Tracing Hijra Ethnicity in Indian Transgender Autobiographies: Revisiting the Erased Hijra Legacy through Trans Self-memory

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Abstract

Transgender people in India are categorized under various regional and culturally bound terms. Hijras is one such transgender category indigenous to the religious and cultural history of the land. They are considered ethnic clans because of their self-identification with Hijra legacy. This article critically explicates Indian transgender autobiographies as narrative accounts of the collective experiences of transgender communities, transgressing the borders of self-memory to collective memory and consciousness. Transgenders experiencing trauma from victimization are bereft of agency and autonomy to assert their epistemic value in the discursive process. Heteronormative narrative discourses subvert transgender subjectivity, perpetuating normative modalities that result in epistemic amnesia regarding transgender concerns. Individual transgender autobiographical narratives become the assertion of epistemic agency rooted in trans subjectivity, representing the collective legacy of the hijra clan. Hijra autobiographies are the panacea for the collective amnesia of normative society that obliterates the hijra cultural legacy. The authorial narrative diegesis evidences the replication of customs and rituals of the hijra heritage in modern milieu.

Keywords: Hijra, transgenre, autobiography, personal memory, collective memory

1. Introduction

Transgender refers to an individual whose gender-sex identity does not align with the cisgender identity ascribed to the person at the time of birth. The implications of the terms transgender and transgenderism vary depending on the very nature of plurality that transgender discourse codifies, and the presupposition resulting from the derogative assumptions alluded to in the heteronormative perception of society. The first implication is the result of the inclusive interventions in assimilating transgender cultural potential into mainstream culture, whereas the second emanates from the transphobic misogyny towards a transgender community that erupts from the stigmatization of gender transition as deviance. The inclusive and productive implications of the terms pave the way for conscientizing the populace of the infinite diversity of gender-sex conceptualization, their articulation, and their actualization beyond the monotonous binary recognition of gender and sex. The heteronormative conjuncture breeds pejorative discourses that corrupt the process of signification of terminologies associated with transgender identity. Transgender signifiers are signified with contumelious traits, thereby arbitrarily branding trans terms to signify embodiments of perennial moral and cultural deterioration. Transgender studies, as a discipline, gain vitality from both implications. The constructive and inclusive perception grants visibility and agency to transgenders as members of society. The heteronormative derisions are reinterpreted from transgender subjectivity to exhibit the ways in which 'trans self' are being disparaged as victims to the normative disposal of alternative genders.

1.1 Trans Narratives and Transgender Studies

The modern world has witnessed tremendous advancements in science and technology and their interpolation in the human environment, even in the human quest to generate meaning for one's existence. In addition to scientific advancements and technological innovations, such as developments in the administration of artificial hormonal agents, plastic surgery, and other surgical procedures, in the initial decades of the twentieth century, modernist social and cultural discourse on gender, sex, and sexuality and their subjectivity accounted for the emergence of transsexualism, as currently seen in the modern world. Despite the prospects of science, the potentiality of literary discourses to transform notions of identity in terms of gender, sex, and sexuality in the modernist age by concentrating on the intersection between scientific exploration and actual and artistic experimentation within representations as reciprocal cultural performances needs to be privileged. Modernist sensibilities make textual analysis crucial to current transgender studies, as cultural history confers novel methods for analyzing the intersection of gender, sex, and sexuality in narratives (Caughie, 2013, p. 502). Transgender studies symbolize the exemplification of Michel Foucault's idea of "the insurrection of subjugated knowledge" (Stryker, 2006, p.12).

In transgender studies, transgender refers to potential gender variances that liberate and articulate beyond the clutches of the normative binary construction of sex and gender. Any discourse on transgenderism must be sufficient to incorporate potential plurality, which is the

threshold of the discourse. Pluralistic dispositions and their actualization through transgender experiences and expressions have not obtained recognition and agency amidst the deliberate intervention and discourse generation by academia. Mainstream culture and society being the foster progenitors and guardians of the bi-polar sex and gender strands arbitrate the retention of the norms governing sex, gender, and their legitimacy in sexuality. The eulogization and propagation of the dichotomous construction of sex and gender with their univocal depictions in all mainstream normative discourses, including religious, political, social, cultural, and literary, impact the naturalization and perpetuation of heteronormativity amidst the self-contained ambiguity within heteronormative discourse productions and their manipulations. Mainstream culture retains its supremacy and heteronormative ascendancy upon all gender variants as a means to curtail their claim for agency in society, stabilizing absolute autonomy over sex, gender, and sexuality and their modus operandi. This is a catastrophic sociopolitical condition in which the sociocultural rights of an individual to lead a life of dignity are negated for the exertion of one's choice of sex, gender, and sexuality.

