Beyond Binaries: An Ethnographic Study of Hijra in Dhaka, Bangladesh

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A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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2021

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date: 19th March, 2021

Dedicated to

In the memory of my only younger brother

Mahmud Karim Shaikat

List of Publications and Presentations

Publications relevant to the thesis but not forming part of it

Sigdha, R. K. (2019). An Obscure Perception of Transgender in Islam: A Case of Hijra in Bangladesh. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science Research*, *19*(5), 29–36. doi:10.34257/GJHSSCVOL19IS5PG29

Snigdha, R. K. (2015). Cholochitrer potovumi o prantikotar noya upakkhan: Prekkhit Common Gender-The Film [The new anecdote of marginalization and the representation of Cinema: Case- Common Gender-The Film]. *Bangladesh Film Archive Journal, 8*, 100-106. ISSN-2074-2134 (Published in Bangla language)

Presentations relevant to the thesis but not forming part of it

Snigdha, R. K. (2020, December). *Unzipping your Pants: Dehumanization of Hijra in contemporary Bangladesh* [paper presentation]. New Zealand South Asian Centre (NZAC) University of Canterbury. New Zealand. https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/arts/research/nzsac/

Snigdha, R. K. (2016, May). *Exploring hijra in Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study.* "Gender and diversity research: More critical perspectives". Research seminar: Auckland University of Technology. New Zealand

https://www.aut.ac.nz/gender-and-diversity-research-group

Snigdha, R. K. (2016, February). *The Romance of marginalization: Relocating the hijra in Bangladesh* [paper presentation]. "Critical Engagement in Anthropological Landscape in Bangladesh". Shahjalal University of Science and Technology. Sylhet, Bangladesh. https://www.sust.edu/research/conferences

Acknowledgment

This study could never have been conceivable without my research participants, including hijra, NGO workers, and government officials. I would like to acknowledge all my hijra participants to allow me to join their daily lives and consider me as a part of them. I am touched by their love, care, and friendship. I have received an implicit trust that they placed on me to share their personal experience, innermost thoughts, and feelings.

This doctoral journey is not just a study for me to acquire a degree; all things considered, it's my long-awaited aspiration, which I've been endured for the last twenty years. I have struggled a great deal to pick this research topic in uncooperative surroundings. I was demotivated continuously, discouraged, and once in a while, overlooked by my teachers, associates, and colleagues when I demonstrated my enthusiasm to select this topic as my research interest. Therefore, when I commenced my Ph.D., I was truly excited about my academic engagements and endeavors. I would like to thank the Auckland University of Technology for awarding me a social science faculty scholarship. However, I was entirely unaware of how many struggles and difficulties it would project on me. It is beyond my aptitude to communicate my own battles, to put it in words, the dilemmas I encountered however out this research work.

I started my fieldwork with a four-month pregnancy. Since I had to manage my fieldwork during the childbearing period, I was exposed continuously to constant health risks, as a result of which I had a cardiovascular breakdown during childbirth, and thus, I had to take a break from my fieldwork. Overall, I was fortunate enough to be able to return to fieldwork after a long absence. After all that occurred, I began my thesis writing with a toddler, a five-year-old daughter, and a Ph.D. candidate partner. During the pandemic, the pressing factor became an over-burden when the world went into lockdown and a following a home quarantine Then I found out that my father was COVID-19 positive back home. When he was hospitalized, being the only child, and I couldn't be with them made me feel really broken and helpless. With each of these conditions, I was questioning myself each day if I would be able to complete this Ph.D. project. Nonetheless, I didn't give up, and lastly, I arrived at this final stage in spite of loads of difficulties and struggles.

Meanwhile, I've gone over something I didn't ever anticipate. That life event emotionally shook me. I accidentally got pregnant again and had no option but to terminate my pregnancy because of an unbearable crisis like a critical medical condition, financial worries, lockdown situation, and coronavirus anxiety disrupted the transfer of money from Bangladesh to New Zealand. On top of that, motherhood responsibilities imposed a large challenge on my shoulders with a researcher's role. When

I was focused on my studies, as a student mother, I experienced unpleasant comments and emotional pressures from colleagues, social, family settings, implying that I wasn't supposed to study while a mother with young children. I am especially tired of answering the question of how I feel about being a mother and a Ph.D. student simultaneously in childcare.

Despite the best of my intentions, this thesis could never take this shape without the supervisory team's guidelines. I am wholeheartedly grateful to Associate professor, Sharyn Graham Davies, Pani Farvid, and Senior lecturer, Kay Hammond, for their endless patience, support, care, and kindness. They were always happy and willing to help me resolve the confusion and move forward towards the thesis's outcome. My Ph.D. has been a fulfilling experience, and I sincerely thank them, not only for their unwavering academic support but for their advice, guidance, and time. I am shall always be grateful to them for their mentorship that made it possible to meet the deadlines.

Words cannot describe my gratitude to my mom Shipra Khandokar, my dad Md. Rejaul Karim, whose investment makes me what I am today. They have always been there each time I needed any support of which I could never repay. They still support me with all sorts of financial necessity. Sadly, when they needed me at that time my father got infected by the coronavirus, I couldn't be with him. I am immensely thankful for my significant other, Syed Nizar Alam, for his valuable companionship on this journey. His constructive criticism and our academic debates concerning distinctive knowledge contribution of philosophy and anthropology supplemented my contemplations. Doing a Ph.D. at the same time revived in me a great deal to think critically, probably an essential factor as to why this was the best benefit of having a Ph.D. candidate husband.

I am deeply apologetic towards my elder daughter Syed Niladree Freya, whom I left alone back home for one whole year when she was only three and a half. I will never get that one year back with her. And to my little one, Syed Tathadree Tilottoma, who hadn't even at the time come to this world. She was in my womb when my Ph.D. candidateship was confirmed, and I started to conduct my fieldwork when she was only two months old. In 2019, I came again to New Zealand with two of my daughters, and these last two years, they sacrificed a lot, especially their most precious childhood expectations got inadequately taken care of. Combining motherhood and studying without compromising was a great dilemma as a student mother that I had to face the whole time. As parents, neither my husband nor I could manage sufficient time to pay full attention to them, as we both had part-time jobs to survive, and two of us had to spend the rest of the day writing our theses. However, during this challenge, my two daughters were my regular source of happiness and joy. I hope that one day they will forgive me for all the hard times I have had to endure in pursuit of this Ph.D.

There are many different phases of a Ph.D. Journey and in each stage, I have gone through distinctive struggles and difficulties. When I had finished my Ph.D. draft and started re-touching it, I was frustrated,

fragile, emotionally wrecked, exhausted from the tremendous pressure and burden of this time-consuming battle. At the time, the person who appeared with great support is Nahid Aktar. The care and attention that I got from her in the last one and a half months at the end of this journey I would never be able to thank her enough for her patience, attention, generosity, and championship.

I want to acknowledge my aunt Swati Khandokar, whose home I used to write about my everyday field experiences. In particular, even from a thousand miles away, she is the one who sincerely and emotionally upheld me in this crucial period. Finally, I might want to especially thank a few of my extended family members Rupa, Tanzin, Tasfia, Upoma, Taslim, and my students Sifat, Milli, Sharmin, Partha, Opu, who endured me at various stages; accordingly, I am grateful to them.

Last, of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my home university. Regardless of how I put it, it would never be sufficient to thank the Department of Anthropology at Jahangir Nagar University for making me the person I am today. I have been immensely enriched to be part of the faculty members at the same university where my teaching experience gives me the opportunity to contribute my insights with my students and the university.

Abstract

Hijra, a category often considered to be beyond the woman/man binary, has been officially recognized as a separate gender in Bangladesh since 2013. However, there has been little research exploring the lived experiences of hijra. This Ph.D. explores what it means to identify as hijra. To do this, I adopted a postmodern framework and conducted 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork. During this year, I got to know twenty hijra who lived in Dhaka. I also conducted two focus groups among NGO workers and undertook four in-depth interviews with government officials. Such an exploration allowed insight into the complexity of hijra categorization, sexuality, gender, and government perceptions of hijra. To assist in the analysis of this primary data, I drew on Foucault's concept of sexuality as discourse and Butler's idea of gender performativity.

Based on field data, this Ph.D. has four key findings. First, I found that hijra in Bangladesh are not a homogenous category. Instead, understanding the complexity of hijra identity needs an intersectionality lens. Second, I found that hijra sexual acts and practices can be fluid and, in some ways, are less regulative than heterosexuality. Here I trouble the popular understanding of hijra as 'sexually disabled' or 'asexual' or as having sexual desire only for men. I found that hijra can enjoy a variety of sexual partners and that this does not preclude them from identifying as hijra. Third, I found that for many hijra in Bangladesh, gender is performative, as Butler suggests. Further, gender can involve fun and play and a variety of code-switching from performing as a man to hijra, then hijra to woman, and as hijra to a man depending on what is most strategic for accessing certain rights, and as the situation, context, and circumstance demand. Fourth, I found that hijra is dehumanized in contemporary Bangladesh society and that this dehumanization is, in part, an outcome of the lack of understating of hijra, which has antecedents in Bangladesh's colonial past.

