



## Lakshmi Narayan Tripathi's *Red Lipstick*: A Queer Study

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### Abstract:

In the current novel *Red Lipstick*, the third-gender situations are the key areas of focus. It is looked at and described with a queer lens. The Third Gender has experienced prejudice from society. The present research examines the historical use of the queer theory in the hijra community and provides a comparison of the queer in Indian culture. The chapter lines in the hijra's story are about their identification crisis. It also demonstrates the difficulties that the Hijra or members of other communities suffer as a result of not being treated equally by either gender. This is the analysis's finding regarding the third-gender tales. The hijras, a particular subgroup of the male-to-female transgender population, adopt the conventional language outlined by regional authorities. The conceptual frameworks used in this study come from anthropology, communication studies, and digital and social media, as well as a social media ethnography. a particular class of male to female transgender people, known as employs the slang designated by regional authorities for the hijras. The conceptual frameworks used in this study come from anthropology, communication studies, and digital and social media, as well as a social media ethnography. Queer theory corrects these evasive strategies, as well as the fundamental political concept that "all politics is local" and promotes rhetorical sensitivity to a wide audience within the LGBT "community." Queer theory also bolsters a crucial assertion made by all rhetorical theorists that activists should remember: language expression may affect behaviour.

**Key words:** Feminist theory, Queer theory, women, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Gender.

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**INTRODUCTION:**

In general, queer theorists advocate undermining dominant cultural norms of propriety. The humanities (and some areas of the social sciences) have been affected by this project's constructivist view of social thinking, which denatures all human experience, achieves a level of acceptance for an indeterminacy that rejects all claims to identity, places a premium on expansive cultural experiences at the expense of political analysis and action, and encourages a historicism that relativizes all thought and culture. Queer theory serves as a gentle reminder to pay careful attention to the diversity of sexual minorities and to the discontinuity of experience over time and across cultures. Gay politics disregards social distinctions, historical developments, and numerous other issues in its effort to create and represent a united collective concern identity. All politics is local, the core tenet of political practice, is confirmed by queer theory, which also encourages rhetorical sensitivity to a wide range of listeners in the LGBT community. Recent years have seen harsh criticism of queer theory's acceptance in academia. This criticism contends that queer theorists, in their radical nominalism, ignore the material world of real people and relationships in favor of concentrating on the grammatical and semantic analysis of texts and the circumstances surrounding reception and consumption in order to draw attention away from economic inequality and the conditions of actual exploitation.

Queer philosophy specifically weakens the social justice and civil rights movements by erasing gay identity. It exacerbates the already pervasive sense of divide among LGBT lawyers and fosters a sense of futility in terms of changing conditions for sexual minorities. This would entail acknowledging that variety results in uneven development (by geographic region and regional culture)

In terms of knowledge, target audience, and problems. A move like that would highlight the necessity to modify communications for people who are hardly post-modern, let alone contemporary. The idea of the male sex and the male identity, which have long been the "object" of Western thinking, are waiting for a thorough inquiry as a unique and no longer

broadly representative area of study. The uncertain nature of male gender theory's relationship to the "queer theory" subfield is the source of much of its theoretical vigour. Share many of its issues with conventional conceptions of gender and sexuality.

**HISTORY OF QUEER THEORY:**

It takes some teeth to deal with the English language's adaptability and the jargonization of everyday terms. Queer can be a verb, a noun, or an adjective. It is frequently used as an adjective to denote something that is "not normal," particularly something that is not heterosexual. Doty (1993) operationalized the term "queer" as "a property that refers to any expression that can be characterised as contra-, non- or anti-straight," which distinguishes people more as individuals than as modes of expression and the ideologies that underlie them. However, during the past ten years, the term has increasingly been used for homosexuals and lesbians to refer to individuals whose sexual orientation and/or gender removes them from the "normal" bisexual and transgender population (Warner 1993; Rhoads 1994 Penn, 1995).

However, the term "queer" now has a deeper significance beyond just being an inclusive classification. The term can be used as a noun to refer to a member of the marginalised group called a queer.

