

A Dissertation

On

The Plight of The Third Gender: Quest for Identity in the Narratives

Me Hijra Me Laxmi and *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*

Submitted To

LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY

In the partial fulfillment for the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M.PHIL.IN ENGLISH)

2016-2017



FACULTY OF ARTS AND LANGUAGES

LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY

PUNJAB (INDIA)

Submitted by:

Vandhana Bhardwaj

Reg.No.11614940

Roll no.RU1602A02

Supervised By:

Dr. Shreya Chatterji

Associate Professor

Department of English

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled *The Plight of Third Gender and Quest for Identity* in the Narratives *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* and *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story* submitted for the M.Phil. Degree is entirely my original work, and all ideas and references have been duly acknowledged. It does not contain any work for award of any other degree or diploma at any university.

Research Scholar

Vandhana Bhardwaj

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the dissertation entitled “The Plight of the Third Gender and The Quest for Identity in the narratives *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* and *The Truth About Me-A Hijra Life Story*” by Vandhana Bhardwaj for the award of Master of Philosophy, is a record of research work done by the candidate under my supervision during the period of her study(2016-2017) and that the dissertation has not formed the basis for the award of any other Degree, Diploma, Associate ship, Fellowship or other similar title and that this dissertation represents independent work on the part of the candidate.

Place: Jalandhar

Dr. Shreya Chatterji

Date:

Supervisor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I bow to Almighty Lord whose blessings have enabled me to accomplish my dissertation work.

I offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Shreya Chatterji, who has generously offered her time, expertise, and continuous encouragement in guiding me and mentoring me step by step through the whole research process. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Ajoy Batta, Head of the Department of English for his valuable guidance. I acknowledge the faculty of the Department of English for constant motivation.

Last but certainly not least I am highly indebted to my family for the love and encouragement. Without the support of the family, it would not have been accomplished. Finally, I am grateful to all those friends who have supported me directly and indirectly.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the dissertation is to bring into perspective to the predicament of the third gender .The dissertation is thus titled *The Plight of the Third Gender: Quest for Identity in the Narratives Me Hijra Me Laxmi and The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story*. The chief endeavour is to create awareness amidst people of the grievances of the third gender. The present work analyses the plight of the third gender through the queer lens. Since time immemorial, the third gender has been discriminated by society. The present study explores the authentic side of the story of the *hijra* Community and their social status. The first chapter of the dissertation delineates the origin of the queer theory and presents a comparative analysis of the queer in the Indian context. The second chapter focuses on the identity crisis in the narrative *The Truth about Me-A hijra Life story*. It tells the poignant tale of Revathi, who is a transgender. The third chapter evaluates the narrative of Laxminarayan Tripathi through the queer theoretical approach it reflects the plight of the third gender. The concluding part of the dissertation delineates the contribution made by transgenders to queer literature. The dissertation is the outcome of queer analysis based on third gender narratives. It outlines the objective of the work and brings out the findings of the research.

Keywords: *hijra, queer, identity, third gender, plight, nirvana, guru, chela*

TABLE OF CONTENT

S. No.	Title	Page No.
1	Introduction	1-15
2	Chapter: 1 Queer theory and The Indian Context	16-35
3	Chapter: 2 Identity Crisis in <i>The Truth about Me-A Hijra Life Story</i> by A.Revathi	36-52
4	Chapter: 3 The Plight of The Third Gender in <i>Me Hijra Me Laxmi</i> by Laxminarayan Tripathi	53-69
5	Conclusion	70-80
6	Bibliography	81-83

Introduction

The dimension of marginalization of the third gender manifests itself in various social and cultural norms. In the Indian society, the assimilation of the third gender is not a current phenomenon; it has developed from the prehistoric time. The third gender individuals have been marginalized, in the hegemonic system of the binaries of being masculine and feminine because of their perception of sexual orientation and gender identity. Gender Identity refers to the personal view of oneself as male or female; how a person identifies his gender regardless of the sex assigned at the time of the birth. It's the inner being of an individual; that of being a male or female or somewhere in between these identities.

The terms 'sex' and 'gender' are not synonymous but often linked together. The substantive words 'geschlecht', 'gender', 'genre' and 'genero' refer to the idea of the sort, kind, and class. In English, 'gender' has been used in this 'generic' sense since at least the fourteenth century. The modern English word 'gender' refer to sexual difference. Sex defines the biological aspects of being male or female. Gender refers to the Psychological and socio-cultural meanings added to biological sex. It is the social construction based on the personal expectations of an individual. It is not something a person born with but it is something he feels about himself/herself. The concept of gender became popular in early 1970. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* makes the distinction clear between sex and gender in gender studies. Beauvoir defines that sex is a biological category and gender is the cultural interpretation of sex. "Gender is a social organization of different kinds of bodies into different categories of people" (Stryker 11). Judith Butler argues that sex is neutral and comes first. Gender is perceived as a secondary construct which is imposed over the top of this natural distinction. Wittig refers to "sex" as a mark that is

somehow applied by an institutionalized heterosexuality, a mark that can be erased or obfuscated through practices that effectively contest that institution (Butler 26). The words “male” or “female” refer to sex.

The distinction between sex and gender is social construction. Sex /gender diversity varies from both among and within cultures. Social attitude toward sex/gender diversity are often built on stereotypes, and are somewhat different than attitudes sex/gender variant individuals have about themselves, especially when social attitudes are negative, while cultural images of sex/gender diversity do influence how individual differences in sex/gender identity-how one experiences oneself as a sexed and gendered person. This individual variation is based on differences in personality, life circumstances, social class and other factors. Many social theorists assert that gender identity is one of the most fundamental means by individuals are recognized, both by others and by themselves. According to one scholar, “people may be described and categorized along many dimensions, but few seem to be as silent as gender....Gender is an integral part of who we are, how we think about ourselves, and how others respond to us” (Katz 1979, 155). Another theorist concludes, “Being female or being male is a part of everyone’s social identity from birth till death. Gender is at the core of what we really are”(Stoll 1974, ix). While gender is a primary identity for everyone, it may be particularly silent for women. For example, Deaux and Major (1990, 93) found that women are more likely to spontaneously describe themselves by gender than are men.

The University of Minnesota’s Transgender Commission defines these terms as “Gender identity is one’s internal sense of who they are; being a woman or man, girl or boy, or between these genders. It was in 1958, that the Gender Identity Research Project was established for the study of intersexual and transsexuals, at the University of California, at Los Angeles. In 1963 the

term 'gender identity' was introduced by Stoller, to the International Psychoanalytic Congress, at Stockholm. Second-wave of feminists criticized the binary logics of the nature/culture pair, including dialectical versions of the Marxist-humanist story of the domination, appropriation, or mediation of 'nature' by 'man' through 'labour'. But these endeavours hesitated to extend their criticism to the derivative sex/gender distinction. Judith Butler argues that gender identity discourse is intrinsic to fictions of heterosexual coherence, and feminist need to learn to produce narrative legitimacy for a whole array of non-coherent genders. Gender expression is the external representation of one's gender identity, usually expressed through feminine or masculine behaviors and signals such as clothing hair, movement, and voice or body characteristics. There is a great diversity in how an individual express his/her gender identity. Gender is most commonly thought about in binary terms as male or female. But not all men and women fit into these terms. Transgender people feel that their gender differs from the sex they were labeled at the time of the birth. Being transgender or having a non-binary gender identity is just a variation of human condition. Susan Stryker defines it in *Transgender History* as:

Gender identity: Each person has a subjective sense of fit with a particular gender category; this is one's gender identity. For most people, there is a sense of congruence between the category one has been assigned to and trained in, and what one considers oneself to be. Transgender people demonstrate that this is not always the case-that is possible to form a sense of oneself as not like other members of the gender one has been assigned to, or to think of one as properly belonging to another gender category. (13)

Gender Studies, Queer theory and Third gender/*Hijra* community

Gender theory came to the forefront of the theoretical scene first as feminist theory but has subsequently come to include the investigation of all gender and sexual categories and identities. In the context of postmodernism, gender theorists, led by the work of Judith Butler, initially viewed the category of "gender" as a human construct enacted by a vast repetition of social performance. The biological distinction between man and woman eventually came under the same scrutiny by theorists who reached a similar conclusion: the sexual categories are products of culture and as such help create social reality rather than simply reflect it.

Gender theory achieved a wide readership and acquired much of its initial theoretical rigor through the work of a group of French feminist theorists that included Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, and Julia Kristeva, who while Bulgarian rather than French, made her mark writing in French. Masculine gender theory as a separate enterprise has focused largely on social, literary, and historical accounts of the construction of male gender identities. Such work generally lacks feminism's activist stance and tends to serve primarily as an indictment rather than a validation of male gender practices and masculinity. A gender study is a field of study that looks at the world from the perspective of gender. It is a generic term which provides a common understanding regarding gender identity. Gender studies allow people to understand a gender's needs and the contributions each gender makes to society. Thus gender studies recognize that gender has to be taken seriously. It is also a field that recognizes that often, within academic disciplines and also other spheres of society, the perspective that has been applied has been that of the most powerful people in society, and that this is often at the expense of less powerful people. Gender studies then exist as an important means of correcting such imbalances. It

evaluates the phenomenon of gender. It is a field of interdisciplinary study which includes gender equality studies, women studies, men's studies and queer studies.

Much of what theoretical energy of masculine gender theory currently possesses comes from its ambiguous relationship with the field of "Queer theory." "Queer theory" is not synonymous with gender theory, nor even with the overlapping fields of gay and lesbian studies, but does share many of their concerns with normative definition. . Queer theory's main project is exploring the contesting the categorization of gender and sexuality; identities are not fixed-they cannot be categorized and labeled. . Queer theory said that there is an interval between what the subject "dese" or what the subject "is". It provides scholars activists and others with ways of thinking and talking about identity beyond simple binaries, especially in fighting homophobia and trans phobia (unreasoned fear and hatred toward homosexuals, trans sexuality and transgender people, respectively.) In the last two decades the focus of the queer Indian Research has been on linguistic or literary-critical analysis to show the representation of gender transposition in Indian socio cultural discourse. Queer theory often serves as a framework to study transvestitism, drag performances, the disparity between desire and gender, hermaphroditism and gender identity disorder and gender corrective surgery.

The third gender is a concept in which individuals are categorized either by society or themselves as neither man nor woman. Third gender/ eunuchs have existed since 9th century BC. The word has roots in Greek and means 'keeper of the bed'; castrated men were in demand to guard the women quarters of royal household. Transgender persons had been part of Indian society for centuries. In ancient Egypt (Middle Kingdom, 2000-1800 BCE) there were said to be three genders of human: men, Sekht (sht) and women. It may also mean as cisgender gay men in the sense of not having children and not necessarily someone who was castrated. In south Asian

countries including Pakistan and Bangladesh the hijras are AMAB (Assigned-Male-At-Birth) people with a feminine gender expression. In Japan, transgender identity is recognized as x-gender that isn't male or female. In China, yinyang are the people who have both feminine (yin) and masculine (yang) qualities. In Nepal netis are AMAB with feminine gender expression.

Transgender persons have been documented in many indigenous, Western and Eastern and societies and cultures in antiquity to the present day. The word "transgender" itself, which seems to have been coined in 1980s, took on its current meaning in 1992 after appearing in the title of a small but influential pamphlet by Leslie Feinberg, 'Transgender Liberation: A Movement whose Time has Come'. The first use of "transgender" is generally attributed to Virginia Prince, a Southern California advocate for freedom of gender expression. Prince used the term to refer to individuals like herself whose personal identities she considered to fall somewhere on a spectrum between "transvestite" (a term coined in 1910 by Dr. Magnus Hirschfield) and "trans-sexual" (the term popularized in 1950s by Dr. Harry Benjamin). The definition of transgender is controversial some believe that the term "transgender" comes from a term known as "transgenderist", meaning someone who changes their gender but not their sex. (Broad 2000), Feinberg (1996) defines transgender as "a distinction between those who reassign the sex they were labeled at birth and those of us whose gender expression is considered inappropriate for our sex" (pp. x-xi). Transsexuals, however, argue that the term "transgender" does not recognize the real experience of changing one's sex not just one's gender (Califia 1997). Lane (2009) notes the concern of transsexual voices being silenced or ultimately erased under the umbrella of transgender. *Hijra* in India are defined as an alternative gender role neither male nor female. Indian mythology provides ample illustration among deities and humans of androgens in

presentation of opposite sex, and sex change (O'Flaherty 1980) Thus the Hindu tradition provides models for the hijra, although they occupy a marginal status in India.

“The word *hijra* derives from the Urdu word *hijar*. A *hijar* is a person who has walked out of his community. Thus *hijra* is a one who has left mainstream society, compromising men and women, and joined a community of hijras. But *hijra* community isn't a monolith. In Urdu the hijras are also called *khwaja Sara*. In Hindi they are called *kinner*. South Indian languages adopt other terms for hijras. For example, in Telugu we're called *napunsaka*, In Tamil, *aravani*, after the well-known story of Lord Krishna and Aravan. Though the nomenclature differs, the concept is same everywhere.” There was an evidence of recognition of third sex in Indian Vedas: ancient texts. Hindu mythology is full of examples of how the *hijras* were inclusive in the society. In 17th and 18th century *hijras* wore both male and female clothing, this portrayal changed to *hijras* only in women clothing. *Hijras* have a great affinity for Lord Shiva in his *Ardhnarishwar* form i.e. the half man and half woman.

Third gendered persons in India or in other non-cultures have had a social acceptance since antiquity and there are legends and myths about them. Through Vedic literature, the sex or gender of the human being is clearly divided into three separate categories according to prakriti or nature. These are: *pums- prakriti* or male, *stri -prakriti* or female and *tritiya -prakriti* or third sex. The term prakriti or nature however, implies both aspects together as one intricately woven and cohesive unit; people of third sex are analyzed in *Kama Sutra* and broken down into several categories that are still visible today and generally referred to as gay and lesbians. The homosexual behavior of these people is described in great detail within the eighth and ninth chapters of the second part of the *Kama Sutra*. People of the third sex are also classified under a larger social category known as the “neutral gender”. Its members are called *napunsaka*, or

“those who do not engage in procreation.” There are five types of napunsaka people: (1) children (2) the elderly (3) the impotent (4) the celibate (5) the third sex. They were all considered to be sexually neutral by Vedic definition and were protected and believed to bring good luck.

