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# Rituals of Belonging: Challenging the Sacred Marginalised Views of Hijras in India

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**Abstract**

Hijras, a third-gender community deeply rooted in South Asian cultures, has long held spiritual and social significance. Revered for their unique position outside the traditional gender binary, Hijras were historically believed to possess powers to bless and curse, playing integral roles in various rituals and ceremonies. This research article explores the intricate relationship between Hijra rituals, identity formation, and societal perceptions in India. Drawing on cultural relativism, the study challenges the dominant societal tendency to position Hijras within a binary of sacredness and marginalisation, hindering their full participation in everyday life. Through in-depth analysis of rituals, informed by seminal works like Gayatri Reddy's *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India* (2005) and Serena Nanda's *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India* (1996), the research illuminates how these practices become a powerful means for hijras to construct and negotiate their identities. By examining rituals as vehicles of both religious and cultural expression, the study reveals how hijras navigate their marginalised status while simultaneously carving out a space of profound meaning and belonging. This binary view, venerating them as sacred or ostracising them as outcasts, ultimately denies Hijras the recognition and inclusion they deserve as equals within Indian society. This research contributes to broader discussions on gender diversity, cultural heritage, and the complexities of social inclusion in India, emphasising the importance of understanding Hijra experiences through their own cultural lens.

**Keywords**: Ethnography; Sacred Community; Hijra; Cultural Rituals; Marginalised; Cultural Relativism; India

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**Introduction**

The term "transgender" is an inclusive label that covers various gender identities and expressions that differ from the sex assigned at birth (Butler, 2011). ‘Sex’ denotes biological characteristics that differentiate males and females, encompassing visible variances in genitalia and the associated disparities in reproductive capabilities. Conversely, ‘gender’ pertains to cultural factors, encompassing the societal categorisation into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ roles. As per the Oxford English Dictionary (1989), sex (noun) encompasses the collective traits stemming from variances in the structure and functionality of reproductive organs, which delineate beings into male and female categories, along with the additional physiological disparities stemming from these variations; the realm of phenomena encapsulating these distinctions. Gender, on the other hand, can be conceptualised as the behaviour, cultural, or psychological characteristics typically linked with a particular sex. The term ‘gender’ (noun) originates from the Latin word ‘genus’," signifying ‘kind’ or ‘category’ (Torgrimson & Minson, 2005). The concept of gender identity disrupts the traditional notion of gender as a binary concept inexorably linked to biology. Research has indicated that bias against transgender individuals is linked to a reluctance to embrace ambiguity (Buck, 2016; Tebbe & Moradi, 2012;), support for a rigid, binary understanding of gender (Buck, 2016; Norton & Herek, 2013;), and the conviction that gender is rooted in biology (Tee & Hegarty, 2006). It is important to note that gender identity is a deeply personal and individual experience, and there is no single or fixed way to categorise all transgender people ("Answers to your questions about transgender people, gender identity, and gender expression," 2014).

There is no reason to assume that gender should also remain as two. The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it (Butler, 2011).

Defining the term "transgender" can be a complex task. Some expansive definitions consider it as a broad umbrella term encompassing individuals who display gender-diverse attributes (Norton & Herek, 2013). This includes transgender women (individuals assigned male at birth who identify as female) and transgender men (individuals assigned female at birth who identify as male). Non-binary individuals do not exclusively identify as strictly male or female; they may identify as a combination of genders, neither gender, or an entirely different gender, often using terms such as genderqueer, genderfluid, or agender (Matsuno & Budge, 2017). Bigender individuals identify as two genders simultaneously or at different times (Blechner, 2015). Two-Spirit is a term from certain Indigenous North American cultures that describes individuals who encompass both masculine and feminine qualities (Jacobs et al., 1997). Gender non-conforming individuals express their gender in ways that defy societal norms associated with their assigned sex, encompassing appearance, clothing, and behaviour. Some individuals use transsexual to describe transitioning from one gender to another, often through medical interventions. Cross-dressers occasionally wear clothing associated with a different gender but may not identify as transgender.

As Sarah Kaye Lewis says in her thesis on *Gendering the Body: Exploring the Construction of the Sexually Dimorphic Body* (Lewis, 2011), Transgender identities are often perceived as transitional states, moving from one binary gender to another—man to woman or woman to man. Within this framework, Hijras can be seen as striving to embody a single gender perfectly, without error or ambiguity. Hijras, as recognised in India, are commonly referred to as the third gender. Hijras are often characterised as being “neither man nor woman.” In her ethnographic study, Professor Serena Nanda of New York’s Department of Anthropology delves into the lives and circumstances of Hijras in India,

contributing to the recognition of their distinct identity as the third gender. “Starting from the premise that the category of a third sex has been a part of the Indian worldview for nearly three thousand years” (Zwillin & Sweet, 1996) there are different kinds of Hijras. These intersex individuals, who were sometimes referred to as hermaphrodites in the past, are individuals born with a combination of physical, genetic, or anatomical characteristics. Intersex variations arise due to disruptions in the process of sexual development and differentiation, resulting in the birth of individuals possessing a combination of both male and female internal and/or external genitalia (Money et al.,1995).

Transsexuals are individuals who were assigned male at birth but harbour a profound desire to transition to the female gender. Essentially, these are males who identify as transgenders and become part of the Hijra community (Jagadish, 2015). They often express a wish for surgical and hormonal interventions to align their bodies as closely as possible with their preferred gender. In the realm of transsexual individuals, two distinct subgroups can be identified. The first subgroup consists of Eunuchs, Castrated Males, or Nirbans, which includes individuals who have undergone rudimentary surgical procedures like castration or emasculation as part of their journey to transition to the opposite gender (Mithani & Burfat,2003). The second subgroup encompasses Uncastrated males, Cross-dressers, or Haqwa, comprising transgender individuals who have chosen to be part of the Hijra community but have not pursued castration or emasculation procedures. Fake Hijras are individuals who present themselves as Hijras, dressing in women’s clothing and adopting the outward appearance and behaviours typically associated with the Hijra community. However, these individuals are not genuine members of the Hijra community; instead pretend to be such beings to engage in activities like street begging (Mithani & Burfat, 2003).