There is frequently a political philosophy or when employing the word, one's goal is partially motivated by the choice to combat prejudice and profess a group identification based on experiencing marginalisation due to one's own sexuality instead. Only discrimination can distinguish between gender and subject matter (Rhoads, 1994, 1997; Jogose, 1996). In a way, this oddness is not about a lack of something (a lack of heterosexuality) (Hocquenghem, 1978), but rather about the presence of something that yearns for same-sex encounters, a position outside of mainstream society that deviates from the usual. The word emphasises the issue of "conventional understanding of sexual identity through deconstruction of categories, opposites, and equations that support them" (Jagose, 1996) due to its use. According to Honeychurch (1996), "It may be "strange" in

the sense that there are many opportunities to identify and declare various positions resulting from the diversity of sexual differences.

*“Muriel seemed to believe that as lesbians, we were all outsiders and all equal in our outsider hood. “We're all niggers,” she used to say, and I hated to hear her say it. It was wishful thinking based on little fact; the ways in which it was true languished in the shadow of those many ways in which it would always be false”.*( Curtis 2014)

Indeed, the ambivalence toward interracial relationships may account for Smith's elision or discounting of Schockley's *Loving Her*, a novel about a black-white lesbian relationship, in which the white character's racist, if benevolent, assumptions are made clear to the reader but not countered or remarked upon by either the black protagonist or the narrator. In the context of black feminist politics and theory, of which Smith was at the time one of the most compelling, and one of the extremely few, courageously lesbian, voices, it is not surprising that her critical advocacy should focus on a lesbian reading of Toni Morrison's bestseller *Sula*, with its haunting portrayal of an intense and life-long, if profoundly ambivalent, friendship between two black women, rather than on the happy-ending lesbian romance of a black woman and her young daughter rescued from an abusive marriage, and a life without social or spiritual rewards, by an upper-class white woman.

Queer theory is an interdisciplinary approach to understanding and critiquing the social and cultural construction of gender and sexuality. It emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a response to traditional approaches to studying gender and sexuality, which tended to assume a binary system of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual. Queer theory challenges these binary categories and seeks to uncover the ways in which they are constructed and maintained through social and cultural practices. It also explores the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, class, and other forms of identity and power.

Queer theory draws on a range of fields, including cultural studies, feminism, poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, and queer

studies. It has influenced a wide range of academic disciplines, as well as activism and cultural production, and has contributed to a greater understanding of the diversity and complexity of gender and sexual identities. Jay Stewart claims that "Transgression in the form of obvious deviation from standards is inherently celebrated in queer theory and politics.

In conclusion, the characteristics of queer theory, heteronormativity and performativity, may be helpful in challenging authority figures and "the way that things are done" in the workplace. Current criticisms of queer theory's overly Western focus have led to its evolution to embrace elements of transnationalism in light of globalized cultures (e.g., Gopinath, 2005). This criticism has been helpful in showing how queer theory may be used as an analytical tool to undermine and deconstruct speech (Kirsch, 2007), such as examining how varied contexts produce interlocking ideas of "race," citizenship, gender, class, and sexuality differently.

Online communities and interactions operate as a networked counter public, which helps to normalize queerness and challenge heteronormativity. The discourse analysis of the hashtag **#GirlsLikeUs** by Sarah Jackson, Moya Bailey, and Brooke Foucault Welles reveals how trans women have utilized the hashtag to foster community in ways that normalize being trans and provide counternarratives to the frequently stereotypical and caricatured portrayal of trans people's lives in popular mainstream media. Lesbian/ gay/ straight divisions as well as rigid and stable masculine/feminine, male/female, and other identity categories are challenged by queer theory, which also reexamines concepts of plurality, intersectionality, and fluidity in the creation of discourse.

#### **APPLICATION OF QUEER THEORY IN THE NOVEL *RED LIPSTICK***

The transgender activist Laxminarayan Tripathi's autobiography, *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi*, was published in 2015. R. Raj Rao and P.G. Joshi translated the Marathi original into English.

Laxminarayan Tripathi, who was born in 1979, is a transgender person who, despite being

offered the opportunity, lives a more comfortable and appealing life than a typical man or woman. No transgender person has the strength and tenacity to live such a moral life. Her education, freedom of choice, and support from her biological parents made it feasible for her to follow her dreams. She wrote her biography with her parents in mind, which is why. It says "Her Dedication".