The Sanskrit word *shandha* refers to men who behave like women or whose manhood is completely destroyed (the word *shandhi* similarly applies to women) this can refer to many types of third-gender people but is perhaps most commonly used to describe those with complete transgender identity. Such people do not identify with their physical sex but instead consider themselves and live their lives as members of the opposite sex. Castration was not a common or accepted practice of ancient India and mutilation of the body is discouraged in Vedic texts and considered to be in the mode of darkness. In South India, largely spared from Islamic rule and influence, there is a third gender class similar to the *hijra* known as *jogappa* but they do not practice castration. The eunuchs-transvestite role of the *hijras* links them not only to the mother Goddess, but also to Siva, through their identification with Arjuna, the hero of *Mahabharata*. There are various myths which are linked to the origin of the hijras. In *Neither Man nor Woman—The Hijras of India* Serena Nanda defines the myth related to Lord Rama as:

In the time of the Ramayana, Ram fought with demon Ravenna and went to Sri Lanka to bring his wife, Sita, back to India. Before this, his father commanded Ram to leave Ayodhya (his native city) and go into the forest for 14 years. As he went, the whole city followed him because they loved him so. As Ram came to the banks of the river at the edge of the forest, he turned to the people and said, “Ladies and gents, please wipe your tears and go away.” But those people who were not men or women did not know what to do. So they stayed there because Ram did not ask them to go. They remained there 14 years and Ram returned

from Lanka he found those people there, all meditating. And so they were blessed by Ram. (13)

It is believed that because of this blessing they have the power to bless the good fortune and fertility. One origin myth of the *hijras* is the story of Arjuna's exile. Vedic culture allowed transgender people of the third sex to live openly according to their gender identity and this is demonstrated in the *Mahabharata* story of Arjuna and Brhinnala. Arjuna lives incognito for one year as a part of the price he must pay for losing a game of dice and also rejecting the advances of one of the celestial nymphs. Arjuna decides to hide himself in the guise of eunuch/transvestite, wearing bangles made of white conch, braiding his hair like a woman, clothing himself in female attire, and serving the ladies of the king's court (Rajagopalachari 1980) some *hijras* say that whoever is born on Arjuna's day, no matter where in the world, will become a *hijra*. Another myth which is linked with eunuchs is tale of *Mahabharata*'s Shikhandi. The story of Shikhandi in the epic tells us that Shikhandi had his rightful place in the society, although publically recognized as neither man, nor woman. *Mahabharata* has a lot of characters and each character is related to the other by some or other way. The story of Aravan is one of the tragic stories of *Mahabharata*. Aravan was a fierce warrior. He fought bravely in the Kurukshetra war. Aravan sacrificed his life for the greater good. It is from his lineage that the transgenders are said to have been born. This is the reason why the transgenders are known as *Aravanis*. The transgender identity is celebrated in the Koovagam festival. Koothandavar temple is famous for its festival of transgenders and transvestites. Koovagam is a village in Ulundurpettai Taluk in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu. Koothandavar temple is dedicated to the Lord Aravan/Koothandavar. The transgenders, who celebrate this festival, marry the Lord Aravan and become the brides for one day. This ritual is connected the myth of *Mahabharata*, when Aravan asked Lord Krishna for

three boons. In his third boon, he asked Lord Krishna to be married before his death. But no woman was willing to marry for one day. So Lord Krishna took the avatar as 'Mohini' and became the bride of Aravan for one day, and the next day Aravan sacrificed his life. In Koovagam festival after celebrating as the brides of Aravan for one day transgenders mourn Aravan's death by dancing and breaking their bangles. This festival is observed for eighteen days.

Eunuchs enjoyed high status in the royal courts of the Mughal Empire. Eunuchs were the guards of the Mughal harem. The Mughal household was the world of slavery. A number of male and female slaves were given the charge of the household. The slave eunuchs were the castrated young boys. They were given the various tasks in the harem. They acted as the royal guards. Mughal rulers also employed them as their assistants. In Mughal harem the security was maintained by eunuchs. They guarded the main gates of the harem and checked every activity of the harem. Harem was the largest part of the Mughal Empire. Therefore thousands of eunuchs were employed for various tasks. The groups of the guard eunuchs were hierarchical. Senior eunuchs were called *Nazirs* and *Khwaja Saras*. A number of junior eunuchs worked under *Nazirs* and *Khwaja Saras*. It is a well-known fact of Mughal history that a number of eunuchs were the nobles of Mughal Empire and Sultanate of Delhi.

Imaduddin Rayhan, Kafur Hazardinari, Khurau Shah were the eunuchs who got much recognition in the history of Mughal period. Khurau Shah was the favorite of Qutbuddin Mubarak Khalji and Kafur Hazardinari was the vice-regent and army commander under Sultan Balban. In 1394 Khwaja Jahan Malik was sent as the governor of Jaunpur with the title of Malik-us-shariq (master of the east) .He was appointed as wazir of Sultan Mahmud. Bakhtawar Khan was a great historian and scholar who became superintendent of eunuchs under the rule of

Aurangzeb. Mia Mahabat and Mia Arjamand got much honor. On the behalf of Mughlani Begham they ruled the state in later period of Mughal period (1754-1756). In the Mughal Era eunuchs got mastery and large allowance. They were the trustworthy of the Mughal rulers. Though they worked as the guards and slaves in the harem, they enjoyed the honor and prestige. In harem they were the trustworthy helpers of the Mughal ladies in various ways. Eunuchs played a considerable role in Mughal period, they fought battles, they conquered kingdoms, and they became governors. They enjoyed honor in the royal courts and accumulated much wealth.

Under the British rule the *hijras* lost some of their traditional legitimacy when British government refused to lend its legal support to the *hijras* '“right of begging and extorting money, whether authorized governments or not.” The British thereby hoped to discourage what they found to be “the abominable practices of the wretches.” British government established a law under the Criminal Tribes Act 1871 in which British government labeled the eunuchs as a criminal tribe. British government considered the *hijra* community as a threat to the society. They were discriminated on the basis of their gender and social status and they lost their prestige and honor which they gained in Mughal period. Under the Criminal Tribes Act 1871, the *hijras* were categorized as criminals. They were also arrested for dressing as women and performing in public places or indulging in sex work. After independence the law was repealed by the Indian government in 1949 but transgender community was not accepted by the society as equal to them.

The *hijra* community act and dress like women or whose cultures centers on the worship of Bahuchara Mata. Bahuchara Mata is also known as Bedhraj Mata. Bahuchar Mata is Hindu goddess who rides a rooster and carried trident in one hand and scripture in another. Mata is also known for the goddess of non-violence and innocence. It is believed that *hijras* are descendants

of Bahuchara Mata. Primarily North Indian cultural group such as Gujratis, Punjabis, Sindhis and Marwaris believe their *hijra* have powers to bless and to curse. By asking them to dance and sing or allowing them to do so when a baby is born, the public shows respect for their powers. *Hijras* are culturally significant performers. Their traditional occupation is to perform on the birth of the child and at weddings or temple festivals.

Hijras also adopt female behavior: they imitate, even exaggerate a woman's swaying walk sit and stand like women, and carry pots on their hips, which men do not. *Hijras* also take female names when they join the *hijra* community and they use female kinship terms for each other, such as "sister", "aunty", and "grandmother" (mother's mother). In some parts of India they also have a special, feminized language, which consists of the use of feminine expressions and intonations. (Freeman 1979:295)

An average Indian thinks of *hijras* as a menace and a nuisance, and runs away spotting them on the streets. This bias, or worse, prejudice towards *hijras* is shared by both men and women alike. Men are shamed and embarrassed when surrounded by a group of *hijras* who stubbornly beg for money, refusing to let go till the person concerned parts with least a few rupees. *Hijras* are considered threat to society by some people. They give money to them, not with the sense of sympathy or charity but to get rid of them. Mostly *hijras* live in the *gharanas* also called *dera* in Punjab. The *hijras* live like a family in the *dera* or *gharanas*. The *guru* is considered the head of the family. In the family *guru* is the head and the mother of the *hijras*, it's called the *guru-chela* relationship. In the family *hijras* have mothers, sisters and daughters and no man as family. The Guru-Chela relationship is one of the unique relations in the family of *hijras*. When a born male person wants to become a *hijra* or transgender he has to go through the rituals of the *gharana*, he

is castrated and this ritual is called *nirvana*. The whole ritual is celebrated as a ceremony and after that the male becomes the *hijra/ chela* of the *Guru*. The rank of the *Guru* is hierarchical. The main source of earning of *hijras* is *badhai*. 'Badhai' is a kind of performance where *hijra* performs on the birth of a child and the occasion of the marriage and receive money as the 'badhai'. But *hijras* have to do sex-work. They are also found begging money in the public places. Lack of employment and education is the main cause of prostitution. Violence against the sex-workers is brutal. They are discriminated on the basis of their gender and class.

In *Third Sex and Human Rights*, Rajesh Talwar (1999) highlights human rights abuses and legal problems faced by third sex in India. He details the legal position regarding emasculation, marriage, adoption, petitions challenging the criminalization of homosexuality as well as human rights law treatise that have bearing on their status. He also shows how media mirror and perpetrate a different kind of violence on *hijras*, placing them right at the bottom of social hierarchy, effectively turning them into citizens without rights. But in the 21st century has witnessed some change in the attitude of the government towards the minorities like LGBT. In May 2008, Tamil Nadu became the first state to grant the recognition to the transgender. Applications for admission to educational institutions, government hospitals and ration cards in the state since then have allowed one's gender to be designated as M, F or T. The Election Commission of India's decision of November 11, 2009, permitting eunuchs/transsexuals to indicate their sex as 'Other', if they don't wish to be described as male or female, has come after struggle by groups working for the rights of transgender persons. On 15 April 2014 Justices Radhakrishnan and A.K. Sikri granted legal recognition to transgender as the third gender and directed the center and state to treat the transgender as socially and educationally backward class for the purpose of quotas. LGBT people in India still experience difficulty in getting medical

treatment, as well as work discrimination. Transgender people are doing their best to get the recognition in the society.

The aim of this dissertation is to create awareness amidst people about the grievances of transgenders and to highlight the contribution given by transgender writers to queer literature. The transgender people are prejudiced in every sphere of life. The first chapter of the dissertation explores the origin of the queer theory and its contribution to literary world. The chapter also reveals how queer theory became one of the most influential literary theories that fascinated the Indian scholars. This chapter also presents a comparative analysis of queerness in the Indian scenario. The chapter puts on the anvil the literature review of the third gender narratives. The main focus of this dissertation is to analyze the two narratives, *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* and *The Truth about Me- A Hijra Life Story*.

The Second Chapter of this Dissertation will focus on the identity crisis in the autobiographical work, *The Truth about Me- A Hijra Life Story* by A.Revathi. Also, this chapter explores the journey of a transgender, facing the discrimination in the patriarchal society and outlines the pathetic story of a transgender/hijra (in Hindi) who does not hide her virtues or flaws from the judgment of the world. Further, it highlights the quest for identity in the narrative *The Truth about Me-A Hijra Life Story*.

The third chapter of the said work evaluates the third gender narrative, *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* by Laxminarayan Tripathi. It offers an insight into the life of transgenders: their struggle and miseries. It reflects the plight of the third gender describing the personal experiences of Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, who herself is a transgender. The concluding portion of this Dissertation reflects the status of the third gender/ *hijra* community in the Indian society. It highlights the

contribution made by the transgenders in general and to the queer literature and to the *hijra* community in particular by working for the sexual minorities as transgender activists. Hence, the work in-question is interdisciplinary in nature as it espouses both the socio-cultural front and subsumes literary part too. This part of the dissertation brings the findings of the research as it outlines the main objective of the dissertation.

This dissertation is the outcome of the analysis based on the literary works on the third gender narratives, authored by Laxminarayan Tripathi and A. Revathi. Laxminarayan Tripathi is the transgender activist and has got the recognition at the international level. A.Revathi is the first Indian transgender who has written her autobiography. In the narratives of these transgender author-activists, they have told the stories of their psychological trauma. How the world of transgenders or *hijras* is facing the difficulties in every sphere of life has been lucidly delineated in these narratives. Laxminarayan Tripathi has narrated in her autobiography the quest for identity and particularly, after becoming a *hijra*. So, the narrative is a success-story of the author in-question.

Chapter: 1

Queer theory and The Indian context

The terms “queer”, “queer theory” and “queer nation” have recently gained wide importance in academic discourse. Queer theory is a field of the poststructuralist critical theory that emerged out of Feminism and Gender studies in the 1990s. The theory is, after all as its Greek root suggests, fundamentally about *theros* that is *spectatorship* (*horan*, is to see). It determines the ways in which we see the world around us. A study of ‘theory’ quite simply implies understanding these ways of seeing and constantly revising those according to needs and situations. Queer theory, heavily influenced by post-structuralism, has entered the academy as a critical approach to examine human sexuality, issues of power, patriarchy, and hegemony (Slage, 2003; Turner, 2001; Yep, 2003). Like postmodern and post-structuralist discussions of identity formations queer theory also troubles the notion of “stability” and “fixity” (Atay36). Queer theory challenges the traditional binary division. “Queer marks both continuity and a break with previous gay liberationist and lesbian feminist models” (Jagose 75). For queer theorists, “queer” connotes a crossing of boundaries, transgression of norms, and the failure to fit expected categories.

Before the phrase Queer theory was born the queer nation appeared on the cover of the short-lived Lesbian/gay quarterly magazines *Outlook* and *Queer Nation*. Soon enough *Outlook* and *Queer Nation* stopped being published which is followed by a Mini Gay Renaissance during the 1980s and early 1990s, out if this emerged queer Theory. The term queer theory is coined by Teresa de Lauretis; several writers such as Eve Kosfsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Adrienne Rich, and Diana Fuss have positioned the queer and queer theory in the light of culturally marginal

sexual self-identifications. In 1991 feminist film critic Teresa de Lauretis edited a special issue of the journal *Difference* under the subtitle *Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities*. The issue contained essays on a diverse array of cultural representations and manifestations of same-sex desire. In his book, *Saint Foucault*, David Halperin also refrains from pinning down the term queer, arguing instead that:

Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate and dominant. There is nothing particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence. ‘Queer’ then demarcates not positivity but a possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance (62).

Michael Warner has remarked that “almost everything that would be called queer theory is about ways in which texts –either literature or mass culture of language –shape sexually.” More extremely he continues, “You can’t eliminate queerness...or screen it out. It’s everywhere” (Warner, 1992, p. 19). Queerness indicates the failure to fit particularly within a category, and some individuals at some point of time find themselves uncomfortable in the bounds of the categories of gender identity. Jagose argues “queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire.” Although it is believed that queer theory has been emerged from the gay and lesbian studies but apparently the queer theorists have expanded their field to challenge the perception of gender identity. According to Turner, queer theory is based to the ideas of thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Eve Sedgwick, Teresa de Lauretis and Judith Butler. Turner states that, “beginning with gender and sexuality, Butler, de Lauretis, Sedgwick and others have begun to wonder how we adopt our genders and sexualities, how those categories come to have the specific meaning that they do, what symbolic and institutional practices contribute to our sense

of ourselves as selves, and how those enable and constrain us”(8). Queer theory indicates the emergence of new forms of thought or at least new ways of working with the categories or concepts. Annamarie Jagose in her work *Queer theory: An Introduction* refers as:

Once the term ‘queer’ was, at best, slang for homosexual, at worst, a term of homophobic abuse. In recent years ‘queer’ has come to be used differently, sometimes as an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications and at other times to describe a nascent theoretical model which has developed out of more traditional lesbian and gay studies.(1)

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick was a pioneering voice in the field of queer theory. In *Queer and Now*, Sedgwick vigorously argues against monolithic understandings of sexuality that presume sexual identity as a static identity category. In doing so, she offers several definitions to “queer”, the first of which works to destabilize “common sense” approaches to sexual identity. Sedgwick in her *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire (1985)* presents the idea that the ‘homosocial desire’ has been present in English literature through ages and male bonding has also been in tradition in English literature. Sedgwick believes that the notions of ‘desire’, ‘homosexual’, ‘lesbian’ are historically inconstant. Sedgwick suggests that the concepts like desire, masculinity, and femininity, lesbian and homosexual are historically uncertain. These terms have their cultural meanings according to the cultural milieu of the age. In her work she explores that there is plenty of material available in English literature on same-sex relationships. In 1990, Sedgwick published her work *Epistemology of Closet*, she didn’t use the term queer in it but she expected its development in her argument that the logic of concealment and disclosure around “the closet” was an interpretation of the western culture. In her work Sedgwick suggested that

western culture was troubled by the queer disruption. Nikki Sullivan in her work *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* suggests that “sexuality is not natural, but rather, is discursively constructed” (1). She believes sexuality is constructed, experienced and understood in culturally and historically specific ways.