Hijras once held a revered and esteemed position in Indian society until the arrival of Western colonial powers. Through the instrument of cultural imperialism, these colonisers reshaped the collective mindset of Indians and drastically altered their perception of the Hijra community. This transformation began in the 1850s when colonial rulers set out to demolish the traditional practices of Hijras, deeming them socially inappropriate and resistant to moral reform (P & S, 2024). Under the provisions of [1]Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, Hijras were already criminalised (Azhar, 2019). However, in 1861, the North-Western Provinces introduced a 'special law' specifically targeting hijras. By 1870, influential British officials threw their support behind this approach, paving the way for an extensive campaign against the hijra community throughout the South Asian subcontinent (Semmalar et al, 2021; *Hijras and the Legacy of British Colonial Rule in India,* 2019;P & S, 2024).

A series of discriminatory measures targeted the Hijra community, including a ban on castration, despite it being rare among Hijras. [2]The 1871 Criminal Tribes Act subjected them to harsh surveillance, registration, and social bias. This law also prohibited hijras from having children, unjustly branding them as criminals during the colonial era (Piliavsky, 2015). In recent years, efforts have been made to acknowledge Hijra rights, including officially recognising them as a third gender by the Indian government in 2014, granting legal status and affirmative action benefits.

The study’s rationale on Hijra rituals in India lies in the need to understand and appreciate the intricate interplay between the sacred and the marginalised within the context of the Hijra

[1] Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, introduced in 1861 during British rule, criminalised homosexuality under "unnatural offences." It states that anyone voluntarily engaging in carnal intercourse against the "order of nature" with a man, woman, or animal could face life imprisonment ("What is section 377 of IPC? | India news - Times of India," 2018).

[2] The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 allowed colonial authorities to label resistant tribes or groups as "criminal tribes" for systematic non-bailable offences, enabling their registration and control (Ghosh, n.d.).

community. By delving into the religious practices and cultural traditions of the Hijras, the study aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of how these rituals shape their identity, foster community cohesion, and offer insights into their lived experiences. Through the lens of cultural relativism theory, the research seeks to avoid ethnocentric judgements and instead embrace an understanding of the Hijras' rituals within their cultural and mythological context. It examines the strained relationship between Hijras and mainstream Hinduism, emphasising the need to understand and appreciate their unconventional traditions while acknowledging the challenges they face. Indeed, the transgender community, including Hijras, navigates this complex, ambiguous terrain daily. They are forced to carve out spaces for themselves within a society that struggles to understand or accept them. The study concentrates on the intersections of identity politics and the perpetuation of social disparities stemming from prevalent inequalities in class, gender, and sexuality. The researcher examines several examples of such cultural and religious practices to observe the operational mechanisms of this paradox. Bennett said, "[i]mplies that we have no basis for judging other peoples and cultures, and certainly no basis for declaring some better than others, let alone 'good' or 'evil'" (Bennett, 2002; Davis, 2008). Frequently, we encounter the idea that morality is influenced by cultural viewpoints, with ideas of right and wrong adapting to cultural norms. These are simplified expressions of cultural relativism, a theory that possesses various appeal aspects, appearing scientifically rigorous to some and fitting into the postmodern trends for others (Tilley, 2000).

Franz Boas, often regarded as the father of American anthropology, was one of the foremost social scientists to criticise these approaches as ethnocentric and racist. Boas and his influential students dismissed evolutionary theories, viewing them as inconsistent with ethnographic evidence and excessively speculative (Davis, 2008). Instead, they emphasised our shared humanity and argued that diversity in cultures could be attributed to cultural traditions, not inherent racial differences. They championed cultural relativism as an essential descriptive and methodological tool for studying diverse cultures, both from a historical and scientific perspective. According to this perspective, each culture, often described as a "design for living," was unique. To truly understand their values and characteristics, one needed to view them within their specific cultural context without imposing arbitrary or preconceived universal value systems (Davis, 2008; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Applying this concept, the study aims to unravel the enigmatic nature of Hijra rituals. The Hijra community in India occupies a paradoxical space, revered and ostracised, sacred and marginalised. This marginality within a societal in-between is central to understanding the complexities of their social position. This study examines how rituals serve as channels to express religious devotion and cultural identity.

## Literature Review

### Sacred and Scorned: The Paradox of Hijra Identity

The Hijras of South Asia, as already stated above, a distinct third gender, embodying elements of both male and female, defy easy categorisation, but personify a complex tapestry of sexuality, spirituality, and social standing that often leads to misunderstanding (Hossain & Nanda, 2020 ). Hijras embody a complex interplay of reverence and marginalization. Often described as occupying a liminal space between male and female, they are simultaneously revered as sacred beings with the power to bless and curse and marginalised as a socially ostracised community facing discrimination and prejudice (Aggarwal, 2017).

Thus, the Hijra community as a class face severe social exclusion and marginalisation due to their non-conforming gender identity (Mal, 2015; Khan et al., 2009). The history of Hijras in India has been marked by both periods of acceptance and persecution. Prior to the onset of colonial rule, Hijras were often welcomed and celebrated in royal courts and other institutions across the subcontinent (Michelraj, 2015). However, the arrival of British colonial administration in the

18th Century led to a drastic shift in the perception and treatment of Hijras (Michelraj, 2015). The colonial authorities sought to criminalise the Hijra community, viewing them as a separate caste or tribe engaged in kidnapping and castrating children. Alamgir (2022) discusses the historical regulation and criminalisation of Hijra communities during British colonialism, which had a significant impact on their lives. It highlights that in pre-colonial periods, the lives of Khawaja Sara and Hijras were once regarded with honour and held esteemed positions in Mughal harems and princely palaces (Alamgir, 2022).

It is, therefore, arguable that historically, Hijras held significant religious and cultural roles in India. Their association with deities like Bahuchara Mata, a Hindu mother goddess, imbued them with a sacred aura, granting them the perceived ability to bless fertility and ward off evil. This spiritual authority earned them respect and a place in traditional ceremonies, particularly those related to marriage and childbirth (Bhadoria & Jadhav, 2020; Nanda, 1986). Hijras navigate between sacred roles as devotees of the Mother Goddess and stigmatised positions as sex workers (Nanda, 1986). Hijras' religious practices often blend Hindu and Muslim elements, reflecting individual beliefs and contexts rather than adhering to a single tradition. Taparia (2011) suggests that Hijras embraced Hindu practices due to declining of their status within the Mughal court system. During Mughal rule, Hijras endured brutal enslavement. They successfully transformed the Islamic practice of emasculation into a powerful symbol of idealised renunciation, even within the predominantly Hindu society of India (Taparia, 2011).

