

Me Hijra Me Laxmi: Sordidness and Squalor of Transgender Life

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Abstract:

Me Hijra Me Laxmi is the autobiography of Laxminarayan Tripathi who is a Transgender activist and social worker. The work was originally written in Marathi and later it was translated into English by R. Raj Rao and P.G. Joshi. In this work, the life of a hijra and the problems faced by her are portrayed realistically. She describes the inhuman treatment met to hijras by society and how they are ostracized and estranged by it. They have not been provided proper rights guaranteed by the constitution of the country to its citizens. The government is also not serious about their welfare. In this work, Laxmi becomes the mouthpiece of every hijra in the country. The present papers aim at describing the condition and situation of the hijra community in India as presented by LaxminarayanTripathi in *Me Hijra Me Laxmi*.

Key Words: Transgender, Ostracize, Estrange, Mouthpiece, Community.

Hijra is one of the most backward communities in India. They consider themselves neither men nor women. It is a socially and educationally backward community. Their traditional business is to perform badhai (give blessings) on the occasion of marriage and childbirth. These people can be seen begging at signals, in trains, and at the shops. According to Dr Vachaspati Dwivedi, in the 2011 census report there population is about 4,90,000 in the country. Like Dalits, they live in separate colonies in cities or we can say they live in ghettos. They have not been given proper space and are ostracized by the society. They are often teased with terms like Chakka and homo. The constitution of the country gives equal rights to its citizens but they have been denied these rights. There are various references to hijras in the scriptures also. Devdutt Pattnaik in his book *Shikhandi and Other Tales They Don't Tell*

You discusses in detail various hijra stories in Indian mythology. Shikhandi is a famous character of Mahabharata who was neither a man nor a woman and who became the cause behind the death of the mighty Bhishma. Arjuna also lived as a transgender named Bruhanaddain during the exile period of Pandavas. When Rama, the Hero of Ramayana went into exile, people came to bid him farewell. Rama ordered all the men and women to return to their homes but there were also hijras among them who were neither men nor women and they waited for fourteen years until his return from exile. Rama was so much moved by their devotion.

Me Hijra Me Laxmi is a stirring saga of a transgender written by Laxminarayan Tripathi. To give vent the feeling of oneself through literature is not a new phenomenon. Marginalized sections like women, blacks, and Dalits have formed their canon of literature. Through their stories, they express their agonies and the injustice met to them by society. They have been silenced for centuries but now they are raising their voice. Transgender like Laxminarayan Tripathi and A. Revathi has also written about the suffering of the hijra community in India. A. Revathi's *The Truth about Me: A Hijra's Life Story* is a seminal work in this field. Laxmi describes that becoming a hijra is not an easy task. Although people have various meanings of the word hijra she defines it as, "The word he refers to the soul, a holy soul. The body in which the holy soul resides is called hijra (Tripathi 39)." When a person decides to become a hijra he has to face several problems. Some of these problems are created by his own family and others are by society. Laxmi says, "As the eldest son of my parents, they expect me to be manly, and eventually be the man of the house. I knew I couldn't fulfill these expectations because I didn't feel like a man. On top of that, I was gay, Even if my parents overlooked my aberrations, society would not. I felt inadequate. I wanted to be addressed as a woman, not a man, I was in turmoil (Tripathi 37)." After becoming hijra Laxmi observed the hijra life keenly and she concluded that this life was no better than the untouchables. The untouchables who were now called Dalits were getting reservations in jobs but nobody was serious about the welfare of her community. A hijra remains despised by society throughout her life. Laxmi writes "The hijras told us that they were no different from the untouchables of the past. When they went to the District Civil Hospital (or any other hospital for that matter), no one touched them, neither the doctors nor the nurses, not even the boys and ayah. They were pariahs (Tripathi 91)." Another business of hijras apart from

badhai and begging is sex work. They sell their bodies like prostitutes. Some of Laxmi's chela like Kiran, and Rupa died because of AIDS and other STDs (Sexual Transmitted Diseases). They indulge in this work not for pleasure but for bread. When Subhadra, the first chela of Laxmi was murdered, the police didn't do the investigations seriously and just did the formality. Laxmi writes, "A hijras death, nay murder, didn't seem to matter to anyone. But it mattered to us (Tripathi 57)."

People have various stereotypes about the hijras. They think that they abduct children to make them like them. But Laxmi says that it is a false accusation and a story created by a person who became hijra and told it to his family to defend himself. She tells that they never force anyone to become a hijra. She affirms that they also live an ordinary life like other human beings. Like other communities, they also have their traditions. But society doesn't consider them human beings and they are oppressed and discriminated. She writes, "As hijras, we live an ordinary life like everyone else. Like the underdog, we are respected by nobody (Tripathi 153)."

Laxmi visited several countries as a transgender activist and participated in various meetings and conferences organized by the organisations like United Nations. When she compares the condition of the transgender community of India with that of other countries, she finds the condition in other countries like America is much better than in India. She observed the transgender community of New York and writes, "One thing about New York that stood out for me was that here trans men and trans women are not obliged to live in ghettos and gated communities ... contrast with India. We abuse hijra when they 'harass' us on the streets, without realizing that the things they can do to survive can be counted on the fingers of one hand- begging, singing, dancing, and sex work. Can a hijra in India ever aspire to be a doctor, teacher, journalist, or business manager? The answer is resounding no (Tripathi109-110)."

Laxmi started his social activism very early in his life. She writes, "Activism runs through my blood. It is the elixir of my life (Tripathi 117)."

Because of their long struggle, the Supreme Court of India passed a judgment on 15 April 2014 which accorded the status of "third gender" to the hijra community and directed the government to reserve some seats for them in educational institutions and government jobs. This was a really big victory and Laxmi played a major part in this battle.

To Summarize, *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* is not merely an autobiography of Laxminarayan Tripathi but it represents the community that has been relegated to the margins for time immemorial. The writer has shown the mirror to society how it has done injustice to people with none of their faults. It can be seen as a revolt against the heteronormative system of society.

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