

Research Article

**A Memoir of Trials and Tribulations
A study on Lakshmi Narayan Tripathi's Me Hijra Me Lakshmi**

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Abstract

The journey of an exceptional human being, Lakshmi Tripathi, the eldest son of an orthodox Brahmin family who fought against the torturing odds of the society is portrayed in this paper. Lakshmi says it was an unpredictable and unpleasant choice of her to become Hijra. She says, from the mental and physical torments, she made it a point to gain fame and dignity in the society and she proudly presents herself as 'Hijra'. Hijras in our country have to face too many ordeals, careless oppression and they always hold the scars of the memories and brutal moments that had hurt them. Though the third gender is now officially recognized, accepted and they are free from slavery, they yet go through the obstacles that try to push them down. They have to undergo sexual oppression, lack of education, disintegration from the society and the people; they lose their identity and etc. though they are aware of the injustice happening against women, Lakshmi makes it a point to stand and fight against the exploitation. Though she was fully accepted by her family and there were no hindrances for her to achieve her dreams, the society was a big backdrop. All the trauma and exploitation has made her what she is now. Lakshmi in her autobiography, which she says it did not happen with a plan but with the encouragement of few good souls around her, talks about the inhuman activity that took place upon her and around her.

Keywords : Marginalization, Taboo, Trails, Tribulations, Hijra

Third gender- which is now being widely recognized earlier had to undergo many tribulations. Hijra community in India is still considered a taboo to talk about or people still find it difficult to move around them and they are still avoided from various groups and social activities. They proceed with their life by singing around and occasionally by selling themselves. Our society and us talk about the equality among people and strongly oppose gender discrimination but we often forget the fact that transgenders are also recognized as one of the gender and they too have equal rights as we have. We live in a country where we still do not have separate toilets for transgender everywhere and they still are abused for the hormonal changes they undergo. We seldom understand the pain that the people of transgender community undergo. This paper tries to excavate the life, trails and desires of a transgender, who was excluded by the society through their

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dominance. *Me Hijra, Me Lakshmi* (2015) by Lakshmi Tripathi is an autobiography of an educated and confident hijra who converted and rose from the society of taboos and stigma and established herself.

Lakshmi is proud and is always thankful to her family for accepting and understanding her. She says, "I am a hijra and have been accepted by my family. This is rare in a culture where deviant sexuality is enough for parents to disown their offspring,.....They never stopped me from expressing myself,". But it was only her family that supported her, she had to face a bitter experience from her cousins which made her more silent and incommunicative. Lakshmi seeks advice from Sangita, who thought Lakshmi to be gay as she had feelings towards male.

"As the eldest son of my parents, they expected me to be a man. They expressed me to be manly, and eventually be the man of the house. I knew I couldn't fulfil these expectations because, inwardly, I did not feel like a man. On top of that, I was gay. Even if my aberrations, society would not. I felt inadequate. I wanted to be addressed as a woman, not a man. I was in turmoil." (37)

Lakshmi was born in an orthodox Brahmin family as their eldest son. As she was the eldest son the family wanted her to be a moral support for them and do manly chores but lakshmi says that she could not fulfill that because she was not a man inside it was only her appearance and she never wanted the society to address her as a man but to recognize her inner self and call her a woman. She was in a chaos, without knowing what to do and how to make people realize about what and how she felt.

"This brought me to the question of sexuality. I had learnt from Ashok Row Kavi that I wasn't abnormal. But then, what was going on with my body? Though I was born as a boy, how come I fell in love with boys and not with girls? Slowly gradually, I came to the conclusion that I wasn't a boy. I was a girl. But then I had a penis and testicles, not breasts. So how could I call myself a girl? I was bewildered. I didn't have answers to these difficult questions. I wanted to end my life. (22)

One's identity plays an important role; identity gives one the strength to live life. Here Lakshmi was depressed as she herself could not identify who she was. Though she thought herself as gay, was attracted towards men and had different affairs every time men used to hurt her and end up the relation and gradually she realized that she was not ready to accept her masculine features. Lakshmi says, she even concluded that she was not a male but was confused with the fact that she has penis and testicles. This trauma even drove her to end up her life. Lakshmi could not discuss this with her family as Indian society always had a distance between the parents and the child.

"No, my child, you are not abnormal. You are absolutely normal. What is abnormal is the world around us." (11) Lakshmi met Ashok who worked for the gay community, but he asked Lakshmi to drop thinking as she was too young to decide about these things. And he told her that it was not her who was abnormal but the society around them. "Dancing transported me to another world where I could be my true self."(23) With all chaos and confusions she decided to join the dance classes it was first time for her when her teacher Baby Johnny told her to accept the feminine form and the dance class became her refuge. The teacher taught her how to be herself without losing one's dignity and identity. "how to be myself, without compromising on my dignity and self-

respect.”(25). That was a big lesson for Lakshmi to stand for herself but her confusions and desires were still same. Though she was an active member of Ashok’s gay group she couldn’t accept herself as gay because she never felt any masculine qualities in her.

But where was I in all this? How could I fit into such a scenario? True, I didn’t have to support a family. But, I too straddled many worlds, without belonging to any. As the eldest son of my parents, they expected me to be a man. They expected me to be manly, and eventually be the man of the house. I couldn’t fulfill these expectations because, inwardly, I did not feel like a man. (37)

After her school days she grew bolder and started wearing girls attire and grew nails and wore rings. When Ashok introduced her to the other hijras she too started going to bars for dancing when gave her money but she was not interested to go with different men everyday to earn money which other girls did to feed their family.

Then came the most important phase in Lakshmi’s life, she met Shabina. Shabina was a Hijra who taught everything to Lakshmi about Hijras. And now Lakshmi found out the true meaning of Hijra “the word Hij refers to the soul, a holy soul. The body in which the holy soul resides is called, Hijra” (39) when Lakshmi was a complete hijra without any trauma she accepted Shabina as her guru.

The one, who was sexually abused twice, ridiculed by the society, thought of ending her life, withstood marginalization emerged out bright without losing any hope. She fought the battle of life with her own hands and will power. Lakshmi used various platforms to portray herself and the people like her so that the society can understand them better. Though there are many laws for the development of transgenders it is the responsibility of us common people too to accept them. We should push them out to shine further rather than let them use their skills for singing around and asking for money.

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