It was in the year 1869 that the term ‘homosexuality’ appeared in print for the first time in a German pamphlet written by a Hungarian doctor Karl-Maria Kertbeny (1824-1882). The term homosexual was not used publicly by 1880. Homosexuality is widely known as the sexual attraction towards the same sex. At that time heterosexuality was observed as obsessive sexual behavior towards the opposite sex. In the history of western thought, it is a historical fact that homosexuality has been considered as a disease and is believed to be curable by medical treatment or by the availability of the female prostitutes. It was intentionally termed as ‘orient vice’ during the British colonial period. Andy Buechel quotes Norbert Reck as:

This (division of humanity into sexual and heterosexual) is injurious not only to those who are discriminated against by that division, but to all others. For even if the unconscious aim that of categorization was to ascribe disconcerting sexual feeling to a precisely defined group of “other” to conceive of oneself as “normal” that does not mean that those feelings are banished in any way. Every human being experiences forms of desire for other people- wholly irrespective of their gender. The occasional appearance of same-sex desires (among heterosexuals) means insecurity and anxiety for many of those who have constructed an unequivocally heterosexual identity in which to enclose themselves. (6)

In 1886 with the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1885), sexual relations between men (not women) were given Royal Assent by Queen Victoria. And further, it was 1892 that the word 'bisexual', in its current sense, was used in Charles Gilbert Chaddock's translation of Kraft-Ebing's *Psychopethia sexualitis*. British doctor Havelock Ellis coined the phrase 'sexual inversion' to define the homosexuality and influenced Sigmund Freud. The theories of the psychologists of that time were not based on any scientific evidence. But their theories influenced the next generations. In 1897 Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, a German physician founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in Germany. It was an effort to overcome the antigay prejudice. Dr. Hirschfeld opened the Institute for Sexual Research in 1919 but it was closed by Nazis in 1933. Sex reassignment surgery was pioneered at this institute by Ludwig Levy-Lenz.

Michel Foucault, philosopher, historian and activist was one the most influential thinkers whose work is generally categorized as poststructuralist. Provocatively furnishing an exact date for the invention of homosexuality, Foucault (1981:43) writes:

We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized- Westphal's famous article of 1870 on 'contrary sexual sensations' can stand as its date of birth- less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and feminine in oneself. (Jagose 10-11)

Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, published in 1980 has been a significant text for study of alternative sexualities. Foucault was influenced by the works of George Canguilhem in biology and medicine. Foucault's works on sexuality reflect the influence of the theoretical perspective

of Canguilhem. His approach towards subjectivity added a new dimension to the queer project. Foucault positioned sexuality not as a natural category, but as a constructed category related to experience, which itself is rooted in historical, social, cultural and biological contexts. Foucault provides a broad frame of analysis on the discourse of sexuality. According to Foucault, homosexuality is viewed as a constructed category of knowledge rather than a discovered entity. Michel Foucault edited two memoirs; one was by Herculine Barbin (1978) and another memoir was by Pierre Riviere (1975). Herculine was a hermaphrodite who lived as a female. He lived her life as female for twenty years. When she realized that she was a hermaphrodite, she was guided by the doctors to change her sex by surgery. But misdirected treatment became the cause of her suicide. Through this memoir Foucault shows the insistence of the society to choose a true sexual identity. Foucault argues “homosexuality threatens people as a way of life.” According to Foucault, homosexuality is viewed as a constructed category of knowledge rather than discovered entity. David Halperin wrote his book, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*, explicitly in response to the charge from gay philosopher Richard Mohr that some scholars seemed to have lost their critical faculties on the topic of the “social construction” of “homosexuality,” which position Mohr and Halperin agree on attributing in its origin to Michel Foucault.

Various humanitarian organizations concerned with the “(de)criminalisation of homosexuality” (Sullivan 22) were active in Europe, the U.S.A. and Britain in the first half of twentieth century. The work of such organizations, combined with the increasingly public discussion of sexuality paved the way for the emergence, in 1950s, of what they think of as, the first homosexual and rights groups. Such groups were known as Homophile Movement. An Australian group CAMP (Campaign Against Moral Persecution) Inc, was founded on 1970. The CAMP described their

agenda, “As far as the wider society is concerned, we should concentrate on providing information, removing prejudices, ignorance and fear, stressing the ordinariness of homosexuality and generally reassuring and discussing those with hostile attitudes. Concerning homosexuals, we think a policy of development of confidence and lessening of feelings isolation and guilt, where they exist is vital” (Poll, cited in Thompson, 1985:10). In the 1969 the gay liberation movement was inaugurated through Stonewall riots. The “gay liberation” and “lesbian feminist” movements of the late 1960s and 1970s had given way gradually to the “lesbian/gay” movement of late 1980s (the change in name from the way gradually to the National gay Task Force to the National Gay and Lesbian Task force in 1985 can serve as the marker event). That change, and the later shift to “queer,” reflected two trends. First, white lesbians, LGBT people of color, and other groups pointed out that differences of sex, gender, race, ethnicity, and class mattered for experiencing, understanding, organizing around issues of sexuality and gender. During the 1990s various groups, especially bisexuals and transgender people announced that the categories “homosexual”, “gay” or “lesbian” failed to capture their experiences of alterity and alienation along the axes of sexuality and gender. In 1990, a new militant political group calling itself Queer Nation was founded in New York. Within a few years, there were dozens of Queer Nation Groups across the United States. In 1992 the Queer Nation Movement was started and the objective behind the movement was to challenge the oppression. It was an LGBT organization and a purposeful reaction against the oppressors. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender activists have taken up the strategies of protest on their own behalf. This is primarily a post-world war phenomenon. To grab the attention of the public they used the method of rallies and protests. For the protests and rallies they used the banners with the famous slogan “we’re here! We’re Queer! Get used to it!” The movement was efficacious and powerful in the early 1990s.

It was gay liberation movement which is considered liable for the emergence of a new set of terminology LGBT, referred to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. In the year 1990 the term Queer/ Questioning was added to it as LGBTQ. At present Intersex is also added to it as LGBTIQ. In the soup of LGBTIQ the first 'L' is referred to lesbian. The term lesbian is derived from the name of the island, *lesbos*, where Sappho lived in sixth century B.C. Sappho, was a poet from the island of *lesbos*, who composed love lyrics approximately 12,000 lines out of which about 600 lines survive in praise of women and girls. Sappho's place as a poet of queer literary tradition is noticeable. 'G' is referred to gay which is acquired its place in 17th century. The terms gay and lesbian are the traits of being homosexual. Most commonly queer is used as an umbrella term for the sexual minorities; like third gender. Gay, Lesbian, bisexual and transgender relate with sexual orientation. Transgender is the term which is related to the gender identity. Transgender refers to an individual, who rejects the gender of social assignment. The term transgender is used for the individuals who transgress their gender and can be identified as 'queer'. The word 'transgender' appeared in the title of a small but influential pamphlet by Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time has Come*, published in 1992. First usage of the word transgender is attributed to a Southern California advocate for freedom of gender expression, Virginia Prince. The term transgender includes transvestite, transsexual, cross dresser, drag queen. The word transvestite coined in 1910 by German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld. "He used it to describe the 'erotic urge to disguise', which is how he understood the motivation that led some people to wear clothing generally associated with a social gender other than the one assigned to them at birth"(Stryker 16). The term transsexual was introduced to draw distinction between transvestites. In the past couple of decades, the word transgender got much recognition but its meaning is still under construction. Some individuals feel that they are

different from others and usually cross over the socially constructed boundaries. The transgenders feel that they belong to another gender and they incline to live as their mind allows them to live. The transgenders are termed as sexual minorities, as they are less in numbers; they face discrimination on the basis of their gender identity. The concept of third gender is based on the categorization either by society or themselves as neither man nor woman. The study of third gender comes under queer theory.

The term queer studies is emerged out of the concept of queer theory. It is used variously as synonymous for queer theory. Queer studies focus on the issue of gender identity and sexual orientation. It also challenges the binaries constructed by social culture. Queer studies represent a paradigm or discursive shift in the way some scholars view sexual identity. Queer studies attempt not to abandon identity as a site for knowledge and politics but to problematize fixed and hegemonic notions of identity:

Queer theory is suggesting that the study of homosexuality should not be a study of minority- that making of the lesbian/gay/bisexual subject- but a study of those knowledges and social practices that organize 'society' as a whole by sexualizing – heterosexualizing or homosexualizing – bodies, desires, acts, identities, social relations, knowledges, culture, and social institutions.(Seidman 1996:12)

The expeditious development of lesbian and gay studies in universities in the 1990s is paralleled by an increasing implementation of the term 'queer'. Institutionally queer has been associated most prominently with lesbian and gay subjects but its analytic framework also includes such topics as cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity, and gender-corrective surgery. One of the first topics explored by the queer theorists was the opposition between heterosexuality and

homosexuality. While gay/lesbian theological works have concentrated on questions of homosexuality, queer theory has expanded its realm of investigation to sexual desire, paying close attention to the cultural construction of categories of normative and deviant sexual behavior. Queer studies analyses the sexual behaviors or the concepts related to the sexual identity and the other categories of normative or deviant. As a field of inquiry queer studies gives the emphasis to the ways in which “sexualities organize and destabilize the society. Queer theorists investigate the historical and cultural underpinnings of nouns such as ‘woman’, ‘homosexuals,’ ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ in order to examine what sorts of generalizations and assumptions enable the referential functions, and determine the meanings, of those terms. Joseph Bristow, Jonathan Dollimore, Ed Cohen, Lee Edelman and Alan Sinfield are practitioners of queer studies. The number of queer texts and authors has increased dramatically through the 1990s, as the queer studies has become a part of the university courses.

In the Indian context, queer literature was not much appreciated in its earlier phase but the scenario has changed. Queer theory has influenced Indian scholars in a wide range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields, as a slew of books that invoke ‘queer’ in their titles or contents indicate. In India, queer theory acts as the bunch of ideas that become the driving force of the activists and theorists. In the Indian context, there have been innumerable references to homosexuality. Indian mythology and Vedic literature also refer to homosexuality. Ancient texts provide the evidence of attitudes towards sexuality; these Vedic texts reveal the ethical perspectives on sexuality. There are several instances of nudity in ancient Indian arts; sculptures of Ellora and Ajanta caves. Homosexual behavior is described in great detail in the eighth and ninth chapters of the second part of the *Kama Sutra*, an Indian Hindu text. Throughout history, people have attempted or practiced every possible form of sexual gratification. Indian society is

considered as a segregated society. There are various instances of conservative families where the mixing of sex is not allowed. In this kind of social milieu, the same-sex attraction and relationships are common, but they don't display it publically. Though homosexuality as a practice has been in existence in traditional societies since time immemorial, sexuality has never become an issue of struggle, for instance, many individuals in traditional Indian societies might practice homosexual relations but do not identify themselves as gay or lesbian.

Queer trend is observed in late 1980s or more specifically in late 1990s, when authors came out with the subject of homosexuality in their writings. The revolution started with authors and film makers of Indian origin who were born and brought up in the West and had successfully established themselves in the world of academics. Most prominent authors among them were Suniti Namjoshi, Pratibha Parmar and Rakesh Ratti. The first ever noteworthy debate on homosexuality takes place in the 1920s with the publication of a collection of short stories in Hindi, Ugra's *Chocolate* (1927). In modern India one can randomly speak of Ismat Chughtai's story '*Lihaaf*' (written originally in Urdu, and, translated into English as '*The Quilt* 1942), of Suniti Namjoshi's many poems and fiction such as *Feminist Fables* and *The Conversations of Cow* (1985), of the poetry of Sultan Padamsee, and of Aubrey Menon's autobiographical books *The Space within the Heart* and *It Is All Right* (Raja Rao 184). In 1990, a gay journalist, Ashok Rao Kavi published India's first gay magazine *Bombay Dost* (*Bombay Friends*), later Ashok Rao established his own NGO Humsafar Trust for the LGBT groups in Mumbai. Mahesh Dattani's plays like *A Muggy Night in Mumbai* and *Night Queen* are based on the theme of homosexual identity. R. Raj Rao claims, "My own work has been consistently queer since I published my first collection of short stories, *One Day I Looked My Flat in Soul City*, in 1995" (Rao 186).

From his poetry collection *Bombay*, Riyad Wadia chose six poems and converted them into a short film.

The last decade of the twentieth century has witnessed the publications of two queer anthologies: *Yaraana: Gay Writings from India* (1999), edited by Hoshang Merchant, and *Facing the Mirror: Lesbian Writings from India* (1999) edited by Ashwini Sukthankar; both the anthologies were published by Penguin. These two anthologies, arrestingly the pioneering pieces in the field of queer writing in India, were highly influential in the formation of a canon and in providing a structure for a queer movement in Indian literature. Taking inspiration from the two anthologies, Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai edited *Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History* in 2000 and included passages, that depict same sex love from ancient, medieval and modern India. The anthologies indicate, in principle, that a body of queer literary works has been present through the ages, though it was not technically categorized as “queer literature”. The earliest queer literature involves mythical rather than real people, and Devdatt Pattnaik joins Vanita and Kidwai to reinterpret mythological tales from a non- heterosexual perspective in books like *Shikhandi* and *Other Tales They don't Tell You*, *The Pregnant King* and several others. In *Sakhiyani*, Giti Thadani writes about Lesbian sculptures in ancient Indian temples of Khajuraho and Konark. The first full-fledged Gay novel *The Boyfriend* by Raja Rao came out in 2003. Another noteworthy contribution of Rao to the Indian queer literature is his novel, *Hostel Room131*. The authors (younger) like, Siddharth Dhanvant Shangavi, Mahesh Natarajan, and Himadri Roy made their contribution to the impressive queer literature. Some of the writings are discovered in the regional languages like Marathi and Tamil. Bindumadhav Khire's *Partner* and Indradhanush published in Marathi language. In 2009 A. Revathi published her autobiography *The Truth about Me –A Hijra Life Story* and became the first Indian transgender to write an

autobiography, written in Tamil and translated in English by V.Geetha. Living Smile Vidya, an Indian transgender narrates her traumatic experiences as a *hijra* in Indian society, in her autobiography *I am Vidya- A Transgender's Journey* (2013). India's distinguished transgender Laxminarayan Tripathi published her book *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* (2015), written by Vaishali Rode in Marathi and translated in English by R. Raj Rao and P.G. Joshi. A.Revathi's convincing memoir *The Life in Trans Activism* and Laxminarayan Tripathi's another work *The Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life* appeared in 2016. The queer is no longer a taboo for Indian queer authors. Queer theory is thus being formed at a variety of different places, which include small groups of female or male academics, scholars or activists who identify with, or wish to be associated with, issues related with non-normative sexuality and gender.