The counter-narratives lay their strands in direct opposition to mainstream narration, challenging the heteronormative claims that masquerade the normative construction of sex and gender as an elegant and eloquent expression that constitutes one's identity. Alternative narratives emerge by explicating transgender experiences as natural to the core of the transgender self, innate to the very individual existence. Counternarratives contain experiences of transgender victimization, struggle, survival, and empowerment. Through radical and critical interventions, transgender studies and discursive narrations de-subjugate previously marginalized modes of knowledge concerning gender consciousness and sex and gender-based embodiments (Stryker,2006, p.13). Apparently, the narratives by transgender are not merely critical documents, but they are the re-representation of the trans self with all its autonomy not being the spoken self but being the speaking trans self. Self-revealing transgender autobiographies are key to counter-discourses against the array of heteronormative codex to date, challenging the norms and normality of narration as their transgender self and body revolt against the duplex framework of gender and sex. Transgender auto narratives are the unmitigated imitation of the transgender self and physicality as "the physical body of the transgender is a potential counter-discourse" (Das, 2015, p. 200). The autobiographical narratives of transgender individuals create credibility for transgender discourse debated in academia. Transgender auto narratives are accepted for their politics of marginality rather than their literariness. They transcend the genre of literary autobiographies to take the privilege of being a transgender testimonio to emblematize marginality.

Indian literary tradition is not bereft of transgender references. There are literary references to transgender characters and people, even in the Puranas and Vedic literary traditions rooted in the cultural history of the subcontinent. These depictions, ranging from the ancient cultural history of the land to the present, are overshadowed by the cisgender perception and subjectivity of transgender identity. The driving force behind the misrepresentation of a trans identity is the creeping of the Western binary tradition of sex and gender into the Indian cultural consciousness in the appendage to other forms of cultural reformation and mimicking. The legacy of this cultural consciousness continues to exert its seemingly legitimate hegemony over the critical analysis and interpretation of the transgender cultural-collective self, resulting in the subjugation and negation of transgender subjectivity, leading to the projection and acceptance of the cisgender molding of the pejorative images of the transgender self. These cisgender 'grant narratives' often fail to represent the transgender self in terms of absolute authenticity and transparency. As a result, the real lives of the trans community are disparaged under the slavery of such a narrative yoke. The only medium to re-represent real transgender perception is through the 'small or petty narratives', which embody the trans self and their discourse. Sandy Stone (1991) mentions, transsexuals "not as a class or problematic 'third gender,' but rather as a genre- a set of embodied texts whose potential for productive disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored" (p.165). Transgender autobiographical writings are the epitome of such unexplored trans expressions where they weave the living tales of the quest for survival and existence, a life narrative of displacement and trauma rendered through informal and colloquial narrative style as in their existence amidst the heteronormative hypocrisy. Heteronormative conspiracies against transgenders are deterred by the deployment of trans subjectivity in counter-narratives, as in trans autobiographies. Rubina Iqbal (2020) mentions transgender narratives as "counter narratives against hegemony to dismantle the cartographies of trans identities" (p.31) in the contemporary socio-cultural politics of gender discourse.

1.2 Autobiography as a Literary Genre

The development of autobiography as a literary genre dates back to pre-Greco-Roman civilization. In Western literary tradition, the genre was developed in religious quarters as a means of expressing private life experiences and memories before the public to inspire and conscientise them of greater sanctity and benevolence. In fact, the literary genre watered the border between private and public life. The genre gained its stature in the course of history through the life narratives of luminaries that cemented the autobiographical literary tradition. The Indian autobiographical tradition gained momentum in imitation of the Western autobiographical legacy in the last decades of the twentieth century.

