

## Identical Challenges of Third Gender in India: A Critical Approach to *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi*

Soni Singh

Research Scholar, Department of English and Modern European Languages  
University of Lucknow, Lucknow, India.  
Email - Soni2singh90@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *Now a days the modern Indian society is talking so much about the rights and the position of third gender people. Third gender being an important part of ancient Indian society to again becoming an issue of disrespect and fighting for their peaceful and dignified existence in the same society to gain their identity back. Hijra Community in India is the most backward community which is rejected and socially excluded from participation in any social activity. This paper looks at Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's autobiography Me Hijra Me Laxmi as an important intervention in the debate of identity. The aim of this research paper is to bring into perspective to the predicament of the third gender. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to explore the question of transgender identity in the light of autobiographical work of Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's Me Hijra Me Laxmi. The present paper also attempts to study the life, desires, culture, trauma and pain of transgender exclusion at the hands of dominant culture as well as their silence in expressing themselves through hijra autobiography Me Hijra, Me Luxmi (2015) by Laxmi Narayan Tripathi.*

**Key Words:** *Hijra, Identity, Third gender, Transgender, Gender issues, Gender identity, Trauma.*

Gender identity is the formation of an individual's feelings and emotions in which sense one feels of being male or female or any other sexuality. It is either assigned by birth or by society by acknowledging one's genitals or behavior. As Butler claims that gender identities that do not confirm to the system of 'compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality' expose how gender norms are socially instituted and maintained. Thus in our heterosexual society none other gender gets importance except male and female. Some individuals do not identify with some or all of the aspects of gender that is assigned to their biological sex and when they react different, odd, abnormal, they are called queer gender and such people suffer crisis as their assigned sex categorizes them to one gender and their psychological state categorizes them to the opposite gender. In Indian society, they are called hijra. This third gender identity has always suffered, oppressed and marginalized in all aspects of life due o its gender or sexual differences. The present paper focuses on how hijra community suffered in establishing their gender identity even when their family supported them.

The identity of transgender is one of the greatest social issues within India threatening the progress of the country. Over a decade in India, the issue of transgender has been under literary discussions and researches in both social and cultural context where third gender equality is many miles away from the development of mainstream of society to be assimilated because gender stratification much exists in every walks of life as one of the barriers prevailing within the social structure of India. "Each of us seeks to know our personal identity and where and how we fit in to the scheme of things so that we can make sense of our lives and plan for the future..." [Zarina Patel, a young Kenyan ('Who Am I?' Daily Nation, Nairobi, March 28, 2000)].

The LGBT community has always been met with a certain prejudice, be it from society and in some scenarios the law enforcement agencies. Although in recent years there has been a progressive shift in the manner that we treat LGBT community, for instance the act of granting them recognition as the third gender, but it would be difficult to say that the situation is in any way ideal. Hijras have suffered, hooted, ridiculed, jeered up, excluded and marginalized harshly in heterosexual society. Their regular experience had been full of harassment, sham, rejection, sexual assault, rape and molestation and these cases are rarely reported in the police station as their voice is rarely heard by law as they do not follow their sexual identity. Their access to public places is restricted like in restaurants, cinemas, malls etc and the main problem they suffer on these places is use of toilets as there is no separate toilet made for third gender community. Their involvement in the academic sector either as a teacher or as a learner or as an employ is rare. Even the medical sector does not provide them healthcare facility. Thus their participation and involvement in all the fields of society is near about denied like education, public institutions and cinema etc.

Gender equality is vital in the successful progress of a society. Terms like gender equality, gender inequality, gender roles, and gender issues immediately bring male and female genders to our minds. Nevertheless, the existence

of third gender and its identity is greatly neglected in our societies. Especially, in Indian society either male or female is considered as normal and anything or anyone that is other than male or female is considered abnormal or subhuman, which means they are not complete humans but are on an inferior level.

