words of Ustad Kulsoom are the highlight of the whole speech made by her at this occasion this is not all. The hardships of being born in “a wrong body” are discussed by her in detail as she talked about her life as a Hijra. She claimed, “ordinary people of duniya- what did they know about what it takes to live the life of hijra?”. She included her long journey where she started from ‘begging for alms’ and built herself up “bit by bit, humiliation by humiliation” (Roy, 2017, p.53). Khwabgah was the place where “holy souls trapped in wrong bodies were liberated” (Roy, 2017, p.53). As Ustad Kulsoom addressed to the purpose of building a place where discarded souls lived she acknowledged the fact that people in the outside world have always misunderstood them and portrayed as villains of society.

Due to their “wrong bodies”, the undesirable appearances they were mistaken for the devils, as they “spread wicked rumors about Hijras kidnapping little boys and castrating them” (Roy, 2017, p.53). Such evil is associated with Hijras as their appearances give way to such perceptions and call for attention. Roy in her writing has not once called any of these characters ugly, hideous or unappealing, rather she has portrayed them beautifully. Her descriptions are poetic however the descriptions of characters when discussed in context of social standards for beauty and ugliness indicate the unpleasant appearances of Roy’s characters when judged from Socio cultural scales and standers of ugliness and beauty. The description of Anjum, as she moved in the graveyard is one of the examples where one can easily fill in the gaps and understand Anjum’s demonstration as an ugly creature who must be resented by all.

When Anjum stopped dying her hair “it grew dead white from the roots, and suddenly, halfway down her head, turned jet black, making her look, well... stripped” (Roy, 2017, p.63). Not only her hair but everything else was disproportionate just like her hair. The lack of balance and sense of incompleteness was there all over her existence. “Facial hair, which she once dreaded more than anything else, appeared on her chin and cheeks like a glimmer of frost. One of her front teeth, stained dark red from chewing paan, grew loose in her gums. When she spoke or smiled, which she did rarely, it moved up and down terrifyingly, like a harmonium key playing a tune of its own” (Roy, 2017, p.63-64).

Conclusions and Findings

Through critical study of Anjum’s character, as depicted by Roy in her novel ‘*The ministry of utmost happiness*, we can derive the conclusion that the physical appearance plays an important role in judgement of one’s character everywhere, including south Asia. Therefore, any form of disability or disbalance in personality may portray an individual as an evil and resentful creature. furthermore, this

ugliness of their physical appearance effect the lives of people by marginalizing them and creating and depriving them of their rightful opportunities to grow, learn and progress in their lives. Although the study was limited to one character and one novel, the character portrayal in Roy's narrative is the representation of an ugly reality of the world we live in, where good looks are preferred over moral characteristics and nobility of character. Lastly, the stereotypes regarding immorality of ugly people proves to be irrelevant in a few cases physical appearance seems not be the tool for measurement of moral characteristics of human beings. Ugliness surely makes life tough, but it depends on individuals to make the best out of their circumstances and choose how they want their life to turn out.

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