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**Identity Crisis: A Study of Transgender Autobiography *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* by Laxmi Narayan Tripathi**

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**Abstract:**

Identity crisis is one of the prominent themes in transgender autobiographies. They suffered from this trauma during their childhood, because they are unaware of the changes that they experienced during the growth and development of their bodies. This paper aims to analyze the identity crisis which is faced by Laxmi, the protagonist of her autobiography. Along with the crisis of the protagonist, this paper also tries to depict the identity crisis that the minority people of India are faced. Transgenders face ample problems from, birth to death, from identity crisis to cremation. Once there was a certain time when they are confused about their identity, and whom they belonged to.

**Keywords:** Transgender, violence, hijra, Guru-chela, and sex worker.

**Introduction:**

Laxmi Narayan Tripathi is a transgender, hijra rights activist, Bollywood actress, and motivational speaker in Mumbai. She wrote her autobiography in which she describes her experiences from childhood to becoming a famous transgender activist. Her parents are very supportive of her. So, she dedicated her autobiography to them and wrote “

To my beloved parents

Who has been my guiding light through the

Highs and lows of my existence



For standing by and making

Laxmi who she is today.” (Me hijra, me Laxmi)

Her parents always stand up for her and guide her in the right direction to make her life better. They know that she belongs to the LGBTQ community. LGBTQ is related to gender studies in which these letters are a symbol of different movements or gender areas.

**L-** Lesbians, denotes a relationship between two women. In other words, we call it female homosexuality or same-sex attraction.

**G-** Gay term refers to a homosexual person. It shows the relationship between two men.

**B-** This term is used for those people who can be attracted to more than one gender. Sometimes, can be attracted to same-sex gender and opposite gender also.

**T-** Transgender is an umbrella term, that refers to those people whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned to them at the time of their birth. Sometimes, they remained confused about their identity. According to Susan Stryker “

As noted earlier, this key term around which the book revolves implies movement away from an assigned, unchosen gender position. Transgender entered widespread use in the early 1990s, although the word has a long history that stretched back to the mid-1960. In recent years, some people have begun to use the term transgender to refer only to those who identify with a binary gender other than the one they were assigned at birth.” (Susan, 15)

**Q-** Queer refers to something strange, that is not normal. Queer depicts the study of sexuality that is beyond gender. According to Tamsin Spargo “The term Queer describes a range of same-sex desire in literary texts, films, music, images; analyses of the social and political power relations of sexuality; critiques of the sex-gender system; study of transsexual and transgender identifications.” (Spargo, 90)

Objectives: The objectives of the research paper are:

- To know the condition of transgenders in the modern world.
- To compare the situation of past and present.
- To know about their experiences from the past.



## Research Methodology:

The present research work is qualitative which helps to understand the experiences of transgender throughout their life. The primary source of my work is the original text '*Me Hijra, Me Laxmi*', and secondary sources are reference books, research articles, research thesis, recorded interviews, journals, newspaper articles, etc.

## Review of Literature:

- *Status of transgender in India: A review* by Pinky, et. In this paper, she explained how transgender is different from Hijras and the problems faced by them. These are related to physical, discrimination, mental health, and discrimination by family, society, friends, etc. She also gives reference to bills such as the Rights of transgender person bills, The transgender protection rights bill, section 377, etc.
- Andrews, D.T.G analyzed the dimensions of victimization of transgender people that includes, including biological, psychological, and also its effects on the permanent resident and migrant transgender people.
- Desari, Twinkle, G. Channa Reddy in their research paper Transgender literature in India: A comparative study of *I Am vidya* and *A Gift of Goddess Laxmi* explained the difference between gender and sex and how colonization affected the lives of transgender in the beginning and how their condition is changed in recent times.
- Susan Stryker's *Transgender History: The root of today's revolution* is a book about the history of the transgender movement in the USA and mainly concentrating on the year after World War 2. She expresses the feelings of transgender about discrimination, ridiculousness, stigmatization, etc. She also talks about Queer theory which emerged in the 1990s and the history of Queer words.
- Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: A subversion of identity* is a book that was influenced by feminism, women's studies, and lesbian, and gay studies also. She criticizes the main idea of feminist theory is that identity is fixed and differentiates between sex and gender. Gender is not something that is fixed, it is constructed by society. She said that identity is fluid and changeable and Gender is performance rather than fixed characteristics. Along with this, the LGBT community is also discussed in this book.



