



The Quest to Reclaim the Lost Status of Hijras in India: A Reading of Living Smile Vidya's *I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* and A. Revathi's *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*

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Abstract

In precolonial India, a culture of gender and sexual fluidity flourished in society, attributing dignified positions to hijras. However, with the arrival of the British colonial rulers the hijra community became marginalized through laws such as Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code of 1861 and the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. In contemporary India, the echoes of the colonial regulation of hijras remain prevalent. This paper aims to interrogate the systems of domination within the terrains of gender and sexuality that leads to the subordination of the hijra community. It shall also examine the systematic and systemic disempowerment of hijras and their elimination from the narratives of the nation, as depicted in the transgender autobiographies, *I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* (2007) by Living Smile Vidya and *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010) by A. Revathi. In the former text, the experience of oppression of the writer for her Dalit identity and her victimization by the postcolonial ideology of gender conformity and heteronormativity, shall be analyzed. Further, in A. Revathi's autobiography, the writer's traumatic experiences and the lack of legal rights for the hijra community would be discussed. These autobiographies contribute to the identity politics of transgender individuals in postcolonial India, as the writers strive to abolish stereotypes and demand for their right to freedom and equality. The methodology of close reading shall be combined with the postcolonial and feminist approach, to conduct the study.

Keywords: Postcolonial India, Hijra Identity, Masculinity, Transgender Autobiographies, Transgender Rights.