The tradition of authoring autobiography in English has undergone a tremendous transition, radically deviating from the existing pattern of portraying the salubrious facets of life, to adequate and accommodate mundane and seamy facts. This transition initiated the ceremonial revolution of autobiography as a tool to question the biased civic virtues of the times. Consequently, identity is constructed in the public domain in terms of sex, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, rather than the projection of the author's professional accomplishments. Queer, transgender, and ethnic self-disclosure are tangible evidence of digression in identity conceptualization. According to Mary Evans (2013), "when individuals write autobiographies, they often locate themselves as people who have had a battle against a particular culture" (p. 39). The culture of radical self-revelation often questions the authenticity and validity of the prevailing constructed social and cultural morality, initiating a countertrend. Autobiographies then blur the lines that demarcate writing as an aesthetic endeavor and writing as a

vehicle for socio-political discourse (Iqbal, 2020, p.32). Individual autobiographers place themselves against particular social and cultural moments in history. The subject's interaction with particular historical circumstances generates new horizons of knowledge, dispelling the difference between the personal and public virtues of the derived information. The transparent disclosure of personal sexuality, morality, and ethnicity, distinct from prevailing sociocultural norms, gains potential space for discussion. The critical approach to the study of an autobiography should not constrain its scope in interpreting the author's subject, but should locate and contextualize the author as the defining spirit of the time, the 'zeitgeist'.

2. Transgender Auto Narratives and Trans Subjectivity

Trans subjectivity in its chaste form is found in the writings of transgender individuals. In reference to narrative accounts depicting transgender existence, defying the stipulations of narrative diegesis, Pamela Caughie adopts the French expression "transgenre" into English. This genre "disrupts conventions of narrative logic by defying pronominal stability, temporal continuity, and natural progression. It thereby demands a new genre, a transnarrative" (Caughie, 2013, p. 503). Within this genre, trans autobiographical narratives are the finest embodiment of trans subjectivity, which lays the foundation for an alternate gender representation in the normative cultural industry. As an emerging genre, transgender studies have consistently depended on trans autobiographies and autofiction for the production of critical discourse ever since its emergence. The discipline unravels different facets of the transgender experience to academia through the analysis of trans lives in a trans hostile civilization. Trans autobiographical narratives emerged much later in India than in the Western trans narrative legacy. The first indigenous trans autobiography appeared at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The trans self that appears in the autobiographies is not the mere recollection of an individual, but they detail the transgender ordeals as a collective representation of the public lives of the transgender community in the heteronormative sociocultural and political environment. Transgender autobiographies embody trans vitality as "memory, remembering and recording are the key to existence, becoming and belonging" (Caoduro, 2012, p.96). They are the sagas carved out of their traumatic memories of the struggle to survive in a transphobic society. The lives narrated in these autobiographical notes depict the quest for existence by being and becoming what they feel within themselves, thereby achieving a sense of belonging in a society that ascribes invisibility to them amidst the hyper-visibility they possess. Evans mentions autobiography as "the most individual of all literary genres; its very existence is premised on the belief in the particularity of the individual" (2013, p. 35). Individuality and sense of self are products of social interactions. Transgender interactions with the social environment are impacted by the heinous gender-sex discourses anchored in polarity, confining their agency in discourse production and manipulation. This experience of being dejected in society is not specific to a single individual. Each individual trans community member is a victim of the process of branding as a gender out-law, pushing the community into utter destitution.

Generally, in their attempt to produce a self-authored replica of their lives, autobiographers focus on the scintillating accomplishments of their careers. Phillipe Lejeune (1989) contextualizes autobiography as the "retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (p. 4). They highlight definite and deliberate choices that have tremendous influence on the social and cultural world. These choices gave them the agency to assert their own existence as their privilege and not the bounty of any external authority. This individual agency and autonomy allows them to be stakeholders in the discursive process of production and manipulation of social and cultural discourse. In transgender lives, the choices that an individual makes are unacceptable to majoritarian normality and lead to denial of agency and autonomy. The denial of agency and autonomy over one's trans existence is the disempowering of transgender discourse in the sociocultural world. This denied transgender existence in the socio-cultural discourse entitles them to be in the victimhood of being absent in the mainstream discourse as perennial absence indicated in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of 'epistemic violence'. Referring to this socio-cultural and political absenteeism, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi (2015) picturizes Hijras in India as "missing persons' or the country's lost property" (p.163). The scarcity of epistemic references results in an absolute lack of space and time throughout human history. This predicament of the transgender community is restated as the lifeline of transgender embodiment, transforming the trans life of exile into the self of trans existence. The marginalized existence is brought forth to the mainstream seeking space, resorting to the ascribed derogative identity as pride and prestige. The eclectic process of voicing transgender life glimpses gives popularity and dynamicity to trans subjectivity in the discursive circle. The trans autobiographer becomes the trans cultural envoy who mediates between the trans community and mainstream society to conscientiously bring critical advancements away from gender and sex-based social and cultural stratification. Through the trans discursive model of autobiographical narratives, the narrator intervenes in the existing sociocultural history demanding representation by unmasking the trans collective past through the imparting of individual trans memory.

