



To Be Or Not To Be: A Question of Identity: A Comparative Study of *Me Laxmi*, *Me Hijra* and *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*.

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Abstract

*From the existence of human, the two genders, male and female were considered as a significance for identity. On the one side, man was supposed as dominator in the society while on the other side, female played a passive role towards man in the society. Apart from these two genders, another gender existed in modern period which is called as 'transgender'. In the present time, the identity of being hijra or transgender, lesbian, gay has been considered as 'third gender'. In India, Hijra community is despised more than other communities such as Dalit and tribal communities. They suffer discrimination, humiliation and violence of the society throughout of their life. Mostly Hijras, remained as third gender spend their life in dilemma, having question of their identity. Through this comparative study of both autobiographies, *Me Laxmi*, *Me Hijra: An Autobiography of Laxminarayan Tripathi* and *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*, I analysed that both Revathi and Laxmi were humiliated and discriminated in their childhood due to their transgender identity.*

Keywords: Transgender (hijra); Identity; Victim; Discrimination; Third-gender; Rights etc.

Introduction

In contemporary time, writing about transgender and their life has been much popular. The autobiographies based on their (transgenders) life give an empathetic picture for readers. Even, non-hetrosexual people have been writing about Hijras' lives and their issues. In the present time, the identity of being hijra or transgender, lesbian, gay and bisexual has been considered as 'third gender'. As in our society, having an identity of "Hijra" for someone becomes an issue itself.

The aim of this paper is to do a comparative study between Laxmi and Revathi in the context of identity. How both faced difficulties in the society regarding their identity. We, people forget that modernity is not responsible for the existence of transgender. It was remained with human subsistence. Even we can trace the history of Hijra's existence in the two grand epics; Ramayana and Mahabharata. The character of Shikhandi played an important role in the epic Mahabharata. However,

transgenders are also a part of society as same as others are. With same purpose, Transgender studies enhance the reader's awareness towards transgenders, gay and lesbians even bisexuals and about their rights. Now, many transgenders are social worker and doing campaigning as well.

Through Laxmi's autobiography, we get the realistic picture of Hijra's life, who hijras are and what are the processes to shape their personalities as Hijras? Her autobiography helps to dispel myths about the Hijras and also throw away our prejudices. Hijras are also ordinary people, just like us. They suffer discrimination, humiliation and violence of the society throughout of their life. Mostly Hijras, remained as third gender spend their life in dilemma, and having question of their identity. Therefore, sometimes due to the people's perceptions towards them, they don't consider themselves as member of the society.

Other text that I have chosen to comparative study is an autobiography *The*



Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story (translated from Tamil into English by V. Geetha) based on Revathi's life. She is also a hijra like Laxmi. Both books are autobiographies but are very different at the same time. Initially, Laxmi talked about her bitter experiences of sexual harassment openly while Revathi described herself as a guilty person into two terms; first, she was born as a transgender and other was her birth in a dalit family which is already considered as oppressed community in the society.

In *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story*, Revathi's life is accounted with the essentials of good life while in *Me Laxmi, Me Hijra*, the life of Laxmi is accounted conversely but as anti-essentialist. Revathi accepted her identity by virtue as being Hijra but in the case of Laxmi, she accepted with a purpose to show that being a Hijra, she is not a victim. Revathi consistently describe herself as victim. She also portrays the humiliation and violence that Hijras face in daily routine even she is one of them. In the contrary, Laxmi was humiliated in her childhood when she was still a boy. Once she accepted her identity as hijra unlike Revathi, she used to live on her own terms. Laxmi's birth in upper caste family, I observed, proved as positive point and resisted her from social discrimination. Here, caste proved as more protective weapon than identity from the identity conflict.

The atmosphere of brought up in both Revathi and Laxmis' families was totally different which effected the psyche of Revathi and Laxmi. In the case of Laxmi, she is born and brought up in a Brahmin family. She got education and supported by her family even knowing her identity as Hijra. The support of her family gave her a positive inner inspiration to resist the violence and to stand for her rights. As the result of this support, she became a social

activist and also attended national and international conferences for eradication of AIDS among the people. She also participated in Bigg Boss and Dus Ka Dum. In one TV program, her family also state that they are proud of their daughter. They would rather accept her as a Hijra than leave her on the streets to beg and trade her body. On the contrary, Revathi was born in dalit/low caste family. She was humiliated not only by society but by her family too. She didn't get support from her family. She used to work as sex worker. Therefore, there is much difference in which both grew up.

Conclusion: Here, the question of **to be or not to be** remarks on both Laxmi and Revathis' identity in the society. Laxmi, was in dilemma about her identity in her childhood. Thus, due to this cause she was effected psychologically. This thing gave an advantage for those same aged boys who assaulted her until she didn't meet to Ashok Row kavi who used to run a coaching class named 'Maheshwari Udyaan' for Gay teeange. He was that person who motivated her to take a stand for identity and also made a realization that she is not a victim in the society but she has same share/responsibilities in the society as others have. On the contrary of this, Revathi accepted herself as a victim of the society. The discrimination and sexually harassment as abuse or physically torture through out of her life came out as result of it. Even she was thrown forcibly in the Sex working field by her family merely to earn money. Within that, Revathi was nurtured later positively and took stand for her right.

Workcited

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