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List of Acronyms

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

AUTEC: Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

BSWS: Bandhu Social Welfare Society

CDA: Contagious Diseases Acts

CTA: Colonial Tribe Act

DIG: Deputy Inspector General of Police

DSD: Disorder of Sex Development

FTM: Female To Male

GHRD: Global Human Right Defence

GHRD: Global Human Rights Defence

GRS: Gender-Reassignment Surgery

GRS: Gender-Reassignment surgery

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

ICCPR): International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICDDRB: International Centre for Diarrheal Disease Research, Bangladesh

ICESCR: Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

IPC: Indian Penal Code

LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender

MSM: Men who have sex with Men

MSW: Male Sex Workers

MTF: Male To Female

NGO: Non-Government Organization

NHRC: National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh

NWP: North-Western Provinces

NZD: New Zealand Dollar

PDF: Physically Challenged Development Foundation

STD: Sexually Transmitted Diseases

STI: Sexually Transmitted Infections

TERF: Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist

UDH: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UNAIDS: United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

Glossary

Apart from the Bengali language, hijra ordinarily speak to each other and their allies in a different spoken language called Ulti. They usually converse with each other and with their peers in this language as a secret code. In due course, this language becomes a part of their daily communication tools, and they frequently express their emotions and feelings in both Bengali and Ulti. Therefore, most of my discussions with them were mixed with both languages. I utilized both languages in my research work to layout the exact articulation and expression of their assertions and narratives. The words that I have frequently used in this thesis are listed below for the convenience of the reader; I have translated all the Ulti and Bengali words into English.

Apa: sister

Akkhar: big; large; great; attractive.

Achla: an act of discipleship a chela takes under a guru and enter into hijra kin network.

Badhai: money as a gift at the birth of a new-born

Bangla: the primary spoken language of Bangladesh.

Baraiya: a ritual is held on the twelfth day after the emasculation.

Bakor: stealing money.

Butli mashi: Anal sex

Bideshi Tonna: immigrant male

Birit: ritualized jurisdiction which hijra carry out for hijragiri.

Butli: anus; buttock

Bia: marriage (usually refer to heterosexual marriage).

Chanan: The money that a chela gives to her guru to get permission for her marriage.

Chela: disciple.

Cholla or cholla mangtia: part of a traditional hijra livelihood where they demand money or food from shopkeepers, vendors, and markets.

Chatai: arbitration

Chippu: surgically reconstructed vagina after emasculation

Chibry: refer to hijra who emasculated.

Chibrani: the act of removing the penis and the scrotum.

Chis: to desire or to have a liking for something (also used as an adjective).

Chipty: surgically reconstructed vagina

Daiyar: a meeting place for arbitration

Dhurpit: having sex with someone

Dhurrani: a manifestation of someone's erotic sex.

Chissa: beautiful; nice; lovely

Chiton: gold ornaments which is usually taken from the accused as a symbol of another agreement for the traditional hijra arbitration.

Choritrohin: characterless

Don: fine; compensation

Doporata/ Dogala: hijra who perform sex with male and female

Dud beti: an adopted daughter who is called milk daughter

Dhol: drum.

Durbol: weak

Dhuraite para: getting sexual pleasure.

Dhur khawa: receiving sexual pleasure

Gandu: A negative image of a man.

Ghor: different hijra house based on differents lineage

Gotia: sisters or hijra of equal rank.

Garia: stubborn

Gordan: head

Hamsi: I

Hater Murat: ritualized removal penis by hand

Hijragiri: taking hijra tradition as a livelihood.

Hijrapon: hijra community judicial system

Janana: hijra with penis

Janaza: Muslim funeral rituals

Jhumka: scrotum

Jhalka: money

Jok: hair

Jhinni-billi: ejaculation

Jowban: youthfulness

Karkhanar chibry: the emasculation of a hijra by a professional medical surgeon

Kharkhana: the place where hijra remove their penis and scrotum secretly.

Khoma: the face of a person

Kacchi kora: fight; shout; castigate someone.

Koti: ‘girlish’ male who adopts ‘feminine’ mannerism

Ligam: penis.

Ligam potano: to disappear the penis

Lohori/ Lohori khawa: fall in love.

Ligam potano: the emasculation of the penis

Lojjashil: timidity

Maigga: a derogatory expression for an effeminate male.

Magi: whore; slut

Malik: the term refers to those who hold more powers than a regular guru.

Mazar: a Mazār is a mausoleum or shrine in the Muslim world.

Meyeli shobhab: feminine attitude

Morod: man

Mukh mashi: oral sex

Nak ful: nose pin

Para: areas which are divided into hijra for their traditional livelihood.

Nayak: leader.

Neharun: female or women.

Nati chela: grand disciple

Nightkam: sex work; prostitution.

Ninlki: surgically reconstructed vagina breasts; boobs

Pakki pon: knowledgeable about hijra lifestyle.

Parik: lover or intimate partner.

Panthi: a masculine man, or just man.

Panthi thekano: to catch or capture a panthi for sex.

Pon Pesha: traditional hijra livelihood.

Pakki: learned; schooled in hijra mores.

Pan Chipty: imperfect implanted vagina.

Potano: to cut off the penis.

Protibondhi: disable; handicap.

Puti cela: great grand disciple.

Reet: community rites.

Sanads: land deeds.

Samokami: homosexual.

Samajik lingo: social genitalia

Sannyasi: monk.

Sharee: Unstitched women traditional cloths in Bangladesh.

Shirni: sweetmeat; sweet dish prepared by boiling rice in milk with sugar etc.

Shottikarer Purush: real man

Sona: gold but also refer to the penis.

Taka: name of the Bangladeshi currency.

Tarikana: illegal bars.

Tali: clap.

Tonna: a young man or a teenager.

Tumsi: you.

Ulti: a form of oral language which hijra use to communicate among themselves.

Ulujhulu: fun.

Vabi: the wife of a brother.

Vabraj: intersex.

Vabrajer chibry: hijra born with defective or missing genitals.

Velki: phony; bogus; False.

Varavari: objurgate someone.

Velkibaj: con artist.

Prologue

In the year 2000, when I had finished high school, I went for a vacation to Pabna, far away from Dhaka, Bangladesh. Though I was born and raised in Dhaka, almost every year, I used to visit Pabna to meet my grandmother before her departure. One morning when I was out for a walk on Grandpa's house, I unexpectedly saw many people had assembled close to the mosque. I was curious to know what happened over there, and what I came across was a dead body. I slowly approached a little closer and heard that there was disagreement among the people as to how the body would be buried. Since the men's and women's burial procedures are different, individuals contend with one another to decide which burial rituals are to be followed.

Additionally, people raised further questions as to whether a man or a woman should bathe the corpse. They were even indecisive about which name should be addressed in *janaza* (Muslim funeral) - should it be the name given by her family or chosen for herself? The local mosque *imam* (religious leader) also said, "I am hesitant of what *janaza* rules to follow for this dead body, as the person is neither male nor female." Out of nowhere, a gathering of individuals who were wearing ladies' garments yet seemed like men showed up. People in the crowd begun to whisper to each other. A few remarks resembled, "see, hijra[1] started coming, the real fun would begin now"; "now the real fun twitches as those hijra seem dangerous." Someone among the gathering said," "hijra are coming; we better leave this spot; otherwise, they will start creating chaos; they are annoying." That was the very first time I noticed 'hijra closely.'

Then they came to the corpse and began to cry loudly, and one elderly hijra began to speak to the Imam that they would rather perform the dead body's last washing and requested him to complete the *janaza* with the name 'Bobita,' which she[2] had been using all her adult life. The

[1] 'Hijra' is used simultaneously in two senses— (i) 'individual' and (ii) 'community'. According to the senses, the verb has taken the forms (i.e. 'is' is used when 'hijra' refers to a person, and 'are' is used when 'hijra' refers to the whole community or more than one person). Moreover, All non-English words except hijra/hijra are written in italic font because hijra cannot be limited to just one non-English word; rather it is far from what is vividly reflected in this thesis.

[2] In contemporary English and trans literature, there is an ongoing debate on using 'pronoun pins' for trans individuals, whether they should refer to as she, he, they, or alternative third-person singular pronouns (Zimman, 2017). Also, in English for trans individuals, there are some non-normative pronouns use, such as they, ze, ey, and hir (McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2018). The general solution for this challenge is asking them which pronouns they would like to address, but there is no use of the pronoun in the Bangala language for males or females. Therefore, I use 'her' as a pronoun to address because hijra, as they use to feel comfortable identifying themselves as women, and I use the pronoun 'she' in the rest of the thesis.

elderly hijra added, "Bobita's family initially named her Babul, but neither her family nor this society allowed her to live as Babul, so why would she be identified as Babul when she could not use it in her lifetime!" Nevertheless, I did not find any of her family members at her funeral, and neither did anyone express any grief on her death except those hijra. Rather, the crowd found the burial entertaining. Gradually the number of people increased, and some of them were even saying that the person got freed from curses; death is better than living such a sinful life." Another man said, "wouldn't it be immoral to participate in a *janaza* of a hijra? I was curious to know more, but all of a sudden, one of the hijra shouted to the crowd and said, "Why are you standing here? Do you think hijra can even entertain you even after death? Leave the place right now."