This dissertation is based on the study of the autobiographical works by transgender authors, Laxminarayan Tripathi and A.Revathi. Autobiography is the self-narrative in which an author gives the vivid account of himself. Transgender autobiography is a body of literature that consists of narratives that articulate and empower the transgender or transsexual autobiographical voice. Most critics consider the rise of the transgender autobiography as a twentieth-century phenomenon. The transgenders have got published autobiographies to relate the stories of their lives, which is an effort for paving the way in the acceptance for the transgender community. Early trans-autobiographies were written by transsexual women whose gender identities had been revealed as a response to the stereotypes and misinformation circulated about their lives. Last few years has witnessed that trans-autobiographies have been written to recount the personal experiences of the revelation of the transgender identities by the transgender people. Traditionally, the autobiography of Lili Elbe (1882-1931) is cited as the first book-length account of trans-sexuality. Elbe was a male born Danish painter who identified and

lived as a woman in 1920s and had a series of gender conforming surgeries. *Man into Woman: An Authentic Record of a Change of Sex* was published by her friend Ernst Ludwig Hawthorn Jacobson in 1933. After *Man into Woman*, another transsexual autobiography was apparently not published until 1954. The transsexual autobiography *Roberta Cowell's Story* (1954) similarly erupted from sensationalized publicity and was in fact first published as a magazine serial. Cowell is known as Britain's first transsexual. Mario Martino's *Emergence: A Transsexual Autobiography* (1977) is one of the earliest autobiographical chronicles of FTM life. "Many transsexual autobiographers relate a similar story: from their earliest memories feeling themselves to be very different from others of their assigned gender, while growing up expressing themselves whenever possible as that different gender, learning about and meeting others of their gender identity, and eventually transitioning to their appropriate gender"(Brett Genny Beemyn 3). The late 1990s and 2000s also saw a spate of trans-autobiographies.

In India, A. Revathi is the first transgender to narrate her story of transition in her autobiography, which is considered to be the first of its kind in Indian Queer literature. *The Truth about Me- A Hijra Life Story* by A.Revathi is a narrative of her personal experiences and her struggle. Dr. Trayee Sinha in her article *Identity Construction of the Third Gender in The Truth about Me* describes:

The autobiographical account of Revathi presents the painful picture of her life. On one hand her story symbolizes the nature-culture binary and it is also problematizing gender mainstreaming. The claim of humanity is constitution of human. It is Revathi's claim of humanity to consider her not as someone from the sexuality minority community but an ordinary human being. She could fill the

irreducible gap between the marginalized and the 'normal' beings. Revathi's struggle is a living symbol for thousands of identities like Revathi. (68)

Revathi yearned to live like a woman but she claims to be a human being as equal to others. As in the very beginning of her narrative she argues about the right of equality for the third gender or the *hijra* community. She paints the real picture of the inequality in her work.

As the autobiography of a person reveals every aspects of his life and reflects the inner self of that particular person, Revathi also reflects her inner self in her work. By narrating her pathetic story she unfolds the real picture of *hijra* community. Atanu Samanta in his article *Gender Discrimination in A. Revathi's Autobiography The Truth about Me- A Hijra Life Story* comments:

The *hijra* community in India is thus enmeshed in the mire of lingual, sartorial and economic colonization. And, it is A.Revathi who through her autobiography, for the first time, bravely attempts to challenge and break this cyclic process of gender colonization and heteronormative discourse. To narrate the everyday life of a *hijra* was not so easy, it was not so easy to re-live all those moments of agony and brutal torture, but Revathi took the trouble to do so only with a hope that after the publication of this autobiography, a *hijra* is no longer "started at" and "laughed" (83) but rather considered as a human being. (223)

As Atanu Samanta defines the courage of Revathi; she took the daring step to pave the way for the other *hijras* to come forward and reveal their agony in front of the readers who don't know about the real pain of a *hijra*. After Revathi the other *hijras* also have narrated their tales of agony and claimed for the equality of the *hijra* community.

Revathi reveals the bitter truth of the trans- sexuality. It is an autobiographical account of what it is to be transsexual in India. She relates her terrible life experiences and explains her desire to be recognized as equal to other genders. In a web article of book review of *The Truth About me- A Hijra Life Story* Yoginder Sikand highlights Revathi's critique of social construction of gender identity.

The frankness and fearlessness with which she discusses even the most 'private' aspects of her life as a *hijra*- the details of her sex change operation, her sexual encounters with her customers, the brutal sexual assault by police and so on- is striking and admirable. Her critique of social constructions of gender and dominant notions of masculinity- bereft of theoretical jargon, and precisely because of this, lucid and compelling is a powerful plea for us to radically reconsider what it means to be male and female at the same time as it urges us to seek the third way- of transcending the rigid binary division between male and female and work towards a notion of humanness beyond and above gender as conventionally understood. (Sikand)

The Truth about Me- A Hijra Life Story offers a glimpse into the complex world of hijra. Revathi explains her traumatic experiences inside her parental house of *hijra* community and the brutal world outside. The journey of Doraiswamy to Revathi brought change in the life of Revathi. It is an appealing narrative of a transgender who lives on margins. The mainstream often dislikes the *hijras* and sometimes become hostile towards such kind of people.

The present dissertation analyses another third gender narrative, *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* authored by Laxminarayan Tripathi. 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)

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. Her autobiography is one of the earliest works that belong to the genre of *hijra* literature. *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* seeks to make readers aware of who the *hijras* really are, and what goes into the shaping of their personalities.

In the article *Review of Me Laxmi, Me Hijra: An Autobiography of Laxminarayan Tripathi, Translated by Raja Rao and P.G. Joshi*, Ishrat Jahan delineated the pathetic state of *hijra* community in Indian society and explicates the notable contribution made by Laxminarayan

Tripathi. Ishrat Jahan also describes the wretchedness of the transgender individual who becomes the victim of the sexual assault.

She also talked about the bitter truth of her life. How she was sexually abused in her early childhood due to feminine feeling and gesture? Not only by her relatives but outsiders also. From her early childhood, she was unable to find her identity as woman or man. When she was in fourth standard, she joined a gay group of Ashok Row Kavi. She had several love affairs with many boys, forcibly or due to self-interest since her childhood. Unfortunately, she was used by boys sexually such as an object, and abandoned by them later. (489)

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. Yes, this literary work is a tale of hardships of a human being having a male body with a psyche of a female but we can't deny that it is an inspiring work, it not only shows the psychic trauma of a transgender but it is a success story of a celebrity of India. Dr. Darsha Jani in her article '*Me Hijra Me Laxmi*': *A Stirring Saga of a Transgender* considers Laxmi's narrative as the most inspiring journey of a hijra. Dr. Darsha emphasizes upon the contribution made by Laxmi for the upliftment of LGBT community. "For Laxmi there is no word called 'defeat' in her dictionary. Her battle for attaining the dignity of the transgender and other members of LGBT community is unstoppable process."(Jani 20) It's all about the determination of Laxmi, who achieved the distinguished place in the society and raised her voice against the discrimination.

There are some similarities between these works. Laxminarayan Tripathi and A.Revathi both are transgenders, having male bodies with female minds, both joined *hijra* community, but they have their own stories. In her work, Laxmi being a *hijra* does not find herself as a victim but Revathi finds herself as a victim of the society. The families in which they are brought up are completely dissimilar. The support of Laxmi's family becomes the source of motivation in her life. Revathi, by contrast, has parents and brothers who came across as brutes. Though Revathi's parents accepted her but they didn't support her in the beginning. Laxmi's family accepted their family member as she wanted to be in her life. Dr. Darsha Jani relates in her article '*Me Hijra Me Laxmi*': *A Stirring Saga of a Transgender* as:

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 question.*" Laxmi expresses her heartfelt gratitude towards her parents, wholeheartedly accepted her the way she was, despite suffering continual derisions and contempt from their family and social circle. (18)

"The biggest difference between Revathi and Laxmi is that while the former is castrated, the latter is not" (Rao 191). As Ishrat Jahan refers to Laxmi, "the best of her which I felt she accepted however she is. She could be opted to operation to change her sex but she decided to be a *hijra* and started to work to uplift for *hijras* community"(490). Laxmi chose her life as she wanted to live; she decided not to be castrated. She boldly declared her gender identity and worked for the upliftment of the sexual minorities.

The present chapter characterizes the queer theory and the Indian context; it also discusses the literature review of the selected third gender narratives; *The Truth about Me- A hijra Life Story* and *Me Hijra Me Laxmi*. In India, queer is not a current phenomenon as discussed earlier in this chapter but still, it has a long way to get the equal place in the Indian society. The contribution made by the sexual minorities to the literary and social work cannot be denied. Though the people of the present generation are more aware and educated, the number of people still living in the boundaries of heteronormative society. India is a country, which is known for its traditional values and social norms; queer is regarded as opposite to the cultural norms of the conservative psychology of typical 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. The queer identities are more accepted by the young generation than before which reflects the acceptance of queer in the future.

Chapter 2

Identity Crisis in *The Truth about Me – A Hijra Life Story*

by A.Revathi

The Truth about Me- A Hijra Life Story is authored by a high-spirited transgender of India, A.Revathi. She is an author, actor, and activist, working for the sexual minorities in India. She is the author of *Unarvum Uruvamum*. In *The Truth About me- A Hijra Life Story*, Revathi shares her experiences of having a masculine body with the feminine characteristics. Revathi's narrative is translated from Tamil to English by V.Geetha. Geetha is an author, translator, social historian and activist. She has been active in the Indian women's movement since 1988. She has written on gender, caste, the culture of Tamil Nadu, both in English and Tamil.

The autobiography *The Truth about Me- A Hijra Life Story*, is a daring revelation of the endurance of a marginalized *hijra* who confront the every challenge of the Indian society. She narrates every aspect of *hijra* culture to make the society aware of the fact that the *hijras* are human beings, they have the desires and they want to live their life as the other people live in this society. In the preface of this autobiography, A.Revathi mentions her motive of writing. She explains that her aim is to introduce to the readers the lives of *hijras*, their distinct culture, and their dreams and desires. Revathi begins the preface of the autobiography with a question, "In our society, and we speak the language of rights loud and often, but do the marginalized really have access to these rights?"(A.Revathi). She has been marginalized because she belongs to sexual minorities.

The story opens, in a small village in Namakkal taluk, Salem district, in Tamil Nadu; Doraiswamy was the youngest son of the family. He grew up effeminate and shy with a desire to

dress up as a girl and do traditional female activities. As the youngest in the family, he got much affection from parents. When he was in class five, he started living as a girl child. Doraiswamy's attraction to play only *girls' games* brings gender trouble for him because the society does not accept easily that a male lives like a female. Revathi shares this experience as:

As soon as I got home from school, I would wear my sister's long skirt and blouse, twist a long towel around my head and let it trail down my back like a braid. I would then walk as if I was a shy bride, my eyes to the ground, and everyone would laugh. No one thought much of it then, for I was little. They reasoned, 'he'll outgrow all this when he grows older,' and didn't say much else.

(4)

But soon after Doraiswamy became the laughing stock of the boys and neighbors. They started teasing him as 'Hey Number 9!', 'Female thing', and 'female boy'. But it was natural for Doraiswamy to behave like a girl. When he was in class seven he participated in a play and played the role of Chandramathi and he felt very pleased to do that role. Identity crisis is found from the very beginning of the narrative. When Doraiswamy was in the class tenth he experienced some changes in his body and mind. He experienced a growing sense of "irrepressible femaleness" (14). Doraiswamy wondered about his gender identity.

A woman trapped in a man's body was how I thought of myself. But could that be? Would the world accept me thus? I longed to be known as a woman and felt pain at being considered a man. I longed to be with men, but felt shamed by this feeling. I wondered why God had chosen me to inflict this peculiar torture on me, and why He could not have created me wholly male or wholly female. (15)

His identity was problematic and he yearned to be a woman. When he was quite young he met a group of spirited men who introduced him to visiting *hijras*. From them he found that there were other people like him, they dressed in *saris*. He met them on the hill and befriended with them. He started spending more time with them. They told him that there was a woman, *amma* in Dindigul, who wore the *sari* and had an operation also. Doraiswamy was fifteen years old when he met *hijras*, the *sari-clad* (21). Doraiswamy and his friends changed their dress into *saris*, and wore wigs. It was the time when Doraiswamy got his name from an elder *hijra*, “you look like Revathi’. And in my heart, I imagined that was name- Revathi. I looked at myself into the mirror and felt a glow of pride”(22).

As the subtitle of the autobiographical work suggests, it is a story of the life of a *hijra*. Without taking the permission of the family Doraiswamy met the *pottais* (*sari-clad* feminine men). In Tamil, *hijras* are called *pottai*. Doraiswamy became Revathi there and performed every ritual performed by *hijras*, at the time of temple festival. She became the *chela* of the *hijra guru*. But her *guru* suggested her to go back home. After two months living with *hijras*, Revathi returned to her home. In the Indian patriarchal society, the third gender is always prejudiced and discriminated. Revathi was in similar state. When she returned back to be a part of her sister’s marriage, her family treated her brutally. She didn’t tell anyone about her new identity as Revathi. But after two days she decided to go back to her *guru*. But her *guru* was in Delhi and that was not an easy task for her. She stole her mother’s earring and with the help of a friend she managed to reach Delhi where she met her *guru*.