Despite having a historical place in Hindu society, contemporary attitudes towards Hijras remain largely negative, with many people fearing their presence in public spaces (Mal & Mundu, 2018) and are often subjected to physical, verbal, and sexual abuse, leading to diminished self-esteem and social responsibility (Khan et al., 2009). Their primary sources of income are typically begging and sex work, as they are denied access to formal employment opportunities. In literature, themes of alienation, displacement, and the longing for authentic connections highlight the complexities of human relationships and the search for belonging. Alienation arises when individuals feel disconnected or isolated due to differences in beliefs, values, or societal norms. The marginalised community often struggle to find acceptance within their social or cultural environments, feeling like outsiders. This isolation creates a deep desire for genuine connections and a place where they truly belong (Chiranjeevi, 2023). To address these challenges, researchers recommend a multi-pronged approach that prioritises social recognition, legal protections, and targeted interventions to ensure equal rights and opportunities for the Hijra community (Khan et al., 2009; Mal & Mundu, 2018).

**Ethnographic Explorations of Hijra Communities in India**

Early anthropologists aimed to capture the intricacies of different societies, often those that were colonised or considered “exotic” from a Western perspective. The formalisation of ethnography as a distinct discipline is often attributed to anthropologists in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries (Mandavilli, 2023). Ethnography, broadly defined as the systematic study of people and cultures, has a rich and complex history. While the term emerged later, observing and documenting different cultures has roots in ancient civilisations. Ethnographic studies have explored the multifaceted dimensions of Hijra identity, emphasising the importance of embodied experience in understanding their subjectivity (Gannon, 2007). These studies highlight how Hijras both challenge and reinforce hegemonic social structures, revealing the complexity of their position in Indian society. Hijra’s search for belonging begins with forming tight-knit communities, often structured around a guru-chela system, where mentorship and shared experiences create a sense of familial connection. Within these communities, Hijras find emotional support and validation, helping them cope with the isolation imposed by

mainstream society (Gannon, 2007). Gayatri Reddy's comprehensive ethnography, *With Respect to Sex* (Reddy, 2005) explores the intricate identity of Hijras in Hyderabad through the lens of respect and embodied experience and challenges Nanda's (1996) perspective. Reddy argues that Hijra identity is far too intricate to be reduced to a simple "third sex/gender" category. She highlights the complex interplay of religion, caste, class, gender, and sexuality that shapes Hijra experiences. Reddy emphasises the importance of understanding the moral economy of respect within which different groups negotiate, compete for, and assert their legitimacy as Hijras (Reddy, 2005). Challenging prior research, Reddy highlights the contradictions within Hijra subjectivity, arguing that they both disrupt and uphold societal norms, making their role complex and multifaceted.

Reddy also explores the concept of thirdness in Hyderabad, examining sexual difference and its discontents. Hijras actively engage with non-Hijra communities in religious spaces like dargahs, where shared rituals and festivals contribute to constructing and authenticating their identity (Ghosh, 2021). These interactions highlight the intricate relationship between hijras' spiritual pursuits and material interests, demonstrating how sacred spaces serve as sites for reinventing and invigorating their complex social universe (Ghosh, 2021). Despite their spiritual significance, Hijras face social stigma and discrimination, affecting their socioeconomic status (Bhadoria& Jadhav, 2020). Additionally, many Hijras engage in prostitution, which conflicts with their culturally valued sacred role (Nanda, 1986). This tension between spiritual and material aspects contributes to the complex nature of Hijra identity and their place in Indian society. Their portrayal in Bollywood cinema ranges from comic to maternal figures, reflecting their complex social status (Kalra & Bhugra, 2015). Several scholars have critiqued Serena Nanda's portrayal of Hijras as a third sex in her work *Neither Man nor Woman*. Cohen (1995) criticises Nanda for neglecting the brutal reality of castration that individuals endure to be accepted as part of this third category. Aggarwal (2017) argues that emasculation symbolises India's intolerance, rather than acceptance, of diverse sex/gender identities. Exploring the rituals and practices that form the bedrock of Hijra identity and community is a crucial undertaking, that draws inspiration from the seminal works of scholars like Gayathri Reddy and Serena Nanda (Spina, 2017; Tanupriya, 2020). Hijra rituals, often at odds with heteronormative expectations, serve as both a reinforcement of their unique cultural identity and a form of resistance against societal marginalization. These rituals allow them to carve out a space within Indian society that challenges gender and kinship norms, fostering a sense of belonging crucial for their survival (Tanupriya, 2020).

**Cultural Relativism and the Hijra Community**

In literature, "belonging" explores the universal human need to feel connected, accepted, and at home in the world. Stories show characters searching for this feeling, whether it is about fitting into a group, overcoming social barriers, or finding a place that feels like home. This exploration reveals how deeply belonging impacts our emotions, relationships, and sense of self (Chiranjeevi, 2023). Hijras, with their unique social and cultural position outside the traditional gender binary, challenge Western assumptions about gender and sexuality. Hijras are yearning for a sense of belonging in society. Reddy's concept of "local economies of respect" (Reddy, 2005) highlights how Hijras derive status and social acceptance within their communities. This understanding requires the society to set aside its own cultural biases about gender roles and recognise the validity of the Hijra experience within its own cultural framework. Cultural relativism plays a significant role in understanding transgender experiences and theories. Cultural relativism is a foundational concept in the social sciences and humanities, which posits that a particular culture's beliefs, values, and practices should be understood in the context of that culture rather than judged by the standards of another culture (Wrong, 1997). This theory emerged as a reaction to the ethnocentrism and cultural imperialism that had

characterised much of Western scholarship and colonial discourse (Stenmark, 2015).

Winkelman (1993) critiques transpersonal psychology's hierarchical view of consciousness evolution, emphasising the importance of cultural relativism in evaluating different states of consciousness. Taking this forward, Roen (2001) highlights the risk of racial marginalisation in transgender theory, calling for greater attention to cultural diversity and Indigenous perspectives. He examines how intersectional identities, including race, class, and sexuality, shape transgender experiences within androcentric and white normative cultural narratives. These studies collectively emphasise the need for a culturally sensitive approach to transgender theory and practice, recognising the diverse experiences and cultural contexts of transgender individuals.