The term "Hijr" which denotes a journey to discover one's true self—is the root of the word "Hijra." Laxmi went through a complete journey of self-discovery, self-acceptance, and fighting for my gender identification. Since Kinnar or Hijra have been a part of Indian history and ancient texts like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and others, the term "transgender" is inadequate. A community that adheres to the "Guru Chela" Parampara and has certain laws, customs, and rituals is known as the Hijra or Kinnar. India has a long history of sexually active women, including the apsaras from the Vedas, Draupadi from MahaBartha, and Sita from the Ramayana.

While Laxmi was born a boy, she never identified as one. She described her sexual orientation as "oozing femininity" and said that she was "his firstborn masculine offspring, his eldest son" (Red Lipstick 18). Being a hijra begins with isolation, which began for her even in her early years. She was made fun of for dancing femininely. They all poked fun of Laxmi, claiming that while she had a boy's body, she had a woman's body language. In Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life, one of Laxmi's autobiographies, she writes, "The world kept indicating I was a female, but my private parts showed that I was a boy. Then there was the entire sexuality issue. Everyone around me seemed to think I was acting like a girl based on their reactions (Red Lipstick 2). Me Hijra, Me Laxmi, her first memory is regarded as one of the most open and truthful biographies ever. Her writings explore the mythologies, cultures, traditions, stereotypes, and identities that a hijra experiences throughout their lifetime. This book instills respect for people and teaches us to accept people for who they are. It eliminated bigotry against the hijra group and distorted perceptions of them.

Her second autobiography Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life is a unique story. In this book she unpeels layer after layer of her personal life and her journey towards hijrahood. She makes the reader aware of the LGBT community particularly about hijra community. She also describes about her friends, family, love life and her struggle to do things for the society especially for the marginalized hijra community. She put into light all the myths and stereotypes and changed the outlook of hijra community as a whole in her two autobiographies. Her existence as an activist is justified by her identity as "Laxmi." She uses an example from the epic.

*"When I came out as Gay, when I finally gathered the courage to abandon the life of lies, I was living and start my own life, my parents disowned me. Laxmi stood by me in those difficult times... I can never forget how very supportive she was, how her strength and confidence were a boon for me when I was coming out" (Tripathi 143-144).*

Ganesh entered the hijra society as well and changed his gender to become Gauri through gender-alignment surgery. In the name of Ganesh, she does not disguise her true identity as Gauri from the public. Gauri's life has been a colossal struggle since her cross-dressing was discovered by her father, who only ordered her to leave the house one day. Laxmi's biological family is the only one that loves her and accepts her for who she is. For Laxmi, too, Gauri's company made life incredibly worthwhile. Laxmi offers support. He is drawn to guys and feels helpless as he grows up in his hometown of Amravati, which is a highly conservative place. At a preliminary stage Laxmi is perplexed by his balanced lifestyle between his adoptive family and birth family (Hijrotic).

The other members of the hijra community do not approve of Pawan's actions. They make fun of him by saying he doesn't always wear saris and that he doesn't know how to clap in the hijra manner (80). He later joined the hijra society and begged Laxmi to give him a name; as a result, he is now known as Pavithra. Laxmi is a transgender activist who fiercely defends

the rights of transgender people. She also assists them in maintaining their sense of self. This study examines how people who experience gender incongruence as adults deal with their dysphoria and occasionally indulge in cross-dressing behaviour. In Laxmi's Red Lipstick, it is clearly explained how they battle between these two opposing ways of living and how they contend with their biological sex and their mental discomfort.

***“My relationship with my father was complicated. He loved me, but he also wanted me to be someone I wasn't - a 'normal' boy”. (Red Lipstick p. 15)***

The author is saying that because their father had expectations for them that they weren't able to live up to, their relationship with him was difficult. It is implied that the author did not adhere to conventional gender standards or expectations by the fact that the author's father specifically wanted them to be a "normal" guy. Even if the author's father may have loved them, their disagreement stemmed from their insistence that the author be "great" in a particular way. The author might have been under pressure to live up to their father's expectations, which might have left them feeling inadequate or unworthy.

Parent-child relationships can frequently experience this kind of stress, especially when parents have high expectations for their kids' achievements or behaviour. Nevertheless, a challenging and complex dynamic can arise when parents' expectations clash with their children's genuine character or desires. Overall, the author's assertion shows that their connection with their father was not simple or easy, and that this complexity may have been exacerbated by their father's expectations.