I immediately left the place as I did not want to hurt their feelings. However, that incident and all those comments pushed me to think more about gender critically for the first time. This teenage experience with hijra sowed a seed in me to pursue my undergraduate and masters in Anthropology at Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, one of the pioneer universities in Bangladesh. I never could erase that incident from my memory, which sooner or later influenced me to conduct in-depth research on hijra, but every time I attempted to work on it, I have constantly been discouraged in many ways. However, some discussion would be hugely valuable for the readers as to my passion for this research as well as the barriers I had to face to pursue my interest and would be substantially important to display how hijra are perceived by mainstream society. Correspondingly, I will explain how I overcame those barriers and built a friendship with hijra to learn about their community language, commonly called '*Ulti*'[3].

In 2007, during my last year of the undergraduate program, I wanted to write my dissertation on hijra; but frustratingly, my supervisor discouraged me from doing any further research on hijra. According to him, the topic was worthless, and it neither would acknowledge me in the academic sphere nor would it help me to get an appropriate job or research funding in the future." In 2008, my postgraduate supervisor again stopped me from choosing hijra as a research topic. I got demotivated, discouraged, and rejected one more time. She encouraged me to research discrimination against women if I am passionate about gender issues. She

[3] Hijra community members in Dhaka, Bangladesh, use a unique secret language named '*Ulti*' for their community and personal privacy, which is a combination of Hindi, Persian, and Urdu languages (Haque et al., 2019). It is an oral language which hijra use as a secret code in their everyday life but gradually it has become their everyday language. The vocabulary of *Ulti* contains such words that are specific to their sexual expressions and professional needs, body parts, and other hijra acts. They use this language to keep their activities hidden from the public hearing and protects themselves from outsiders (Zabus & Kumar Das, 2020).

believes "as a woman; it's wise to consider women's issues instead of hijra since they are also a suppressed group in Bangladesh. Those remarks deterred me from choosing my research interests in hijra, and thus, I was on no occasion allowed to work on the gender and sexuality of hijra at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

In 2010, on my wedding morning, I unexpectedly overheard loud clapping, swearing, and flashy voices arguing with my parents in our front yard. I finally grasped that someone was asking for money from my father, saying, "We are Hijra; our tradition is to collect money from weddings and to bless the bride. Since you have only one daughter, you must give us ten thousand takas. At that point, I became more curious and went to open the door and found that my door was locked from outside. When I was constantly knocking on the door, my mother opened it; she was terrified and said, "I am sorry, I had to lock you in the room, hijra are here to collect money; I do not want them to see you. Do not move from this room. They are dangerous; they might hurt you." I convinced my mum that I would be fine and came outside to talk to those hijra. Though, none of my family members was happy about my presence there.

When hijra saw me, they started clapping around me. Three of them began to dance, and another one started playing one of the traditional instruments called *dhol*[4] *(*drum*)*. The rest of the hijra also began singing and dancing. After the dance, they said, "Bless you! Have a happy married life and get kids within a year so that we can come again to bless your child". They asked for ten thousand takas again, but my father only agreed to give them five thousand. Suddenly, one of the hijra said, "We danced, sang and blessed your daughter, now you have to give us fifteen thousand takas." Then, the argument started getting worse one more time. I was not sure what to do, but my anthropological training inspired me to look at any happening deeply. So, I offered them to come inside and enjoy tea. My invitation softened their voices, and they looked at me with surprise on their faces. One of the hijra said something in a somewhat different language, "*neharun to chissha, tai na* (that girl is nice, isn't it?)". I requested them to come inside again. Then, one of the senior hijra of that group came close to me and put her hand on my head, saying that:

> We are never invited into people's homes nowadays; however, you did something unusual, and as an appreciation for your kindness, we would like to reduce this amount;

[4] *Dhol*: The *dhol* is a double-sided barrel drum played mostly as an accompanying instrument in regional music forms. It is treated as a sacred instrument for hijra, they use it for *badhai* and usually, senior hijra carries *dhol*.

> now seven thousand will work. We want to thank you for your offer, yet we are fine outside.

I persuaded my father to pay them seven thousand takas (150 NZD). When they were ready to leave, one of the hijra came to me and said, "You are very different from many; Allah bless you." I immediately asked him if he would meet me another day. She smiled and said, "I am Boishakhi, and you can have my contact number." I met her in the park after two months. Slowly, we became good friends, and I started learning their traditions and the *Ulti* language from her. The more I learned about them, the more I became interested in pursuing my higher studies in this field.

After my first daughter's birth in 2011, some hijra came to my place for *badhai*[5], and that time, both my parents and partner received them cordially and gave them five thousand takas (100 NZD). That was the first time I met Srabonti, and she was amazed to realize that I know their language; and she said surprisingly, "Glad to meet someone who knows our language but doesn't call us a common gender." I wonder and ask her why I should address you as a "Common Gender"! Srabonti replied:

> A movie called 'common gender' was released based on the lives of hijra. When it got released, people started calling us a 'common gender', but we never liked to be called a common gender. Unfortunately, the director of that film overlooked the fact that language needs to be collectively agreed upon before it's termed; he incorrectly used this term to address us.

Afterward, I watched that film out of curiosity. It had a tragic ending showing the leading character Sushmi committed suicide because her boyfriend and family refused to accept her as a hijra. Another character named Bubli has been beaten and abandoned by her parents because of being a hijra. In the movie's last scene, Bubli was expressing her emotional urge to her mother to be accepted as her child, which was excruciating and heartbreaking for the viewers. I was so confused why Srabonti didn't like that movie, so I meet Boishakhi and Srabonti to know about the reason. I asked Boishakhi what she felt about the film, and she replied to me:

[5] '*Badhai'* is a form of performance involving blessing the newly married couple and newborn by dancing, singing, and loud clapping, in exchange of money to hijra (Chakrapani, 2010; Hossain, 2012). The *badhai* hijra lives a traditional life including collecting money from markets (Bazar tola), blessing newborn babies (bacha nachano), and newly wedding couple in Dhaka, Bangladesh (Khan et *al.,* 2009).

> The director was selling a little story of our life but having an unclear picture of us. Also, he disregarded our social inclusion and did not even cast a single real hijra for his movie. At the same time, you know many hijra are very good at acting, singing, and dancing. This movie didn't bring anything positive to us; instead, it misrepresented the hijra community.

I have asked similar questions to Srabonti and, she replied:

> We don't want to be represented wrongly, and the movie is not reflecting our real life; therefore, I don't like the movie. In the last couple of decades, we, the hijra, were a target group of HIV research by some NGOs. Those NGO reports represent us as HIV carriers, and this film director makes us a common gender. None of them was concerned about our lives and rights.

When I heard this reaction from Srabonti, I started to think critically by going through other research on hijra, but what I found was surprising, there is very little published literature on hijra done in Bangladesh. I have discovered a growing focus on HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection and sexual risk behaviors in several NGOs' research over the past decade. Most of the studies selected participants who are in the sex trade, including MSW (male sex workers) and MSM (men who have sex with men), as higher risk population for the HIV epidemic and STD (Sexually transmitted diseases) in Bangladesh (Azim et al., 2008; Chan & khan, 2007; Rana et al., 2016). However, minimal research was published concerning the social exclusion of hijra. A few NGO research prioritizes extreme marginalization of hijra, their sexual and citizenship rights to explore HIV among the hijra community in Bangladesh (Khan et al. 2008; Khan et al. 2009; Khan et al. 2012).

On 13th November 2013, the Bangladesh government officially recognized hijra, and on 2nd November 2014, one of the non-government organizations Bandhu, Social Welfare Society (BSWS), the Ministry of Social Welfare, and UNAIDS (United Nations Programme on AIDS), jointly organized 'Hijra Pride'. The pride was organized at the divisional level. The main spots of all divisional cities were colored with five different posters to raise awareness, focusing on the human rights issue as well as pointing at their capability to contribute to the country's growth. Hossain (2017) argues that recognizing hijra as a separate gender in Bangladesh is rather a cultural paradox. According to him, hijra transformed from a cultural category to a legal category as a 'third gender' in Bangladesh based on the disability discourse, which constitutes their rights as citizens of the country. He also stated that "the legal recognition of

hijra interprets and includes them within the 'disabled' category, whereas in "popular public discourse hijra is people with genital anomaly" (Hossain, 2017, p. 1421).