Transgender/ *hijras* in Indian society are believed to have the power to bless or curse. Revathi explains how the *hijras* manage their livelihood. The main source of their earnings is to beg and

to engage in sex work. Revathi describes the life of *hijras* as her nani explained the life of *hijras* as:

In this Hindi country, we hijras are meant to do this and no other things. We ask money from shops, to collect *badaai*....in old days *hijras* waited upon queens and princesses. But today there are no queens; the rule of kings and queens has given way to the rule of ministers. But this government has not given us other work to do. (44)

Revathi describes the intricate details of the *hijra* culture; how *guru-chela* system works in Tamil Nadu and Mumbai and all over the India. In every state, there are separate *hijra* houses (also called *gharana*) each with their own guru and chelas. The *hijras* from all the seven houses live in Karnataka. Revathi unravels the *hijra* vocabulary and terminologies of South India such as; *jamaat* (the group of elder *guru* and *chelas*), *ghori moorathan* (who first time becomes the chela), *paamapaduthi* (greeting), *reeth* (system of consecrating). The *hijras* are abused and harassed inside the *hijra* house and even outside it. Revathi describes in detail, the agony of her *hijra* friend, Shakuntala. She belonged to the Chauhan house; she was harassed by her *guru* for money. Shakuntala started living with a male partner, he also abused her and demanded money from her. It can easily be surmised, that it is not only the story of Revathi but of every effeminate male, who suffers from an identity crisis and becomes the victim in the hands of society and his own family. The transgender people become the victim in the hands of callous society because of their gender ambiguity. When Revathi decided to meet her family, her parents don't accept her new gender identity. Revathi explains:

He beat me hard mindlessly, yelling that he wanted to kill me, I who had dared to run away. I tried to protect my face and head with my hands to keep the blows from falling. But nevertheless they came down hard, and I felt my hand swell. I was beaten on my legs, on my back, and finally my brother brought the bat down heavily on my head. My skull cracked and there was blood all over, flowing, warm, ‘That’s right. Beat him and break his bones. Only then will he stay at home and not run away,’ I heard my mother say. (55)

Revathi was unable to endure the constant torture of her family, so she decided to go back to *hijra* community and became a *hijra* through the ritual of *nirvana*. When her *nani* sent her for the operation she felt, “finally the female in me would be free from her male body” (67). Serena Nanda explains the ritual of *nirvana*, in her work *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India* as:

The *hijras* call the emasculation operation *nirvan*. *Nirvan* is a condition of calm and absence of desire; it is liberation from the finite human consciousness and the dawn of higher consciousness. The Hindu scriptures call the beginning of this experience the second birth, or the opening of the eye of wisdom. The *hijras* too translate *nirvan* as rebirth. Emasculation is explicitly is a passage, moving the *nirvan* (the one who is operated on) from the status of an ordinary, impotent male to that of a *hijra*. Through the operation, the former, impotent male person dies, and a new person, endowed with sacred power (*shakti*), is reborn. (Nanda 26)

Her quest for identity made her way to be a woman through the operation but it was not the end of her identity crisis. She felt trapped in the community; though she got operated she couldn't be a woman. She was a *hijra* and the *hijra* norms didn't allow her to be like a woman. She ran away to the other *hijra guru* to fulfill her desires but there also she had to engage herself in the sex work. She was not content with the life there as a sex worker and her identity crisis remained the same. She went back to meet her family and that was the first time she was finally treated as women by her parents and other people of the village. The women from the neighborhood addressed her as Revathi, "Sister! Your daughter is here! Cook something nice for her"(158). Revathi wondered about that:

I also asked myself if those who called me Revathi did so truly, from their hearts, or were they actually mocking me. Whatever it is, I concluded, I am glad they called me Revathi. I was going to be this way. Slowly, gradually, they're bound to understand my womanly feelings. There's perhaps a legitimate reason for my mother calling me 'dai', I told myself that I ought not to be angry with her. As far as my village was concerned, they did not look at me as before, as if I were a strange creature. They appeared to have accepted who I was. (160)

After the property dispute of the family, Revathi returned to *hijra* community. But her discontentment did not allow her to do the things, which were considered wrong by the society. Revathi wanted to acquire sufficient wealth for a meaningful life. When she was in Bangalore she met the three *pottais* like her. They reminded Revathi about her own earlier days of quest for identity. Mayuri, Famila and Rithu, requested Revathi to accept them as her *chelas*. They also underwent castration and in order to join the community.

‘Amma we’re in pain. Please accept us as your daughters and teach us right from wrong. If you don’t take us in, we have no choice but to die. If our families come and ask us, we’ll tell them that we did this of our own volition’ they were in tears. I felt their pain, and recalled my own operation. They were probably in great pain similar to what I had experienced. (234)

Revathi finally decided to take them as her *chelas*. She gave them the place to stay and allowed them to live as they wished to live. Revathi’s *chelas* took lovers, had their own homes and lived as they wished- demonstrating to the world that they were women. They were well educated and had a number of educated friends. They addressed Revathi as *Mummy* (237), and she felt as their actual mother. Her *chelas* brought her to the “Sangama”; it was an organization, working for the sexual minorities. Revathi gave up the sex work and joined “Sangama” as an office assistant with a pay of two thousand and five hundred rupees. She started living in the apartment and was content in her life. The aim of Sangama was to challenge “stereotypical and incorrect perceptions of sexual minorities” (243). Revathi in her narrative shares her experiences of being in a relationship. She felt content and finally her dream had turned into the reality, she found her life partner, who was a senior member of Sangama. They got married in the presence of her *guru* and other *aravanis*. It was a normal ceremony with simple rituals; everyone was amazed by their blissful conjugal relation that she enjoyed with her partner. It was Revathi who felt overwhelming joy at her marriage and having a husband. It was her life’s desire to be married and have a husband. She was delighted that her family and society at large had accepted their marriage. However, Revathi’s ecstasy didn’t last long, her partner soon lost all desire for her. As she explains her grief, “God knows who said what, or who cast the evil eye on us, a year after we got married, our relationship ended” (290). It was not only that she separated from her husband,

she also lost her *chela*, Famila, who had killed herself. It was a devastating incident of her life that she lost her daughter. But it was not the end of her misfortune, another assault that broke her was the murder of her *guru*. Revathi's *guru* was stabbed and killed by some rowdies. Though Revathi was crushed by the tragic occurrences of her life, she didn't give up. She had suffered but eventually, she managed to finish her first book, *Unarvum Uruvamum*. Revathi decided to live with her parents but her misfortune didn't leave her alone. She learned that both kidneys of her mother had failed. She took care of her mother but she didn't have enough money. She didn't want to continue sex work. Revathi's *chela* did not respect her. She felt alienated and devoid of hope"(304). Finally, Revathi went back to Sangama.

The present chapter outlines the identity crisis in Revathi's autobiography *The Truth about Me-A Hijra Life Story*, it upholds that it is not only the story of a Revathi who is a victim of identity crisis but all the other transgender people who suffer from the identity crisis in their lives. The identity of an individual regulates his position in the society but if his identity doesn't match with views of others. She has to go through some crucial circumstances. If a male is born effeminate, he is prejudiced by the society for being feminine and Revathi is the example of it. The narrative defines the journey of Revathi, as the quest for identity. In the last chapter of *The Truth about Me-A Hijra Life Story*, Revathi explains her isolation and seclusion from her own community. Her husband, her chelas left her when she needed them most. The identity crisis dominates her story till the last chapter of the book. As the title of the autobiography connotes the story of a *hijra*, it tells the truth about the life of A. Revathi.

The main focus of this chapter is to analyze *The Truth about Me- A Hijra Life Story* from a queer scope. Annamarie Jagose, in her *Queer Theory: An Introduction* argues that queer focuses

on mismatches between sex, gender, and desire. *The Truth About me- A Hijra Life Story* also represents these mismatches between sex and gender. Revathi begins the preface with a question:

In our society we speak the language of rights loud and often. But do the marginalized really have access to these rights? Individuals are denied their rights in the sex, sexuality, caste and religion. They have to either arrive at a compromise or engage in a struggle. I am one of such individual who has been marginalized because I was born a male and wanted to live my life as a woman.

(v)

In queer studies, the concept of identity is an essential part of the analysis. The notion of identity can provide a sharp understanding of gender and sexual norms. “The question of identity plays an important role in queer studies since identity is bound with mutually dependent and undefined social constructions” (Villaverde 78). Doraiswamy was confused about his identity, “Why did I love men? Was I mad? Was I the only one who felt this way? Or were there others like me, elsewhere in the world?”(14). He wanted to live like a woman. He felt like a woman inside. When he was quite young he met a group of spirited men who introduced him to visiting *hijras*. Doraiswamy got his name from an elder *hijra*, “You look like Revathi’. And in my heart, I imagined that was the name- Revathi. I looked at myself into the mirror and felt a glow of pride. I did look like a woman. It was at that moment that I was convinced I was indeed one”(22). It was a very special day for him.

Queer theory indicates the failure to fit particularly within a category, and some individuals at some point of time in their lives, find themselves uncomfortable in the boundaries of the categories of gender, established by the cultural norms. Revathi also felt uncomfortable with the

socio-cultural norms. At a very early age, she started playing with girls and doing girly things. The queer theory connotes a crossing of boundaries. In *The Truth About me- A Hijra Life Story*, the family of Revathi wanted that their son should live like a man and take the responsibilities. But Revathi couldn't manage to fit in the normal socio-culture. According to David Halperin queer means, "whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate and dominant" (Halperin). The present study demonstrates that Revathi was at odds with the legitimate cultural norms. Doraiswami (Revathi) was the youngest son of the family, he grew up effeminate and shy with a desire to dress up as a girl and do traditional female activities. When he was quite young he met a group of spirited men who introduced him to visiting *hijras*. He went to Delhi where he chose *guru* and asked her to take him under her wing. Doraiswami became Revathi in the *hijra* house. As Revathi, Doraiswami could live like a woman but of course she was a *hijra* "I am not a man now. I am a woman and I have a family with a mother, a grandmother, sister-in-laws" (43). Revathi crossed the boundaries of traditional norms and she decided to be castrated, as the ritual of *hijra* community. She underwent the painful surgery, and described it in great detail, in her narrative. Revathi narrates in her autobiography, "I lay writhing in pain for nearly two hours and then felt this huge pressure on my chest" (75). Castration is a spiritual process for *hijras* and it cannot be imposed. Revathi's desires made her odd in the society. Being a human and the part of society, she was at odds in the social milieu.

Queer theory deals with the ways in which a culture shapes the sexuality of a person. Simone de Beauvoir suggests in *The Second Sex* that "one is not born, but, rather becomes one." For Beauvoir, gender is "constructed," but implied in her formulation is an agent, a *cogito*, who somehow takes on or appropriates that gender and could, in principle, take on some other gender (Butler 8). Doraiswami's fascination toward the *sari-clad*, the male members of his village,

strengthened his desires. When he met the *hijra* community, he started living like them. *Hijra* community supported to shape his sexual orientation. *Hijra* community brought a great change in Doraiswamy; the different cultural values changed Doraiswamy into Revathi. It is not only the *hijra* culture, but Revathi's own inclination brought change in her, but without the encouragement of *hijra* culture it would not be possible for Doraiswamy to become Revathi.

The *guru* took a fancy to me and agreed to make me her *chela*. This made the other jealous. My new *guru* admonished them 'Why be so blunt and rude to her? The pottai has come looking for us. Come on talk nicely to her, be kind.' She turned to me and said, 'See you are fair-skinned, pretty like a woman. They're jealous that they won't get any customers.' (102)

Revathi's *nani guru* disclosed the *hijra* rituals to her, the cultural norms that they followed as a *chela* and other members of the *hijra* community who were bound to live under the laws and cultural norms. *Nani guru* told her that it was their culture to live like a real woman with pierced ears and long hairs. She had to follow the ways of the *hijras* and follow the rules. Revathi changed her *hijra gharana* because she felt uncomfortable with the ways of her previous *gharana*. Revathi describes, "After many days for the first time since I came to Mumbai, I applied lipstick and touched up my cheeks with rouge. I was not allowed to do this at my *nani's* house in Ghatkopar"(105). The *hijra* culture affected her as Revathi narrates, "I didn't like doing sex work, but now found myself doing it. I wanted to experience sexual happiness, but I found myself having to treat sexual experiences as work" (106). The queer approach investigates the sexual dimensions, as in the case of Revathi, she outlines the sexuality as one of the noticeable aspect of her work.

Queer theoretical approach investigates the issue of gender identity and sexual orientation. Serena Nanda, in her work, *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India* argues *hijra* narratives also confirm the importance of an interactionist perspective on gender identity/role, supporting the arguments of those who see sex assignment and subsequent socialization interacting with individual biological factors.”(116). *The Truth about Me-A Hijra Life Story* reveals the aspect of gender identity of Doraiswamy, who becomes Revathi. The gender identity is the inner being of an individual; Revathi was born male but gender identity didn't match with her sex assigned at the time of birth. The fluidity of gender is not generally entertained in the Indian society. Revathi's gender identity didn't match with her sex. She opted to be castrated to be defined as a female; she became transgender and suffered the pain of being a mismatch with the society. Revathi loved to sweep the front yard and helped her mother in the kitchen. At the school where other boys played *gilli-danda*, *robber- police*, cricket, and football, Doraiswamy played with girls, five stones, hopscotch and hide-and-seek. Revathi as Doraiswamy often teased at school, for behaving like a girl. It tells the story of Revathi's gender identity. Doraiswamy (Revathi) was a male but his inner being didn't accept the reality of her sex. Revathi's gender identity persuaded her to choose the life of a transgender. It is a constituent of gender identity of a person that comprises his sexual attraction towards another person whether the person belongs to the opposite sex or the same sex, the person can be homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual.

The queer analysis of the autobiography of Revathi represents the dimensions of gender identity and sexual orientation. From the very early age, Revathi felt her inclination towards the same sex. Though she felt like a woman inside, she was aware of her same-sex desire. She became *hijra* and castrated herself to fulfill her desires. But she was discontent in the house of her *guru*. The *guru* of Revathi didn't allow her to think about having a husband and live like a woman.

Revathi's *nani guru* asked her, "Beta, do you have a *panthi* (husband/ partner) in Tamil Nadu?" I said, 'No, I do not have any such relationship. Beta, I don't want you gaging up with some pottais and take to drinking and seeking a husband'(65). For the accomplishment of her desires, she left her *guru*'s house and went to Matunga, where she became the *chela* of another *guru* and started living in jopdis (the huts). She started doing sex work there. It was just her desires that made her sex worker, soon she fed-up from that life of a sex worker. In the light of queer approach, the reference of sexual orientation can be traced in the later part of the book. Revathi started working with "Sangama", where she found a senior member of the organization as her partner. She felt sexually attracted towards him; both confessed their love towards each other. They got married and Revathi took it as the bliss of her life, it was her dream to be a wife but it was not a congruous relation.

Queer theory examines the lives of the sexual minorities who are considered by the society as non-heteronormative (homosexual). The queer analysis of the narrative traces the details of the personal experiences of the non-heteronormative individuals. *Truth about Me- A Hijra Life Story*, as the subtitle suggests, is a story of the personal experiences of the life of a transgender, who captured every moment of her life in the words. Queer analyses, how the sexual minorities considered outside the traditional norms. Homosexuality is one of the major aspects of the autobiographical work of Revathi. She explains the predicament of the trans-sexuality. The *hijras* have to do the sex work, as some *hijras* don't choose to be operated upon and join the sex work. The transgender people are considered homosexual by the society. All the *hijras* are not intersex; they chose to be *hijra* because of their recognition of the gender identity. A *hijra* is first born male and becomes *hijra* later. If he castrates himself, he becomes eunuch. A *hijra* is different from hermaphrodite who is naturally born with both male and female sexual organs and

characteristics. Revathi was castrated, she wanted to be a woman, that was the dream of her life but as a *hijra*, she couldn't live like a woman. Despite her *guru's* encouragement, Revathi found the sex work difficult. When she visited Bangalore, her chela took her to an organization named Sangama. There she found the people who belong to the sexual minorities. Revathi narrates it as, "Are they people like us? 'No, some of them are gay.' 'Gay? What is gay?' 'They are homosexuals'"(238). Revathi's *chela* Famila introduced her to a person who told her about the homosexual and the organization's role toward the sexual minorities.

