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Inclusivity and Allyship in South Asian Fiction: A Transgender Study of Transmisia

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Abstract

This study examines health rights, social acceptance, and the construction of transgender identities through the lens of contemporary South Asian literature. Using Frey Lawrence R's textual analysis, it looks at transgender peoples' narratives in their relationships with cisgender characters in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, Narcopolis, and This House of Clay and Water, which represent. These works highlight the underrepresented transgender struggles in their narratives. The growing cancellations of transgender rights make the discourse around these lives important to explore in contemporary fiction, especially surrounding medical intervention and social exclusion. This study engages in this discourse by examining the representation of forced medical intervention and surgical procedures, that often take place without consent. This is linked to the scaffolding of health rights and health policy. The work highlights the need for urgent policy reform to build national solidarity, cooperation, and inclusivity for transgender people across South Asia. South Asian fiction practices as a savvy way to promote social awareness and social change. The novels demonstrated that gender discrimination and positivity coexist, and advocate for the possibility of a more just and humane society. Finally, this research reinforces the power of literature to cultivate empathy, work against prejudice, and ignite advocacy.

Keywords: Transgender Health, Social Acceptance, Transgender Struggles, Marginalization, Education Rights & Policy Implication.

Introduction

In recent years, transgender representation in South Asian fiction has found a home and blossomed. This is a phenomenon that broadly mirrors the large-scale social changes we have witnessed in the turn toward diversity, integration, and tolerance (Hossain, 2017). As people's lives change, literature has been able to record the transition of transgender identities. It is also a powerful tool to draw attention and praise for transgender individuals (Israel, 1997). *Inclusivity and allyship, in South Asian Fiction: A Transgender Study of Transmissia* is mainly concerned with this respect: How does contemporary South Asian literature represent heterosexual people, and how do those representations help to hide the general conditions under which they come about (Khan, 2019).

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However, many transgender people in South Asia find that their health issues are compounded. The background of social stigma and discrimination makes every problem more difficult to solve (Akram, Munir & Baig, 2023). Combined with this, they are troubled by alcohol and other substance abuse, the malaise in general government provision for mental health problems (Tan et al., 2022). Such a situation, in which both mental illnesses need different degrees of medical treatment, further entrenches their plight: the right treatment is always difficult to find (Schwenke, 2018). The complex nature of transgender identities often leads many individuals to unknowingly live parallel lives, grappling with challenges that remain hidden even to themselves (Winter, 2009).

Like mental health problems, the health-related treatments that transgender individuals need are often beyond reach (Eyssel et al., 2017). When they attempt to approach gender-confirming therapy fast custom healthcare (for example, hormone therapy and surgery) obstacle after obstacle presents itself (Moagi et al., 2021). According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual DSM Fifth Edition to explore the normality of the psychiatric and medical perspective, this definition holds that biologically speaking normality is when gender identity is a match with transgender. Most fundamental to the approach is the concept of gender identity as a binary category (Mizock, 2017). A child's sex is assigned at birth and with the sex gender is assumed. As a result, society inhibits the chance for people to explore their gender for those who do not identify with their observed sex and what is expected of them in terms of gender roles by society, this would ultimately lead to problems like harassment or violence either internalized for fear of reprisal or externalized when under pressure.

A person being transgender is not due to a single cause, but genetics and prenatal hormones are integral parts. It is valid to say that upbringing in the first few years of life, then the teen years and adulthood are all contributing factors to how we became trans! Otherwise, being transgender is no more a matter of psychiatric illness than being tall or short (Sood, 2010). When faced with innumerable difficulties, south Asian Transgenders suffer, not only themselves but long producing a variety of problems for any given society, and thus all countries in this area (Rougier, 2024). Some common problems encountered throughout the region include more than just oppression and social alienation. For example, in India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh the transgender community is affected by social stigma and endures a long-term lack of basic social services like housing, employment, or healthcare. These serious systemic issues not only hinder the development and survival of transgender individuals themselves but also affect the socio-economic stability of these countries (Whittle et al., 2007).

