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**Review of *Me Laxmi, Me Hijra: An Autobiography of Laxminarayan Tripathi*,
Translated by R. Raj Rao and P. G. Joshi**

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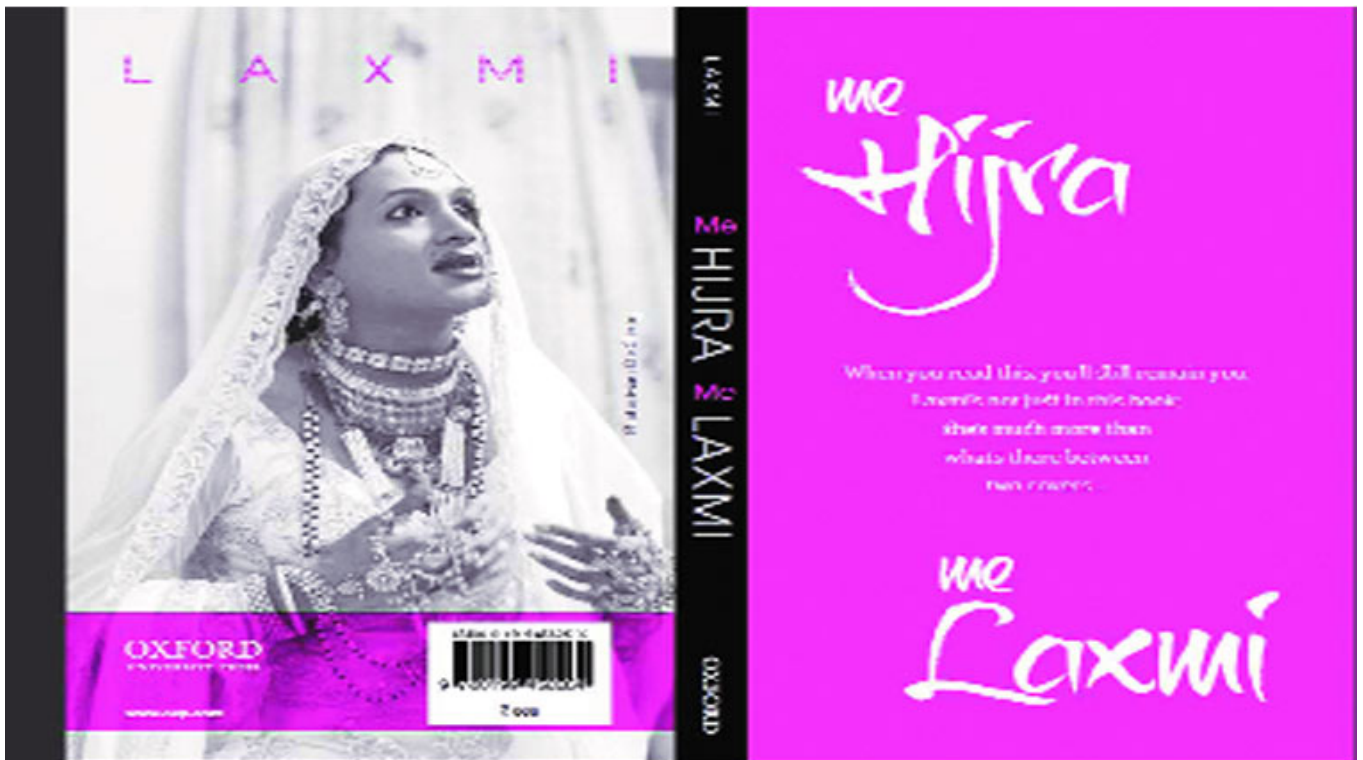
Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad

About the book: *Prof. R. Raj Rao has translated the autobiography of a Hijra, Laxminarayan Tripathi who is a well-known celebrity and working for the upliftment of community. The original version of this autobiography has written by Vaishali Rode in Marathi. This autobiography has included twenty-one chapters in itself.*

ISBN- 0-19-945826-X

Oxford University Press,

Pages- 238, (Rs. 445)



First time when I saw the front cover of this book, these few lines, (between the title) drew my attention immediately and became favourite. “When you read this, you'll still remain you. Laxmi's

not just in this book; she's much more than what's there between two covers”.

Hijras are disliked a lot in India. The word “*Hijra*” is a term of abuse. In few languages such expressions *chhakka* (number six) *kinnar* have been used for Hijras. The word 'hijra' has been derived from the Urdu word '*hijra*' which means a person who has walked out from his tribe or community and joined a community of hijras. In Urdu, hijra is called *Khwaja sara* and *kinnar* in Hindi.

In this book, Laxmi spoke about every sphere of her life, whether it was the matter of sexuality or personal life. Initial chapters are fully dropped in the incidents of sexual harassment. She is a popular trans-gender activist, actor-dancer and a television celebrity. According to her, she was born as a normal male child but always had confusion to choose between her sexuality or personality. Laxmi was the eldest son of a Brahmin family, settled in Mumbai, Thane. She has one brother and one sister. Fortunately, her family accepted her as hijra. She hadn't face any difficulty to live with her family after acceptance of hijra. It seems much trickery when she had used to wear pants-shirts to live like elder son in the family and used to wear sari only outside of house, specially in hijra community.

She also talked about the bitter truth of her life. How she was sexually abused in her early childhood due to feminine feeling and gesture? Not only by her relatives, but outsiders also. From her early childhood, she was unable to find her identity as women or man. When she was in fourth standard, she joined a gay group of Ashok Row Ravi. She had several love affairs with many boys, forcibly or due to self interest since her childhood. Unfortunately, she was used by boys sexually such as object, and abandoned by them later.

After living a confused life, she joined a hijra community and became a *chela* (pupil) of Lataguru, a leader of Hijras. It held a small ceremony with rituals in 1998. In chapter-six, Laxmi expressed her joy for being called as hijra. She said, “When I became a hijra, a great burden was lifted off my head. I felt relaxed. I was now neither a man nor a woman. I was hijra. I had my own identity. No longer did I feel like an alien (43). In 2006, she gave a lecture on “Transgender issues”

in Toronto at 6th world AIDS conference. She has been a participant of Das Ka Dum and Bigg Boss hosted by Salman Khan, an actor. By these shows, she got immense popularity. She organized many programmes to make an awareness among the peoples towards trans-gender issues and society.

The word hijra is a social construct not a biological construct. Laxmi also spoke about historical significance of hijras. How hijras characters such as Aravan and Shikhandi had played an important role in Ramayana and Mahabharata. Hijras are born as male children biologically. There is a conflict between psychological and biological which effects on a person. The gestures, manners, expressions and movements are the result of this conflict. In this case, a person has attraction with same gender like lesbian and gay. Laxmi has never had to live the life of a typical hijra who sings, dances, begs. She never did sex work for a living. Although, she has worked in Bombay's bar in her initial days.

The best of her which I felt is that she accepted however she is. She could be opted to operation to change her sex but she decided to be a hijra and started to work to uplift for hijras community. I conclude with this sentence that, her identity of being hijra is for the people but being a social worker, her works are more than 'of being hijra'.