The Integration of Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Resilience in Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's *Me Hijra Me Laxmi*

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Abstract

Gender preconceptions often lead to prejudice and sexual assault against transgender people in society. They need to dismantle the myth of the archetypal society to get past this catastrophe. Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's autobiography *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* has been examined for the current study *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* was perceived as a major attempt to refute and dispel common stereotypes about transgender people. This article discusses the positive outlook and capacity for self-sufficiency of the multi-talented and well-known social activist Laxmi. The primary goal of the text is to debunk many myths and preconceptions regarding transgender people, or Hijras, and to inspire readers to approach their shift with optimism. The study presents clichés of mainstream culture, in which the general public and law enforcement officials do not even regard Hijras as fellow human beings. Their rights had been violated and they suffered humiliation. *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* dispels many of the myths and stereotypes that the general world has about hijras.

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Stereotypes.

Stereotyping is the practice of making judgements about someone based on their status in a specific class or group. Understanding the operation of traditional gender norms and stereotypes is necessary to understand the definition of stereotyping. Stereotypes about transgender people arise when the most positive perceptions of them are perpetuated. Examples of these stereotypes include the impression that they are ugly, that they mostly work as pub dancers or beg, and that they only turn to sex work to survive. Transgender people have

major challenges in obtaining social equality as a result of these stereotypes.

Prejudice is generally understood to be the act of acting in a biased manner towards and maintaining stereotypes about a particular group (transgender people). Studies have examined discrimination against transgender individuals, encompassing transphobia. Hill & Willoughby in the article entitled "The Development and Validation of the Genderism and Transphobia Scale" defines transphobia as,"an irrational fear or hatred of, or emotional disgust toward, individuals who do not conform to society's gender expectation"(2005). Trans prejudice is defined by King Winter,& Webster in "Contact Reduces Transprejudice: A Study on Attitudes towards Transgenderism and Transgender Civil Rights in Hong Kong" as "negative beliefs about the character and value of individuals who, in appearance and/or identity, do not conform to society's current conceptualization of gender" (19). Prejudice and discrimination are thought to be influenced by stereotype content. Therefore, investigating the myths associated with transgender people could make a substantial addition to the corpus of research already available on transgender attitudes. Gender identity has taken centre stage in discussions, organisations, and initiatives supported by the transgender community. A great number of individuals who do not fully comprehend their concerns have greatly misinterpreted it.

Laxmi's autobiography promotes productive discussions on gender identity without promoting prejudices or dismissing the legal significance of biological sex. Kankana Basu in the *New Indian Express* opines "Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, actor, activist, and dancer, whose familiar florid face epitomizes the rise and rise of the transgender. While her debut book Me Hijra, Me Laxmi may have caused a mini tsunami in the past" (8th October). Writing is the most effective medium for depicting the hijras' way of existence in a sensitive and caring manner. Any change that affects the hijra community directly and significantly affects Laxmi personally. Writing turned out to be the most effective way to deal with and resist oppression. People who have inconsistent sexual, psychological, and biological identities are viewed as abnormal by society. Society has socially isolated them. An individual experiencing this isolating state actively seeks out and makes alliances with individuals who have gone through similar situations. Anyone can decide whether to have anesthesia-free sex transition surgery or have their male genital organs removed by another hijra. People who get hormone therapy to grow breasts become members of hijra communities.

In her autobiography, Laxmi describes how, as a weak male youngster tormented by a nagging doubt about her sexual identity, she delighted in dressing like a woman. She was consoled after meeting Ashok Row Kavi, who works for the Gay community. Laxmi exclaims, "What is abnormal is the world around us. They simply don't understand us" (11). The realisation of her gender (third gender) brought Laxmi joy and relief. She shares her joy, "I felt relieved. The thought that I was not the only one like this, but there were others too was elating" (11)."On the contrary, I had become brazen, ready to declare to the world that I was gay" (14). It was her first proactive step to embracing who she was. Her sense of confusion at her situation was replaced with comfort after meeting others who were similar to her. It shaped her into a future transgender social activist. Laxmi opines, "Social service can be a bitter pill with adverse side effects. But I was determined to dedicate my life to social work" (61). After that, she moves to Khopat, where she finds herself thinking positively. She participated in a variety of events, including dancing, acting, elocution, and basketball, and she also took home numerous awards. It was her unwavering willingness to pursue her interests that led to her current position. Laxmi's talents were valued by the public. Laxmi proclaims, "I loved winning prizes, for they gave my self-esteem a boost. Thus, I enrolled my name for whatever dance competitions I got to know of " (26).