Although many laws have been passed in recent years, for transgender people who were born transgender or with an intersex condition, life is still harsh in many South Asian countries today (Sood, 2010). This is why protection and broader policies are needed urgently across the entire South Asian region (Jain & Dasgupta 2021). In certain religious or cultural contexts –such as the Hijra community in India, for

example–transgender people are widely respected but have also suffered from a great deal of discrimination and every kind of social marginalization (Stryker 2013). This dual status can be observed in the literature, where transgender characters are both celebrated and removed at the same time, reflecting a widely held societal attitude that conflicts with non-normative gender (Namaste, 2011). By studying the portrayal of transgender characters in the literature of South Asia, this research project hopes to find out how books can be used as a channel for advocacy and change (Gallagher, 2001).

Theoretical Framework

To examine transgender representation in South Asian fiction, this study employs Frey's framework of textual analysis that interprets texts in their cultural and historical contexts (Frey & Oishi, 1995). It conducts a critical analysis of The Ministry of Utmost Happiness (Roy, 2017), Narcopolis (Thayil, 2012), and The House of Clay and Water (Mansab, 2017) in terms of representation of transgender identities, including silencing, marginalization, and forced medical interventions (Frey, 1994). Textual analysis, according to Frey & SunWolf (2005), is the interpretative aspect concerning language, structure, and cultural contexts through which any text can be articulated. In this study, rhetorical criticism has been added to evaluating how literary symbols and narrative contribute to an audience (Frey & Fontana, 1991) and thereby ways in which literature can advocate for inclusivity and other social movements (McKinnon et al., 2016). Although the old and the new rhetorical approaches were used, it examines how language and narratives create perceptions among An Interrogation into Transgender Representation in South Asian Fiction, the reader, and sloppy social attitudes. Further, Butler's transgender theory (1990) and Crenshaw's intersectionality theory (1989) serve as prisms through which gender is taken into account as a social construct while joining the multilayered oppression that transgender individuals face. The melding of various perspectives aids the study in showing how South Asian fiction interrogates and then varies social norms and, in turn, advocates for reforms in the areas of education, health care, and human rights.

Research Objectives

The Research objectives of the present study are to

- To find out the problems that transgender community comes across in society
- To analyze policies aimed at addressing hate crime

Research Questions

The research questions of the present study are to

- How does transmisia impact the social interactions of transgender communities as portrayed in South Asian fiction?

- How can policies be pivotal in addressing transmisia within transgender communities, as informed by the narrative of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Roy (2017)?

Research Gap

While narratives around transgender issues are growing in contemporary South Asian fiction, there is still a dearth of academic research in determining how such stories negotiate challenges concerning the specifics of the themes of transmisia and allyship in the struggle for medical and educational rights. While some novels provide rich insight into the various transgender experiences, this body of novels as a whole has yet to be critically examined for characters who are bravely charged with confronting transmisia and building up allyship on issues of medical and educational access. This considerably shuts the door on a nuanced understanding of transgender representation in South Asian literature and, correspondingly, foils discussions around inclusivity, allyship, and equity that are central to engendering social change within the medical and educational arenas.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research is to deconstruct transmisia to encourage cisgender individuals to become allies to stand in solidarity with the transgender community to combat discrimination and promote understanding. It often leads to advocacy for legal and policy reforms that protect the rights of transgender individuals. This intersectional perspective helps in understanding the unique challenges faced by individuals who navigate multiple marginalized identities. It provides insights into the legal and policy issues affecting transgender individuals, including issues related to civil rights, antidiscrimination laws, and legal recognition of gender identity.

Delimitations of the Study

The research has been delimited to this study by focusing on particular aspects of transgender experience, such as healthcare access, legal rights, mental health, or familial relationships, within the following works:

- *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy (Roy, 2017).

- *This House of Clay and Water* by Faiqa Mansab (Mansab, 2017).
- *Narcopolis* by Jeet Thayil (Thayil, 2012)

Review of the Literature

According to Alibudbud (2025), the changing nature of LGBTQ+ rights and health is focusing on the intersection of legislative regimes and access to healthcare. The researcher asserts that in addition to legal recognition, in terms of achieving real equality for LGBTQ+ individuals, inclusive healthcare policies and eliminating systemic discrimination are two key remaining challenges (Alibudbud, 2025). With gender and culture evolving in India, Lekha and Kumar (2024), provide an argument where literature can become a negotiation space for intersectionality. Their work demonstrates the varied conversations South Asian fiction initiates around the cultural othering of gender even as parts of it appear in opposition to other norms (Lekha & Kumar, 2024).

