



TRAUMA OF THE MARGINALIZED THROUGH ADRIENNE NASH'S 'THE HIJRA'

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 2 nd May 2021 Accepted: 13 th May 2021 Published: 4 th June 2021	This paper emphasizes the trauma faced by transgenders who are being marginalized by the society. Transgender Studies is an umbrella term that can be shortened as trans, and for these people, their gender identity is opposite to the assigned sex. This study also includes queer theory, and it tries to define cross-dressers and gender dysphoria. These transgenders face discrimination, humiliation, and child abuse, as observed in the novel 'The Hijra' by Adrienne Nash. These people are marginalized and are pushed into prostitution. The quest for identity has made a little innocent boy undergo trauma, abuse, bullying, and teasing at school which depicts the marginalization of transgenders. The book not only deals with the marginalization of Hijras but also the racist encounter on the Pakistani men and stereotyping of men from Pakistan as evil.

Keywords: Hijra, transgender, queer, trauma, discrimination

In South Asia, 'Hijra' is a person who by birth is a male and identifies as female or neither male nor female. The word 'Hijra' is a Hindustani word and it is translated into English as 'Eunuch' or 'Transgender.' 'Hijras' are recognized as the 'third gender' in the Indian sub-continent. These people in the community are adjected to poverty and have been rejected by the family. Devoid of opportunities to lead a decent life they are pushed to work as sex workers for survival. Most Hijras are marginalized, and they have been designated a very low status. The word 'Hijra' is sometimes used in a derogatory manner. However, maybe more than a hundred years ago, Hijras from the tradition of Hindu culture they were given a certain degree of respect in the society. Ancient Indian literature held a special significance for Hijras, be it in the "Kamasutra", which discusses human sexual behavior or in the ancient texts of Hinduism "Ramayana" and "Mahabharata". The text from Kamasutra says nothing about gender dysphoria or transsexual tendencies, but it is clear that in ancient India there were quite a few proactive gender benders assigned female or male at birth, who did not care about "natural" gender roles. Similarly, the epics speak of one of the forms of Shiva, a Hindu deity who merges with his wife Parvathi to form a single entity. This deity is designated a special significance in the Hijra community. During the sixteenth to nineteenth century in the Mughal era, Hijras held important positions in the court and were even involved in administration. Special privileges on a religious ground were bestowed on them and people sought them to avail blessings.

Colonization of India by the British was the key cause for the respect for Hijras degenerating. The Britishers looked upon the Hijras with a judgmental perspective because of their sexual and carnal behavior. Since Hijras were an aberration of the natural order, the colonizers tried to eradicate and criminalize Hijras through the implementation of varied laws. Many of these laws were rescinded after the independence.

The chief endeavor of the researchers is to create awareness and grievances of the third gender through the queer lens. Queer theory is a study of transvestism, gender identity disorder, and gender corrective surgery. Gender is determined at the time of birth in binary terms as male or female but the third genders resist this notion as they 'no longer are' or according to them belong to the category they were born in. The Third Genders have a non-binary gender identity. Fienberg (1996) defines transgender as "a distinction between those who reassign the sex they were

labeled at birth and those of us whose gender expression is considered inappropriate for our sex" (qtd in Nagoshi x-xi). Transgenders face the problem of sexual ambiguity and this can be understood through the novel *Hijra*. It gives an insight into what goes in the mind of a young boy as he realizes himself to be transgender. The social convention and taunting at school make him undergo psychological trauma as he feels out of place to fit into the gender which he attained by birth and his desire to live as a girl. His inability to discuss his insecurity with his mother, about his desire to live as a girl and the apparent biological and physical changes that would reflect his birth gender have been well depicted. The story takes a turn when he falls into the hands of a British Pakistani who gave him illegal medicines and thrusts him into prostitution. The novel goes on to explain how the boy escaped from their clutches. The sensitively narrated book shows the psychological and emotional trauma the boy and the mother undergo and the final acceptance of Kylie (Kyle Johnson). This work deciphers transgender studies through queer theory in the social milieu, a story of how a bully found hope for herself through the help of a friend and her family in transition. This book deals with gender, sexual identity, physical and mental trauma and is incredibly narrated in a smart and sensitive manner.

Adrienne Nash's novel *The Hijra* is a fictional encounter of the existing criminality in the United Kingdom and the gang of British Pakistani men who prey on vulnerable girls who run from their broken or troubled homes. They use alcohol, drugs, threats, and blackmail to control these children so that they are alienated from their families and coerce them into prostitution.