3. Memory: Individual and Collective

Through entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Kourken Michaelian and John Sutton (2017) illustrates memory as:

> A diverse set of cognitive capacities by which we retain information and reconstruct past experiences, usually for present purposes. Memory is one of the most important ways by which our histories animate our current actions and experiences. Memory seems to be a source of knowledge.

The dynamic nature of pastness through memory is exalted through recollections engendering emotions associated with it and furthers into the construction of knowledge of self and other. Memory as a source of knowledge operates at a minuscule and substantial outpour as in 'individual and collective memory'. (2017)

Hugo Von Hofmannsthal is credited with the coinage of the term 'collective memory' for the first time in reference to the cumulative

collective consciousness and pent-up vitality of the mysterious pastness of the legacy (Olick & Robbins, 1998, p.106). Collective memory as a theoretical framework in research was developed by Maurice Halbwachs, a French philosopher, and sociologist, who defined it as "the process and result of sharing past events among members of a particular group, and guarantees the continuity of collective memory when social communication and group consciousness need to extract it" (Liao & Dai, 2020, p.2). Individual memory is sustained in adherence to the collective memory of an individual's social group. Through the reciprocal association between individual and collective memory, an individual member of a social group actualizes certainty in one's identity and existence. "Collective memory sustains a community's identity and makes possible the continuity of its social life and cultural cohesion" (Wang, 2008, p.37). Thus, it is through the identification and adherence to the collective consciousness and memory of a group that an individual retrieves meaning from one's personal memory. Individual and collective memories are raw materials of history. History freezes sequences of past memories through recording and documentation. Historiography arrests the dynamicity of memory, which can be restored by being channeled into individual and collective consciousness. The past is richer and more yielding when correlated with the present than when it is seen as a distinct historical period, as though it is merely a single point in time (Caughie, 2013, p. 502). The correlation between past and present occurs in the living memories of individuals whose individual memories and consciousness are identified with collective memories and consciousness. This renders validation equivalent to organicity, rather than a mere vantage point in history.

Individual and collective memories are closely associated with the events of personal and collective significance. Reference to the past automatically juxtaposes memory and history or historiography into a critical entourage. History and memory are associated, but the extent of association becomes indecisive as memory further diverges into personal and collective memory. Halbwach regarded history as:

> Dead memory, a way of preserving pasts to which we no longer have an organic experiential relation.
> On the surface, this understanding of the distinction negates the self-image of historiography as the
> more important or appropriate attitude toward the past. History's epistemological claim is devalued
> in favour of memories of meaningfulness (Olick and Robbins, 1998, p.110).

History remains the collection and recording of memory in its inert and crude semblance, dynamic memory throbs through individual and collective memories in their esemplastic attribution of epistemic value to individual existence in cultural and ethnic communities. Memories survive in their intact form in the individual psyche and are part of the collective and shared psyche. Active memory creates bonds between members who cherish and benefit from collective memory, resulting in self-identification with collective cultural and ethnic identity. This existential and perennial process of being and belonging validates the facts of the past recorded in history. Historical facts gain organic specificity as they gain momentum in the individual and collective psyches. This implies the sociocultural accentuation of history through its sustenance in the human psyche. "Collective memory is not history, though it is sometimes made from similar material. It is a collective phenomenon but only manifests itself in the actions and statements of individuals…it often privileges the interest of the contemporary" (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 180). Thus, history as the recording of stagnant memory of the past retrieves its organicity in the human, individual and collective, psyche. Virginia Woolf in her text "A Sketch of the Past" (1985) writes, "for the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else" (p.98).