Blatt (2024) studies the dynamics of allied labor in transgender allyship and observes that while many allies are in advocacy, they still are often, though not always, performative rather than transformative. This critique is significant while analyzing South Asian fiction, where quite often, the cisgender characters assume the role of allies but do not realize the need to dismantle the systemic barriers fully. Blatt notes that these discriminatory practices yield not only because of open acts of discrimination but also through medical gatekeeping, legal exclusions, and cultural stigmatization. Such themes resonate with the experiences of transgender characters in fiction who, at times, are faced with necessity-based medical treatment or socially induced ostracism (Blatt, 2024). Stephenson (2024) elaborates on this by putting allyship within diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) frames. It is in this framework that he discourses on allyship and how in some opinions, rights and self-representation alone do not satisfactorily fulfill the functioning of an ally while moving on to utilize his arguments in the analysis of literary characters of the reality of trans experiences (Stephenson, 2024).

According to Nawaz & Safdar (2023), the assessment of advancing progress in the field of transgender rights in Pakistan and India is the phenomenon of multidimensionality legally, implemented in practice and social aspects (Unterhalter, 2020). Both states have implemented their fundamental pieces of legislature making the major part of a framework for protecting the rights and adopting other legal solutions: the Transgender Persons Act of 2018 and the 2019 Act of India, correspond to the Pakistani one (Qureshi, 2022). Thus, the study claims that several assessment tools may be detected to measure the positive outcomes of implemented laws, including the number of people in the transgender community who can successfully

receive governmental recognition and benefits covered by the law (Rappole, 2015). Bell et al. (2011) claim that the issued legal documents and involvement of transgender people in the workforce are the most important measures of public recognition of their status.

Neumann's (2023) work on The Ministry of Utmost Happiness furthers this discussion to show how South Asian fiction captures this struggle of systemic exclusion and resistance. Inclusiveness, one is left to conclude, is a contested domain of South Asian fiction. Multilingualism in the Ministry of Utmost Happiness eventually seems to emerge in Neumann's argument concerning how language enables and constricts transgender voices. In doing this, representation hardly gives a way out it seems since it either enforces structures of exclusion or gives space for subversion, wherein mythology can reclaim an identity (Neumann, 2023).

Akhtar & Bilour (2020) emphasizes the barriers faced by transgender people, such as discrimination, violence, and social exclusion, which refer to their inability to access healthcare facilities, education, and employment (Romanelli & Hudson, 2017). At the same time, the focus should be made on such types of intervention as a legal one, the policy, and social joint and ongoing initiatives that are important for increasing the visibility of a law-abiding lifestyle of transgender in Pakistani culture (Stoum, 2012).

Flores et al. (2018) pointed out the critical role socio-economic factors play inequity of education. For example, students from low-income families have extra burdens like a lack of access to technology, limited opportunities for educational materials, and extracurricular activities that can hamper their academic success (Mezzanotte, 2022). Introducing economic aid programs, by way of scholarships and grants, can help dissolve such barriers (Smith et al., 2021). Schools can give more support to those poorer students by providing night classes and informal schooling or in cooperation with the community people who will render help on a larger scale (Flores et al., 2018). Public awareness campaigns can help transform the attitudes of society toward transgender individuals. Support of public awareness campaigns should take up two things in particular: rolling back harmful stereotypes and welcoming other people who choose different gender identities (Ghosal, 2018). They speak of how the media, religious leaders, and educators are essential in inculcating a culture where everyone is given due respect. By attending to both the legal and social aspects of transgender rights (Khan et al., 2017), South Asian countries can head off prejudice and discrimination against these people, and move forward toward equality for all individuals (Gill-Peterson, 2018).

Akhtar & Bilour (2020) feature the obstacles faced by transgender people, like discrimination, violence, and social exclusion as greater obstacles to health care, education, or employment opportunities at any level whatsoever (McCann & Sharek, 2016). The research underscores that for transgender individuals in Pakistan to become acknowledged in society through laws and policies such interventions must

be taken (Farhat et al., 2020). It also points out the necessity for social initiatives that make this class of people more visible and accepted within our culture (Reddy, 2010). Naseem (2018) demonstrates how power dynamics affect the lives of transgender people due to their marginalization. They often can be shut out of resources, rights, and recognition by societal structures. Many of these societal structures are based on a history of gender discrimination and are institutionalized, and legal (Naseem, 2018).