Hijra identity deconstructs the norm of binary gender identity. The idea that one is one's gender to the extent that one is not the other gender restricts gender identity to the binary pair of male and female. "Hijras" were once a revered and accepted group in Indian culture. The Vedas, ancient, Hindu texts, include eunuchs and characters with both male and female characteristics. They were believed to bring luck and provide special fertility power . . . For centuries; they have performed badhai, or blessings at weddings and births" (Delli Swararaos 2016).

While talking about the avenues of job opportunities for the transgender, she cited an example of the frequent rape cases in the compartments of the moving trains, which could be avoided by employing a hijra as a security guard. Hijras face discrimination even in the healthcare settings. Often, healthcare providers rarely had the opportunity to understand the sexual diversities and they do not have adequate knowledge about the health issues of sexual minorities. Thus, TG people face unique barriers when accessing public or private health services.

Due to the reason that the hijras are ostracized from society they remain illiterate and are forced to pursue their occupation of begging, singing, dancing and sex work. In spite of the fact that some of them were elected as Mayor and representatives in Municipal elections in past years, their win was a result of the anger of voters against the prevailing candidates rather than their own ability.

In recent years, the issue of gender identity has also been looked from a new dimension. It is in recent times that the modern Indian society considered them as third gender otherwise there was no such identity given to them legally. Still all is not well and the third gender people are struggling to be a part of the civil society.

During Mughal period the hijras enjoyed especial places in the royal courts as advisors, they were considered as most trustworthy and safe that is why they were the main protectors of harems where the queens used to live. Not only this, in religious places also they occupied an important place. Transgenders were well treated in the courts of Mughals, "Hijras were considered clever, trustworthy and fiercely loyal and had free access to all spaces and sections of the population, there by playing a crucial role in the politics of empire building in the Mughal era" (Michelraj 2015).

There are depictions of transgender or eunuchs in earliest Indian literature texts (Brahminical, Buddhist and Jain) and Indian epics (Mahabharata, Ramayana and Puranas) which deal with the ostensible history of third sex in India. Their existence can be seen in the mythological texts of the land 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata', "There were historical evidence of recognition of "third-sex" or persons not confirm to male or female gender around the earlier writings of ancient India. The concept of "trityakriti" or "napumsaka" had been an integral part of the Hindu mythology, folklore, epic and early Vedic and Puranic literature" (Michelraj 2015).

The performativity of the hijra identity is best manifested in sartorial terms as evident from Laxmi's pictures before and after being inculcated into the community. The census of India does not list hijras separately; they are usually counted as men, but upon request they may be counted as women. The Male to Female (MTF) Transgenders in India commonly known as the Hijras are one of the hardly researched, abused, scorned, and callously neglected groups in Indian Society.

The Transgender or the hijra community are the sexual minorities of Indian society, they are getting recognition by their literary works and social works. Whether some people are still wavering between giving them the equal place to them or discriminate or neglect them, they are human beings and a part of the society. Transgenders are always seen as an outcaste in our society. This marginalization and alienation leads to trauma in Trans genders. Transgenders undergo intense traumatic experiences both internal and external at various stages of their lives. Dr. Vachaspati Dwivedi notes in "Hijra Autobiographies: Trauma, Discrimination And Social Exclusion in India":

Their everyday experience is filled with discrimination, shame and harassment leading to a strong rejection of their identity which further makes them extremely vulnerable to violence, sexual assault, molestation and rape as no cases are reported in police stations because of their silence against such happenings. Their enrolment in educational institutions is near zero and same is the case with their employment. They never avail essential services like healthcare due to fear of rejection and discrimination. Their access to public places like cinemas, malls, restaurants is very limited and the use of public toilets is a big problem as there are no separate toilets for the transgender community. (46)

In a general and generic sense, 'queer' has become an umbrella term to include diverse non-heterosexual categories such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, MSM (Men who have sex with men), transgender and intersex. However, there exists a

third gender other than the two genders of male and female and it is known as transgender. The experiences of a transgender person are varied and complex. It cannot be simply reduced to the ideological notions of binary gender. The field of transgender studies is:

[C]oncerned with anything that disrupts, denaturalizes, rearticulates, and makes visible the normative linkages we generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differentiated human body, the social roles and statuses that a particular form of body is expected to occupy, the subjectively experienced relationship between a gendered sense of self and social expectations of gender-role performance, and the cultural mechanisms that work to sustain or thwart specific configurations of gendered personhood. (Stryker 3)

In India, transgenders have a very ancient history. They used to enjoy a good position and adorned different official posts in pre-colonial India. Colonization in India brought a lot of change in the lives of transgenders. They were named and treated as criminals and different laws were brought against them. This resulted in the marginalization of transgenders in society. However, the recent developments in India are a ray of hope for transgenders. The 2014 verdict of the Supreme Court recognizing transgenders as third-gender and providing reservations to them seems promising.

Social construction of gender as well as the sexual difference is very much part of the process of Gender Identity. Ironically, social construction of gender, especially in Indian society is confined to either male or female and the third gender is always neglected and more over marginalized and insulted. All hijras are human beings and logically all human rights apply to all hijras. As all human beings have the right to live with dignity at all times, regardless of their legal, social or political status so do hijras.

In societies across India, the Hijara (third gender) are seen as people with power to bless someone (individual or a family) with good luck, prosperity, success, auspiciousness, etc. They get invited or are accepted during rituals and life-cycle events like birth and naming, initiation rites, weddings, etc. Though Supreme Court issued a verdict in April 2014 recognizing transgender as “third gender” with constitutional rights much remain to be attained in connection with the everyday performance of these rights. Nimisha Mishra notes in “Indian society and position of third gender: A comparative study of past and present scenario”:

As compared to past the present situation of third gender people is vulnerable. Earlier they were given importance in the society. They even occupied prestigious place in the society. They hold higher ranks in the administrations. They were very close to kings and queens. Earlier they were strong in terms of respect, identity and possessions as well. Now a days they are the most neglected part of the society and they had to fight a long battle to regain that importance and respect. Now a little change can be seen in the conduct of the mainstream people towards them who are also fighting for their rights. As a result of this laws are being framed so as to provide them better living conditions. Better late than never, at least the TG community in India are hoping some good for their future. If these people get proper access to education and employment opportunities they can not only make their future bright but also they can contribute towards Nation building. Government should come up with compulsory education and employment schemes for them. (40-41)

The third gender people belong to a category of persons who are neither considered as male nor as female. They may appear more like a man but feel like a woman and even dress like them similarly the other people might appear more like a female and feel like a man and even dress like that. Nimisha Mishra notes in “Indian society and position of third gender: A comparative study of past and present scenario”, “The condition of the third gender across the world varies as different parts of the world practice different cultures and to follow different norms and traditions. The present scenario of the lives of the people of this community is unacceptable and in some cases pitiable but again there are a few countries that are moving towards providing them with equal status and recognition in the society” (40).

Born as the eldest son to parents from Uttar Pradesh, with a conservative Brahmin background, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, alias Raju lived in a shanty on the banks of Siddheshwar Lake in Thane, Mumbai with his parents, sister Rukmini and younger brother Shashinarayan. She is the one who is in news for all the good reasons for her courage to speak to fight for the rights of transgender people. Laxmi Narayan Tripathi was the first transgender person to represent Asia Pacific at UN and has represented her community and India on several international platforms including the world AIDS conference in Toronto. Her life story, a famous autobiography *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* counts complete struggle of her life as a hijra and her active fight for the rights of hijras. She is mostly known as a social activist and has secured an important place in society.