4. Trans Autobiographies Beyond Personal Memory

The lived experiences in personal and collective memories are narrated through autobiographies, making those recollections surpass the clutches of space and time. Recollection is a dynamic mode of memory, as it is the reminiscence of personal experiences, subsequently signifying them in communion with collective consciousness. Memory in its existence in sociocultural contexts is a phenomenon that is not limited to the past. However, its extensions span beyond the past and across the present and the future. Although the conceptual framework of memory is inherent in past experiences, it has tremendous influence on human civilization in the present and future.

> In writing a life, and in reading life writing, one unavoidably encounters the past from some present
> vantage point, some immediate stimulus that revisions that past, and thus the present as the past's
> future, gathering up moments in time that resonate with the present moment (Caughie, 2013, p.502).

Human memory in its personal and collective perspective originates in the reminiscence of nostalgic and/or traumatic past. This nostalgic and/or traumatic past is freed from pastness due to contemporary social and cultural actualization through individual and collective psyches attributing vitality to human esse on diverse grounds. So:

> Remembering is an active reconciliation of past and present. The meaning of the past in relation to
> the present is what is at stake here; memories are important as they bring our changing sense of who
> we are and who we were, coherently into view of one another (Keightley, 2010, p.58).

In Indian transgender (hijra) autobiographies, self-memoirs transcend personal spheres to represent the concerns of the community as testimonios. Thus, the process of recording the reminiscence of the trans lives through the self-memory system turns out to be the projection of the hijra collective memory. The individual memories incorporated in the autobiographies are the shared memories of the community, as the narratives in individual autobiographies embody the collective experiences and memories of the transgender ethnic community. Often, mainstream academia focuses on and highlights only the memories of mainstream events, negating agency to the reminiscence of minority memories. This prejudice towards trans self-memory and experience sidelines the socio-political validation of trans memories in a democratic environment. The traumatic memories that appear in these autobiographical texts are not isolated references to past events. However, they are the aftermath of the tangible horrors that each individual of the hijra clan has been experiencing in various strata of their

social life. These memories become the collective memory of the hijra ethnicity, as they are shared and tangible experiences in the collective consciousness of the ethnic clan of transgenders in India, called Hijra. Collective memories become highly augmented as they are "shareable among members of a social group or community, be it a nation, an institution, a religious group, or a family" (Wang, 2008, p.305). Trans autobiographies are melting containers in which personal transgender experiences amalgamate with the collective memory and experiences of the hijra community. The porous borderlines demarcating personal and collective memory dismantle in relocating each other to evolve a trans scholastic space indigenous to Indian culture.

Hijra autobiography is a genre in literature that subjectively documents the memories of the trans self as an author, as subject, and as representing the collective memory of the clan immersed in "the subhuman status and pain of hijra clan" (Iqbal, 2020, p.32). The hijra communities in India are regarded as clans with their unique ethnicity marked by their rituals and customs, who share the same traumatic experiences and are burdened by the memories of the horrors. This individual memory, collectively shared by each member of the Hijra ethnic group, endorses the feeling of collective consciousness. Thereby, the act of trans self-narration becomes the embodiment of the hijra collective culture and its relative negation in mainstream culture. Revathi (2010), in her preface to her autobiography, explicates the motive behind the self-revelation as "I dared to share my innermost life with you-about being a hijra… my aim is to introduce to the readers the lives of hijras, their distinct culture and their dreams and desires" (p. v). These narratives are not mere representations of facts concerning the hijra community and culture, but illustrate the social reciprocity and mobility that exist within the social spectrum. Indian trans narratives delineate how transgender identity emerged amidst toil and turmoil within the cultural history of the land. Indian cultural history is not a lucid document that accords the lives of everyone. It often accorded the privilege of majoritarianism, denigrating minorities through pejorative representations, and negating space and agency. The biased cultural history of the land is amnesiac towards the minority cultural legacies of the hijra clan. It deliberately eliminates any worthy references to hijra legacies intended to wipe out the cultural memory of the clan from mainstream cultural heritage. The cultural history of transgenders in India can be traced back to the indigenous literary heritage of the land, which is the outcome of cultural transactions. The numerous references to the hijra persona in Hindu mythology, literary tradition, and historical reference to the hijra tradition of India substantiate transgender heritage in the cultural history of the land.