This research distinguishes itself from prior studies on Hijras and transgender ethnography in India through its comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach. This study examines the complexities of Hijra experiences in society through the lens of cultural relativism. By analysing how Hijras are perceived as both marginalised and sacred, the article argues for understanding their rituals and traditions from their own perspective. This approach reveals how these practices contribute to Hijra identity formation. The article critiques the societal tendency to relegate Hijras to the fringes; either by venerating them as sacred or ostracising them as outcasts. This binary limits their full participation in everyday life and denies them the recognition they deserve as equals.

**Research Methodology**

This research utilises a qualitative research framework to analyse the ethnographic works of Reddy and Nanda, a methodological approach particularly appropriate for examining the intricate and subjective dimensions of Hijra identity within its specific cultural context. The research article employs the theoretical framework of cultural relativism to understand the complex dynamics within the Hijra community in India. Cultural relativism is a fundamental concept in the field of anthropology that challenges the view of universal moral and ethical standards. The theory posits that cultural practices and beliefs should be understood within their own context rather than being judged against a single, absolute set of values (Fokkema, 1993). In this study, cultural relativism allows for examining Hijra rituals without imposing external values or judgments. Cultural relativism, a concept with roots predating anthropology, was developed into a comprehensive theory by Franz Boas and his students in the early 20th Century (Hahn, 2023). Boas, often called the "Father of American Anthropology," argued that every culture has its own internal logic and that practices that may seem strange or unethical from an outsider's perspective are often deeply rooted in a culture's history, traditions, and worldview (Mitchell, 2007). Benedict's influential book *Patterns of Culture* further developed these ideas, emphasising the diversity of cultural values and the need to understand them on their own terms. Boas's work, particularly *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1903), is often considered a cultural relativist manifesto. This approach emphasises holistic cultural descriptions, refraining from judgments or comparisons between cultures and recognising that each culture can only be understood from its members' subjective perspectives (Hahn, 2023). One of the key features of cultural relativism is the rejection of ethnocentrism, the tendency to judge other cultures based on the standards of one's own culture. As Ruth Benedict(1934) pointed out, cultural relativism is a value in itself, as it implies that one's values are not inherently superior to those of other cultures (Fokkema, 1993). This perspective challenges the assumption that there is a universal, objective standard of morality and behaviour that all cultures should adhere to (Tilley, 2000). While cultural relativism became a fundamental principle in appreciating multicultural societies, its rejection of universal norms and external criteria has been criticised for potentially overlooking cultural conflicts and power asymmetries (Hahn, 2023). Over time, anthropologists have progressively reduced the scope of cultural relativism, viewing it more as a

practical guideline than a comprehensive doctrine (Brown, 2008).

## Discussion

### An Ethnographic Exploration by Nanda and Reddy

Serena Nanda's work is a form of humanistic anthropology, focusing on portraying and interpreting the narratives of religious individuals who display remarkable courage in living their lives by their divinely ordained sexual ambiguity. Her narrative primarily revolves around the biographical accounts of four Hijras: Meera, Sushila, Kamladevi, and Salma. Nanda's exploration leaves a few aspects of the variable lifestyles of Hijras unexamined. Nanda provides an in-depth insight into the various facets of Hijra life, including the management of Hijra houses of prostitution, the dynamics of relationships between Hijras and their spouses, and the intricate web of obligations and reciprocities existing between the younger Hijras (known as Chelas) and their elder celibate Hijra mentors (Gurus). By adopting a cross-cultural perspective, Nanda draws intriguing parallels with similar gender expressions in other cultures. She highlights the Xanith in Oman, who represent an intermediate gender category, the Alyha among the Mohave, which serves as an alternative gender role, and the Mahu of Tahiti, offering readers a richer understanding of the diverse manifestations of gender and identity across different societies (Nanda, 1996).

Gayathri Reddy's ethnographic work *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India* offers an insightful exploration of the lives and experiences of the Hijra community in India (Reddy, 2005). The ethnography work examines the intricate dynamics of gender, sexuality, and identity, presenting Hijras not merely as marginalised individuals but as active agents who negotiate their social standing within a culturally ingrained and economically significant framework of respect. Challenging prevalent narratives, it illuminates the multifaceted societal roles of Hijras, particularly their significant contributions to fertility rituals, which underscore their complex navigation of respect and stigma in everyday life (Reddy, 2005). Her journey takes us from India's ancient philosophical and religious texts to the secondary literature in medieval Perso-Urdu. In essence, the descriptions of third-gender individuals predating the Mughal era in the 16th Century may not necessarily align with the later Urdu term 'Hijra'She then delves into the British colonial writings and more contemporary anthropological studies that shed light on Hijras as the 'third sex '.She explores early scholarship and literature that provides historical evidence of pre-modern and pre-Islamic concepts of sexuality, including a third gender in India. She highlights linguistic diversity, such as Sanskrit, Pali, and Urdu, where references to Hijras and the third gender have appeared.

### Exploring Hijra Rituals Through the Lens of Cultural Relativism

Cultural relativism asserts that cultures should not be subject to objective evaluation regarding superiority or inferiority, or moral rightness or wrongness. From a cultural relativist perspective, cultures can only be assessed within their own contextual framework. For the cultural relativist, the role of an anthropologist is to comprehend the workings of a culture rather than passing aesthetic or moral judgments on other cultures (Schmidt, 1955). In his anthropological writings dating back to 1887, Boas argued that civilisation is not an absolute entity, but rather a relative one. He asserted that our ideas and conceptions are valid only within the context of our own civilization. Since then, extensive debate has ensued regarding the principles of cultural relativism and universalism (Aggarwal, 2017). "The fact of cultural relativism is a factual judgment about values, not a value judgment. It says something about what is the case, not about what ought to be" (Schmidt, 1955:783). Similarly, Melville Herskovits' perspective on cultural relativism emphasises that it is a philosophy acknowledging the unique values established by each society to govern its way of life. It underscores the intrinsic worth of every cultural tradition and the importance of being open to diverse conventions, even if they diverge from one's own (Herskovit, 1955). The idea that individuals should respect societal

values (though not all cultures do this), the belief that all cultural traditions have dignity and value (raising questions of equality), and the call for tolerance of differing conventions (despite some cultures being intolerant) are key principles of cultural relativism.