Homosexuality is not abnormal, it's natural. Yet Indian law considers it a crime. Indian customs too criminalize it. Homosexuals cannot be open about their sexual orientation and cannot express their feelings in public. Sangama provides a space for them to be who they are. Here they can ask questions, address anxieties about their sexuality. (239)

Queer theorist Diana Fuss focuses on the differences related to categories such as 'homo' and 'hetero'. Fuss notes that sexual borders are unstable and unsecure. According to Fuss, "the category of homo becomes part of the sexual border which helps to assert identity"(459). The homosexual behavior is lucidly stated in the narrative. Revathi's passionate love towards the senior member of Sangama, demonstrate the aspect of homosexuality. The intimacy between the same-sex brings out the theme of sexuality. Revathi's marriage with that senior member of Sangama emphasizes the queerness of the work. Michel Foucault positioned the sexuality as the constructed category, related to the experiences. Queer approach analyses these constructed categories, which are considered deviant in form. Revathi's predicament is the outcome of her deviant experiences and her identity construction. The acceptance of her new gender identity was not an easy task for her family and neighbors. Revathi was herself aware of this fact, but her

sexual orientation paved the way for trans-sexuality. Her sexual orientation perplexed her and she chose the life beyond the socially constructed binaries which was not an easy task.

Revathi's memoir is her daring step towards the upliftment of the hijra community. It is the first attempt by a member of *hijra* community to write about herself and the hijra culture and norms. She speaks for herself, narrates the everyday life of a *hijra*. Primarily she wants to assert that the people, who belong to the *hijra* community, have the same desires and emotions as the other people of the society have. In her speech at the Koovagam festival Revathi speaks for the minorities as, "All I ask that you accept as worthy of respect what you've all along considered unnatural and illegal. If you have an unnaturally long finger, do you therefore cut it off?"(261). Revathi argues, the people who live under the cultural norms and accept the binaries and call the other as unnatural, it is their erroneous assumption. To kill the girl child in the womb is a natural procedure for the people who talk about the law and nature. She further explains her desire to get the recognition by the government as:

Listen! I am not diseased. I consider myself a woman. But I possessed the form of a man. I wanted to rid myself of that form and live as a complete woman. How can that be wrong? In some countries government run hospitals counsel people like me, put us on a course of hormones, carry out sex reassignment surgery and acknowledge our right to change our sex. Such women go to work, get married, do as other woman. We want the Indian state to do the same: provide us with counseling, put us on a course of hormones and assist with sex-change surgeries.(262)

Revathi in her speech at Koovagam Festival claimed to the right of equality. She demanded to live as the other women live in the society. “We were not born to beg or to do sex work. Circumstances, faulty laws and social hatred have left us with no course but to beg and do sex work” (262). She believed in the right of equality and the transgender people should get the same facilities as the other people were getting. Revathi’s audacious speech was so inspiring that a police officer who was present there assured that the strict action would be taken against the people who referred to the transgender as *ali* or *number nine* (263). It highlights the main motive of Revathi’s memoir to make aware the people about the hardships of the *hijras* and to change the attitude towards them as beggars and sex workers.

The present chapter of the dissertation primarily focuses on identity crisis in the third gender narrative, *The Truth about Me- A Hijra Life Story* authored by A. Revathi. This chapter unravels the inner quest of a member of *hijra* community, who finds herself ostracized in the patriarchal society. The poignant story of the life of a transgender, constraints to feel sympathize towards the marginalization of the sexual minorities, who suffer the great torment in every sphere of life. The study traces various instances of the queerness in the third gender narrative. The present analysis interprets the queer theme of sexual orientation and gender identity. The analysis represents the pathetic tale of misfortunes of sexual minorities. The autobiography of Revathi defines the meaning of being queer. As David Halperin defines the queer, “Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate and dominant.” Revathi was at odds with the socio-cultural norms, she was unable to survive in the binaries. Revathi ‘s narrative tells the poignant tale of the grief of a born male human being, who lives his life at odds with the normal categorization of binaries of feminine and masculine. Is she grieved just because she is born male? She is grieved because she feels like a woman trapped in a man’s body.

The critical analysis of *The Truth about me-A Hijra Life Story*, highlights the marginalization of the transgender community of India. Revathi wants to make the people aware of the fact that the *hijras* are capable of more than begging and sex work. The *hijras* are also human beings like others with dreams and desires of their own. Revathi's memoir exhibits the traumatic journey of a transgender, who not only asserts her own life experiences but also the torments of other sexual minorities who live on margins and couldn't raise their voice against the oppression of the society.

Chapter 3

The Plight of the Third Gender in *Me Hijra Me Laxmi*

by Laxminarayan Tripathi

Me Laxmi Me Hijra is an autobiography, authored by Laxminarayan Tripathi, one of the most distinguished transgenders of India, who fought and is still fighting for the dignity of the *hijra* community. *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* provides an insight into the life of transgenders: their struggle and miseries. Though the autobiography has been written in Marathi by Vaishali Rode, it has been translated into English by R. Raj Rao and P.G. Joshi. R. Raj Rao is an author, poet, playwright, biographer, critic, and Literature teacher. Rao is recognized as India's foremost queer theorist and gay right activist. P.G. Joshi is English language and literature teacher, his book reviews and research articles have appeared in reputed journals and newspapers such as *New Quest*, *BEAM*, *The Indian PEN* and *Sunday Times of India*. Joshi has written a few short stories and articles in Marathi as well.

In *Me Hijra Me Laxmi*, Laxminarayan Tripathi has portrayed a veridical picture of the plight of the third gender in Indian society. 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. 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. She has got the most esteemed position in Indian *hijra* community, after a long period of struggle. Recently, Laxmi has been selected as the *Mahamandleshwar* (spokesperson) of India's *Kinner Akhada* (*kinner* community).

The narrative begins with Laxmi's assent, that she was different from others. Laxmi was born as a male in Mumbai, in an orthodox Brahmin family; her parents named him Laxminarayan Tripathi alias Raju. Laxmi gave the account of her childhood which was quite different from other children of her age. She was the favorite child in the house and got much appreciation. But her childhood was mostly fraught with illness; she had all the ailments like typhoid, pneumonia, malaria etc. Every time she caught in an ailment, it was the love of her parents that saved her, but she became the feeble child. She had many restrictions on her, as she was a weak child. She started living the life of a loner from a very early age. In spite of her fragile health, her love for dancing couldn't be suppressed; her dancing had a therapeutic effect on her. She loved dancing and often got the chance to perform on stage by her teachers, but in an Indian patriarchal society, the dancing is considered a feminine pursuit. The people teased her by calling her names as homo and *a chakka* (4). At the very early age Laxmi recognized the different gender identity as, "Yes, it's true that I was like a woman. My mannerisms, my walking and talking style were all feminine. But why was it so? I didn't know. I wasn't of an age to answer this question. Loner that I already was, I drifted further into my cocoon" (4). Laxmi was sexually harassed, when she was just seven years old. Once she had attended the marriage function of a relative, where she was molested by a cousin and even threatened by that cousin. After a few days, she was molested again by him and his other friends. She was a little boy at the time of molestation; so she remained silent and didn't talk about her assault to anyone. The physical exploitation became a part of her life and her cousin and his friends molested her several times at occasions such as family functions.

Laxmi narrates her anguish as, "These sexual assaults transformed me. I became secretive and incommunicative, hiding my feelings from my family and friends. Suddenly, it felt as if my

childhood was over and I had grown up before my time”(7). It was not the end of Laxminarayan’s agony; she wanted to save her brother Shashi going astray. Laxmi decided to attract his friends sexually and she even became successful at it but how long could it be done? She was confused and finally, one day she decided not to surrender her to those lustful people, who used to molest him, she became aggressive and confronted them courageously. Laxmi decided nothing to do against her will. She was in the fourth standard when she realized her attraction towards the same-sex.

Laxmi got the chance to meet the people like Ashok Row Kavi (India’s LGBT rights activist) through her friend Sangita Sethi. In those days Ashok Row Kavi and his friends had their meetings at Maheshwari Udyaan, where they discussed the issues related to the gay community. When Laxmi met them, she felt much relieved because she found that she was not alone; there were other people who exist and who were effeminate like her. They called themselves *homos*. They welcomed her to the gay community. It was the first time she learnt the new word gay. Laxmi then talks about her experiences of changing from educational institutes and her friends. The first boy with whom she fell in love was Rohan and after that, she fell in love with other boys but didn’t get their love, it was only lust that she got from them. Rukmini was her first dance teacher and it was Baby Johnny who influenced her so much that she taught her the lesson of life that how to live the life without compromising on dignity and self-respect. She was a widow but never lived like a widow. Laxmi got the inspiration from Baby Johnny and started her own dance school, Vidya Nritya Niketan. Later Laxmi learnt *Bharatnatyam* from Mahalingam and Vasant Pillay. At that time dancing feminized his physique. Laxmi narrates about her physical torture that she managed to tackle with bravely. In her words, “Male dominated society nauseated me. I realized that I would have to put up a lifelong fight to resist male lust. But how

could I take on the whole world? As if to endorse how powerless I was, I was raped again”(28). In the company of gay people, Laxmi felt much comfortable but they alienated themselves as they didn't regard themselves as women like her. After joining Mithibai College, she met many professionals, who were associated with glamour world. Laxmi wanted to be a drag queen and it was the *hijra* Sweety, who introduced Laxmi to the world of bar dancing. Laxmi narrates the actuality of the world of bar dancing. Through the help of Gloria who was a model, Laxmi met Lawrence Francis, alias Shabina. Shabina was a *hijra*; Laxmi learned so many things about *hijras* from Shabina and decided to become a member of *hijra* community.

Laxmi recognized her gender identity and joined the *hijra* community. She considered herself as feminine rather than masculine. Laxmi expresses her feelings as, “When I became a *hijra*, a great burden was lifted off my head. I felt relaxed. I was now neither a man nor a woman. I was a *hijra*. I had my own identity; no longer did I feel like an alien” (43). Laxmi kept it a secret from her family, but eventually, her family got to know the reality, at first they agitated but they had to accept the real identity of their son. Laxmi's decision to become a transgender made her completely feminine (the transgenders are feminine rather masculine) and she was addressed as female by other people also.

Laxmi's family basically belonged to the high caste Brahmin caste of Uttar Pradesh and historically *hijras* are respected in Uttar Pradesh. In her narrative, Laxmi unravels the historical and social significance of the *hijras*. The existence of transgender in ancient Indian texts is disclosed in the memoir of Laxmi. She talks about the divine powers of *hijras*. People believe that *hijras* have the power to bless and curse. As Serena Nanda in her work, *Neither Man nor Woman- the Hijras of India* describes in detail, Laxmi also relates the myth of *Ramayana* that *hijras* were blessed by Lord Rama. When Rama began his fourteen years exile the people of

Ayodhya accompanied him to the outskirts of the town, Rama addressed all the men and women to go back to their homes. There were *hijras*, who couldn't go back home because Rama implored only men and women. They stayed there for fourteen years until Rama returned. Lord Rama was moved by the penance and granted them boon that "their blessings and curses would come true" (49). Laxmi also defines the myths related to *Mahabharata*, when Arjuna becomes the Brhinnala and the *khogas* who guarded the harems of kings. Laxmi discusses the origin of the word *hijra* as:

The word '*hijra*' is a term of abuse. Its variants in colloquial language include expression like number six, number nine, and chakka. The word '*hijra*' derives from the Urdu word '*hijar*'. A *hijar* is a person who has walked out of his tribe or community. Thus, a *hijra* is one who has left mainstream society comprising men and women, and joined a community of *hijras*. (171)

Laxmi gives the details about the *gharanas* (clans) of *hijras* and the rituals performed by the *hijras* at the time of joining a *hijra gharana* or the *nirvana* (the castration). She explains that castration is a spiritual process and it cannot be imposed on anyone. During the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb castration was prohibited. The *hijras* live in ghettos and many ghettos exist in Mumbai and Thane. The main occupation of the *hijras* is to perform *badhai*, at the birth of a child especially male child or at the weddings. Laxmi unfolds every aspect of the life of transgender and the terminology. She also dispels several myths related to the *hijras* of India. The transgender or the *hijras* of India live like families and the *guru* as their mother. When someone decides to become *hijra* or joins *hijra* community, he has to undergo a christening ceremony. All the rites are performed by the *guru* and the rules are explained to the aspirant. Laxmi also dispels the myth of funeral of *hijras*; she makes clear the fact about the last rites of

hijras which are often misunderstood by the people. There are seven *gharanas* of *hijra* in India; each *gharana* has its *nayak* (Chief) and every *hijra* is obliged to observe the laws and these laws vary from one *gharana* to another *gharana*. The outside world is not supposed to know about these laws of *hijra* community. Laxmi not only takes the daring step to raise the voice against the third gender prejudice, she becomes one of the distinguished transgender rights activists of India. The memoir is a voyage to her success through the various kinds of affairs, considerable or impetuous.

The present chapter of the dissertation examines the plight of the third gender in the autobiography, *Me Hijra Me Laxmi*. 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 are considered neither male nor female. Laxminarayan Tripathi took the daring step to reveal the plight of the *hijra* community in the Indian society.

Social ostracism is considered as the major cause of the psychic trauma of the third gender. As the *hijras* belong to the community outside the socially constructed binaries, they are often ostracized. The people consider them as a menace and a nuisance and run away at spotting them in the streets. The bias towards *hijras* is shared by both men and women alike. They sometimes give the money to the *hijras*, not with a sense of sympathy, but to get rid of them. The people of the mainstream only know the fact that the *hijras* are subversive, but the reality behind the behavior of *hijras* is hardly known by anyone.

When Laxmi joined the *hijra* community, three weeks later, ten *hijras* became her *chelas*. She became *nani guru* and a head of a large family. In the *chelas* of Laxmi some girls worked in dance bars and others were engaged in sex work. Laxmi narrates the plight of *hijras* as:

In our group only Sangeeta, Mardana, and Vardaan did sex work. Soon the police began to harass them. There were bitter quarrels between the cops and the girls, and they landed up at the Sheelfata police station. Though these girls were not my *chelas*, they were *hijras* all the same, and the police had been brutal in their dealings with them. (53)

The harassment faced by the *hijras*, can easily be traced in the autobiography of Laxmi. Laxmi's encounter with the police inspired her to choose the life of activism. Another instance of assault is explained through the incident of Subhadra. She went for sex work and never returned and reported dead later. Laxmi explains her grief in her words, "Subhadra's death had opened our eyes to the dangers of being a *hijra*"(55). She has been murdered and the police was unable to find any evidence of her murder. She relates, "Our fight with the world seemed so pointless. But we couldn't give up and fight either. The world would only be too happy to silence us. But we couldn't afford to be silenced. We couldn't afford to be thrown in jails and forgotten altogether"(56). The case of Subhadra's murder was finally closed for the lack of evidence. This incident tells the tale of the grievances of *hijras* who are neglected and often ill-treated by the common people or even sometimes by the law.