In the twenty-first century, in England, lived a mother, son duo - Kyle Johnson, twelve-year-old boy and the mother, Barbara Johnson a nurse and a single parent. Usually staying alone at home during holidays, he wouldn't mingle with any of his fellow mates in school as they would tease and bully him for his 'sissy behavior'. He was content to be the little house-boy and help his mother without thinking about himself but after going to the mall and seeing a fine silk dress he desires to own that fine piece of clothing, changing everything. He started hating being termed as a boy or treated as a boy, "Now, all he could think of was that dress and how he wanted his clothes, his girl clothes, for he wasn't a boy, hated being classed as a boy, treated as a boy"(36). This is the mindset of a twelve-year-old boy who thought there was something wrong with him as he was feeling uncomfortable with his own body. Once again, he went back to the shop and was looking at the books, but his mind was wavering to focus on the dress. He felt ashamed as a boy and the thought made him sick, and he collapsed sobbing. Kyle never felt more deprived as he couldn't own a dress. He says that, "there was nothing in the World he wanted as much as that dress, pink check, sweet, soft, smooth and feminine...there is no remedy that could expunge his desire" (36-37). This is a preliminary stage of transgenders when they would cross dress to express their gender identity. Susan Stryker defines Gender identity as:

Each person has a subjective sense of fit with a particular gender category; this is one's gender identity. For most people, there is a sense of congruence between the category one has been assigned to and trained in, and what one considers oneself to be. Transgender people demonstrate that this is not always the case-that is possible to form a sense of oneself as not like other members of the gender one has been assigned to, or to think of one as properly belonging to another gender category. (13)

At last, he bought the dress with hesitation and guilt, but his feelings were elated and he felt that he was living in a parallel universe and the two ladies at the mall assumed him to be a girl. So, he felt that a nightmare purchase has suddenly turned to a wonderful adventure. He didn't stop with the dress, and he bought stockings, shoes, panties, and a bra. Though he was excited and thrilled by buying the dress, he was mentally guilty and agonized by his imagination admitting about this adventure to the TV news that a boy was buying a girl's dress.

This when viewed through queer theorists imply crossing of boundaries, transgressing the norms, and failing to fit into the expected categories. German sexologist Magnus Hirschfle explains this transformation as, "He used it to describe the 'erotic urge to disguise', which is how he understood the motivation that led some people to wear clothing generally associated with a social gender other than the one assigned to them at birth" (qtd. in Stryker 16).

After Kyle Johnson had completed his shopping, he was in a state of excitement, and while crossing the road, he bumped into a girl named Greta Langdon who is a senior in the school and his neighbour. Greta Langdon is described by Barbara Johnson as belonging to a troubled and problematic family. Greta Langdon, out of anger caught hold of his sleeves and said, "You wanna watch it. You'll get run over, little goody two shoes" (39). She immediately puts her hand in the basket and pulls out the dress before Kyle could stop her and remark as, "'Right little housewife aren't yer? I been watching you. Your Mum got you right where she wants you, doing all the chores, not like a boy at all. Well, see yer, Kylie, little housewife'" (40). This daring expedition increased his wish to buy additional purchase of things which he would like to possess like any other girl. He tried on his dress and admired himself in the mirror and considered himself quite pretty, but he didn't like the boy's face and puberty. He was glowing with pride because he had passed as a girl and the woman in the mall identified him as a girl. This indeed made him believe that he was a girl except for the chemical compound in his mother's womb which had produced a wrong body. This throws light on the term cross-dresser which is reserved for boys who dress up as a girl but when the girl is cross-dressed, they are unremarked as it a 'woman's world'. Enjoying the present bliss of wearing a girl's clothing, a wavering thought about male puberty, his voice becoming rough and hair growing all over his body as well as on his face and particularly on his chest which filled him with sudden horror and considered himself being a misfit. His expedition made him bold and he went on another adventure to buy more items meant for girls and while returning home after his purchase, he pierced his ear and wore a stud. When Greta noticed his stud, she appreciated and befriended him and promised that

she will protect him at school. When she made a comment on his house-boy chores in pink frock and vacuuming in frilly apron he felt he was trapped. He expected her to mock him but she said, "Tell. You're one of them, ain't yer. Trannie" (65), when for the first time he revealed his identity to Greta Langdon as, " I think I'm really a girl but with the wrong body.' He flushed and burst into tears" (66). So, after this incident, Greta consoled and kissed him, but he felt embarrassed as the truth was out. Greta Langdon and Kyle become good friends; they had coffee together and he dressed up while she put the make up on him. The money which his aunt Jean has given for Christmas was spent on feminine possessions such as having his lipstick, mascara, eyebrow pencil. Greta came home and told Kylie that she dressed up like a proper girl and she gave him a piece of exciting news that her friend who is a chemist would give him medicine so that he wouldn't turn into a boy but look like a girl. The chemist wanted to meet him at the park in the afternoon but Greta couldn't accompany him and said that she would wait for him in a distance. This made him feel elated and he utters, "You mean he can give me something to stop me becoming a man?"(75). Greta declared that the chemist told her he wouldn't get medicine until he is sixteen by the time his voice will be broken and he would have hair all over. Kylie met the chemist who says:

I give you two months' supply. You must follow the instructions, don't take more to hurry things. You look very sweet. You make a good girl. After two months, I'll see you again. I leave the bag here on the seat.' He had no discernible accent. He departed. Kyle sat stunned. He could hardly believe what had happened. He dragged the bag towards him and looked inside. There was a typed sheet of dosage instructions. He looked at the packets, oestradiol, and spironolactone. (77)

He doesn't know whether the drug is legal and genuine or whether it was poison. He decided that he would experiment on the medicine and swallowed them. If he didn't like the result, he could stop them and find another alternative to stop his bodily transformation into a man. He was feeling guilty because he was hiding from his mother but he was excited and elated as he has taken a magic potion which is going to turn him into a girl, "He was euphoric. Momentarily he was exhilarated, ebullient. He did a little sashay, spun in his stockinged feet. Greta had given him the gift of life itself, no less than that. Who would have thought" (80).

Kyle Johnson started taking the pills but didn't identify any changes in the early stages. As days went by, he could observe changes such as nipples aching and swollen a little. Kyle Johnson's friend at school is Raquelle who didn't mind about class opinion and she remained his friend and called him Kylie. The changes were evident and his fellow mates started noticing and they started bullying and teasing him. This is when Greta would interfere and all the bullying and teasing are abated. Marta, who is one of the classmates, spoke what is on her mind said that she had been watching him for quite some time. Marta observed that Kyle was mixing with bad people and that earlier he was good but nowadays he wears studs and behaves in a girly fashion; she even says that she could see his breasts. Marta reached across the table and tried to touch him in the front but he drew back. At this moment Marta remarked, "See, a real boy would not have moved. You have somethin' to hide Kylie. You are so girl" (87). Raquelle came to his defense and asked Marta to mind her own business and leave him alone. Kyle who was fearful, was also pleased as people started to see a girl in him.

Transgenders have a phenomenon and unifying the category 'woman' follow new strategies to combat discrimination and injustice based on gender identity. Kyle was enjoying the bliss of becoming a girl and the changes in his body brings forth immense joy, "It was gorgeous, his greatest joy. If he turned on his side, he could feel the weight of them shift, just slightly, his flesh firm but he could feel the weight"(88). A bright light of joy was shining within him that he would never become a man. He would be a trans-girl or T-girl and through his friendship with Greta, he escaped his natural fate.

He was invited by Greta to the youth club where she works as a waitress. She asked Kyle also to join as a waitress in the club so that he could buy more girl stuff. He trusted Greta as he owed her so much and she was protecting him at school, finding medication, and helping him with clothing. A taxi drove in and both of them got into the taxi and went into a Methodist Church and it was no more a church but a club. The men in the club greeted Greta and kissed her and she introduced Kylie. A man named Ahmed called Kylie 'the little hijra'. He kissed her lips and this was the very first time he was kissed by a man and Ahmed says, "Hijra we have in Pakistan, throughout the Sub-continent. We understand people like you. Hijra is a boy who dresses as a girl" (96). Ahmed said the only way to repay for the medicine is to serve them food and wait at the table. Kyle was frightened because all the men in the club knew that he was a boy so he enquired Greta whether he should continue the work. Greta promptly replied that he would have to until he required the medication. The thought of not developing a male voice and facial hair has provoked him to work with these men. These men used to grope the girls while they serve food. While he was serving, Ahmed pushed a twenty note into his brassiere and he asked for a kiss. Kyle kissed him, but the innocent boy went through mental trauma and abuse as there was a need for medication:

He offered his cheek and Kyle dutifully kissed him, Ahmed's hand was on his arse. Suddenly he found himself sitting on Ahmed's knee, his arm tight around Kyle's waist, his fingers tight into Kyle's abdomen, and his spare hand holding Kyle's. He released that and gripped Kyle's thigh, raised her skirt, and saw the stocking tops and the suspender. Kyle pushed the hand away and pulled his skirt down. Ahmed laughed and tickled his ribs. 'You are delightful little Kylie. Another kiss, on the lips then I let you go, little hijra. (88)