Culture encompasses a broad spectrum, ranging from tangible cultural artefacts like arts and literature to intangible cultural practices and a way of life. It is a dynamic entity that evolves and transforms over time, devoid of static qualities but rather characterised by constant change. Culture is not merely a product but an ongoing process, often without clearly defined boundaries. It manifests in both objective and subjective realms: the former is represented by observable aspects like language, religion, and customs, while the latter encompasses shared attitudes and cognitive patterns. In addition to that, culture has both individual and collective dimensions, as it is shaped by communities with which individuals identify, contributing to their personal cultural identity (Donders, 2010).

Cultural relativism questions the idea of universally applicable "good" or "bad" practices by highlighting that these judgments are contingent on specific cultures. Even the vast repository of knowledge and progress ushered in by science, according to cultural relativism, is essentially a culturally biased way of thinking, akin to magic or witchcraft (Kanarek, 2013). This concept transcends a mere declaration of the equal validity of all cultures; it constitutes a comprehensive philosophical theory, asserting that there are no absolute truths, whether ethical, moral, or cultural, and that the evaluation of different cultures is inevitably tainted by ethnocentrism. Applying cultural relativism to this research means approaching Hijra rituals with a commitment to understanding them within their own cultural context, free from external value judgments. This approach recognises that the Hijra community, like any other, possesses a unique worldview and set of values that shape its practices and beliefs.

**Intricacies of Hijra Rituals in the Tapestry of Indian Society**

India, a diverse nation with a multitude of identities and cultures, includes the third gender, represented by Hijras, who embody a range of cross-gender identities. The connection between Hindu mythology and the Hijra community is intricate and multifaceted. Hindu mythology has both influenced and been influenced by the Hijra community for centuries. Within Hindu mythology, there are references to transgender or gender-nonconforming figures, and Indian folklore abounds with stories of androgynous individuals, role reversals in gender, and transformations in gender identity (Nanda, 1986). As mentioned by Devdutt Pattanaik in his book, *Shikhandi: And Other Tales They Don't Tell You:*

Hindu mythology makes constant references to queerness, the idea that questions notions of maleness and femaleness. There are stories of men who become women, and women who become men, of men who create children without women, and women who create children without men, and of creatures who are neither this nor that but a little bit of both, like the Makara (a combination of fish and elephant) or the Vali (a combination of lion and elephant)(Pattanaik, 2014:127)

The presence of transgender individuals can also be traced in classical Sanskrit texts like the *Natyashastra* and *Kamasutra,* which include discussions on the third gender (Tiwari, 2014). As Rama prepared for his fourteen-year exile in the Ramayana, he addressed the men and women, urging them to return to the kingdom. However, some individuals remained motionless. When Rama asked about them, they explained that they did not identify as either men or women. In response to their declaration, Rama granted them a unique blessing: that whatever they spoke would come to pass (Nanda, 1986)

One of the characters in the ethnographic work *With Respect to Sex* drew a parallel between themselves and Arjuna during his Brihannala incarnation in the Mahabharata. They remarked, “We are like Arjuna in his Brihannala incarnation. Some Hijras may say, ‘not the Brihannala incarnation because that was because of a curse.’ But our life is also a curse isn’t it?”

(Reddy, 2005). As Gayathri Reddy suggests, the Mahabharata contains numerous instances of individuals who could be identified as transgender or gender non-conforming, highlighting the presence of diverse gender identities in ancient Indian mythology. For example, the character Shikhandi from Mahabharata, who was born female but later identified as male played a significant role in the battle of Kurukshetra. Such references in ancient texts indicate that diverse gender identities are historically present in Hindu culture.

In Hinduism, the concept of Ardhanarishvara represents a deity embodying both male and female aspects of the divine, signifying an acknowledgement of gender fluidity within the religious tradition (Kamatar, 2021). The Shiva Linga, a symbol associated with Lord Shiva, is typically set within the yoni, representing female genitalia, and further underscores this fluidity. The popular depiction of Shiva as "Ardhanarishvara," meaning "The Lord whose half is a woman," illustrates Shiva's unity with his Shakti, the female creative power (Reddy, 2005: 20).

Sukumarika, a third-gender figure known for her unconventional nature, faced a paradoxical societal perception. While her non-conforming traits offered certain advantages, her image was also met with fear and ridicule, mirroring the complex societal position often experienced by Hijras (Nanda, 2014). As mentioned in O'Flaherty text as the fortunes of Hijras life: "[s]he has no breasts to get in the way of a tight embrace, no monthly period to interrupt the enjoyment of passion, and no pregnancy to mar her beauty" (Doniger & O'Flaherty, 1982 :299 ). During the Mughal era, individuals known as 'Kwaja Saras' or eunuchs were entrusted with the guardianship of the [3]harem's women. Hijras often cite this historical role as a source of their status and prestige within Indian culture. While the Hijra community is primarily associated with Hinduism, they are also accepted within Islam.

Unlike many Western religions, Hinduism readily embraces paradoxes without the need to resolve them (Doniger & O'Flaherty, 1982).Within this context, male and female are perceived as inherent categories, embodying characteristics of both biological sex and gender identity in harmonious juxtaposition. Despite the significant importance of this duality, Hindu mythology, rituals, and artistic expressions exalt the meaningful and affirmative exploration of variations, exchanges, and transformations in both sex and gender (Doniger & O'Flaherty, 1982).Hinduism legitimises space for Hijras by providing a religious foundation for their unique powers (Nanda, 1986; 1996; Reddy, 2003).

Their association with India's predominant religion fosters social inclusion, as religion and culture are deeply intertwined in South Asia, enhancing their societal legitimacy.

The Western notion that an individual's physical sex is determined solely by their genitalia is contested within Hindu philosophy, as Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (1982) discusses in her essay *Women, Androgens, and Other Mythical Beasts*. Hindu beliefs resonate with the theory of the hydraulic construction of the body, a perspective similar to findings from recent studies on medical texts from ancient Greek and Roman civilizations (Tiwari, 2014). To be clear, both masculinity and femininity are undeniably shaped by physiology, but this influence is inherently fluid. Gender distinctions, observed not only in Greco-Roman traditions but also in Hindu texts, are dependent on the body's temperature levels, which can shift even after a person's birth (Roscoe, 1996).