The article titled Transgender Inclusive Sanitation: Insights from South Asia brings out the importance of having transgender persons as part of the sanitation programming (Pokhrel et al., 2014). It also presents case studies from India and Nepal that have shown that it is important to work with transgender persons as partners in such programs. Further, the article argues that the language of gender identity is not fixed and therefore urges that the policy should be flexible enough to embrace the diversity of the identities within the transgender (Knight, 2015).

Activists are championing reforms that afford transgender people healthcare, social recognition, and protections against discrimination. The movement for transgender empowerment seeks to disrupt the dominant power structures and gain visibility. It is not just a push for privilege or equality but a demand for a profound act of alteration in which society is transformed and no member of a given sphere will ever again be disenfranchised (Hines, 2007). As such, transgender empowerment can be thought of as achieved when trans people are the ones influencing the system in the first place. Not only are they visible but also that the spaces they occupy are influenced by their diversity to hold them up as actual people who exist. (Smooth, 2013). Dutta (2012) recommends that transgender people should be empowered. This group is largely disenfranchised. By advocating for their empowerment, we would ultimately be challenging the structures already in place. Social, political, and economic structures are largely governed by cis normativity (Singh, Richmond & Burnes, 2013). This is a principle that assumes everyone identifies as the gender assigned to them at birth time. That means transgender voices are invisible and disempowered (Dutta, 2012).

Research Methodology

This study uses qualitative research as an approach, while textual analysis will be a chosen method of examination of transgender representation in contemporary South Asian fiction. Textual analysis would permit a closer engagement with the text and would facilitate an understanding of how language, narrative structures, and cultural contexts affect the representation of transgender identities. This method is particularly well-suited to explore how literary works affirm, support, or contest societies' perceptions of transgender individuals.

Rhetorical analysis:

Historical Analysis

History is not just a canvas against which these books are written but an active component that molds the lives of its heroes and saturates their societies. The quote, “As always, history would be a revelation of the future as much as it was a study of the past" (Roy, 2017, p.401) in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness highlights that possessing knowledge about events from yesteryears can help us predict and change our futures. Similarly, The House of Clay and Water reflects on the internal struggle of holding onto traditions in a rapidly changing world: “He taught me to read the Holy Book. I wish that he hadn't, ji. It hurt me and confused me” (Mansab, 2017, p.39). In *Narcopolis*, the transformation of Bombay to Mumbai is portrayed as a total annihilation: "Bombay, which obliterated its history by changing its name and surgically altering its face, is the hero or 'heroin' of this story" (Thayil, 2012, p.1). The pivotal theme here is how overurbanization and modernity have wiped out the historical identity of places and people.

Socio-Demographic Analysis

These novels present a rich and diverse sociodemographic landscape, reflecting the struggles and complications faced by individuals from marginalized communities. In The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, the visibility of Hijras in society contrasts sharply with their marginalization: “Hijras are a sexual minority that is visible, and yet we are treated as the invisible” (Roy, 2017, p.13). The House of Clay and Water similarly explores the struggles of individuals trapped in societal expectations: “Each one of us chooses to wear a disguise but the masks for Hijras... aren’t chosen by them” (Mansab, 2017, p.44). In Narcopolis, the rejection of binary gender labels “Woman and man are words other people use, not me. I am not sure what I am” (Thayil, 2012, p.1112) captures the challenge of living authentically in a society that attempts to contain individuals within rigid labels.

Cultural Analysis

Roy's novel presents stunning views on how social systems based on caste, class, and gender maintain brutality even while they nourish a very small few. She defines the structures and systems of power and exploitation in what used to be called "post-colonial" India, not as separate entities, but rather as a systemic oppression containing a cruelty of its own. Specific marginalized classes, such as transgender individuals and the erstwhile lower castes, face both external injustice and internal turmoil. Roy intimately describes the way that social institutions continue to structure inequality as if it were an inevitability: "And she learned from experience that need was a warehouse that could accommodate a considerable amount of cruelty" (Roy, 2017, p.13). Similarly, The Clay House in Water deals with cultural conflicts largely through the

collision of religious teaching with personal identity and modern values. The speaker's loss of faith suggests an exclusionary nature in religious doctrines that do not include her existence: "He taught me to read the Holy Book. I wish that he hadn't, ji. It hurt me and confused me" (Mansab, 2017, p.39). This reflects more extensive tensions between tradition and understanding of oneself.