- Nair, J.R. Haripriya in her work *Literary Potential and reformative power of transgender self writings from India* a work on transgender literature in which she discusses how they are considered marginalized and also tries to convey the importance of autobiographies and transgender literature. She told by writing for self they express many problems that transgenders are facing in society. Because of this, they are unable to get a relevant position in society.
- Kaur, Inderpreet in her work *Transgender and a Hijra: A literary review of Global differences* explained that transgender studies are a subpart of queer literature whose clear definition is still in dispute and she makes a comparison between East and Western perspectives of gender studies. In Eastern countries, their conditions are pathetic because people are not ready to accept them as a part of society but this situation is not the same in western countries.

Experiences of Laxmi Narayan Tripathi:

Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* is a first-person perspective memoir of her. In her work, she talks about her childhood experiences lucidly, such as how she was sexually harassed during her childhood. She wrote her experience:

I was first sexually exploited when I was seven. I had just recovered from yet another bout of illness and gone to my hometown for my cousin's wedding.... As we prayed, an older boy a sort of distant cousin, lured me into a dark room. I was too young to understand what happened to me..." (Laxmi, 6)

Laxmi said that people are not ready to accept them as a part of society. People called them by different names, those are derogatory terms. They are not able to understand, we are also humans. It is not his mistake if people make them in this way. While talking about sexual harassment, she talked about one incident which changed his life. She thinks that she is never a child. She felt that she was an adult because people assault her in different ways. She wrote:

These sexual assaults transformed me. I become 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. (Laxmi, 7)



She said that how people think that they were abnormal. She was confused about her identity. When she met Ashok Row Kavi and shared her feelings with him and she wants to clear her doubts and asked many questions regarding her sexuality. She asked, why I was effeminate and why people tease us. Ashok replied in a very lucent manner: No, my child you are not abnormal. You are normal. What is abnormal is the world around us. They simply do not understand us. But do not think of all that now. (Laxmi, 11)

Laxmi belongs to the hijra community which is different from transgender. Transgender is a wider term that covers gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc. But hijra is a community based on one specific area and the transgender term is accepted worldwide for non-binary people. Hijras are those who are trapped in the wrong body. Laxmi defines it very beautifully in her work.

A hijra is neither a man nor a woman. She is feminine, but not a woman. He is masculine, a male by birth, but not a man either. A hijra male body is a trap not just to the hijra itself who suffocates within it, but to the world in general that wrongly assumes, a hijra to be a man. (Laxmi, 40)

One more side of upper society is depicted by Laxmi. She said that she faced problems when she wants to make a passport. Before this, she had never seen a passport, even though she was the first Asian transgender who wants a passport because she wants to attend a conference in Toronto in 2006. It was a difficult time for her but with the help of Dr. Jaya Rajni, she solved this problem and became successful. After that, she joined a DWS (Dai welfare society) but due to disputes, she left it and started a new organization for the help of transgenders 'ASTTVA'. In this, Laxmi with her friends gives counseling to new people in their community.

#### Guru-Chela relationship-

The relationship between the guru and the chela is very important in the hijra community. Guru is like a teacher to chela. In Bombay, there were seven head Gurus of seven naiks. The head of these clans will assemble in the 'jamaat' to make important decisions for the community. In the early days, chelas are treated as slaves. There were severe punishments for them, some are not able to suffer from these punishments. But in recent times, it is changed. She talked about one incident and wrote



After Big Boss, my relations with Lataguru were completely strained. She thought I had made millions on the show and some of that lucre was rightfully hers. She asked me for two lakh rupees, and when I told her that I could not pay her that much, she verbally abused me... (Laxmi, 153)

Castration is the process of removing the testicles of a male animal or human. It is not a part of hijras. It is optional and also called 'Nirvana'. There is a rumor that all hijra are castrated but this is not true. Castration is not enforceable upon them. Apart from this, she also talked about the stone wall riots, and activism during her life. She always fights for the rights of hijras. A. Revathi also demands the same and write

Rejected by parents

Rejected by society

Rejected by the world

I sing today.

I was born a man

I have struggled to be as any woman

To be a daughter, a sister

A mother, a grandmother

A granddaughter.

Ours is an excluded

And exiled community

We are the aravanis

The transgender people.

We demand acceptance



From parents

From society

From world

To be human

To live as we have chosen. ( Revathi, 51)

## Conclusion:

Therefore, the problem of transgender can be easily eliminated if people will accept them and stay with their parents because parents can easily deal with them. They can be given education and proper love to them. No doubt, within a time everything will become settled and all problems will be solved but till the time awareness is one of the easy ways to get people educated.

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