In January 2014, a local Region-based NGO, PDF (Physically Challenged Development Foundation), offered me to arrange a dialogue between hijra and other social actors about their recognition. At that time, I was a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at Jahangirnaragar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. I immediately took that opportunity and personally sent invitations to some local hijra communities in Savar to join the dialogue, but they didn't show any interest. However, when they were informed that each of them would receive 1000 takas (20 NZD) as a transportation and refreshment cost for joining the dialogue, they agreed to attend the event. Most of them informed me that they sadly need to spend a whole day on the street to earn a thousand each day, so if they get this amount of money in half of a day, that will be an extra income for them, so they would love to join the dialogue. Moreover, I contacted three hijra activists, and two of them promptly responded that they would love to join.

Also, I invited a few government officials to that dialogue too. However, most of them finally refused to show up because they did not receive permission from a higher authority. However, some of them agreed to participate in a condition such that their identity should not be disclosed in the discussion. I was wondering why they would not be interested in revealing their identity. One of them revealed:

> We have been addressed by the media after the authority acknowledgment of hijra, yet to be straightforward, it was fairly a brief choice. We are not clear what and who are hijra? At that point, how might we answer inquiries regarding them? In any case, to go to the conversation as a visitor should be possible informally.

I also invited some faculties from Jahangirnagar University and the journalists to that dialogue but rarely got any positive responses from them. One of the faculties expressed:

> Are you sure you are going to invite hijra to the university campus? Are you not frightened? For what reason would you say you are doing this? They appear to be so irritating to me. I found them weird whenever I saw them on the street, and honestly speaking, I cannot accept them from my heart. I don't know what you will archive by doing all this.

Another friend told me, "Reconsider prior arranging the dialogue; people might laugh behind your back when they'd know you are working with hijra." However, a few faculties in social science showed their interest when the cabinet decided to recognize hijra as a third gender. Additionally, I circulated posters all over the campus and noticeboards to inform the undergraduate and graduate students if they are interested in participating in the dialogue. Nevertheless, I got permission to use the university seminar room, and the authority wanted me to take all the responsibilities so that the conversation goes smoothly. They were worried and wanted me to make sure that the hijra's presence must not disrupt the campus atmosphere.

On 16th July 2014, for the first time in Bangladesh, hijra and other social actors participated together in a dialogue in a public university titled "Dialogue on Transgender rights: To what extent Bangladesh is ready to accept hijra." I was the moderator of that session and practically knew the dynamics of hijra socio-cultural realities formally. Some of their remarks were so bold, powerful, and striking, such as:

> The physically challenged development foundations arrange this program, but we are not *protibondhi* (disabled). Yet, society does not allow us to work like others, which indicates we are socially disabled. Society made us disable, so society needs to set its mind in a correct order instead of us. We are ready to contribute and serve because we are neither physically handicap nor disable.

Just before the event, one of the students asked, "Should we address a hijra as sister or brother[6]? One of the hijra participants answered:

> Can this society not think beyond him (brother) or her (sister)? A hijra can be someone's brother and/or sister. People cannot accept an incomplete male or an incomplete female in this society. We don't mind if you call me by my name. If you want to show respect, ask the person what is comfortable with her.

So, one of the significant questions were raised about how we should address them and so forth. Ironically, it also raised questions in my mind; even though the language Bangla doesn't have gender pronouns, people's thoughts are stuck within the binary. One of the journalists asked them, "what do they think about the official recognition of hijra?" A hijra activist replied, - "We are happy that the Bangladesh government acknowledged hijra, but the recognition only

[6] In Bangladeshi culture, young people do not call elders by names, they address their elder sisters (*apa*) or brothers (*bhai*) to show respect and esteem, older citizens are called uncles or aunts.

cannot change our reality until we get the opportunity to work with equal rights like a male and female". This statement shows hijra want their rights as hijra, not as women, which significantly expresses their distinctive identity from men and women.

During this conversation, I also learned that there was a problem between the government and the hijra community over the exact number of hijra population in Bangladesh. The government declared that there are only ten thousand hijra inhabit Bangladesh. In contrast, all the hijra participants claimed that there are more than one hundred and fifty thousand hijra living in Bangladesh. The government does not even count them accurately. Also, hijra participants stated that this recognition does not bring any visible change in their lives, and she continued:

> Though the government recognizes hijra as a third gender, it does not mean that it will allow a hijra to study in this university with a hijra identity. We only can get studentship here with the identity of male or female, and it is the same everywhere, then what is the point for this recognition?

By hearing all this, that teenage funeral incident re-appeared in front of me again. Ever since I was confronted with a hijra individual's funeral, my 15-year-old self-became keen on exploring their lives. What fascinates me the most is that hijra never present themselves as conventional Bengali men or women; they appear in many more different ways. Nevertheless, my interest in pursuing a postgraduate degree in anthropology continues to grow as I gradually move on to the next step. And at the same time, my inclination to work with hijra began to grow very intensely, and that interest, along with my anthropological training, made my passion turn into doing in-depth academic research on hijra in Bangladesh. However, every time I showed my passion for working on this topic, I was rejected countless times by potential academic supervisors, but the more rejection I have got, the more intense my interest in working with hijra became.

So, after meeting them at my wedding, I started to learn from them and make friends with them and begun observing them from different perspectives on how they beg on the streets, raising money from weddings and baby showers, etc., and all these features raised millions of questions in my mind. Most of these questions focused on three distinct areas that encouraged me to think critically about gender normalization and heterosexuality. First, if gender is a socio-cultural construction, how is the hijra gender constructed? Secondly, what does it mean to be a hijra? And thirdly, how does the hijra gender perform beyond the heteronormative norms and regulations?

Finally, in 2015, I chose to lead my doctoral research on hijra in Bangladesh and began composing my Ph.D. proposal. Even though everyone in my professional and personal life discouraged me from pursuing my higher studies on hijra, I did not give up and kept following my passion. One day, all of a sudden, I was watching a TV show featuring national geography called 'Taboo'. There I found an expert, Sharyn Graham Davis, who was discussing five genders in Indonesia. I was fascinated by her area of interest and looked up her name on google and figured out how to connect with her. So, I thought, I will contact her and send her my research proposal and ask whether she is interested in supervising me. I then emailed her my proposal, and she responded positively. And accordingly, I got an endorsement from the university and eventually arrived in New Zealand, and my Ph.D. journey at AUT started from that point.

Chapter One: Locating Hijra

1.1 Introduction

In addition to binary male and female, hijra have also been recognized as a separate gender in Bangladesh since 2013. Despite this recognition, they are still neglected in terms of access to basic necessities. In order to understand their sexual fluidity, gender overt play, and performativity in Bangladesh, my research tried to break down the crisis to place hijra within a single category. This thesis seeks to generate an ethnography on hijra from their living insights and further consider the multilayered nature of the hierarchical power practices among the hijra communities, their kinship network, interconnectivity with other social actors, as well as the limited perception of the non-governmental organizations (NGO) workers and the government officials over understanding hijra respectively. As a consequence of the partial knowledge about hijra, they are persistently being dehumanized in contemporary Bangladesh. Nevertheless, dehumanizing hijra is not merely a depiction of current Bangladesh; rather, it has its colonial legacy. However, this introductory chapter will locate the hijra within the South Asian history connecting to Bangladesh. In addition, to ascertain the research questions, this chapter will correspondingly discuss the significance of the hijra study.

1.1.1 Chapter Outline

Aside from the introduction, this chapter is partitioned into five sections. The first section is going to analyze the term hijra and the place they have taken in Hindu mythology. The second part will briefly locate hijra in South Asian history with the focus on Mughal Empire, British Raj, Post-Colonial Era, and independent Bangladesh. Section four will closely consider the research focus, aims, and objectives, which will, in turn, conclude by outlining the rationale of this research. In fine, the last section will shed light on the overall discussed areas of the thesis.

1.2 Analysis of the Term 'Hijra'

The term 'hijra' is initially rooted in the Semitic Arabic root '*hjr'*. The Arabic meaning of the word *'hjr'* is extensive, which usually indicates leaving one's 'tribe' and migrate to another group or escape from one place to another (Abdullah, 2018; Islam, 2019). On the contrary, Islam (2020) argues that the word hijra is derived from the Persian word *'hiz',* which means ineffective and incompetent. She also pronounced hijra as '*heejra'* or '*heejda',* which contains various alternative pronunciations and spellings such as *hijada, hijra, hijrah* (Islam, 2020). Hijra was pronounced as '*hijdā'* in Pre-colonial

Indian Bazar (Preston, 1987). However, the Arabic or Persian meanings of hijra neither reflect their reality nor precisely connect to their identity in Bangla.