Trans autobiographies reveal the bitter and seamy sides of their lives within heteronormative confinement and how the trans community perceives this sociocultural exile. The written transgender or Hijra narrative documents are magna carta appealing for their legitimate socio-political space, identity, and agency. The narratives accommodate anecdotes from transgender cultural plurality, which are judged and distanced by the narrative normality deep-rooted in cisgender idealization. Trans narratives are the appropriation of transgender perspectives to induce a trend in normative society to adapt itself to adopt gender plurality. These seldom discussed concerns occupy the narrative ground and permeate the fumes of transgender discourses in mainstream discursive practices.

Indian trans autobiographical narratives act as historical documents of Hijra ethnography. Each transgender autobiographer becomes a hijra ethno-biographer in narrating one's own transgender legacy, which in turn becomes the unsolicited transgender, specifically Hijra ethnography. This process of narrative codifying hijra self-memory solidifies collective hijra memory, which is the deleted past in the cultural history of the land. The historical facts referred to in transgender autobiographies clearly indicate that autobiographical memories are not confined to individuals, but extend to the wider cultural categories of the hijra clan. Trans(hijra) autobiographies are the synthesis of author, subject, and experiences through hijra subjectivity, ethnicity, and cultural history, as inseparable and intermittent discursive bonding. The trans authors of the auto narratives are self-conscious of transgender subjects and experiences on both personal and collective grounds and associate them with the hijra ethnicity and cultural history of the land. The Indian hijra ethnic legacy and cultural history resonate in the autobiographical narratives of transgenders. Trans autobiography of an individual hijra is the reiteration of the perceptible and tangible lived memories of transgender individuals in a paradoxical parochiality. The memories referred to in hijra autobiographies have self-affirmative validation that can be verified as they are pervasive and encountered in sociocultural climes. The memories of individual hijras are pertinent to the social and cultural analysis of the hijra ethnicity in India. The self-memory of the transgender individual becomes the microcosm of hijra collective memory resulting from the collective and shared experience of displacement and victimization in the Indian sociocultural status quo. The personal memory of transgenders mediates the recollection of the collective past of hijras as an ethnic community unique to the Indian legacy of gender plurality and its broader dimensions in ancient literary and cultural performances rooted in various religions and regions.

5. Tracing Hijra Legacy through Trans Autobiographies

Heteronormative narratives have a monopoly over collective memory in normative society that attempts to alleviate the hijra history inherent in the socio-cultural legacy of the Indian subcontinent. The heteronormative agenda in dismantling hijra ethnicity from the religious and cultural history of India is counterpoised by the subjectively triggered autobiographical narrations by Indian transgenders, who identify themselves as heirs to the Hijra legacy. They are not merely autobiographical narratives dealing with the memoirs of individual transgender existence in a heteronormatively malicious society. Tripathi (2015) says "the word 'hij' refers to the soul, holy soul. The body in which the holy soul resides is called 'hijra'. The individual is not important here. What is important is the soul and the hijra community that possesses it" (pp. 39-40). Deducting from her postulation, a hijra author exemplifies oneself as an envoy of the prototypical hijra heritage, trying to reclaim the bygone grandeur in epitomizing hijra living memories through life narratives. Borrowing the words of Ranjana, a hijra activist, "hijra is a tradition…transmitted through a guru-chela system" (Dutta, 2012, p.838), one can clarify the confusion pertaining to hijra cultural identity and its formulation.

The various references to historical incidents and mythological characters implied in the hijra autobiographies lucidly explicate the intensity of the hijra autobiographers' discursive attempts to reinstate the hijra cultural legacy authentic to the land. The transgender author becomes

the subject of pluralism by narrating one's life and demanding diversity through the incorporation of the hijra ethnicity in the cultural plurality of the land. The alternate gender and sex actualizations exerted better privileges and agency in the cultural and political affairs of the land until the late *c*.18th century. The legacy of plurality in India pertaining to the diversity of gender, sex, and sexuality was mutilated during the colonial history of moralizing native Indian culture from deterioration. The colonial legacy of cultural morality ferments Indians' cultural consciousness even after independence, and is reluctant to assign human agency to gender-sex variants. The negated agency amplifies the demarcation of the hijras constantly in the past, present, and future temporal modalities.