Greta though made him believe to be his friend trapped him into prostitution. He saw his schoolmate Melanie who is also working in the club. He was scared that his identity would be known in school as Melanie would disclose to her friends and schoolmates. When people at school discover his identity, he thinks it is not worth living. In school,

the students think, "you're a bum boy, an arse bandit or a sissy boy"(100), but all these men in the club treat him as hijra and he was making money. Greta helps him to close his mind to sexual harassment (as men like to touch girls) and she convinces him that he should be pleased as they see him as a girl and not as a boy. Though he was sexually assaulted, he was in need of attention as he was humiliated and teased for being identified in the wrong body. A young boy who is in the quest of his identity is appreciated and viewed as he would like to be identified made him feel comfortable and real though it was a shock:

He liked that, compared to the girls. And he might make as much Saturday. It had all been a shock. Suddenly it was not only wearing the clothes, feeling like a girl, looking like a girl, but being treated like a girl, treated like a man's plaything. Actually, it was rather nice. It made him feel really real (101).

Kyle after returning home felt happy but wished to be born as a girl. He was undergoing mental trauma as he was unable to fit in as a boy or girl. The crisis put him in the rattrap and he resorts to hurt himself by placing the lighted cigarette under his arm and below the elbow until he burst into tears.

This feeling of discomfort occurs in people because of their predicament of gender identity, a sort of Gender Dysphoria. Barbara observing the changes in her son understands the transformation of his gender. To the relief of the readers, Barbara accepts him as he is and takes him to the hospital and starts his medication. Mrs. Cox, a teacher understands his position and Kylie tells his teacher that he would be dressed as girl to the school. Meanwhile his mother's intervention and her support make Kylie lead a mentally stronger life but is bullied and threatened by Greta to join the club. His persistent efforts to escape from the clutches of these men results to devise a plan with the assistance of Melanie who in turn cautions him of the criminality of these men who would burn houses and would even go to an extent of killing their family. Despite knowing the fact that the girls in the club were considered as sex objects, Kylie takes a back step. Summer vacation comes as a great relief, when Raquelle his friend wants him to join her for a trip to France. He felt relieved when Raquelle invited him for a trip as he could escape from the British Pakistani men. Raquelle's father is a chief inspector in the police and her mother is a solicitor in Crown Prosecution Service. Kylie enjoys the holidays with her friend Raquelle, dreadful thoughts of the club and the British Pakistani men kept haunting his mind.

The threats continue after her return, under stress of circumstances and the dreadful thoughts of the young girls being threatened, she takes petrol from his mothers' vehicle and drives on the wrong side of the road. She gets arrested and immediately rings up Raquelle's mother Emily and speaks to her husband. Mr. Chalerton, on enquiry, understands the trauma of her experiences in her life:

She told how Greta had discovered her being trans and her introduction to the club. She told about the pills. Finally, she told of the men and what they made her do and what they did to Melanie and other girls. She told of reading about the Finns fighting a superior Russian army and making Molotov cocktails. She told of the threats, of burning her house, burning her and her mum and of acid attacks (278).

Kylie was finally going to school as a girl. She faced all her bullies with courage and help from her teachers, friends, and family. Her worries of being exposed by Greta was removed by the Police as Greta was in their custody.

Literature is a reflection of the life that portrays society through its character. This fictional story of abuse of vulnerable children in the United Kingdom presents yet another important aspect of stereotyping Pakistani men for all the evil-doing though there could be white British men too who would have been engaged in Pedophilia and racism. The story ends on a positive note with Kylie walking out for a better life. The book focuses on transgender studies through a queer lens. It is a popular field in the modern context and its literature portrays the realm of transgender, crossdresser and gender dysphoria society.

The employment of Hijras in the premodern era until even today is from extortions, begging, performing at ceremonies or as sex workers. These Hijras enter into dispute to acquire a territory for begging and prostitution. Hijra sex workers undergo a brutal violence especially in the public spheres, police station, prison and their homes. These transgenders are discriminated a varied places especially in the health centers, education, housing and employment. Feinberg's preface use the term 'Transgender Warriors', "to refer to all courageous trans warriors of every sex and gender – those who led battles and rebellions throughout history and those who today must muster the courage to battle for their identities and for their very lives.."(xi) is very apt to the prevailing situation.

In the novel *The Hijra*, which depicts a story set in the United Kingdom, Kylie was lucky to have a better life ,unlike her Indian counterparts for whom life would almost be impossible. The conservative society and the lack of awareness in the general public team up and escalate the difficulties of third genders and their basic rights. Though India has been one of the foremost nations to amend the constitution to recognize the Transgenders as one among the citizens, much has to be done on the ground level to safeguard humanity from the clenches of these antisocial elements.

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