In Hinduism, impotence is transformed into a potent force of generativity through the practice of *tapasya* (austerity), which involves asceticism and the voluntary renunciation of sexual activities. Tapa, generated through these ascetic practices and abstaining from sexual pursuits, plays a central role in the creative process. Hindu mythology often features ascetic figures, with Shiva being a prominent example of a creative

[3] The section of a Muslim household reserved for women, including family members, concubines, entertainers, and servants.

ascetic. Like Shiva, who achieved creative potential through self-emasculation, Hijras, as emasculated individuals, serve as conduits for the creative energy of the Mother Goddess and by extension, the energy of Shiva (Hiltelbeitel, 1980; Reddy, 2003).

Every Hijra household has a small shrine dedicated to *Bahuchara Mata*, and ideally, every Hijra should visit her temple. It is in the name of this goddess that Hijra showers blessings of fertility and prosperity on a newborn child or a married couple (Nanda, 1996: 25).

The cornerstone of their cultural identity revolves around their deep worship of *Bahuchara Mata*, one of the many Mother Goddesses venerated across India and emasculation is an integral aspect of this worship. Their strong connection to the Mother Goddess forms the basis for both the Hijra community's assertion of their unique role in Indian society and the longstanding belief in their ability to bestow blessings or invoke curses upon male infants. The direct connection between the Hindu concept of creative asceticism and the significance of the Hijras is explicitly outlined in the myths that bind them to their central religious figure *Bahuchara Mata*. This deity requires them to undergo emasculation as part of their devotion. "All Hijras are enjoined to worship a Hindu goddess, *Bahuchara* or *Bedhraj Mata*, from whom they are believed to get their power to confer fertility" (Reddy, 2005). The legend of *Bahuchara Mata* recounts a tale of a beautiful young woman travelling through the forest in Gujarat with a group of fellow travellers. When the group was threatened by robbers and fearing a violation of her modesty, *Bahuchara Mata* took a courageous step. She drew her dagger and, in an act of sacrifice, severed her own breast. She offered this as a substitute for her physical self to the assailants. This remarkable act, along with her subsequent passing, led to the deification of *Bahuchara Mata* and the practice of self-mutilation and sexual abstinence by her devoted followers to seek her divine favour (Holland et al., 2002).

Through the lens of cultural relativism, which advocates for understanding cultural practices within their own context, the adherence of Hijras to traditional religious and cultural practices reveals a profound yearning for recognition and inclusion. These practices, often viewed through a contemporary lens of marginalisation, are taken back to a historical period when Hijras held distinct societal roles and commanded respect. By upholding these traditions, they are not clinging to an archaic past but rather asserting their enduring cultural heritage and its inherent value within Indian society.

These rituals, rich in symbolism and meaning, offer a glimpse into a time when Hijra identities were not merely tolerated but celebrated for their contributions to the social fabric. In a modern India grappling with evolving notions of gender and identity, Hijras, through their steadfast commitment to these practices, challenge the dominant narrative of marginalisation. They offer a powerful counterpoint, reminding society of a time when their presence was not a point of contention but a source of social and spiritual significance.

**Sacred Rituals: Shaping Hijra Lives**

Emasculation holds profound significance within the Hijra community, constituting their sacred duty or dharma and forming the bedrock of their unique identity. This ritual unfolds within a ceremonial framework, with the supplicant seated before an effigy of the *Bahuchara Mata*, incessantly chanting her name throughout the procedure. Those who successfully undergo emasculation are believed to attain favoured status as devotees of *Bahuchara Mata*, becoming vessels for her divine power through a symbolic process of rebirth. While *Bahuchara Mata* is commonly depicted as riding a rooster, Shah (1961) suggests that her original form of worship centeredon the yantra, a symbolic representation of the vulva. A connection may indeed exist between this representation of the Goddess and the act of emasculation (Shah, 1961). Many Hijras opt for a comprehensive procedure known as the 'nirvan operation,' which involves the surgical removal of the penis and testes. Following the nirvana process, the

release of blood is allowed, symbolising the shedding of the male aspect. Subsequently, recovery rituals bear a remarkable resemblance to those observed for women after childbirth. A post-nirvan Hijra is adorned in bridal attire, with customary practices like the application of mehndi (henna). It is widely believed that individuals who have undergone this process possess the ability to bestow fertility upon newly married couples.

“Cultural relativism, then, is the doctrine that what makes an action right is that it’s approved by one’s culture” (Park, 2011: 160). What may seem unusual or extreme in one culture can hold deep religious or spiritual significance in another (Donders, 2010). It also mentions the symbolism of the *Bahuchara Mata* and the possible connection between this symbolism and emasculation. Emasculation may be seen as a symbolic act of devotion and identification with their deity.

Throughout history, the moral significance attributed to the Hindu ethic of "brahmacharya," which represents the early stage of life in the Hindu life cycle and emphasises celibacy. Additionally, the divine creative powers associated with tapas or asceticism have played a crucial role in this discourse (Reddy, 2005). It is worth noting that for men, the power of tapas and asceticism lies mainly in practices such as sexual abstinence and semen retention.“The key to this creative power, however, lies in chastity—an ascetic must remain chaste and renounce sexual desire and practice to generate tapas” (Reddy, 2005: 85). A connection exists between the concept of tapas and the practices observed among Hijras, as highlighted by Reddy in her ethnographic study. “A “real hijra” is said to be like an ascetic or sannyasi—completely free of sexual desire” (Reddy, 2005: 56).

Hijras share a deep spiritual connection with Lord Shiva. In a Hindu cosmogonic narrative, as described by O'Flaherty in 1981 Shiva, the ultimate ‘ascetic of creation,’ is called upon to initiate the creation of the universe. Accepting this immense responsibility, Shiva retreats into meditation for a millennium to prepare him. During his prolonged absence, Vishnu and Brahma, driven by restlessness and impatience, bring forth numerous divinities and beings, setting the creation process into motion. When Shiva finally emerges from his meditative state, ready to create, he finds that creation is already underway. In response, he breaks his linga (phallus) and places it on the earth. As O'Flaherty insightfully notes, “[The linga] shifts from being a source of individual fecundity to a source of universal fertility” (O'Flaherty , 1981: 135). In a similar vein, Hijras undergo the nirvan operation and bury their removed organs in the ground. Afterwards, they believe in their ability to confer fertility upon others. By relinquishing their personal fertility, they acquire a universal creative power. These narratives serve as both validation and a source of authority for Hijras, who openly draw upon these stories to affirm their unique role in matters of creativity and fertility (Reddy, 2005).