In a different language-speaking region of India, hijra has also been termed as '*kinnar*' or '*mukhannis*' (Bockrath, 2003). The Puranas mention three types of devas of music and dance, such as *gandhravas* (male), *apsaras* (female), and *kinnars*, meaning the neuter and is also known as hijra in India (Vyasa & Dwaipayan 1883-1896) Nevertheless, in the Vedic Period (1500 BC - 500 BC), sex/gender has been termed as[7] *Prakriti* (nature) in South Asia, where those who are not male or female are identified as *'Tritiya-Prakriti'*[8] (third nature) and those who are *Tritiya Prakriti* called hijra (Dutta, 2012). Michelraj state that:

> The foundational work of Hindu law, the *Manu Smriti* (200 BC – 200 AD), explains the biological origins of the three sexes: "A male child is produced by a greater quantity of male seed, a female child by the prevalence of the female; if both are equal, a third-sex child or boy and girl twins are produced; if either is weak or deficient in quantity, a failure of conception results. (Michelraj, 2015, p. 17)

Hijra has also been traditionally translated as 'eunuch' in English (castrated males), or 'hermaphrodite' (refers to those who have chromosome disorder), where the anomaly of the male genitalia is the central concern. However, there are many forms present in the Bangladeshi hijra community, which I will further discuss in chapter five. However, it is generally perceived that hijra are born with male physiology who claim to be women, only a few who are born as intersex also treated as hijra and called '*vabraj*'. Some of them are even effeminate males and are typically called '*koti*', and the ones who remove their male genitals are known as '*chibry*'. Those do not remove their male genitals but perform hijra livelihood known as '*Janana*'[9] or '*Janka*'. However, all of them claim themselves as hijra, and therefore, I would suggest hijra as an umbrella term. Besides, 'Transgender' is also an 'umbrella term,' and both the terms recently used interchangeably do not precisely mean the same (Habib, 2012).

Some scholars use the term transgender to address hijra (Jami & Kamal, 2017; Khan et al., 2009; Klara, 2012; Mal, 2015; Islam, 2019). In recent years, the term transgender sometimes replaced the word third gender, which refers to individuals whose gender roles and practices cannot be identified in terms of local understandings of gender normativity (Towle & Morgan, 2002). Valentine said:

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[7] *Mahābhārata's* date of composition is unknown. However, generally thought to have been composed in the 4th century BCE or earlier. See Vyasa, Krishna-Dwaipayana, 1883–1896), The *Mahābhārata,* vol. 1; Tr. Ganguli, Kisari Mohan (The Project Gutenberg EBook

[8] *"Tritiya Prakriti"* is a Sanskrit word where Prakrit means nature which refers to the role of the third gender which includes any gender outside the dominant male and female.

[9] Some scholars spell the *Janna* as *Zanna*, but I spelt it as *janana* in this thesis as the way my participants pronounce it.

> The term transgender should be seen in the context of broader changes in US American understandings of identity politics, the body, and embodied identities in the late twentieth century [which have been] shaped by shifts in neoliberal capitalist modes of production and consumption where 'difference' can be exploited as a market niche as much as enabling new forms of subjectivity. (Valentine, 2007, p. 37)

The word transgender is a trendy signifier that has been imported recently in South Asia as a category emphasizing one's self-understanding and individuality (Roy, 2016). According to Roy (2016), the translation of hijra into transgender came into existence in India's mid-1990s with the emergence of the LGBTQ activist community and NGOs involvement concerning HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency). However, the term transgender too became very popular among the NGOs and within some hijra activists in contemporary Bangladesh. Yet, the term "transgender" is often deployed to describe all gender-variant people interchangeably in contemporary South Asia (Mokhtasr, 2020). Still, the historical, cultural, and political usage of the term hijra in South Asia and the term transgender or trans in the West are meaningfully dissimilar.

1.2.1 Hijra in Mythology

Some researchers express that hijra in the South Asian context are also integrated into many forms in Hindu mythology (Aggarwal, 2017; Ahmad, 2010; Bockrath, 2003; Habib, 2013, 2014; Nanda, 2003; Reddy, 2003; Wilson, 2006). For centuries, the stereotypes myths about hijra have shaped how mainstream society would perceive them (Jami & Kamal, 2017). In *Ramayana & Mahabharat*, the mythical presence of hijra is likewise found. Dutta (2012) mentioned that in *Ramayana*, Lord Rama started living in the forest and was banished from the kingdom for 14 years; when he was leaving the city, many followers were following him. Suddenly he turned around and ordered all the 'men and women' to return to the town. However, among his followers, those who were hijra did not go back as Rama ordered only men and women. So, the hijra stayed at that place and were waiting for him until he returns. Rama was impressed with their loyalty and endorsed them with the spiritual power to bestow blessings on people on auspicious occasions like marriage and childbirth. Accordingly, hijra have long been performing their traditional practices such as *cholla*[10] and *badhai* with the mythological belief that they have the spiritual power of blessing and curse. Besides, hijra follow many other myths and religious rites prevalent in Hindu mythology:

> ……hijra could furthermore be interpreted as tirthas, or a physical and spiritual crossing place to deity, myth, and power. Their destiny is conceived of as the working out of a particular

[10] By following hijra traditional livelihood, hijra use to go collect money from local vendors, market, and shopkeepers, which is called as *'cholla.'*

> svadharma, the spiritual life task of the individual who is seeking moksa, a cornerstone of Indian belief which is supportive of this institutionalized gender variance. (Sepie, 2009, p. 2)

On the contrary, Reddy (2005) mentioned that hijra were identified as '*sannyasi*' (ascetic) is a complex figure in Indian mythology, and she said:

> I argue that hijra invoke and manipulate popular cultural symbols of (Hindu) "tradition" and mythology to legitimize their basis for (political) authority and reinforce the very constructions of sexual, religious, and "moral good" that anchors them to their marginal position in contemporary India. (Reddy, 2003, p. 172)

Though the hijra community in India worships the goddess called Bahuchara Mata (A Hindu Goddess), hijra are not identified as a spiritual being in Bangladeshi public discourse. Other than that, none of the hijras I have encountered in the last ten years have claimed that religiosity played a significant role in them joining hijra community.

Figure 1:This picture is used for worship in hijra rituals (MATA, 2009)

Serena Nanda's *Neither Man nor Woman* (1999) offers an ethnographic approach considering the social location of hijra in the Indian sub-continent. Nanda looks at the history of the cultural performativity of hijra as devotees of the *Bahuchara Mata*, and she also discusses the significance of their position in the Hindu religion. She also paints a contrasting picture with Western religious ideas that separate men and women by excluding the two biological sexes. Nanda argues that the essential feature of hijra culture is their devotion to *Bahuchara Mata,* for whom the emasculation is carried out. These testimonies with the Mother Goddess are the source of mythological beliefs in their spiritual power to claim and curse or bless hijra for their special place in Indian society.

On the other hand, in Pakistan, hijra used to connect themselves as eunuchs of Muslim rulers' royal courts, and they are known as '*khwajasiras*' (Alizai, Doneys, & Doane, 2017). Jami and Kamal (2017), argue that hijra in Pakistan propagate their identification with such 'myths' where they are appointed as caretakers of a holy place such as Al-Masjid an-Nabawi (Mosque of Muhammad at Madina) Kaba, the mosque of Jerusalem, and Madina. Those 'myths' portray hijra as holy and pious, which gives them the opportunity to interact with society and justify their social roles.

In Bangladesh, some hijra usually believe in two mythical characters named Mayaji[11] and Tara Moni[12]. There is a myth behind why the hijra are being tormented from the consequences that happened to them today. This myth has different oral versions, and the elderly hijra has described it in various forms. However, the message I have got from different versions of this myth is as given below –

> The myths of Mayaji and Taramoni are very prevalent among the hijra community. Notably, the folklore of Mayaji is predominant in Bangladesh. She was thought to have spiritual power. She was given spirituality considering her honesty, asexuality, and devotion. She also had her disciple named Taramoni. Both of them, in fact, are accepted to have the magical power of blessing and curse. It is said in a story that Taramoni blessed an infertile queen so that her blessing would conceive her with a child. Then the queen was happy, hoping to have a child, and promised her that she would give anything that Taramoni wanted without any hesitation if she got pregnant. A few months later, the queen got pregnant and gave birth to a charming price. Taramoni came back to the king's palace after a few years and saw the young prince; she had fallen in love with him. As the queen promised her to give anything if they had any children, she blatantly asked them to give her the prince. The king and queen kept their promise and handed the prince over to Taramoni. By using her magical power, Tara Moni turned the prince into a garland. When she returned home with the prince, both of them sat down to eat; at whatever point Tara served food, Mayaji found that the two plates were mysteriously broke into three. At that point, Maya set the food back and reserved; however, this made no contrast. Then she understood that her devotee had done something mischievous; there would be someone else in the room. To castigate the wrongdoing of Taramoni, Maya shook with outrage and requested that the earth split, and immediately the earth split, and she entered into the hole to get vanished. Promptly the earth aired out, and Maya disappeared from this world. While she was going into the opening to disappear from this world, Taramni tried to grab her hair and tried to explain why she had deceived her, but Mayaji did not listen to her. She then cursed her, saying that you will lose all your magical and spiritual power in the near

[11] Hossain (2013) addresses the name Maya Ji which is usually an Indian style to address; however, I write as Mayaji because many times I cross-checked with my participants, and they insist me to address the name as Mayaji or Maiji instead of Maya Ji.