Laxmi reveals the predicament of the third gender by explaining the sexual assault, they confront, which leads to their psychic trauma. The transgenders are prone to be affected by sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS. The government's health related programs are only directed to the males and females. Laxmi lost many of her *chelas* because of the epidemic. Laxmi started working for an organization DWS, became an educator, who went to *hijra* colonies to educate them about sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. Laxmi became the first chairperson of the DWS.

The dilemma of the third gender is described through the incidence when Laxmi was invited to the Sixteenth World AIDS Conference, in Toronto, Canada in August 2006. She didn't have the passport and she had to apply for it. Laxmi explains:

How could I go abroad? Foreign travel required a passport, and could a *hijra*, born as a male and now a female, ever get a passport? I did not want my passport to refer to my gender as 'male'. I wanted it to refer to me as *hijra* and a *hijra* alone. I was in a dilemma: to go or not to go to the conference. (78)

Finally, she made up her mind to go to the conference. She went to the passport office and demanded her passport but the passport officer was puzzled over her demand because in his whole career as a passport officer, it was the first chance, when a transgender demanded the passport. He asked Laxmi for the registered medical certificate, as the proof of his sex change surgery. Laxmi didn't have any kind of certificate because she was not castrated. When the officer referred to the ration card, Laxmi did not want to be considered as a male as mentioned in the ration card. With the help of a generous lady Dr. Hema Jyarajani, Laxmi managed to get the certificate of conversion. She had to go through several formalities to get the passport. At that time, it was not an easy task for a *hijra* to go through all the procedures and get the legal documents. It tells the story of the transgenders who have to confront the troubles to get the legal recognition certificates because they belong to the third gender category.

The social status of the transgenders in Indian society is pathetic. As the transgenders have been marginalized in the society, their life is not secure. The transgender people often confront the denial from the society and their own family. Their gender identity often makes them the victim of stigmatization; therefore, they don't get the chance to get the proper education. The lack of

shelter, education and economic facilities, they engage themselves in the sex work and begging. The social status of *hijras* doesn't permit them to live safely. In the memoir Laxmi talks about the horror of being a *hijra*, Subhadra's death became the mystery for the other *hijras*. "Subhadra's assassins could never be found. The police shut the case for want of evidence. This was a big blow to us A *hijra's* death, nay murder, didn't seem to matter to anyone"(57). 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 *havalgars* 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)

Another member of *hijra* community, Sonia was murdered because of the rivalry in sex work. The *hijras* are shunned by society and sometimes by their own families, and their survival in the indifferent social milieu points out several questions which are still unsolved. The *hijras* are not only murdered they but also live under the psychic trauma. They are scared about the disparaging remarks that they received from the ruthless society. It represents the pathetic picture of the third gender or the *hijras*. The mainstream society of the India is unaware of the fact that how the people, who belong to the third gender, are suffering each day of their life. Laxmi has given the picturesque description of the persistent discrimination of the third gender.

The purpose of the present chapter is to elaborate upon queer theory in the light of the autobiographical work *Me Hijra Me Laxmi*. Queer theory provides a sharp understanding of gender identity. The queer theorists argue that the identity of individual cannot be regarded as stable, it is uncertain and unstable. The identity of an individual determines his place in the society. It is the soul or an inner being of an individual. The uncertainty towards someone's gender identity puts him in a problematic state. Laxminarayan Tripathi was born a male, but she never felt like a male. 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)

Queer theory analysis examines the fluid nature of identity. Laxmi felt relieved when she met the people who belong to the gay community. Her confusion about her gender identity remained the same because the gay people were not like her. She was effeminate and felt like a woman. The members of the gay community considered themselves as men and Laxmi wanted to be a woman. The variation in the recognition of gender identity alienated her from that group. Laxmi became drag-queen and started her own dancing classes. Queer identity made her fall in love with same-sex partners. Laxmi became the source of sexual pleasure for them. Laxmi decided to join the *hijra* community and became a *chela of* Lataguru as a member of *hijra* community. Annamarie Jagose in her work *Queer Theory: An Introduction* argues that identity is the natural property of any individual. As it is a natural process to be attracted towards the same-sex or the opposite sex. Nobody can change their inner being, which decides the gender identity of an

individual. Laxmi's recognition of her gender identity influenced her to join the *hijra* community. Queer theory focuses on the mismatches between the sex, gender and desire. The present study analyses the mismatches between the sex, gender and desire in the memoir of Laxmi. In *Me Hijra Me Laxmi*, Laxmi reveals her gender identity as a *hijra* and she was unable to live as male (sex assigned at the time of the birth). The mismatches are lucidly explained in the text.

Queer theory indicates the failure to fit within a category, transgression of norms and crossing of boundaries. Queer people feel uncomfortable in the culturally construct binaries. Queer study of the text suggests the crossing of the boundaries in the context of traditional categorizations. Laxmi crossed the boundaries of the binary gender categories. She was unable to manage herself in the male body and attire. She became a drag-queen and then joined bar dancing and after that she became *hijra*. Laxmi was unable to fit in the normal socio-culture. Serena Nanda in *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India* delineates the *hijra* culture that Laxmi adopted after christening:

Hijras enjoys dressing in women's clothing, and their female dress is typically accompanied by traditionally feminine jewelry, such as wrist bangles, nose rings, and toe rings, as well as *bindi*-the colored dot applied to the forehead of all Hindu women, who are not widows. Long hair is must for *hijra*. One of the punishments meted out by the elders to a *hijra* who has misbehaved to cut her hair. (17)

Being a *hijra* and Laxmi was obliged to live under the norms of *hijra* culture. Laxmi was at odds with the cultural norms as eminent queer theorist David Halperin delineates upon the queerness, "Whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate and dominant"(Halperin). In the Indian

tradition, the deviant behavior of the individuals is unacceptable. 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)

Queer analysis emphasizes the difference in the socio-cultural norms. Laxmi was indifferent towards dominant cultural values of her family. She learned *Bharatnatyam*, the Indian classical dance as dancing is considered as feminine pursuit, she valued her desires more than the opinions of others. She became the well-known classical dancer. She also became the *nani guru* and adopted more than ten *chelas*. The *hijras* are the persons who go beyond the rigid social construction of genders. Rao refers to the castration in the afterword of the work as, “to the extent that Laxmi is not castrated, she may be said to encompass the ambivalence principle of queer theory” (204). Some individuals chose castration to become eunuchs but Laxmi joins the community without the castration. Laxmi narrates:

When a person’s biological and psychological and sexual identities are at odds with each other, he becomes a freak in the eyes of the society. Society ostracizes him. Overcome by feelings of isolation, such a person desperately seeks out

others like him and bands with them. Together with them, he may decide to get rid of his male sexual organs, either through sex reassignment surgery, or by having another *hijra* sever his private parts from the rest of his body, without anesthesia. (172).

Laxmi was deviant from the normal and the legitimate as the queer approach demonstrates to define the queerness in the text.

Nikki Sullivan in her work *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* argues that, “sexuality is not natural, but rather, is discursively constructed.” Queer theory deals with the ways in which a culture shapes the sexuality of a person. Laxmi was not a born female; there were many people who helped her in shaping her sexuality. With the help of Shabina, Laxmi met the *hijras* and learnt the *hijra* norms. *Hijra* community supported to shape her sexual orientation. Laxmi talks about it as, “The world *hijra* is social and not a biological construct. One cannot be born a *hijra*, though one can be born a hermaphrodite. A hermaphrodite has both male and female sexual organs at birth, whereas a *hijra* is always born as a male. Then there is a question of the child’s sexual orientation” (173). The present study highlights the queer characteristics of the discursive constructed sexuality in the narrative of Laxminarayan Tripathi. Queer analysis offers the uncovering and emphasizing sexuality in general and sexual difference in particular.

Queer theoretical approach examines the lives of the sexual minorities and their personal experiences. Sexual minorities are considered by the society as non-heteronormative (homosexual). The transgender community comes under the category of sexual minorities and *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* is authored by a member of transgender community. The narrative also highlights the theme of homosexuality. There are various instances of homosexuality, which can

be traced in the text. Laxmi was sexually harassed at a very early age. 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. Laxmi becomes the symbol of queer desires. Michel Foucault also states the sexuality as the constructed category, related to the personal experiences of an individual. Laxmi narrates about the Thailand's lady boys which highlights the queerness in the text. Laxmi explains:

They are a part of Thailand's famed sex industry that has patrons from all over the world, including the West, and is so 'perverse' that even an unconventional person, like me was shocked. The kathoys are transgenders who cross-dress from childhood and have the body language and mannerisms of women. Some people think of them as *different* type of men. Still others call them the third gender, a term that the *Kamasutra* frequently uses. The key word, of course, is differences. In the Thai language kathoys means fairy, or queen, and the Kathoys are accepted as such. (114)

The queer theorists argue that queerness is everywhere, it cannot be separated from the society and the present text illustrates the argument.

William Benjamin Turner in his work *A Genealogy of Queer Theory* argues that, "Gender and sexuality are only two of the myriad elements that constitutes a given individual's identity, but especially where they seem ambiguous or undisciplined, gender and sexuality provoke the

greatest anxieties” (5). The queer study of the text outlines the characteristics of queer as stated by Turner. The ambiguous gender identity of Laxmi and her transformation give rise to the anxieties. She was quite young when she was disturbed by her gender identity.

Me Hijra Me Laxmi is a journey of a *hijra*, who takes her gender identity transformation as the major aspect of her life and represents it in a picturesque description. The memoir is an evocative story which reveals the hidden aspects of a flamboyant transgender, Laxmi. The autobiography illuminates the voyage of a *hijra*, from a meek, feeble young boy to one of the distinguished personalities of India. Laxmi joined *hijra* community and learnt everything from Shabina. Being a *hijra*, Laxmi realized the hardships and torments the *hijras* suffer are unacceptable for her. She joined an organization DWS, the main motive of this organization was to make awareness between *hijras* about the sexual epidemics like AIDS. Laxmi became the educator first and then became the first chairperson of the organization. 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 got much recognition for her presentation and she dismantled the stereotypes about *hijras*. She left her profession as a bar dancer. Her next presentation was at the Mumbai District AIDS Control Society (MDACS) and left her audience speechless. In a TV show, *The Big Fight* she

made a controversial statement about the ban on dance bars. Then she performed in film *Between the Lines* based on the lives of hijras, directed by German director Thomas Wartman, which was premiered at the Locarno Film Festival in Switzerland. There came a time in Laxmi's life when she tried to kill herself. She made up her positive mind and decided to fight against the odds.

One of the prestigious moments came when Laxmi was invited to the World AIDS Conference. The Toronto Conference provided her a new platform. She made a great dance performance at Amsterdam. Laxmi reached at a place, which might not be possible for a common *hijra*, it was her endeavor that paved the ways for her. Laxmi became a celebrity from a *hijra*, she explains her experience, "my television appearances made me a known face. Strangers often accosted me on the street to ask, 'You are Laxmi? I saw you on TV and liked you.' Laxmi, the *hijra*, was on her way to stardom"(120). Another proud moment, she shares about her was to be invited by India's most distinguished actor, Salman Khan to participate in his TV show *Dus ka Dum*, but she was unable to participate in that show. Later she participated in the TV show *Sach Ka Samna* and *Big Boss*.

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. She is proud to be a *hijra* and fighting for the upliftment of the *hijra* community. Being a *hijra*, to visit several countries was not an easy task; Laxmi made it possible and became the icon for other *hijras*. Laxmi believes that it is the support and affection of her family that makes her path smooth. She underwent innumerable hardships but eventually, she started living her life with dignity and proud. She is the pathfinder of the victory over the battle of humiliation and discrimination against *hijras*.

The present chapter not only discusses the plight of the third gender in the autobiographical work *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* by Laxminarayan Tripathi, the chapter also analyses the text through the queer lens. The present study evaluates the queerness in the third gender narrative. The third gender narrative is not only a presentation of the pathetic state of sexual minorities but also represent a picture of the triumph of a *hijra*, who belongs to the category of sexual minorities of India.

Conclusion

The dissertation entitled *The Plight of the Third Gender: Quest for Identity in the Narratives Me Hijra Me Laxmi and Truth about Me- A Hijra Life Story* is the outcome of the study of the third gender narratives through the queer lens. The selected literary works authored by the distinguished transgenders of India; highlight the historical and social significance of the *hijras* in Indian society. It reflects the lives of Laxmi and Revathi, the transgenders of India who belong to the category of sexual minorities. Despite the marginalization and exploitation, they didn't give up and they have received favorable reception. The queer analysis also highlights the significance of queerness in the Indian context.

The Literature is an imitation of life and human desires, actions, dreams and thoughts. It portrays the picture of the society through the words, actions or characters. Contemporary Indian English literature is the reflection of modern society and modern thoughts. Transgender literature, one of the popular fields of Indian English literature has got much recognition in the modern context. As literature delineates the human stories, transgender literature also portrays the real picture of the transgender society. After the emergence of queer theory, the portrayal of the issues, related to the LGBT community is no longer a taboo in Indian English literature. In India, A.Revathi has become the first transgender to write about her life in an autobiographical work. She paved the way for the other transgenders to make their contribution to the Indian literature. The past few years have witnessed the growing interest of the authors and researchers towards the issue of transgender community.

Since time immemorial, transgenders have been a part of the society. Transgenders are neither male nor female as discussed earlier in the present study. Transgender phenomenon seems to be a persistent part of human culture across time and world. Transgender is an umbrella term and it has contained various kinds of identities and social practices. Unfortunately, great visibility of the issues related to the transgenders, has not brought an end to gender-based discrimination and harassment. They have been harassed and marginalized because they are considered as menace to the society. The first use of the word is attributed to Virginia Prince. The word was coined in 1980 but took its current meaning in 1992. Lili Elbe was the first person to undergo the sex reassignment surgery. Elbe was a born male in 1882 as Einar Magnus Andreas Wegener. He was a successful painter and got married in 1904. He underwent a sex reassignment surgery and became a transgender, in 1920. As a transgender he lived in Germany and Denmark. Lili underwent a series of four different surgeries which was at that time an experimental procedure. In 1931, Lili went into cardiac arrest and died when he was forty eight year old. Lili Elbe's autobiography *Man into Woman* was first of its kind in the world. The new edition of the autobiography of Elbe was published as *Man into Woman the First Sex Change* by Neils Hoyer. *The Danish Girl* was the fictionalized representation of Lili Elbe's life it was translated into several languages.

The study of transgender issues explores the status and the role of the transgenders in the world. Despite their stigmatization, they are getting much recognition in the world. In the twenty-first century, the scenario has been changed with the globalization and the transgender rights awareness. They have got much attention of the mass media in the modern era. We can trace multiple instances of the success of the transgenders in the various fields. Kate Bornstein is an American author and gender theorist and a member of transgender community. She underwent

the SRS (Sex Reassignment Surgery) in 1986. Laverne Cox is an American activist, actress, reality television star and a popular transgender. Laverne became the first transgender person to be nominated for a Primetime Emmy Awards. Cox is the first transgender to have wax figure of herself at Madame Tussauds. Jamie Roberts is an American Transgender rights activist. She graduated from University of Georgia School of Law. Jamie was born a male and transformed into a female in later nineties. She is working as the public defender in LaGrange former chair of board of directors of Atlanta based Organization. Misty Katherine Snow is an American transgender to represent the major political party, and became the first transgender to be a nominee for the United States Senate.

