



## **Gender Dysphoria Among Indian Third Gender In Laxminarayan Tripathi's Autobiographies**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

From the existence of human, two genders, male and female were considered as significant for identity. Apart from these two genders, another gender existed, which is called as 'transgender'. They are cross dressers and are identified by different names such as bisexuals, cross sexuals, epicene, unisexual, genderqueer, hijras and so on. Throughout their life they suffer from discrimination, humiliation and violence from the society. They remain as third gender and spend their life in dilemma with the question of their identity. The term Gender Dysphoria is used to define a person with gender identity disorder. This is a kind of distress experienced mainly by transgender because of the mismatch between their physical sex and mental sex. Such people are totally uncomfortable with their body and experience psychological trauma which affects their daily routine life. This paper shall therefore focus on the identity crisis faced by Indian Hijras, their rise and struggle to gain their space in the society in the Autobiographies of Laxminarayan Tripathi, who is a writer, dancer, actor, activist and above all a Hijra.

### **KEYWORDS:**

Hijra, Identity, Discrimination, Trauma, Space, Empowerment.

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Gender dysphoria can also be called as gender incongruence. This is a kind of gender identity disorder faced by an individual even from the early childhood days. This condition arises when a person's anatomy mismatches with his own gender identity. The person affected with



dysphoria never faces any physical symptoms but they have some behavioral changes which affects their mind inwardly. This disorder can even be identified before Preadolescence where a child feels that they belong to the opposite sex. They undergo a clash between their body and mind which results in depression and isolation. They will be gagging to wear the cloths meant for the opposite sex. As an adult such people will have a desire to show them as they belongs to the opposite sex and literally hates ones anatomy and wishes to get rid of one's own body parts. They try to hide their biological identity. When such feelings are suppressed they face psychological trauma. Depression is common among the people having gender dysphoria. Although it is a recognized medical condition, it is not a mental illness.

The word transgender is an umbrella term used to describe a person who has cross gender disorder. They lack their own identity and suffer from dysphoria. There is a mismatch between their mind and body. They always have a feeling that they were trapped in a wrong body. These transgenders are identified by different names such as cross sexuals, transvestism, bisexuals, epicene, unisexals, gender queer, transsexuals, hijras, eunuchs, kothis, kathoy, aravanis, kinnar, nappunsakudu, jogappas, shiv-shakthis, hwajasaras, khusras, zenanas, jhankas, khusas, and so on.

In India, hijras occupies the major part. The term hijra derives from Urdu word 'hijra'. In the words of Laxmi a hijra is a person who has walked out of his tribe or community. It also describes a male who has female physiology. "the word 'hiji' refers to the soul, a holy soul. The body in which the holy soul resides is called 'hijra'. This identity was developed in India to identify an individual who was born male and abandoned his male character and likely to behave feminine. Even castration is common among Indian hijras. Although she is a hijra she was not castrated and most of her chelas are also uncastrated. Even she did not opt for hormone therapy to display herself as feminine. According to Laxmi "a hijra is neither a man nor a woman. She is feminine, but not a woman (40)."

In Indian culture, especially in the Hindu tradition people consider hijiras as Upadevatas or sub-gods "they rank higher than mortals, men and women, saints and sadhus as



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well” (Red Lipstick 43). The concept of Ardhanarishvara can be seen in Vedic literature too. The traces of hijra identity is even available in the ancient hindu text Ramayana which was compiled between 400BC and 200 CE. A superstitious belief was there in the northern parts of India that a transgender person has the power to bless people, and it finds its mention in mythical story The Ramayana. They were given the power to bless the newlyweds and newly born babies because they waited for Rama for fourteen long years. When Rama was leaving Ayodya to begin his fourteen years exile in the forest, people followed him due to the love which they had towards Rama. By looking at the affection of people Rama said “I request all the men and women gathered here who truly love me, to please return to their homes. Once the duration of my exile is complete, I shall be back with you” (Me Hijra 49). After the exile when Rama returns, he was surprised to see few people still waiting in the same place on the outskirts of Ayodhya. There are the hijras. Rama asked only men and women to go and they were neither men nor women. By looking at their love, Rama was overwhelmed and he granted them and the future generations of hijras a boon that they would have the power to grant both blessings and curse which would always come true. This is the reason why they were respected by some religious people. This is the reason why Laxmi’s old friend Mistris Saab asked her blessing instead of getting the money from the hands of a hijra.