[12] Hossain (2013) separated the name Taramoni into two words as Tara and Moni wrote the names Tara and Moni as two separate words, but my participant encouraged me to combine these two words as one - Taramani.

> future and live a miserable life in view of your untrustworthiness and double-dealing. From today, you and the future hijra generation will no longer be pure and asexual. Therefore, all the hijra have to get rid of their genitalia, will not be able to gain respect, and will beg to live in the future.

Hijra in Bangladesh believe that this myth is the reason behind their downfall from their previous position. However, my research does not focus on the mythology or the religious practices of the hijra community. Despite the fact that hijra in Bangladesh worship *Bahuchara Mata,* most of them see themselves as Muslims and are interested in practicing Islamic rituals (Snigdha, 2019). However, this study argues in this light that the mythical presence of hijra or India-centric ideas about them is not the factual way to understand hijra in Bangladesh.

1.3 Locating Hijra in South Asian history

The outer society generally regarded hijra to be intersex, sexually incapable, or individuals who remove their genitalia by undergoing castration (Hossain, 2013). Furthermore, a hijra is a person who is born with a penis or with ambiguous genitalia with a purported feminine attitude. Predominant literature in the Indian hijra scholarship phenotypically defines individuals as hijra who renounce sexual desire by removing their physical genitals to "reborn" as hijra wearing female clothing (Hall, 1997; Jaffrey, 1996; Nanda, 1999; Reddy, 2000). According to Hossain (2013), a hijra is a publicly institutionalized subculture of male-bodied feminine men who secretly desire masculine men by identifying themselves as non-men. Hossain (2018) again states that hijra in Bangladesh simultaneously perform heterosexual and masculine roles in their household. Furthermore, he criticized India-centric hijra scholarships and proposed de-Indianization to distinguish hijra in Bangladesh. He asserts:

> The India-centricity in hijra studies works to circumscribe new epistemological and analytical possibilities in terms of how the hijra are conceived and interpreted. The India-centric approach not only reifies our understanding of the hijra but also perpetuates the spatio-intellectual hegemony of India in South Asian studies. (Hossain, 2018, p. 321)

I partially agree with Hossain that the Indian hegemonic hijra scholarship recognizes the concept of hijra in Bangladesh and that it serves the new epistemological and analytical possibilities of hijra in various contexts. However, the method does not indicate that Bangladeshi hijra can be understood without examining the effects of Indian scholarship since both have quite similar roots. Again, to perceive hijra in Bangladesh, it is also not possible to ignore the historical, geopolitical, ritualistic, and political connection between Indian and Bangladeshi hijra communities. Furthermore, the British

colonial legacy has a significant effect both in Indian and Bangladesh hijra regarding their dehumanization process, which will be further specified in chapter nine.

Nevertheless, the existing literature on hijra in Bangladesh is limited; most of the conventional studies on them are derived from scholarly writings from Indian contexts. However, distinct cultural differences emerged in terms of language, religion, and cultural practices between India and Bangladesh. Nevertheless, the ritualistic practices such as '*achla'*[13], '*baraiya'*[14], and hierarchical community culture such as *'guru-chela'* relation, 'kinship' both are strikingly similar in the Bangladeshi and Indian hijra community. Be that as it may, it not possible to understand hijra without the colonial legacy; therefore, Indian hijra scholarship is fairly relevant to perceive them in Bangladesh, even though hijra in Bangladesh are significantly different from India in terms of religious practices, public acceptance, employment, as well as factors related to their basic rights. Yet, in both countries, hijra are meaningfully connected to each other through communal practices, networking, body modification surgery, and the use of power practices within their communities, which will be discussed in chapters five and seven.

Bangladesh has a long history of being colonized by various nations until it got freedom as an autonomous country in 1971. The country was under British colonial rule for 200 years (the colonial period of the British Empire in India officially ended in 1948) and was a part of the Indian subcontinent before the India-Pakistan partition took place in 1947. As I mentioned above, hijra have also been located in Vedic literature and also have been outlined in the Mughal period in history (Taparia, 2011). They were traced as 'eunuchs', or *'Khwajasarais',* in European travel literature in the sixteenth century (Hinchey, 2019). These '*Khwajasarais*' or eunuch slaves performed highly valuable roles such as influential political advisors, administrators, warriors, and guardians of the harem (Alizai Doneys, & Doane, 2017; Hinchy, 2019). Around 1780, James Forbes, a Bombay merchant, mentioned that there is a considerable number of 'hermaphrodites' in India who wore "the habit of a female and the turban of a man" (Forbes, 1834, p. 359). Preston (1987) suggested that these 'hermaphrodites' might considers as hijra. However, Gannon (2009) argues that several historical references could be found about eunuchs before the British Raj, but those eunuch slaves cannot be considered what we now refer to as the hijra. The following table will give a quick review of how hijra have been located throughout history and the social position of hijra during that period.

[13] '*achla'* is one of the prominent rituals among the hijra communities, where a hijra took her discipleship from her guru where guru puts a scarf or the last part of her *sharee* (a traditional Bangladeshi women cloth, which does not have any stitches) upon her chela's head and declare every one that she is going to take her as chela from today.
[14] '*bariya*' is another hijra community where a guru arranges a get to gather to celebrate her *chelas* the new life journey on the twelfth day after emasculation.

Table 1. Locating hijra and hijra social status in history

Period	Locating hijra in History	Social Status of hijra
Hijra in Ancient India (1500 – c. 500 BCE)	Hijra have been located in different religious scripture and Vedic literature, such as *Mahãbãrata*, *Ramayana*, and *Kamasutra*. Hijra also have been located as *Tritiya- Prakriti*, or a "third nature," in the Vedic period (Dutta,2012).	Hijra were treated as asexual, and "sacred powers are contingent upon their asexuality" (Nanda, 1986, p. 35). Hijra has also been treated as a spiritual being who holds the power of blessing and curse.
Hijra in Moghul perid (1527 to 1857)	Eunuchs have been historically traced to the 16th century Mughal Empire (Preston, 1987; Goel, 2016; Newport, 2018). Taparia (2011) argues that eunuchs bought into India along with their masters for Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal empire. These eunuchs and hijra have some similarities and dissimilarities in terms of rituals, kinship, and practices. However, Eunuchs and hijra were marge together and are known as '*khwajasarais*' and hijra because of the historical and political performances, which will further be detailed in chapter nine.	Hijra were considered extremely loyal, intelligent, and reliable (Alizai Doneys, & Doane, 2017; Gosh, 2018; Michelraj, 2015). They were also referred to as '*khawjasaras*,' or ' *khwajasarais,*' whose prime job was to protect the royal harems and to be confidantes of the Mughal rulers Gannon, 2009; Goel, 2016; Hinchy, 2014; 2019). They were in charge of administration and also involved in military and diplomatic affairs, as confidantes, advisors, and warriors (Chatterjee, 1999, 2000, 2012; Chatterjee, & Eaton, 2006; Taparia, 2011).
`	British colonial sate uniformly criminalized and categorized the non-normative, nonbinary, and gender and sexual minorities under the term 'eunuch' (Hossain, 2020). Several court cases involving hijra between the 1850s and 1860 show the eunuch panic among the colonial officials, and finally, they	Hijra was represented as 'child kidnappers', 'immoral groups', 'criminals', and 'habitual sodomites. They have also been started to treat as 'sexually immoral'. Hijra, *jananas* were treated as 'suspect eunuchs' category—these categories were brought under police surveillance

	declared hijra as a 'criminal' through CTA (Criminal Tribes Act) in 1871 (Gairola, 2020; Hinchy, 2014, 2019, 2020; Safdar, 2020). In 1884, they incorporated the 377 acts to prohibit 'unnatural sex', which was also used as a tool to prevent sex between men and hijra.	through registrations (Hinchy, 2014; 2019). Hijra were treated as a 'breach of public decency' because of their verbal obscenity and genital exposure (Hall 1997; Preston 1987).
Hijra in Pakistan [Bangladesh was once a part of Pakistan and known as East Pakistan] (1947 to 1971)	The Penal Code's defined legal provisions remain in post-colonial (Gandee, 2018; Pamment, 2010). Naqvi & Mujtaba (1997) mentioned that Ayub Khan made a decision in the early 1960s to ban all forms of hijra activities in Pakistan, and in response to that decision, members of hijra communities sat in front of the house of Ayub Khan and complained to his mother about her son's decision. The ban was then revoked, but the hijra became socially stigmatized, deprived, and weak. However, the 377 acts remained the same even though it was repealed in 1949, maintaining a skeptical view of marginalized sexuality and nonbinary gender identities in post-colonial Pakistan and its judicial system.	Khan (2014) states that the Pakistani government categorically ignored hijra after independence. Extreme social exclusion bounded hijra to joined in the sex trade (Abdullah et al., 2012). From 1947 to 1971, there was much political tension going on in East Pakistan (Contemporary Bangladesh). Thus, historically, the social position of hijra in East Pakistan could not have been located at that time. However, according to some elderly hijra, many of them migrated to India at that time, some of them joined as '*tarikana*' (illegal bars) dancers and started begging, some hijra joined brothels, some took refuge in refugee camps, and very few in 1971 joined the freedom fights as freedom fighters.