The research based on the third gender's social status explores that the individuals belong to the category of the third gender are not only getting recognition in the western countries; they are getting success in achieving an exalted position in India also. Laxminarayan Tripathi is a transgender rights activist and the most celebrated *hijra* of India. The story of her success has already been discussed in detail. Laxmi has visited almost every country and told her story. One of the biggest achievements of her life is to be the spokesperson of the *Kinner* community (*Mahamandleshwar of Kinner Akhada*). A.Revathi is working for the rights of sexual minorities. Kalki Subramanian is another shining name of Indian transgender, who has achieved the heights of success. Kalki is a journalist, writer and social activist. She is the founder and director of the Sahodari Foundations. She has done her masters in Journalism and Mass Communication. Sahodari Foundation is working for the justice for transgender and gender non-conforming people. She has become the first transgender entrepreneur. Another well-known transgender of India is Dr. Akkai Padmashali. She is the first transgender of India, who is honored with an honorary degree of doctorate. Dr. Akkai is a human rights activist and founder of *Ondede*

Organization. The meaning of *Ondede* is convergence. The main objective of *Ondede* is to create awareness of the sexual minorities of India. Dr. Padmashali belongs to a typical middle class family. Recently she has got married to a LGBT activist. Success stories of *hijras* are many; we can trace several other examples of the *hijras* who have got the recognition on national and international level. Shabnam Mausi Bano was elected as the member of the state legislative assembly in Madhya Pradesh from Suhagpur constituency, in 1998. Shabnam Mausi Bano founded her own political party also. She has inspired other *hijras* to take part in the mainstream activities. Kamal Jaan was elected as mayor of Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh. Daya Rani Kinner, transsexual activist, stood as an independent candidate from Ghaziabad. Madhu Bai Kinner has been elected as the first transgender mayor of Raigarh, district of Chhattisgarh. Padmini Parekh has become the first Indian transgender news anchor of a TV channel. She appeared on a news show on Tamil TV channel Lotus TV, based in the city of Coimbatore.

Dr. Manabi Bandopadhyay has got the honour to become India's first transgender college principal. She embraced her womanhood in 2003 through sex change surgery. She got her degree of doctorate and in 2015 she became the principal, but the dark side of her triumph is that she resigned from the post of principal because of her gender identity. She did not receive the cooperation from the college students and teachers. Dr. Bandopadhyay is the example of dissidence towards the *hijra* community. Unfortunately, despite getting fame, the third-gendered individuals are still under oppression.

Section 377 of the Indian penal code has become an illusion and has been criminalized as being 'unnatural sexual acts' since 1862. The penal code has been variously used by the government officials to harass and humiliate homosexuals and transgenders. The illegitimate use of the penal code 377 can be seen variously all over India. The Naz Foundation, a non-governmental

organization has been working for the awareness of the AIDS and other health issues of the sexual minorities since 1994. The organization filed a writ petition against the penal code 377 but it was dismissed. It has become the most controversial issue of twenty first century. The people belong to the sexual minorities are increasing in numbers day by day. Homosexuality in various parts of the India is still regarded as an offence. The India is a segregated society; it has a large number of conservative people. Still, in the modern era, the people have their mind set up, that the same-sex relationships are offensive and should not be permitted in the society. The people call themselves modern, have followed the western culture in great extent but they don't accept the open same-sex relationships. There are some people, who prefer to call themselves heteronormative whether they engage themselves in bisexual relationships but they don't consider in front of others. It is only because of the conservative mind set up of the people. In some parts of India, most commonly people even don't allow their girls to have opposite sex friendship; they have to spend their time with same- sex members of the family and outside the families. It gives the rise to the inclination towards the same-sex relationships.it is an undeniable fact that queerness is everywhere, whether it is identified or not. The people consider the penal code 377 as against the traditional conservative norms. The people who love freedom in their life chose to live their life as they want to live whether it is under the norms or go against the cultural norms. The transgender people chose their life against the cultural norms.

With the efforts of LGBT rights activists and transgender rights activists, transgenders of India have got success in getting some legal facilities. *Hijras* got their right to vote in 1994 in Tamil Nadu. They have got the right to participate in the elections. In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court of India has recognized transgenders as the third gender in India. On 15April 2014 Justices Radhakrishnan and A.K. Sikri granted legal recognition to transgender as the third

gender and directed the center and state to treat the transgender as socially and educationally backward class for the purpose of quotas. With the endeavor of these transgenders rights activists, *hijras* of India are on their way to get the right of equality yet it's the destination is still far away.

The research work offers an insight into the world of the third gender individuals. It illustrates every aspect of the *hijra* community, their social status and role, torments and traumas, their life and hardships, their pain and sorrow, their quest and recognition, struggle and the triumph. How are the third gendered individuals considered as a menace? The present study explores the hidden side of the transgender community.

Primary and secondary sources have used to gather information about the topic. The interview is the part of qualitative research methodology. A personal interview has been taken to gather authentic information regarding the social status of the *hijras* in India. I personally met a member of *hijra* and community collected some first-hand information from her. In Punjab, *hijras* are called *mahant* and accommodation is called *dera*. The personal interview was with a *mahant* of *dera*, Simran Mahant. She is a well-known *hijra* and belongs to a small town, Nakodar. I prefaced the interview with Simran by telling her my objective of the interview with her and all about my research work. Mostly *hijras* are considered impolite, but Simran is not like other *hijras*. Simran is an attractive *hijra* with long beautiful hair. Before asking anything she made it clear that whatever she was going to tell me was her own opinion not of any other *hijra*'s viewpoint. I asked some questions to her, the questionnaire is as follows:

Interview

Interview with Simran Mahant, a *hijra* belongs to Nakodar (a small town in Jalandhar District of Punjab).

Tell me something about yourself?

I am Simran Mahant and my age is thirty years. I am living with y guru and one more hijra.

What does being a hijra/ transgender mean to you?

I am a mahant and I don't feel bad about it. I am proud of my gender identity. Yes, I do believe hijras are different from the society but this difference is socially constructed. Society doesn't think we are equal to them. We are human beings and we have the same desires and feeling like other human beings. The hijras are the part of the society, but nobody can change the perspective of others. It is our own perception to take the things around us. I have accepted my gender identity and I know I have to live as my gender identity allows me to live.

Tell me something about your family?

As I told you I am living with my guru in the dera and my guru is my mother, If you want to know about my parents and family before joining the community, yes I have my family and I have very good relations with them. I was born in Jalandhar-based Brahmin family. In my family, I have mother father two sisters and one brother. My mother is deeply attached to me, sometimes she feels bad about the fact that I can't stay with them, but I know I have to stay here not with my family. My sisters are married but I meet them when

they visit the parental house. My brother lives in a western country and supports me like a little sister. My guru is everything for me; I call my guru my mother (mummy).

Do you believe in the concept of relationships? What does the word relationship mean to you?

I have already told you about my family, my guru and another mahant, I have only these relations in my life. The people with whom I am living with have cordial relations with me. If I talk about the society, the relationship of the third gender with the society is quite visible for everyone. I have quite harmonious relations with my neighbours. I have many friends and they are not hijras like me.

Does your family accept you?

Yes, as I have told you about my family, they have accepted the truth about my gender identity. I was born as khusra (in Punjab the word khusra denotes a eunuch). Our society doesn't allow the individual like khusra to live in their own home. The people don't accept as a normal human being. I was just five years old when I was sent to the mahant's house and joined the dera. My mother didn't want to be separated with me after all a mother's heart doesn't allow leaving her child to someone's hands at a very early.

How do you earn a living?

The main source of earning is badhai, hijras are performers. In the traditional functions, such as weddings and Lohri (Punjabi festival) the hijras perform dancing and singing to get money as badhai. The birth of a male child, is celebrated everywhere as in Punjab also and we get a large amount of money at the celebration of a male child's birth, I sing

and dance at such kinds of celebrations and get the badhai. There some people who celebrate the birth of a girl child but it is not very common. I feel fortunate that I am far away from wrong deeds. As you know hijras have to engage in sex work to get money. The begging khusras in public places can be seen easily. Unemployment made them beggars and sex workers. My earning is based on badhai and I belong to a wealthy gharana.

What are your strengths?

Strength in my viewpoint is the independence of a person, particularly for mahants khusras. In my dera my guru has given me proper independence; there is no restriction on me. I can visit anywhere, in this matter, I am fortunate because there are in our hijra gharanas hijras are bound to live under the restrictions of guru. I have bought my own land with my money. I performed on the stage dances also but nowadays I perform on wedding and family functions. I have my own property, I have my voter identity card and license also. Now I have applied for my passport also because I have many friends in the other countries. I have a reputation in city and other gharanas of Punjab. I believe it's my strength.

After the Supreme Court's decision, what difference do you see in your life?

I know it's a great decision of the Supreme Court in the favour of hijras. The hijra community has got the right to vote and other facilities. I think this decision is only for the benefit of the government. Just to get few votes in the favour of some politicians, this decision has been taken by the court. The lack of decent jobs for the mahants is still a dream for us. The government has mentioned the educational quotas; I will not be

beneficial for us. Have you ever seen a mahant is going for the higher education in the reputed institutions? If they try to enter into the educational institutes, they become the laughing stock of the other people. Yes, there are few instances that the hijras have got the higher degrees and working on high positions but it is not in the case of born eunuch. The hijras who have got the higher education are the transgender individuals; they belong to the MTF category. The Supreme Court's decision is great but I don't see any difference in my life with it.

In what ways does society affect you?

The hijras have been discriminated by the society since ages. The society is responsible for the misfortune and marginalization of the hijras. It is an undeniable fact that people don't like to be familiar with us. The hijras live under the oppression of the society and they are not allowed to be a part of the normal society. We are normal human beings with emotions and desires. The society always affects the human beings and I also feel that society has affected me in some ways. If I talk about the homosexual relationships, as everybody knows, western culture is more supportive than ours. I have some friends of mine who identified themselves as gay; they are living in western countries. Life is quite hard in India for sexual minorities. A mahant cannot think about marriage. There are some transgenders who have got married to the same sex but I believe their conjugal relation would not be successful for a long time. I think Indian society will take a long time to understand the real identity of the hijras.

The interview with a *hijra* has provided some information about the social status of the *hijras* of India. It explores the personal life of a *hijra*, which gives the impression of the reputable living of a Punjabi *hijra*. The third gender has been living under the oppression of the society but there are some exceptions to it. The hijras like Simran leading a respectable life, there might be some difficulties but they do not take it as trauma. It depends on the fact that the particular *hijra* belongs to which *guru* or *gharana*. If Simran is leading a prosperous life it is because of her *guru* and *gharana*.

The present study explores the true self of the transgender community and their social status. The comparative analysis gives the impression of the gradually increasing visibility of the transgenders in every field of work all over the world. The modern era demands a truly advanced society to embrace the real identity of the third gender. There is a great need to overcome the discrimination of the sexual minorities to ensure the equality of the individuals, who belong to the third gender category. Several Non-Government organizations have been working for the welfare of the third gender, but there is a need to change our social attitude towards the third-gendered individuals. The right to equality must not be an illusion for the sexual minorities. The right of equality can never be achieved by eliminating some laws but it depends on the society's attitude towards the third gender.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Revathi, A. *The Truth about Me-A Hijra Life Story*. Trans. From Tamil by V.Geetha. New Delhi: Penguin Random House India, 2010. Print.

Tripathi, Laxminarayan. *Me Hijra Me Laxmi*. Trans. From Marathi original by R.Raj.Rao and P.G. Joshi. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015. Print.

Secondary Sources

Aneja, Anu, et.al. *Theories of Women's Gender Studies*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Open University, 2011. Print.

Beemyn, Brett Genny. "Autobiography, Transsexual". *glbtq*. 2015. <<http://www.glbtq.com>>

Buechel, Andy. *That We Might Become God: The Queerness of Creedal Christianity*. U.S.A: Cascade Books, 2015. Print.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.

Campbell, Jim, and Morag Gillespie, eds. *Feminist Economics and Public Policy*. New York: Routledge, 2016. Print.

Channa, Subhadra Mitra. *Gender in South Asia: Social Imagination and Constructed Realities*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Print.

Hall, Donald E. *Queer Theories*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Print.

Hanna, Judith Lynne. *Dance, Sex and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance and Desire*. United States of America: University of Chicago Press, 1988. Print.

Jagose, Annamarie. *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York: NYU Press, 1996. Print.

Jahan, Ishrat. "Review of Me Laxmi, Me Hijra: An Autobiography of Laxminarayan Tripathi Translated by R.Raj.Rao and P.G.Joshi". Vol.7, Issue 1. February 2016. <<http://the-criterion.com>>

Jani, Darsha. "Me Hijra Me Laxmi: A Stirring Saga of a Transgender". Vol. 7. Issue 3. June 2016. <<http://www.criterion.com>>

Krondorfer, Bjorn, Ed. *Man and Masculinities and Christianity and Judaism: A Critical Reader*. London: SCM Press, 2009. Print.

Mahant, Simran. Personal Interview. 16 March. 2017.

Nanda, Serena. *Neither Man nor Woman: the Hijras of India*. Canada: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999. Print

Nelson, Emmanuel S, ed. *Encyclopedia of Contemporary LGBTQ. Literature of United States*. California: Greenwood Press, 2009. Print.

Parker, Richard, and Peter, Aggleton, eds. *Culture, Society and Sexuality: A Reader*. London: UCL Press, 1999. Print.

Pilot, Sara, and Lora, Prabhu, eds. *The Fear that Stalks: Gender-Based Violence in Public Spaces*. New Delhi: Zubaan, 2012. Print.

"Queer Theory and Queer Studies". Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered History in America. *Encyclopedia*. 7 April. 2017. <<http://www.encyclopedia.com>>

Saba, Shabbir. "Review: Larger than Life: Me Hijra Me Laxmi by Laxmi Tripathi". *Dawn*. 4. Oct. 2015. <<http://www.dawn.com/news/1210459>>

Samanta, Atanu. "Gender Discrimination in A.Revathi's Autobiography The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story". Vol. 4, issue.1. *IJELR*. 1, 2017. <<http://www.ijelr.in>>

Spargo, Tasmin. *Foucault and Queer Theory*. U.K.Icon Books, 1999. Print.

Sullivan, Nikki. *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. New York: New York University Press, 2003.Print.

Stoller, Robert. J. *Sex and Gender: The development of Masculinity and Femininity*. London: Karnac Books, 1984.Print.

Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History*. Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008.Print.

Turner, William Benjamin.*A Genealogy of Queer Theory*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.2000. Print.

Whilham, Amardas. *Tritya Prakriti: People of Third Sex Understanding Homosexuality and Intersex Conditions through Hinduism*. U.S.A.: Galva, 2013.Web.