5.1 Hijra Legacy as Settled Past Memory

Transgender auto narratives retain their authenticity by expatiating the lived memories of transgenders in a heteronormatively labyrinthine society, which is detrimental to transgender existence. The predicament of transgender in a strangulating marginal space promulgated by the dimorphous framework of gender and sex is depicted as traumatic memories of past experiences. The traumatic memories of trans individual narrators help readers visualize the intensity of deprivation and destitution that the trans existence is doomed to be in their (trans)struggle for being themselves rather than being heir to heteronormativity. In transgender autobiographies, transgender authors' trans narrations are imbued with one's personal transgender experiences juxtaposed with the collective heritage of transgenders as the legacy they inherited from the hijra tradition. This self-identification with the collective heritage and tradition of the Hijra clan further substantiates the indigenous nature of their identity and legacy. There is a social structure within the hijra community that validates Indian Hijra heritage. Trans autobiographies vividly explain the nature and structure of the hijra tradition practiced among the transgenders who identify themselves as descendants of the legacy. Laxmi (2015) mentioned the following:

> We hijras virtually have a parallel social structure. There are seven hijra gharanas … A person who decides to become a hijra must find a guru to perform her initiation rite and 'reet'. The guru then becomes the hijra's mother and she, the chela… It is a vast extended family (p.174).

The references and claims by the trans author are validated by her own lived experiences within the community of hijras that continue to live in the same social structure as an alternative to the heteronormative social stratification that deters and averts any actualization of sex-gender variance beyond normative polarity. Revathi (2010) in her autobiography refers the hijra social and family system as: "Badudaali (Great-grandmother's Guru) - Daadaguru (Grandmother's Guru/Great Grandmother) – Nanaguru (Guru's Guru/Grandmother) – Guru (Mother) – Kalaguru (Guru's Sister) – Gurubai (My-sister) – Badagurubai (Elder Sister) – Chotagurubai (Younger Sister) – Chela (Daughter) – Naathi-chela (Granddaughter) – Chandichela (Great-granddaughter) – Sadak Naathi (Great Granddaughter)" (p. 64).

The self, who is the subject and author of the memoirs, remembers the individual past memory that realistically represents the history of Hijra ethnicity in India. Through Hijra autobiographies, individuals of the hijra community assert their rights for standard living as citizens, denoting and demonstrating the communities' 'historical agency' (Dutta, 2012, p.827), privileges availed by traditional hijra clan. The trans autobiographical narratives eloquently ground a new hijra discourse of transgenders in India, who claim the hijra lineage through their realistic memoirs of living. Dutta postulates, "who can identify as hijra becomes more circumscribed at the level of official discourse, and potentially, lived reality" (p.831). The potential living of the transgenders as hijras validates their life narratives as authentic modern hijra discourses that claim their lineage to their hijra precursors. The potential living is illustrated as, "a formal discipleship under a senior hijra leader within a lineage or *gharana* as the ultimate criteria of hijra legitimacy, in the absence of other markers of hijra belonging." (p.838) The lived reality of hijras within the polarized social and cultural plateau of sex and gender determines their status quo, rather than external ascriptions authenticating their hijra lineage.

5.2 Hijra Legacy Moulding the Present

The haunting and traumatic memories of a bifurcated world captivated by the cultural domination of cisnormativity are key concerns of transgender narratives. The hijra autobiographies in India are the manifestation of persisting traumatic memories of demarcation and the perennial betrayal of their hijra identity in the civic cultural domain. Their memories are immersed in cultural trauma subsequent to the cultural construct of heteronormativity, construed to stabilize the spurious hierarchical apparatus of gender and sex. The cisnormative culture is crust upon bogus ideologies, prioritizing the binarized notions of gender and sex determined and assigned at nativity, and constructing a pseudo-dogmatic discourse thrusting on the fabricated duality within gender and sex distinctiveness. Cisnormative culture and its dogmatism grant gender-sex privileges to normative actualizations, resulting in the negation of privileges to gender-sex variants. Cisnormative gender privilege engenders transgender cultural trauma and memories of their identity and existence. Alexander (2004) argues that "cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (p.1).   Transgender cultural memories are not an individual transgender phenomenon but refer to the collective transgender experiences of the hijra clan, where each hijra is in communion with the collective memories of the trauma of the clan, which in turn become the memories of cultural trauma of the hijras in India.