She is the founder member of Maharashtra Trithiya Panthi Sangathana (MTPS) and a core founder member of APTN – Asia Pacific Transgender Network. Laxmi was the first transgender person to represent Asia Pacific in the UN President’s Office Civil Society Task Force on HIV/AIDS. Laxmi was the core community representative in the planning commission of the AIDS 2014 conference in Melbourne representing Asia Pacific region. She was also the

intervener in the Nasla Petition filed for Transgender Rights and recognition in Supreme Court of India Judgment in April 2014. Currently she is a Mahamandaleshwar of hijra community in India. Laxmi was part of the steering core committee set by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for Transgender Rights and upliftment. She was also a core member on the UGC committee set for Right of Education of the Transgender. Laxmi also played a lead role in a movie called “Queens of Destiny” based on the lives of hijras. She won the approbation of celebrity like Hema Malini and various prominent stars of Bollywood. She was also interviewed by a renowned writer Salman Rushdie. Laxmi, today has become an international celebrity and prominent social activist. She has become an icon of transgender; tripling around the world, posing for selfies and signing autographs for her countless fans. Laxmi is a conspicuous dancer, an actor, writer, and distinguished transgender rights activist of India. Laxmi has become the first transgender of India to represent Asia pacific in the UN in 2008.

Laxmi went on to join Mithibai College and finished his graduation. He wore female attire on campus, became a model coordinator for Bollywood, staged dance shows, became a bar dancer.... and all this without the knowledge of his family! Laxmi took to drinking, struggling with the dual identity and the deception of playing "the man of the house" when all he wanted to was to be acknowledged as a woman.

*Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* is the most evocative and moving autobiography about the hijra activist Laxmi Narayan Tripathi popularly known as Laxmi. *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* is a revelation of the hijra identity. The title of Laxmi's autobiography foregrounds her hijra identity<sup>15</sup> using 'Me' which is associated with the public self rather than 'I' which is more private. By doing so it strategically places the work under the militant genre of 'testimonio' that claims to record the collective trauma of the community. She is worthy of the great esteem, which she has got after a great struggle, and *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* is the perfect picture of her journey from a feeble boy to a dignified transgender of India. It can be considered as a traumatic but a success story of a member of hijra community. Laxmi opines that if the transgender are treated equally, respectfully and given employment like other citizens of India, then their lives will also blossom and they will also lead their lives happily. But it is only through proper education and free information that this gulf of knowledge could be bridged. As pointed out by Rao in the Afterword, "Laxmi's autobiography is one of the earliest works that belong to the genre of hijra literature. It seeks to make readers aware of who the hijras are, and what goes into the shaping of their personalities...it seeks to dispel myths about the hijras and help us to shed our prejudice" (2015, p.183). As the chairperson of DAI Welfare Society, an NGO that works for the hijra community in Mumbai, she became the first hijra to be invited to participate in a conference organized in Mumbai. She writes: "I felt empowered, and empowerment is not a word that normally exists in the vocabulary of a hijra" (Tripathi 62-63).

On an occasion of a reality show in which Laxmi's father Chandradev Chandinath Tripathi also remained present, he proudly replied when asked about Laxmi, "A hijra can be born to any family. If we spurn them and show them the door, we leave them with no alternative but to become beggars. Driving Laxmi out of the house was out of the question." The transgender community in India are commonly known as Hijras. The word "Hijra" is an Urdu-Hindustani word derived from the Semitic Arabic root 'hjr' meaning "leaving one's tribe" and has been borrowed into Hindi. Generally, a transgender person is an effeminate man who is, always, inclined to attain the same identity as that of a woman, thereby "leaving" his status quo given at birth. While defining 'hijra' R. Raj Rao points out in the Afterword of Tripathi's autobiography *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi*, "A hijra may be narrowly defined as one who starts out as an effeminate homosexual man from the lower strata of society who, because of a lack of money and education, believes he can only survive in a community or ghetto of like-bodied and like-minded people" (Tripathi 197). Laxmi Narayan Tripathi writes in her autobiography, *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi*, "A hijra is neither a man nor a woman. She is feminine, but not a woman. He is masculine, a male by birth, but not that a man either. A hijra's male body is a trap — not just to the hijra itself who suffocates within it, but to the world in general that wrongly assumes a hijra to be a man" (Tripathi 40).