Laxmi's career was greatly influenced by her dancing. She had numerous chances to demonstrate to the general public that

transgender people are just as valid as any other gender (including male and female gender) because of her skill as a dancer. She demonstrated through her accomplishments that anyone can be talented and have a great life. She continues to dance despite having asthma. She had stuck with dancing as her form of treatment. Laxmi says, “Dancing transported me to another world where I could be my true self” (23). She enrolled in dance class in her eighth-grade year. She subsequently owned and operated Lucky Chap Dance Academy (also known as Vidya Nritya Niketan), a dance school, with her friend Sachin Kharat. Laxmi uses traditional dancing as a way to communicate dissent in addition to challenging the stereotype that it is solely for ladies. She eventually works as a Model coordinator. She then hosted the transgender beauty pageant, known as the Indian Super Queen Contest. Because of a pervasive inferiority complex, holding such activities will shield people from view, allowing them to use the ramp. Laxmi exclaims, “The hijras were exhilarated. Everywhere, we were the talk of the town. The contest boosted their confidence and they were able to carry themselves about with an air of dignity” (133). This highlights the necessity for society to recognise transgender people as fellow human beings and the idea of equality for them.

Transgender persons face systematic suppression every day. Laxmi condemns, “The world would only be too happy to silence us” (56). They have insufficient representation in politics, governance, and the media. Individuals are inhibited from openly expressing themselves in cultures where they are feared. They often feel unsafe even in their own neighbourhoods. Laxmi says that she does her utmost to ensure that Hijras have their basic rights, “I have been swimming against two currents- one society and the other community. Both need to change their attitude… and Change is only possible when the laws change. And for that the authorities need to be approached” (160-161). Laxmi tells the public “often think of us as troublemakers and would avoid engaging with us” (53). Even police officers, entrusted with protecting everyone, frequently detain people without cause and treat hijras brutally. 'Hijra' is a pejorative term. It's called "number six," "number nine," or "chakka" in colloquial language. The Urdu word "hijar" is the source of the English "hijra." A hijar is a person who has chosen to live apart from their tribe or community. A hijra is someone who has decided to leave the mainstream, which is comprised of both men and women and join a group of people known as hijras. Laxmi laments:

They looked at us with suspicion and bias, subjecting us to questions and cross-questions…..The cops would arrive at the most unearthly hour and randomly pick anyone of us up for questioning at the police station. If we asked for details, we were given evasive answers, like ‘someone told us...’ or‘our sources have revealed...’ But such responses did not satisfy us. (54-56)

Laxmi learns from her Chela Subhadra's passing that she must defend her people against the prejudices of the outside world. She advised her chelas, “how to face the cops when to abuse, and when to be gentle” (56). Laxmi's interaction with the police provided insight into the type of life she will lead going forward. She says, “It would be a life of social and political activism” (53). She moves her home to Kalwa to be with the other hijras during their time of need. She gives up her opulent lifestyle to be a caring and loving Guru for her chelas and acts as an example for them. Her goals were to educate society and give the hijra group more authority. y. “To us, the hijras were the ultimate subaltern, deprived of fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution. We were slaves, non-persons. We had been suffering injustice for centuries” (91).

The media usually portrays transgender people as hypersexualized, uncontrollable freaks, or mistakenly labels them as drug-addled prostitutes or ostentatious drag performers. Laxmi is against the media's clichéd depiction of transgender characters. Laxmi says,“Bollywood films, by continually stereotyping hijras, as indeed they do every marginalized section of society, only add to our jaundiced view of them. Rarely has

Bollywood come up with a sensitive portrayal of a hijra, a notable exception being Pooja Bhatt's film Tamanna" (182). According to Laxmi, those representations change people's perceptions. This misleading image causes her to turn down certain opportunities to act in motion pictures. She even took part in several TV shows, including Zed News Channel, Big Boss, Boogie Woogie, The Big Fight, Dilkhulas, and the album Lavani on *Fire*. She starred in a Kala Ghoda Festival short film titled *Slut*. Laxmi opines, "It is a story of a highly strung but rebellious hijra who rips off the masks of morality worn by the middle class" (119). The request for Laxmi to appear as a guest on Dilkhulas came from Kanchan Adhikari, a TV presenter for the station Mi Marathi. She wore a one-piece outfit that she got at Toronko when she got to the studio. When Sandeep Malvi, her buddy, asks her, "What have you worn? 'she protests his question by saying, 'What does it matter if I wear these clothes?'. 'After all, my body isn't exposed.' She lapsed into a little lecture about the need to destroy stereotypes. "Just because I was a social worker, I didn't have to wear a sari" (89). She later had an appearance in Kartikeya Narayan Singh's documentary Bambaiya. She expresses her feelings over her part in that movie, "I play myself in the film- I am Laxmi, the hijra and the transgender activist" (120).