The hijra cultural community in India is constantly deprived of gender privileges relished by heirs and stakeholders of gender and sex normativity. The resultant traumatic memories abort the hijra-existence to be stagnated as a clan vulnerable to the perpetrated and fallacious sovereignty of heteronormativity. The collective vulnerability of transgenders is encountered in the lived memories of the Indian hijra community. The transgender autobiographies authored in the country commence the blatant and flagrant revelation of ambivalent hijra living through the subjective narrative account of transgender autobiographers. The auto-narratives collectively represent the hijra

testimonials of their journey and existence as trans/hijra. The existence and identity of hijras do not emerge instantaneously. It is in absolute communion with the extant legacy of the hijra predecessor, sharing and being part of the collective memory of 'hijra-hood', molding the succeeding trans scions to amalgamate with the collective hijra consciousness. Conferring self to the (collective)'hijra-self' commences the rejuvenation of the hijra heritage through a neoteric. The proselyte hijra relinquishes oneself to the hijra family and social structure and abides by the legacy of rituals and customs. Through the novices and their gurus, the hijra religious clan transcends ascribed liminality.

The hijra auto narratives are the 'ars' replica of hijra existence in a heteronormative society and within the cultural hegemony over trans identities. Normative society generates spurious discourses on hijra communities blemishing and debauching the sex and gender alterities grounding the degeneration of the cultural clan. The hegemonic power of the normative discursive process continues to atrociously dehumanize the hijra clan, breeding hijra cultural trauma, and incessantly venerating the nominal gender and sex that are cis in their rendition. Narrative accounts of victimization are integral to hijra autobiographies, exemplifying the intensity and trauma not just of the past but as persisting at each stage of temporality.

5.3 Hijra Legacy Endorsing Open Future

Hijra identity is a continuous process of actualizing one's existence amid the ordeals and hostility of the normative world. Hijra auto narratives are anecdotes of real-life incidents of vulnerability that have repetitive destiny in hijra lives. Revathi (2010) refers to this predicament in her writing as "people like us always have problems" (p.190). The woeful existence as cursed humans are inflicted on hijras as a continuous process, and the hijra autobiographies account for a prediction in the distant future freed of all these maladies that impede and stagnate the alternatives to binarized gender and sex constructions. The auto narratives resonate with the prophecy of transition in the existing mainstream socio-cultural sex-gender derivations to accommodate the multifaceted actualizations as in the hijra clan. The scintillating rays of hope and expectation that hijra authors smear at various narrative junctures call upon the reader to be a recipient of the hijra-inclusive social and cultural apparatus that grants agency to the clan and accomplishes their gender-sex choice as innate rather than decadence. The anticipated transition is persistently delayed by heteronormative hegemony, which hinders the inculcation of the inclusive domain of alterity and its accentuation of gender and sex diversity. Revathi in the preface introduces her autobiography as "about my everyday experience of discrimination, ridicule and pain; it is also about my endurance and my joys. As a hijra I get pushed to the fringes of society" (2010, p. v). The repetitive nature of discrimination in hijra lives is beyond temporal liminality. It persists even in the future until society shatters its shackles of bondage, which clutches members to cisnormative hegemony. This will lead to the natural and genuine hijra empowerment that each hijra dreams to privilege.

6. Conclusion

Transgender narrations are not mere autobiographical notes, they are assertions of subverted transgender voices claiming recognition and acceptance. They assert trans subjectivity against the constructed legitimacy of heteronormative notions of gender, sex, and sexuality that relinquish and nullify the diversity and fluidity of these notions. The predominance of heteronormativity over other genders and sexes results in the ostracization of the trans community as gender and sexual outcastes destined to be deprived of even the rightful agency for existence and survival. The marginalized status of transgender is sanctioned by the foregrounding of the heteronormative sex-gender dogma. The plurality of gender and sex is nullified on reproductive grounds that delineate the capitalist monopoly creeping in to curtail the natural instincts of what one is to be. Transgender autobiographies in India counterbalance narratives that subtly postulate collective transgender consciousness through individual transgender experiences. The heteronormatively frivolous hijra cultural legacy resurges into limelight through hijra autobiographies. The narrative accounts are chiseled out of personal hijra memories and delegate the collective memories of the hijra clan. Trans autobiographies by hijras in India inadvertently evolve into recollections of hijra ethnicity and culture with its customs and rituals indigenous to the Indian subcontinent. The narrative diegesis by the trans authorial narrator authenticates the pertinence of hijra ethnicity and its sustenance through their trans existence and auto narratives.

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No additional data are available.

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