In order to dispel her anxiety regarding her identity, Laxmi met Ashok Row Kavi at Maheswari Udyaan in Mumbai. Ashok Row Kavi was a gay activist and he welcomed Laxmi in the gay community. Laxmi also felt relaxed to a great extent thinking that she was 'gay', not 'abnormal' at least. But, this feeling of 'gay' identity did not sustain long in Laxmi. What made her feel alienated from the 'gay' community was that the gays of Maheswari Udyaan were homosexual men. Even when they got engaged in sexual act, they enjoyed the pleasure of sex as men with men. So, unlike Laxmi the gays are men both physically and psychologically. Laxmi polemically made the utterance to bring home her point of distinction between a gay and a transgender, "The gays of Maheswari Udyaan provided solace, but then they saw themselves as men. That alienated me from them. I wondered why they did not regard themselves as women, for, to me, then being homosexual and being a woman meant the same thing. Perhaps it is the conscious desire to be heterosexual, but when I was attracted to a man, I did not think myself as a man. I thought of myself as a woman" (Tripathi 29).



The cruelest part of his life was that he was sexually exploited from a very young age of seven. Talking about her own self, she said, “I was just as normal as any other boy or girl. Society made me feel different.” According to her, the biggest problem in India is the lack of awareness among people regarding the constitutional right of freedom of speech and expression, right to equality and right to education irrespective of gender, caste or colour granted by Constitution of India framed by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Through the narrative, Laxminarayan Tripathi introduced the readers to the plight of the transgender people; her journey from a male to third gender activist is filled with hardships and struggle. Dr. Darsha Jani writes in *Me Hijra Me Laxmi: A Stirring Saga of a Transgender*”:

It talks about the heartrending tale of a transgender Laxmi who always felt comfortable in the garb of a woman, though born as the eldest son of her father. The autobiography exemplifies the journey of a transgender who underwent innumerable sufferings but ultimately decided to live life with his head held high. He bravely declared himself as hijra and fought for the community ceaselessly abused, insulted and denied basic rights. His/ Her quest is to bring about a positive change in the society to enable the transgender acquire dignity and respect by their inclusion in jobs in public and private sectors. Her bold representation as a transgender on the international platforms determines her adeptness in voicing the issues related to LGBT. (17)

It was the year 1998 when Laxmi finally decided to become a hijra. She made up her mind to represent hijras and fight for the rights of her community. She emphatically remarked that “the ideas of gender and sexuality are all in our minds. If you allow people to discriminate you, they will discriminate you totally.” Laxmi Narayan Tripathi’s autobiography *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* was translated from Marathi original in 2015 by R. Raja Rao and P.G. Joshi and it is a very lucid account of Laxmi’s life, though much luckier than Revathi because she has not been disowned by her family and leads a much liberated life. The autobiography by Laxmi is not a mere record of the agony of a transgender but actually it delineates the dilemma of the whole community. Laxmi narrates the reality of the Indian society as:

It was unacceptable for my parents that their own son should become a hijra. Supermen are okay as long they are born to others. No one wants supermen in their homes. My parents wanted me to lead a normal life. They wanted me to get married and beget children. My grandfather, Harisharan Tiwari was such an erudite scholar; he knew the Vedas and Upanishads by heart and I, his grandson, was a hijra! Now tongues would wag even more than before. My parents would scarcely be able to leave the house. They were torn between the demands of the society and the love of their son. (49)

In *Me Hijra Me Laxmi*, Laxmi speaks how she was born a male child in an orthodox Brahmin family, felt trapped and decided to become hijra. This is one of the rare biographies of LGBT community that intends to dispel many myths about their world. It gives a peep into their world that is surrounded in secrecy leading to many myths and speculations. In a web article REVIEW: Larger than Life: *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* by Laxmi Tripathi Saba Shabbir refers to the narrative as:

Despite its provocative title, *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* is foremost the story of an exceptional human being. It is an account of how Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, the eldest son of an orthodox Brahmin family, became Laxmi, a hijra who made history. The memoir gives us a first- person perspective of Laxmi’s experiences and struggle; good and bad, profound and frivolous. We meet the people who transformed her into the person that she is today: an activist, artist, celebrity, ambassador and phenomenal catalyst for change, for her community and country. On a personal level, the reader is also introduced to the child, the dancer, the lover, the woman, the friend, the hijra and the dutiful son. (Saba Shabbir)

*Me Hijra Me Laxmi* is a thrilling saga of Laxmi, who didn’t give up against the odds of her life and reached towards her destination. There was no word called defeat in her life till now. Laxmi in the autobiography narrates incidents to show how passionately Raju, alias Laxmi wanted to dress like a woman and how he/she enjoyed playing the role of female characters, “I liked being a drag queen. But then drag queens cross-dressed only sporadically, for show, where as I wanted to drape myself in a sari and wear skirts every single day” (Tripathi 29).

*Me Hijra Me Laxmi* seeks to make readers aware of who the hijras really are, and what goes into the shaping of their personalities. While analyzing these two life stories one can easily discern that *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* is an autobiography of an educated and responsible hijra who has transformed her from the stigma of being a victim to realizing the life of a hijra by loving it. She boldly declared her gender identity and worked for the upliftment of the sexual minorities. As writes Laxminarayan Tripathi in her autobiography, “People are curious to know about hijras. How do we live? Behave? What do we do? Do we kidnap children? What funeral rites are performed for a hijra after her death? Is she cremated or buried? Such questions do not have answers...because we hijras are so secretive about our lives, hearsay rules the roost” (155). Dr. Darsha Jani writes in “*Me Hijra Me Laxmi*: A Stirring Saga of a Transgender”:

At one point of time, he realized that he is a hijra, though at home, he was treated as the eldest son and expected to wear men's apparel. As a child, he was sickly and mostly fraught with illness. But he was well looked after by his parents. Though there was no dearth of friends around him, yet he started to live the life of a loner. He had asthma from an early age and till date he has been suffering from the disease. But his frail and weak body was no hindrance to his love for dancing. In childhood, he would dance to the tune of Bollywood songs and participated at various functions organized by school. He danced to such a frenzy that his chronic breathlessness and cough did not come his way. Though dancing had a therapeutic effect on him, people could observe that in spite of being a man, his body language was that of a woman. He was being teased by others as chakka. It was true that his mannerisms, his walking style and his way of talking were all feminine. But he was unable to understand the mystery of his body which drew him more and more into a cocoon. (17)

Laxmi organized a beauty contest for hijras. She titled the event Indian Super Queen Contest. She writes: "If there are Miss India and Miss Universe contests for women, why not for hijras, I asked myself. Hijras are called born-clappers, but, for a change, we would get the world clap for us" (Tripathi 131). Laxmi also disrupts the codification of the profession in terms of gender. She writes, "My flamboyance on stage made some people uncomfortable .... So I was teased. People began to call me a homo and a chakka .... All they could see was that though I was a man, my body language was that of a woman" (Tripathi 4).

Though in its landmark judgement, the Supreme Court of India on 15th April 2014 declared that, "Hijras, Eunuchs, apart from binary gender, be treated as "third gender" for the purpose of safeguarding their rights under Part III of our Constitution and the laws made by the Parliament and the State Legislature." Describing further, "Transgender person's right to decide their self-identified gender is also upheld and the Centre and State. Governments are directed to grant legal recognition of their gender identity such as male, female or as the third gender" (NALSA v. Union of India and others, 109).