Narcopolis offers an identity as something that one performs in the frame of societal expectations. Thayil remarks upon the clothing as an expression of cultural norms, especially regarding gender-class dynamics. Traditional clothing—like saris, kurta-pajama, and hijra-specific dress—only serves to reinforce social roles and marginalization on top of being a marker of oppression. Clothing, then, acts as both mask and enforcer of hierarchies: "Clothes are costumes and disguises. The image has nothing to do with the truth" (Thayil, 2012, p.57). These novels, along with others, present stark pictures of modernity's interaction with cultural and individual identities, detailing oppression's unyielding presence within them and even the changing context of them.

Interactional Analysis

These novels depict characters constantly coming together the statement under analysis is meant to stress that while everyone may be looking at what is happening, nobody puts an effort into enabling change, which is wrong and unfair to the victim. As a result, the phrase implies that such an approach is derogatory to both the victim and the potential saviors. However, the phrase can also be seen as a critique of the modern society in which an act of violence, marginalization, and inequality is seen alternately. “Everyone is looking. Nobody stopped them” (Roy, 2017, p.89). The phrase "In our aloneness" sets the mood for an emotional encounter involving two people separated and yet finding comfort from each other's company. This shared solitude is an emotional state that underpins their relationship. Mansab’s characters base their relationship on a mutual, fundamental understanding. It goes beyond the expectations of society and it flies in the face of any kind of traditional categorization. This dynamic is a deeply personal one: it leads inward while emphasizing their mutual situation and the bond between them. This line here "How silly to call it anything less" is a rejection of the forms of language imposed by society and the categories constructed upon reality. Interactionally, it stands for a shared understanding that defies basic communication emphasizing depth over traditional vicennialdifications. “In our aloneness, our souls had found each other. That was all. How silly to call it anything less” (Mansab, 2017, p.252).

Narcopolic (2012) by Jeet Thayil: In this line, which is about drug use, he asks a friend to light his opium pipe. This quote can be analyzed interactively: It reveals the dynamics between characters, examining power and dependence as well as how drug culture is shaped by its rituals absurdly enough; something which will be taken up later in this book. Normally this sort happens in private, in other words, no one is watching

except yourself; you are alone with all this data. However, the emphasis on such minor movements shows that characters feel themselves very crisply present here and now each tiny gesture is an event for care. This request implies that the speaker has lost some control and both need another person's help and symbolically do drugs as an action. In terms of interaction, there are few equals between these two people and one becomes temporarily dependent on support from the other party. “Wait now, light me up so we do this right, yes, hold me steady to the lamp” (Thayil, 2012, p.5).

Societal Interaction Analysis

These relationships speak volumes about other issues of marginalization present within these novels. Roy's character desires to retrieve her memories and re-enter the Duniya to "live an ordinary life," a longing for social acceptability. Duniya reflects the world as well as those social expectations that determine identity. The social pressures surfacing through her journey indicate a contradiction between personal desire and social conformism and demonstrate how self-worth is usually linked to acceptance: "Now she wanted to return to the Duniya and live like an ordinary person".

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Interdiscursive Analysis

The changing composition of gender in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness finds resonance in the expression: “He is a She. He is neither a He nor a She. He is a He and a She” (Roy, 2017, p.12). In these words, the idea of going beyond binary definitions of gender through coupling, repetition, and contradiction appears as a form of expression. The fluidity of language finds resonance with present-day discussions on gender identity, exposing the limitations of traditional classification and the complexities of self-definition. This House of Clay and Water frames not just death as an end but rather an experience with philosophical grounding. The mention of: *“I am destined to die a little every day. Every time I realize I cannot love or be loved; I die a little. Every time jeering children throw stones at me; I die a little.”* (Mansab, 2017, p.44) is straightforward: life is not an end goal. It resurfaces questions on existentialism, like mental well-being, the purpose of existence, and under what conditions the thought of death becomes appealing, something that one would be willing to accept instead of suffering. In a way, it reframes the very discourse about living and dying and feels that death is, if not an escape, at least a consummate understanding of the reason for human life. Narcopolis explores identity as a performance, showing the disjunction between outward appearance and inner self. “The clothes are costumes that conceal, whereas this, the image, has nothing to do with the truth” (Thayil, 2012, p.57) this utterly questions the authenticity of one's self-presentation. It underlines how existing societal roles and expectations shape identity, thus reinforcing the view that external markers like clothing only faintly express one's essence. Whereas such criticism encourages deeper self-reckoning beyond visual judgments, it ultimately raises further philosophical and cultural debates on the self.