1.3.1 Hijra in the Pre-British period

The concept of "*Tritiya Prakriti" was* an integral part of the ancient Vedic, folklore, epic Puranic literature in Hindu Mythology which confirmed the presence and acceptance of hijra as a third sex in ancient India as well as in contemporary South Asia (Chakrapani, Newman & Shunmngan 2020; Das, 2010; Gaikwad, 2020; Kalra, 2012; Saria, 2019; Shukla & Shadangi, 2019; Tiwari, 2014). However, hijra are also cited in many studies as eunuchs, where their presence in the Indian subcontinent was

found in the Delhi Sultanate between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Alpers, 2003; Bano, 2006; Chatterjee & Eaton, 2006; Dalziel, 2016; Eaton, 2019; Eraly, 2015; Taparia, 2011; Welch, Keshani & Bain, 2002). Those eunuchs "were brought into India along with their masters, who were responsible for building big Islamic empires, namely the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal empire" (Taparia, 2011, p.170).

1.3.2 Who are Eunuchs?

Several scholars use the term eunuch as a synonym for the word hijra, which refers to castrated men or hermaphrodite, highlighting the sexual characteristics of both men and women (Chaudhary & Shah, 2009; Hall & O'Donovan, 2014; Khan, 2016; Mithani & Burfat, 2003; Pande, 2018; Reddy, 2003; Rehan, Chaudhary & Shah, 2009; Taparia, 2011). Historical studies also cite eunuch as 'eunuch slaves' (Tapira, 2011) in the medieval courtly Islamic tradition (Mamluk Sultanate and Ottoman Empire); a few historians also claim eunuch slavery by no means an invention of medieval or Islamic tradition (Kosambi, 1975). In contrast, Chatterjee & Guha (1999) argued that it was a common notion to treat hijra as slaves, that in medieval India, eunuchs were like a social capital to their masters. However, they can also be found historically in non-Islamic (Byzantine, Roman, and Chinese) empires (Reddy, 2006), but their roles were different. In China, for example, eunuchs worked in court services, but candidates who were hired for a court job had to show their preserved genitals as proof of complete rationality. In China, eunuchs usually acted as guardians and servants of women, and during the Ming period, eunuchs were visible in virtually every part of the government and held important positions. They also used to work in court services, but candidates who were hired for court services had to show their genitals as proof of total ablation (Anderson, 2019; Crawford, 1962; 2016, 2018; Dale, 2018; Kutcher, 2018).

1.3.3 Eunuch/hijra in the Mughal empire

During the Mughal empire (1556–1707), the eunuchs were essential parts of the aristocratic culture (Deora, 2020; Gandhi, 2020; Hamzić, 2017; Hinchy, 2017, 2019; Lal, 2017). They even played important roles as part of the administration and tax collection process (Ahmed, Yasin & Umair, 2014; Bose; 2014; Ismail & Shah, 2018; Jaffrey, 1996; Khan, 2019; Luttme & Singhal, 2014; Nanda, 2015; Taparia, 2011). An illustration of eunuchs is depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Eunuchs in Mughal empire (INDIAN,2013)

Several studies have shown that during the Mughal period in medieval India, eunuchs were not only in charge of administrative affairs, but they also controlled diplomatic and military affairs as traitors, warriors, and advisers. (Chatterjee, 2018; Dalrymple, 2004; 2009; Gibbons, 2015; Hinchy, 2014; Lal, 2017; Nanda, 2015; Reddy, 2006; Tapaira, 2011).

1.3.4 The role of Eunuch in the Mughal Harem

When the Mughal came into India, they built their harem and recruited eunuchs known as '*khwajasarais*,' which means master of the palace or harem (Hamzić 2015;2019; Hinchy, 2017; Nath, 1995). K.S Lal, in his book *"The Mughal Harem,"* states that - "The term Mughal harem conjures up a vision of a sequestered place ensconcing beautiful forms in mysterious magnificence…. It was meant to be a bright place, an abode of the young and beautiful, an arbor of pleasure and retreat for joy." (Lal, 1988, p. 19). Figure 3 shows wives and eunuchs.

Figure 3: Senior Wives Playing Chaupar in the Court Zenana with Eunuchs (INDIAN,2013)

Another comparative announcement was made in the book of the historian Richard, *'The Mughal Empire'*, he said, "Ideally, the harem provided a respite, a retreat for the nobleman and his closest male

relatives—a retreat of grace, beauty, and order designed to refresh the males of the household". (Richards, 1995, p. 62).

Those Mughal harems were influential in preserving their culture and in building effective administrative services. For example, Lal (1988) and Richards (1995) has argued that the Mughal harem was a place of retreat, joy, and care, whereas Pearson (1984) and Lal (2017) has mentioned that the Mughal harem was a cynical setting for women where there is an absolute absence of care, rather, it was a place for politics and punishment. Though there is a complex discussion on the positionality of women in the harem, in the case of eunuchs/'*khwajasarais*', it was evident that the harem was highly accessible for hijra, and they performed significant roles in Mughal Empire (Hamzić 2019; Jamal, 2019; Lal 2017; Tandon 2019). Many male-born castrated youths as *khwajasarais* were given as gifts or sold to the Mughal Empires (Hamzić, 2019).

1.3.5 Eunuchs in Administrative Roles as *'Nazir'* in the Mughal Empire

Eunuchs/hijra or *khwajasarais* were typically working as the harem's inner gatekeeper, but in the later Mughal era, many eunuchs were found to perform diverse functions within the imperial household other than the harem guardian. Those *khwajasarais* held various positionalities along with the gender-sex continuum and were not treated differently based on their gender identity (Hamzić, 2017; 2019). Some scholars mentioned that in the early days of the Mughal harem, all types of genders, including *khwajasarais* and hijra, could communicate without prejudice (Bano, 2008; Hamzić, 2019; Mushtaqi, Siddiqi & Siddiqi, 2002). For example, during the reign of Emperor Babur (the founder of the Mughal empire), he introduced a new post and recruited a castrated superintendent as "*nazir* named Amber" (Hamzić, 2019, p. 38). Bano (2008) claims that several generations later, the title *nazir* was also used for those who had undergone castration. According to Kidwai (2000), no evidence was found that non-binary people went through discrimination during the Mughal Empire of pre-colonial India, and he noted that those non-binary relationships were often celebrated in public (Khan, 2017). See figures 4 and 5 for images of eunuchs.

Figure 4: Khawas Khan, Eunuch of Bahadur Shah(Nicolais, 2013)

Figure 5: Eunuch Jawid Khan (Sobaan, 2019)

Hinchy (2017) mentioned that those eunuchs/*khwajasarais* were also politically substantial for the government officials, proprietors, military commanders, and intelligencers as well. They also

performed diverse duties both inside and outside the harem and were appointed for multiple government administration and estate business (Pande, 2018). In this way, the hijra's positionality during the Mughal Empire was vibrant as well as wasn't perceived within the gender-sex continuum.

1.3.6 Eunuch, *Khwajasarai*s and Hijra

There were some differences and similarities between *khawajasarais* and hijra. According to Khan (2017), while '*Khwaja Sara'*[15] used to dressed and lived like men and held important positions in pre-colonial India's courtly culture. On the contrary, hijra used to dress and presented themselves as women. She also mentioned that *khwajasarais* uses to hold better status than hijra. By referring to Preston (1987), she states-"Despite having a lower status than *Khwaja Sara*, hijra had also been awarded *sanads* (land deeds) and cash stipends by the various states in which they lived" (Khan, 2017, p. 1286).

Khan (2017) also argued that the distinction between *khwajasarais* and hijra communities collapsed because of the abolishment of their courtly way of life, whereas hijra continued their way of living and ability to manage to survive because their patrons were ordinary people, not kings and aristocrats (Khan, 2017). Hence, *khwajasarais* communities also became a part of hijra tradition, and they merge together, and he proclaims that,

> Although a few *Khwaja Sara* are born intersex, the vast majority who join *Khwaja Sara* communities do so as biological males who choose a dress as females or who are in various stages of transition from male to female. Many use burlesque enactments of femininity, particularly when they serve as performers at birth celebrations and at weddings. Dressed in female attire, they confer blessings to the male child during *badhai* celebrations in return for gifts and monetary rewards, in the process openly flaunting the conventions of 'respectable' femininity. (Khan, 2017, p. 1289)

There are also some similarities and connections between *khwajasarais* and the hijra tradition. For example, the *khwajasarais* believed in a hierarchical discipleship lineage system like hijra hierarchical fictive kinship (Hinchy, 2014). In the *khwajasarais* discipleship lineage tradition, the cultural competence and skills passed down from one generation to another, where the senior *khwajasarais* were in charge of the upbringing and disciplining their devotees. Many scholars have drawn a link between the two groups because of those similarities between the *khwajasarais* and the hijra (Gannon, 2009; Gupta, 2019; Nanda, 2015; Pande, 2018). Kira Hall asserts that,

[15]*Khwaja Sara* is addressed as *khwajasarais* by many scholars like Hinchy, 2017; Hamzić, 2017; 2019; Lal 2017) Therefore, the term *khwajasarais* is used in the rest of the discussion.