One of the Hijras in Reddy’s study, Munira, among others, said, “[t]he body—I mean, you know what I mean right? A man’s body—that should not be functional. Only then can we say that that person is a [H]ijra” (Reddy, 2005: 57). This explains why a significant number of Hijras have undergone emasculation surgery and attained the status of nirvan sultans. As Amir Nayak, one of the characters in Reddy’s study articulated, “[t]his man’s *sarir*[body/organ] is of no use, so why keep it. Cut it off and throw it! That is why we have this operation” (Reddy, 2005: 93). The nirvan operation served as the ultimate confirmation of the asexuality of Hijras, a crucial element in securing their authenticity and *izzat* (respect and honour). In essence, Hijras regarded the operation as not just a physical transformation but also as a symbolic act that solidified their identity as individuals devoid of sexual attributes, thus cementing their place within the Hijra community and society at large. In the past, this ritual was traditionally conducted by Hijras known as “daiammas” or midwives.

The other main reason for the act of achieving *nirvana* holds a special significance for Hijras as it is believed to bestow upon them the unique ability to grant fertility blessings to newlywed

couples. This practice of bestowing blessings is a central element of their traditional ceremonial duties, leading to the identification of those who sustain themselves through this role as *badhai* Hijras. The term "badhai" refers to the compensation they receive for their services.Another distinct occupational role among certain Hijras involves engaging in sex work, earning them the title of Kandra Hijras (Reddy, 2005). Traditionally, prostitution was not considered a part of Hijra customs. Hijras believe that engaging in sexual activity offends their goddess, *Bahuchara Mata*. Unlike the humanist view of culture as having fixed, universal values, anthropology sees culture as context-dependent, with values shaped uniquely by each society. This approach recognises that values are not absolute but vary across cultural contexts (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952).When describing badhai Hijras; they were portrayed as individuals who sustained themselves by singing and dancing, with their primary source of income coming from offering blessings.

In a badhai for a birth, the [H]ijras always examine the genitals of the infant, reinforcing the belief that [H]ijras have a legitimate claim on infants whom they observe to be inter-sexed; they say that "these children belong to us because they are like us, neither man nor woman"(Nanda, 1996:5).

These two vocational identities seem to exist independently, each carrying a distinct social status. The badhai Hijras, recognised as ritual practitioners, hold themselves in high esteem and are generally respected, even by many Hijra sex workers. They are regarded as Hijras possessing *izzat*, signifying honour and respect. Healers serve specific societal ritual roles, not through conventional doctor-patient relationships but through the spiritual solace they offer to families. For Hijras, their healing role is rooted in religious and historical traditions, emphasising their power to bless and curse (Cohen, 1995; Reddy, 2003). Their status as ritual performers highlights their unique ability to heal within a culturally relevant context.

**Cultural Significance of Hijra Rituals and Beliefs**

Although Hijras are often feared for their curses and infertility, they were once highly respected for their spiritual powers, often invited into homes to give fertility blessings rather than being shunned. Their roles in warding off evil and associations with deities like *Bahuchara Mata* and Lord Shiva make them integral to South Asia's religious landscape, where religion plays a vital role in legitimising their place in society (Jagadish, 2013). The power of Hijras to curse and bless holds deep cultural and symbolic significance within the context of Asian societies. It is rooted in both historical traditions and the unique role that Hijras play in these societies. "It is very auspicious you know, to call [H]ijras to your house. They have the power of the Mata to either bless you or curse you" (Reddy, 2005:109). They were often recognised as ritual performers, guardians of certain spaces, and intermediaries between the human and divine realms. Their presence and involvement in these rituals are believed to bring good luck and ward off evil spirits. Conversely, Hijras are also believed to have the power to curse individuals who fail to show them respect or offer them monetary gifts.

Go away, may your mother or your daughter or your wife or your sister give birth to a Hijra like me, let a Hijra be born in your house as well. Then God will tell you, this is the result of your teasing a Hijra, that is why you have a Hijra born in your house (Nanda, 1996: 9).

Hijra curses serve as a means of societal regulation, carrying substantial weight within the community. These blessings and curses hold deep spiritual meaning, surpassing the influence of regular well-wishes or condemnations. The heightened spiritual efficacy is attributed to the distinctive role of the Hijra community in connecting human and divine spheres. These blessings and curses evoke both reverence and apprehension, reflecting the intricate interplay between society and this diverse gender community.

"If someone asked where another hijra was, the answer was often "She is doing [her] darsan" (Reddy, 2005: 125). The term "darsan" is central to both the Hijra community and Hindu religious

practices. It is employed by Hijras to refer to the act of removing Hijras' beard. In the context of Hindu religious worship, darsan takes on a different but related meaning. It signifies the ritual of viewing a deity and receiving their blessings in return. This practice is deeply rooted in the belief that sight is a cosmologically significant sense for Hindus. To be seen by a deity is not merely a passive sensory experience; it is an ongoing exchange of spiritual energy that flows from the inner self, radiating outward through the eyes to actively engage with the objects of perception. From the standpoint of cultural relativism, it is crucial to recognise that the term "darsan" holds unique interpretations within diverse cultural contexts. Vincent Ruggiero explains that it is natural for individuals to interpret others' behaviour through the lens of their own standards and cultural norms.We often assume that what we consider fair or treacherous also aligns with their values. However, a deeper understanding of their cultural code may reveal that they are not violating their principles but are adhering to them (Rosado, 1994). Through the practice of darshan, Hijras find a way to celebrate their identity as Hijras.

Once, there was a Hijra named Tarabai who fervently desired to have children. She sought out Ajmer Baba and made her request. However, she phrased it as follows: "I want a child to be produced in my womb," without explicitly asking for the child to be born. As a result, her pregnancy continued for several months, and eventually, unable to endure the pain and burden any longer, Tarabai slit her stomach, removing the baby and tragically ending her own life as well as the baby's. Even today, Hijras who visit Ajmer Baba's dargah [tomb] inevitably pay homage to Tarabai (Saria, 2014).