The text offers insight into the life of the third gender people of India who have been alienated because they don't belong to the world of masculine or feminine as they do not fall under the category of heterosexuality a common acceptance of binary opposition of sexuality. Laxminarayan Tripathi took the daring step to reveal the plight of the hijra community in the Indian society. Laxmi relates another incident of the plight of the third gender as:

A hijra was raped in Virar. Not only did the police refuse to lodge an FIR, they refused to even listen to what the hijra had to say. The hijra was in pain but the doctors were unwilling to treat her till the police did their job. It was a vicious circle. When I reached the police station, the havaldars were in splits. They couldn't fathom how a hijra could be raped (couldn't they)? They were using the incident to lubricate their filthiest fantasies when all they should have done was file the FIR and send the hijra to hospital. (92)

Laxmi proudly asserts that she is fortunate in the sense that unlike other hijras who are driven out of their house by their parents, she received a lot of support from her family, especially her sister Rukmini who taught her the Bollywood style of dancing. Laxmi's life is an inspiring tale of battling against all odds of life and transpiring as an outstanding activist for LGBT community especially "hijras". She writes: "A hijra from India had been accorded diplomatic status in the world's richest country! It only happened in fairy tales" (Tripathi 108). Laxmi also used all the public platforms and television appearances that came her way to make society sensitive and aware that hijras are ordinary human beings and "to make viewers aware that hijras are normal people, just like them ... not extraterrestrial" (Tripathi 125).

Though there are references to Kinnars, Shikhandi, Brihannala in ancient Indian epics who were used to fulfil the purpose of larger community, but not a single tale is found through which the transgender has expressed himself. In *Me Hijra Me Laxmi*, Laxminarayan Tripathi has portrayed a veridical picture of the plight of the third gender in Indian society. Laxmi had a male body with the psyche of a female. She was confused about her gender identity. She expresses her feelings to her friend as, "I now myself began feeling attracted to boys in general. While I did not want some boys anywhere near me, I was attracted to others and strongly desired them. I wondered if this happened because inwardly I was a woman. I did not know. I was only in the fourth standard then. How I was to know?" (10).

She became a sex worker also. She established intimate relationships with some of her male friends. In the narrative, Laxmi boldly reveals the incidents of her intimate relationships. Laxmi is proud of her sexual identity and had many love affairs but ended up hurting her. The memoir is the tale of the pathetic as well as fortunate experiences of a member of the hijra community, categorized as the sexual minorities. Bhojraj Singh writes in "The Plight of Transgender in Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's Red Lipstick":

The search for identity is a major issue for the transgender in the social binaries set up. Due to their birth-assigned sex and gender not matching their identity transgender feels the distress named 'Gender Dysphoria' leading them to social isolation, loneliness and depression. Since the society lets the male and the female live

in its norms and stereotype, for the transgender it does not allow to live because the appearance and the behavior of transgender misfit in the eye of society. This very sense of belonging and where they are in the society often baffle them creating in them a sense of alienation and stress. Therefore, they are compelled to live in group as the group deems the mental agony and is a helping hand to their emotional needs providing security, identity and a sense of dignity to live how and what they feel. (1168)

Laxmi's success story begins from taking her first step towards the activism. She wanted to take new challenges in her life. She explains her felicity as, "My hour of fame came when, on behalf of the DWS, I was invited to a workshop on Proposal Development at Avert Society in Vashi. I had to make a presentation, and I knew not the ABC of how presentations are made, though I knew the meaning of the word "proposal". I was assisted in my task by a friendly couple of Avert Society" (63). Laxmi's recognition of her gender identity influenced her to join the hijra community.

After leading an anguished life for years, today Laxmi stands tall and has become a loud voice and undisputed spokesperson of transgender community; striving hard to fight for their rights in India and representing hijras on global platforms. In regard with conclusion this paper presents the miserable conditions of transgender people who are compelled to live lives of expulsion from family and society due to cross gender culture. Her battle for attaining the dignity of the transgender and other members of LGBT community is an unstoppable process.

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