Verbal Behaviour & Non-Verbal Behaviour:

Verbal communication a critical role in transmitting themes of resilience, love, and despair in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, This House of Clay and Water, and Narcopolis. In The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, Roy uses metaphor, simile, and symbolic language to communicate the characters' fears, desires, and resilience toward the challenges posed by society (Frey, 2004). The tissue of dialogue is sometimes thick with meaning, as in Anjum's reflections on identity and journey. Defining moments packed with verses of "hope" and "unity" emphasize the bond between characters (Roy, 2017). In this House of Clay and Water, verbal exchange carries despair and failure (Mansab, 2017). The characters talk about love as a spiritual force that shaped their lives, and metaphorical language links personal and cultural struggles. Maternal-daughter dialogues uphold the uniqueness soaked in conflict and expectation (Mansab, 2017). Narcopolis takes you back to the chaos of Bombay, raw and unrefined by its language. Characters picture themselves in "wonder" and "intoxication," at times," while they are submerged in" rot, stench, and decay," alluding to the lost identity of Bombay while being supposedly vibrant" (Thayil, 2012). Nonverbal behaviour makes a cognate impression, too. Silent-weeping and clenched-fist moments in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness reveal agony and resistance, and oftentimes express more than

words would" (Roy, 2017). Longing glances and tightly-knit hugs are reflections of a unified desire in This House of Clay and Water (Mansab, 2017). In Narcopolis, the essence of the world is in its visual aspects- appearances, body language-the very landscape of the city, contributing to greater measures of gory realism (Thayil, 2012).

Personality Traits:

Contemporary fiction makes the most of the newness, of character development, especially in matters of gender identity and psychological transition experiences. In The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, Anjum's journey encapsulates resilience and self-acceptance as she undergoes sex reassignment surgery and attempts to heal from personal and political suffering. Her efforts to reconcile the past with the present speak to themes of healing and identity (Roy, 2017). Correspondingly, This House of Clay and Water sketches out Sadaf as a deeply self-aware and sympathetic character. Mansab's treatment of her living with gender dysphoria, deciding to have surgery, and suffering social pressures indicates transformation and self-discovery (Mansab, 2017). Dimple can showcase her resilience in Narcopolis. As a hijra, she defers rejection and hardship with each return to the streets. Her ability to endure violence, marginalization, and addiction shows an instinct to survive. Dimple provides a canvassing of the exploration of identity and marginality by Thayil, portraying her as defiantly, empathetic, and independent as a part of her character and experience (Thayil, 2012).

Classical Rhetorical Analysis:

Positive Connotations

The most positive words in these novels are “hope,” “love,” “resilience,” “redemption,” and “Spiritual peace.” In The Ministry of Utmost Happiness by Arundhati Roy, the author uses the word “hope” to show the ability and strength of her characters to find joy, unity, and pleasure in their shared experiences. The narrator emphasizes world-weary hope and the determination that grows through hoping, dreaming, and their ultimate realization: "The narrator nourishes world-weary hope and the determination that grows through hoping, dreaming, and their ultimate realization" (Roy, 2017, p.15). In The House of Clay and Water, Faiqa Mansab uses “love” to highlight the forbidden kind of love that threatens to destroy the characters, yet also serves as a search for redemption: “She desired the first few moments after coming to the clitoris when flesh was flesh and female was female. She wanted liberation, love, lust. A spiritual peace offers itself to those who are pure of the essence" (Mansab, 2017, p.88). In Narcopolis, Jeet Thayil uses the word “intoxicating” to capture the allure and seductive nature of Bombay, summarizing the city’s desire to explore and indulge in its complexities. These positive connotations reflect the characters’ ability to find strength, love, and peace, even in challenging circumstances.