Laxmi received an invitation to present a paper while serving as the DWS chairperson. She took advantage of the occasion and received a standing ovation for her flawless English paper presentation at the Proposal Development workshop hosted by the Avert Society in Vashi. Laxmi exclaims, "Everyone was amazed. Their stereotypes about hijras were dismantled" (63). In Laxmi's life, education is essential and saves her when she needs it most. When the bureaucracy refused to grant Laxmi a passport because she was a hijra, she was able to fight it thanks to her educational background. Because of her accomplishment at the workshop, people began to view her as a respectable person and she was able to get over her rude past. Laxmi proclaims:

I felt empowered, and empowerment is not a word that normally exists in the vocabulary of a hijra. It is true that as a person, I, Laxminarayan Tripathi, liked taking on new challenges, but as a hijra, I was never allowed to……I started having differences with the DWS hijras.... 'What does it matter if you are a man, woman, or hijra when something's got to be done?' I asked. 'Why segregate yourselves from mainstream society to such an extent? (63- 67)

Laxmi rejected the common misconception about the hijra group, which holds that they should not integrate with either their birth family or the general public,"hijras are expected to cut off all ties with their natal families" (72). Laxmi is hesitant to remain with her guru, Lataguru, who is fairly mute, but her family accepts her new identity,"Why must you cling on to the male-female society?" (72). When her suggestions were rejected by the other hijras, she left the DWS mutely. Laxmi's attempt to use social media to represent herself as a community spokesperson was met with opposition from Lata Guru. She emphasizes the significance of the hijra culture accepting change even if she would pay a price for her transgression. The limitations on her freedom infuriated her. She fearlessly disobeys Lata Guru's command, which becomes a barrier to her freedom. Laxmi says, "But my chelas stoodby me. They were proud of me because I was educated and had a mind of my own. So what if I broke all the rules?" (160).Her family embraced her and adored her without condition as she was their eldest son. Laxmi enjoys excellent ties both with her chelas and her own family, in contrast to Lata Guru. She strikes a balance between her two households. Her mother also takes good care of her chelas; they reside in surrounding houses and serve as positive role models for the stereotyped culture that gave rise to incorrect beliefs regarding transgender identities. Laxmi opines, "There are several myths about hijras in circulation that act to their detriment. One such myth is that hijras kidnap young male children, castrate them, and forcibly make them hijras" (183). Transgender identity holders should not be subject to discrimination.

Laxmi's opposition to the castration procedure (also known as Nirvana, or sex assignment operation) is a significant factor in shattering preconceptions through self-sustainment.According to her, "castration is strictly optional, and every hijra decides for herself whether or not to undergo it. Castration cannot be forced upon a hijra" (156). She uses her personal experience to dispel the psychological and physical preconceptions associated with hijras. When transgender people are spotted in public, people often feel ashamed or embarrassed. They are characterised as repulsive, ugly, and miserable beings. Laxmi sought to alter people's perceptions and refute the widespread belief that hijras are physically ugly people. Laxmi herself dispels these stereotypes by holding beauty pageants for them. The translator Rao says, "Hijras are considered ugly, But when I see Laxmi- tall, sturdy, beautiful and confident- my stereotypes are automatically destroyed"(225).

Throughout her memoir, Laxmi dispelled myths and illogical beliefs about transgender people and demonstrated what it means to be a successful person, a hijra, a social activist, a devoted son to her family, and the ideal Guru to her chelas. All of this was made possible by her independence and capacity to live her own life as she pleased. Her mature demeanour inspired, supported, and even taught her how to gain the fundamental rights for her community and survive in a culture that marginalises people. The translator Rao says, "One of Laxmi's primary endeavors is to show us that hijras are ordinary people, no different from us: they do not exist in a rarefied realm. And yet, Laxmi's autobiography must not be placed within the wider tradition of Lesbian-Gay-BisexualTransgender (LGBT) writing in India" (183). Every transgender person should therefore be independent and gain the ability to defy societal conventions through self-reliance. Her writing career lends another complexity to her human rights advocacy efforts. Writing is a powerful tool that she uses to build relationships with the hijra community, her family, and the larger society. She hopes to start a conversation by bridging the significant gap between these two domains so that people may understand how intertwined they are and how important it is for everyone to take responsibility for their actions.

People typically believe that they live in a good world free from corruption, violence, abandonment, dishonesty, vulgarity, and greed. Laxmi urges the reader to approach them with objectivity. She chronicles incidents of ongoing harassment, disapproving looks, fear of being in public settings, worries about one's own safety, and other fears. However, this underrepresented group is currently rising above its complaints and beginning to make an impact on the world stage, refusing to accept the status of being invisible and disregarded that has been thrust upon it. Additionally, they contend that having a transgender identity has less to do with a medical problem and more to do with personal identification.

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