This story served as "proof" for Hijras that they "cannot have children" and, by extension, "are not women."Some Hijras do not identify as either men or women but firmly as Hijras. Munira put it unequivocally when she said, "I was born a Hijra, I am a Hijra, and I will always be a Hijra "(Reddy, 2005: 135). The confusion around belonging arises because Hijras differentiate themselves from dominant notions of masculinity and femininity, challenging conventional ideas of what it means to be a man or a woman. This distinction highlights a gap between the emotional connections within their community and the formal language of political identity and representation. As Dutta (2013) point out, some individuals, lacking access to modern methods of transitioning, have developed their own pathways of sartorial, bodily, or behavioural feminisation that do not necessarily align with womanhood. This demonstrates that self-identifications are significant, yet fluid, rather than fixed or essentialized identities (Ramos, 2018).

It touches upon how Hijras interpret this story as evidence that they cannot bear children and, therefore, do not fit into the category of women. Some Hijras firmly identify as Hijras rather than as men or women. Relating this ideology to cultural relativism involves understanding and respecting the cultural context and beliefs of the Hijra people. In this case, the Hijra tribe has its own interpretation of gender and identity, which may differ from conventional Western concepts. As Foucault(1976)argued that, “[s]exuality is not a natural feature or fact of human life but a constructed category of experience which has historical, social and cultural, rather than biological origins” (Spargo, 1999:12). They view Hijras as a distinct gender category, and this perspective shapes their self-identification. The fact that Hijras pay homage to Tarabai at Ajmer Baba’s dargah is a cultural practice rooted in their beliefs and traditions. Cultural relativism also posits that moral judgments between different cultures are inherently complex. It suggests that one culture would be deemed superior to another only if it were closer to an ultimate, universally correct moral standard. However, no culture can claim inherent superiority since there is no universally correct standard. In essence, the idea is that there is no single, universally valid moral code. Multiple moral frameworks exist, none holding inherent superiority over the others. It underscores the notion that no objective yardstick can be applied to deem one society’s moral code superior to another's (Rachels & Rachels, 2012).

**Conclusion**

This study explores the interplay between Hijra rituals, identity formation, and societal perceptions, challenging the binary view of sacredness and marginalisation. While respected for their rituals, Hijras often face societal exclusion. By examining these rituals as acts of self-expression and community building, the research reveals how Hijras use their practices to navigate marginalisation, affirm their identities, and create spaces of belonging. The search for belonging is a powerful force in literature. Experiences of belonging emerge from the dynamic interplay of inclusion and exclusion within spatial, symbolic, and social relationships.The boundaries of belonging, shaped by these processes, are often experienced through racialised, gendered, and economic realities. It is a multidimensional and contextual phenomenon influenced by personal and environmental factors, operating at multiple levels. As a complex and evolving social process, belonging is shaped by specific contexts and involves a sense of connectedness, meaningful social interactions, and the intricate performance of identity (Caxaj & Berman, 2010). Hijras, feeling like outsiders or seeking acceptance, often embark on journeys to find a sense of belonging. This quest shapes their choices, relationships, and, ultimately, their happiness. Finding belonging brings fulfilment and self-acceptance, while the struggle for it can lead to loneliness and inner turmoil. Hijra rituals, far from mere cultural curiosities, emerge as powerful assertions of identity, expressions of faith, and mechanisms for fostering a sense of belonging within a society that often struggles to accommodate them. This research emphasises the need to view Hijra experiences through their cultural lens, recognising their rituals as key expressions of identity. Aligned with cultural relativism, the study argues for understanding cultures based on their own values rather than imposing external standards.

Harman provides an advanced exposition of moral relativism, drawing a parallel to Einstein's theory of relativity (Rosati, 2008). He drew a parallel between moral relativism and Einstein's theory of relativity in physics. Einstein's theory states that physical quantities, such as mass, length, or the passage of time, are dependent on a particular frame of reference. Consequently, two events considered simultaneous within one frame of reference may not be perceived as simultaneous within another (Rosati, 2008). Likewise, when examining the ethnographic studies of the Hijra community, it is essential to respect the cultural context in which these rituals occur. This means acknowledging that what may appear unconventional or marginalised in one culture could hold deep significance and validity within another.

British colonialism in India significantly impacted societal views on gender and sexuality, pushing non-binary identities to the margins. While once acknowledged and integrated into society, these identities became increasingly ostracised. Interestingly, religion has provided a space for groups like Hijras to maintain their traditions and engage with diverse gender expressions, offering a degree of acceptance within a complex social landscape. Serena Nanda's observations highlight that "certain esoteric Hindu rituals involve male transvestism as a form of devotion" (Nanda, 1996: 21). Essentially, religion offers a haven for Hijras to practice their rituals and affirm their identities, bridging the gap between the Symbolic and the Imaginary. The research findings have illuminated the ways in which these rituals serve as a bridge between religious and cultural expression, intricately woven into the fabric of Indian society. It emphasised the necessity of comprehending these practices within their cultural context, avoiding ethnocentric judgments. The study highlights that diverse gender expressions in mythology are understood through varying interpretations, distinct from modern practices such as sex reassignment surgery, hormonal therapy, and castration. It also explores how mythological depictions of gender-transgressive behaviours often involve divine intervention. Despite societal exclusion, Hijras use their cultural rituals to create a sense of belonging and identity. They participate in life events like births and marriages, offering blessings in exchange for gifts, which helps them engage with society on

their terms. Within their own community, rites like the *nirvan* (castration) symbolise rebirth and reinforce their collective identity. Festivals like Koovagam also celebrate their culture, giving them pride and visibility. Through these traditions, Hijras form a strong communal bond, creating a sense of belonging even in the face of marginalisation. Notably, the study emphasises that although gender-variant individuals existed in the past, their lived experiences were not directly documented, even though their presence is noted in various historical records. They have transitioned from being symbols of the sacred to representations of sexuality, a transformation that coincides with a decline in their social acceptance.

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**Ethical Approval**

Ethical considerations have been central to the research, which relies on existing ethnographic studies of the selected texts. Hence, no direct human participants were involved in the study. Nevertheless, the researcher addresses the Hijras' isolation with empathy and respect, steering clear of sensationalism or exploitation. The privacy and confidentiality of the original authors are prioritised, and their work is duly acknowledged.

**Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that they have no known financial or personal conflicts that may have influenced the study presented in this paper. The authors also declare no competing interests.

**Author Contribution Statement**

P. Seshaa Senbagam: Analytical Survey of related work, Writing Original Draft

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**Data Availability Statement**

Data sharing does not apply to this research as no data were generated or analysed.

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