Negative Connotations

Conversely, the most negative words in these novels are “oppression,” “despair,” “decay,” “entrapment,” “addiction,” and “self-destruction.” In The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, Roy highlights the themes of “injustice” and “violence,” creating an environment where marginalized characters must fight against pervasive corruption and brutality: “The desperation of escape was invoked and rebuff was overpowering” (Roy, 2017, p.89). In The House of Clay and Water, Mansab explores “entrapment,” using it to illustrate the characters’ compliance under oppressive conditions and their struggles with unmet desires and acknowledged inadequacies: “He lacked choices. He should describe all these sensations and then operate as a whole in every aspect” (Mansab, 2017, p.44).

Thayil, in Narcopolis, uses the words "decay," "addiction," and "self-destruction" through the character of Mr. Lee to depict the grim reality of Bombay’s underworld, where characters succumb to the violent decay of their surroundings and lose themselves in meaningless waste: “There was a minimum of noise. There are times when we sing our sorrows away. And the problems in the beginning and the night are increasing, the rain falls on the soil. As the city sunsets, the lights of the gallows tick and travel to the west” (Thayil, 2012, p.57). These negative connotations highlight the destructive forces that the characters face, contributing to their struggles with identity and survival.

Contemporary Rhetoric Analysis:

Social Movement Study

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, of 2018, in Pakistan establishes the right for individuals to self-identify as transgender and secure education, work, health, and inheritance while prohibiting discrimination and harassment (Polletta, 2002; Tarrow & Tilly, 2001). It also involves safe houses and a National Council for monitoring (Ramay, 2017).

In India, the Supreme Court's judgment in NLSA v. Union of India (2014), which categorized transgender individuals as the third sex, led to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill. It, however, faces major difficulties in its implementation due to social stigma and prejudice against transgender persons.

In Bangladesh, hijras were legally recognized as a third gender in 2013, but there is no comprehensive legal protection in Bangladesh. They do formally have constitutional rights; however, they face uphill battles concerning education, health, and employment (Islam, 2019). On the government side, national identity cards were issued among other rehabilitation programs. Nepal has ruling policies: forced legal recognition and anti-discriminatory laws. However, there exists social stigma curtailing the rights of the transgender (Hasan, 2022). The transgender rights movement in South Asia, originated from the hijra community, advocating for the rights of exclusionary identities due to a historical marginalization using vocabulary of global human rights and local activism (Loh, 2018). There certainly have been advances in legal recognition and welfare programs; still, hurdles continue to exist (Chakrapani, 2010; Stark & Heaton, 2019; Jha & Kurian, 2018).

Literature plays a critical role in advocating transgender rights. Novels like The Ministry of Utmost Happiness (Roy, 2017), This House of Clay and Water (Mansab, 2017), and Narcopolis (Thayil, 2012) explore the intersecting realms of gender, politics, and identity, challenging established stereotypes and acting as eyes openers to the outside world (Puri, 2016; Fernandes, 2014; Jain & DasGupta, 2021). These works propose to analyze social movements (Melucci, 1996; Chatterji, 2016), showing how fiction alters perceptions and re-signifies (Kashyap, 2023; Kar & Tiwari, 2020).

Conclusion

The transgender narratives through this novel, The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, Narcopolis, and This House of Clay and Water, encapsulate the multifaceted experiences and complexities of challenges transgender populace is facing in the multilayered socio-cultural setup of South Asia. These novels go beyond the mere recounting of individual experiences, allowing the opportunity to reflect on the systematic marginalization of trans people that continues to this day. Ajum, Dimple, and Zoya, protagonists of the stories, are ensnared by institutionalized discrimination, geographical and professional ostracism, and utter dearth of well-wishers. However, it is their strength and refusal to conform to the expectations of their societies that make them beacons of power and rebellion; heroines fighting for equality in their respective fictional universes. Together, this study demonstrates the importance of allies as a means of creating a fair and welcoming society that recognizes and celebrates the plurality of identities present in the world. Within this context, literature plays a transformative role, tackling long-held biases and encouraging readers to develop a greater level of empathy and appreciation for otherness. South Asian fiction has historically offered an invaluable platform for dispossessed voices and continues to make way for a more complex and fluid conception of gender. Not only do these narratives reflect the realities of the lives of human beings' transgender individuals like anyone else but they also challenge the reader to help create a more compassionate, inclusive world.

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