My old friend Mistris saab came to my aid. He magnanimously lent me a thousand rupees. I promised I would return his money at the first opportunity, but he junked the idea and said, ‘Give me your blessings.’ It was the advantageous side of being a hijra. (Me Hijra 83)

In the epic Mahabharatha, the sacrifice of a transgender can be seen in the image of lord Krishna. Before the Kurukshetra War Arjuna’s son Aravan offered to sacrifice himself to goddess Kali to bring victory. The only wish of Aravan is to lead a married life for one night. No women are ready to marry a man who will be no more the next day. So lord Krishna



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transforms into the image of a beautiful woman called Mohini and married him. There is a belief that hijras are descended from Aravan and they call themselves as Aravanis.

Laxmi, in her autobiographies, deals with what a young hijra has to face within oneself and in the outer world as well. Her story speaks for the entire Hijra community and about the problems they face. In her books she describes her childhood especially the moment when she started recognizing herself with feminine attitude or dominance in her male body. It took about six to seven years for her to find her way into the hijra community. As a child she faced a lot of mental trauma and cannot understand who she is.

Laxmi was born a boy, but she never felt like a boy. She explained her status of sexuality as “I was , his firstborn male child, his eldest son, oozing femininity”(Red Lipstick 18). This explains how Laxmi feels inwardly and how she longs for femininity with a male biology. She is attracted to boys. She acted in a different manner she did not play with the boys of his age and never roam in the street like boys and play with mud. Even during his childhood Laxmi in her book *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* points out that “I started to live an internal life, the life of a loner”(3). Isolation is the first phase of being a hijra and that started for her during her childhood itself. She was teased for dancing like a woman. All made fun of Laxmi by saying that she possess the body of a boy but her body language was that of a woman.

During the time of Laxmi’s identity crisis as Raju, she consulted with her aunty Sangita and she met Ashok Row Kavi, who is a homo. He helped her in clarifying her doubt about her behaviour. He consoled Raju saying that he was absolutely normal and the world around him is abnormal because they cannot understand people like them. Laxmi in one of her autobiographies *Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life* says “the world kept suggesting I was a girl, but my private parts indicated that I was a boy. And then there was the whole question of sexuality. Everyone’s reaction around me seemed to indicate that I was acting like a girl” (Red Lipstick 2).

When there is a mismatch between a person’s sexual and gender identity it creates Identity crisis. This crisis can also be termed as gender incongruence or transgenderism. When a



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child is born, based on the chromosomes and external genitalia, sex is determined. Gender is a socio-constructed phenomenon. According to Judith Butler's view in his work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of identity* "Gender is culturally constructed: hence gender is neither the casual result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex.... The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it" (6).

Hijras have a recorded history of more than 4,000 years in India. Ancient myths bestow them with special powers to bring luck and fertility. Despite this supposedly sanctioned place in Indian culture, hijras face severe harassment and discrimination from every direction. However, in recent years one of the hijras, Laxminarayan Tripathi, has tried to change the onlookers mindset about her community and has made it her mission to bring out the revolution.

Laxmi is born and brought up in a bhramin family. She got education and is supported by her family even knowing her identity as Hijra. The support of her family gave her a positive inner inspiration to resist the violation and to stand for her rights.

While most hijras are being abandoned by their parents, who feel ashamed and struggle to accept their own children, Laxmi expresses inexplicable gratitude to her parents who accepted her with her anomalies. Her mission is to advocate her community to get an education, to fight for their rights and for their dignity.

Laxmi's two autobiographies created a great impact in the minds of human beings about the treatment of a third gender. Her first autobiography *MeHijra, Me Laxmi* is considered as one of the honest and open biography ever. Her works deals with the myths, culture, tradition, stereotypes, and identity of a hijra who undergoes in one's life time. This book teaches one to respect human being and makes us to accept one as how they are. It eradicated the prejudice over the hijra community and erased the biased view over them.

Her second autobiography *Red Lipstick :The Men in My Life* is a unique story. In this book she unveils layer after layer of her personal life and her journey towards hijrahood. She



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makes the reader aware of the LGBT community particularly about hijra community. She also describes about her friends, family, love life and her struggle to do things for the society especially for the marginalized hijra community. She put into light all the myths and stereotypes and changed the outlook of hijra community as a whole in her two autobiographies.

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