***“While Laxmi was born a boy, she never identified as one. She described her sexual orientation as "oozing femininity" and said that she was "his firstborn masculine offspring, his eldest son" (Red Lipstick p.18)”***

Those who identify as transgender do not fit into the sex they were assigned at birth. Thus, while having a particular biological sex, they do not identify with the gender that is usually

connected to that sex. But because society is frequently binary and gives biological sex a lot of weight, transgender people frequently experience persecution and prejudice. They could experience pressure to adopt the gender norms and behaviours that go along with their assigned sex and be forbidden from expressing their true gender identity.

In the case of the person who made the statement, despite having a distinct gender identity, they were informed they were a boy and required to act like one. Since they are denied the freedom to express their true selves, many transgender people may find this to be a profoundly traumatic experience that leaves them feeling alone, confused, and rejected. It is crucial for society to recognise and value the variety of gender identities and to foster a climate in which everyone may be who they truly are without worrying about facing prejudice or marginalization.

***“I have always believed that gender is a fluid thing, a spectrum, rather than a binary. But most people don't see it that way. They want everything to fit neatly into boxes - male or female, gay or straight, black or white”. (Red Lipstick p. 45)***

The author is expressing their view that gender is a spectrum that embraces a variety of identities and manifestations, not a fixed or binary construct. The author's viewpoint is in opposition to cultural standards and expectations that frequently force people to fall into one of two groups depending on their biological sex, either male or female. The author observes that rather than appreciating the richness and flexibility of personal identity, most people prefer to define others in simple, binary categories like "gay or straight" or "black or white." This might be as a result of how cultural norms and expectations lead people to conform to rigid gender roles and binary distinctions.

#### **REAL LIFE ASPECTS OF HIJRA COMMUNITY:**

The hijra community is a term used in South Asia to describe individuals who are born male but do not identify as such and may identify as female, transgender, or intersex. They are often marginalized and face discrimination in

society, but they have their own unique culture and community. Here are some real-life aspects of the hijra community:

**Cultural Traditions:**

The hijra community has its own unique cultural traditions, including specific dance forms, music, and dress. They often perform at weddings and other celebrations.

**Discrimination and Marginalization:**

Despite their cultural significance, hijras face discrimination and marginalization in society. They are often excluded from mainstream employment and education, and face violence and harassment.

**Community Support:**

Due to the discrimination they face, hijras often rely on support from their own community. They form close-knit groups and provide each other with emotional and financial support.

**Legal Status:**

In some countries, hijras have legal recognition as a third gender, while in others they do not. This can impact their ability to access healthcare, employment, and education.

**Health Issues:**

Hijras may face health issues related to hormone therapy, surgery, and HIV/AIDS. They often face barriers in accessing healthcare due to discrimination and lack of awareness among healthcare providers.

**Activism:**

Hijras have been involved in activism and advocacy for their rights, including campaigns for legal recognition, access to healthcare, and protection from violence.

**Employment:**

Many hijras work in the informal sector as beggars, sex workers, or performers. They often face economic insecurity and lack of access to formal employment.

These are just a few examples of the real-life aspects of the hijra community. It's important to recognize their diversity and complexity,

and work towards greater acceptance and inclusion in society.

**CONCLUSION:**

In a nutshell, the findings and analysis of this study mainly reflect the current social developments in the lives of the hijra and the social work environment in which the social workers execute their work with this group, as well as the concerning topics for further improvements. As a result, the study's findings highlight the importance of gender identity in relation to the hijra's legal framework, which is a crucial step in ensuring access to social resources and achieving societal acceptance. Additionally, obtaining. Therefore, achieving legal recognition of sex work as a profession could give the hijra a better quality of life and shield them from the right to be free from discrimination.

Government support is crucial for these marginalised people, in addition to the services provided by social workers. The harsh truth is that when the nation is already battling a number of social issues, such as poverty, population growth, unemployment, and gender discrimination; as a result, it might take more time for the development sector's programme to address the issues affecting this minority group's civil, social, and economic inclusion. However, given the country's underlying issues, social work activists who work with the hijra population may have to put up a lengthier fight to get the government's attention and secure their social inclusion.

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