> During the early 1800s, the status allotted to the court eunuch was mapped linguistically onto the 'natural' hijra; that is, the term *khoja,* a derivative of khwaja, came to represent hermaphrodites. In addition to court eunuchs, and both were defined in opposition to the more vulgar, artificially created hijra. Later in the same century, the more prestigious term khoja was, for the most part, lost on Hindi-speaking society, and natural eunuchs, as well as castrated eunuchs, were conflated under the single term hijra. (Hall, 1997, p. 436)

Several scholars also draw a line between eunuchs and hijra similar to Kira hall, and some of them have used the term as one (Ringrose 2007; Kalra 2012; Ahmed et al. 2014), but history has a distorted conception of when and how the term eunuch was merged with the word hijra in colonial India (Hall,1997; Hamzić, 2019; Hinchy, 2017; Hinchy, 2019). Similarly, Taparia (2011) has discussed historically how those eunuchs as emasculated bodies constructed different meanings and embodied in a new form of social roles and identify as hijra. She also claims that those eunuchs entered India during the Mughal empire with their masters; after the demolishment of the Mughal empire, they affirmed their identity with the hijra community. Moreover, during the Mughal empire, hijra did not feel the necessity to construct themselves through Hindu mythologies and portrayed themselves as a part of Hindu religious culture. Nanda (1999) though defined hijra as a Hindu religious category, also mentioned that many of her participants were nostalgic about their honor, dignity, and respect for hijra during the Mughal empire. It might be assumed that, after the end of the Mughal empire, hijra shaped their identity and construct themselves as a religious category in India. Now I am going to discuss why those the eunuchs were seemed problematic to the British colonial government and the reason behind the Criminal Tribal Act 1871.

1.3.7 The Perception of 'Eunuch'/ Hijra in British Raj

At the end of the Islamic courtly traditions, the end of the harem, and the changing socio-political environment in British colonial India made an enormous change in *khwajasarais* and hijra's lives. The *khwajasarais and eunuchs* were becoming an unmanageable subject to the British officials as they did not fit into the colonial expectations of gender and sexuality (Hinchy, 2014, 2019). Besides, masculinity was a prime concern for the British Empire to establish good governance in colonial India. It was evident from the British colonial officials' documents that the company officials' treated eunuchs and hijra as violent and unrestrained forms of masculinity. For them, the failure of masculinity was as significant as the failure of the administration. Hence, articulating the definitions of appropriate and unappropriated forms of governance in terms of masculine behaviors was crucial for the British East India company officials (Hinchy, 2014). Thus, the British officials perceived hijra and *khwajasarais* as ferocious hyper-masculine figures in Muslim despots. While eunuchs or hijra were pictured as asexual in the Mughal period, but British colonial officials labeled them as hypersexual (Alter, 2018; Hinchy, 2014; Mohan 2018; Newport, 2018;). Also, the *khwajasarais* and

hijra kinship and discipleship relationships were classified as deviant to the colonial officials. According to the colonial officials, the relations between *khwajasarais* and hijra were neither family kin nor a relationship of dependence; instead, their relationships were either hypersexual or criminal.

1.3.8 Hijra Treated as 'Habitual Sodomites' in the British Colonial Era

The British colonial authority also treats hijra as 'habitual sodomites'[16]. The term habitual sodomites refer to hijra as 'men' who were 'addicted' to have sex with other men. The British heteronormative eyes failed to classify hijra beyond the gender binary, sexual relations; they also imported a legal culture of sexuality and a code of sexual morality (Bhaskaran, 2002). In the nineteenth century, the marker of sexual differences in Britain was clear out in the name of 'effeminacy'[17]. The term 'effeminate' is the state of behaving, looking like, or having qualities similar to a woman and is drawn excessively towards the company with women and neglected his physical and martial accomplishments. By referring to Oscar Wilde, Tosh (2005) states that "Effeminacy was the primary signifier of homosexuality which highly represented the homosexuals as harmful, disgraceful and it turned them into a threatening 'other' in Britain during 1800 to 1914" (Tosh, 2005, p. 338).

According to Hinchy (2019), there is an interconnection between this British urban context and colonial India because when the effeminate 'sodomite' and a colonial pathology of the cross-dressing emerged in India, at the same time the male effeminacy was gradually increased in Britain, which was associated with sexual deviance. Some scholars also think it is not only the transgressive way of their living that made them a colonial subject of concern and suspicious to British raj but hijra's affiliation with the former empire.

The following section will discuss how eunuchs have been perceived in the pre-British era and the reason for dehumanization during the British raj. I will also shed light on the relationship between two terms, 'eunuch' and 'hijra.' In the 1850s, the British government 'discovered' the hijra and enacted laws to monitor and control them under the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) in 1871 (Hinchy, 2014). Moreover, this Act has a significant influence on historically dehumanizing the hijra, which continued in contemporary Bangladesh. According to Hinchy (2014), in nineteenth-century India, they were seen as a social category and gender deviants, but later they were erased from the public space but at the beginning of the 1870s British attempts to erase their social visibility and gender identity from

[16] The term habitual sodomites refer to hijra as 'men' who were 'addicted' to having sex with other men. According to Hinchy (2019), there is an interconnection between this British urban context and colonial India because when the effeminate 'sodomite' and a colonial pathology of the cross-dressing emerged in India, at the same time the male effeminacy was gradually increased in Britain, which was associated with sexual deviance.

[17] The term 'effeminate' referred to such men who loved to be drawn excessive company with a woman and neglected his physical and martial accomplishments (Cohan, 2014).

public space through the prohibition of performance and transvestism[18]. Thus, the historical and colonial legacy for the hijra is significant to understand them in the Bangladeshi context, which I will further discuss in chapter nine. The British Criminal Tribes Act 1871 interdiction the castration and declare hijra as criminals subjecting them to compulsory registration, strict monitoring, and other forms of social stigmatization (Abdullah, 2018). The abominable Penal code 377 was adopted by the British rules and is still practiced in Bangladesh's constitution. Section 377 of the penal code in 42 British colonies prohibits anal sex between same-sex men or women. Unfortunately, like many other colonized countries, Bangladesh also adapted the longstanding 'British' imposed law after its independence under the same penal code number, which I will further discuss in chapter nine. According to the Ministry of Law's website in Bangladesh the Section 377 states:

> Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with [imprisonment] for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine. Penetrations are sufficient to constitute the carnal intercourse necessary to the offense described in this section. The ambit of Section 377 extends to any sexual union involving penile insertion. Thus, even consensual heterosexual acts such as fellatio and anal penetration may be punishable under this law. (Ministry of Law, 2010)

Nevertheless, the law actually exists very much in pen and paper, and no lawsuit has yet been found against this law, and so it has been misrepresented, misinterpreted against sexual minorities (Abdullah, 2018). The existence of the code is not only archaic, but it is also a major obstacle to tackle the significant challenges facing non-heteronormative identities in Bangladesh.

1.3.9 Hijra Recognition as a Separate Gender in 2013

In November 2013, the Bangladesh government officially recognized hijra but generally considered them to be the third gender, not male or female. The current Prime Minister of Bangladesh (as of 2021), Sheikh Hasina, declared hijra as "third gender" on official documents issued by the government at a cabinet meeting on Monday, 11th November 2013. The new government policy of Bangladesh secures hijra with the right to identify themselves as a distinct gender category from the male-female gender binary on all official documents, including passports (Abdullah, 2018). However, the 377 act remains the same, and hijra are still struggling to get their fundamental rights, such as access to education, shelter, and medical facilities.

[18] Transvestism is the practice of dressing in a manner traditionally associated with the opposite sex. In some cultures, transvestism is practiced for religious, traditional, or ceremonial reasons.

According to the government, there are 10,000 hijra in Bangladesh, but the hijra claim that the number could be as significant as 50,000 (Ahsan & Amin, 2015). However, the majority are not privileged with any mainstream jobs. Their livelihood includes traditional hijra activities such as singing and dancing and blessing newborn babies to exchange money. Hijra also have a tradition to demand food from marketplaces, called *'cholla/bazar tola'*,[19] and the perspective of asking for food from markets is not associated with the traditional begging (Ahsan & Amin, 2015). Because of their semi-sacred aura and ambiguous gender position, hijra can grasp special considerations from general people mixed with fear (Ahsan & Amin, 2015). Still, the prospects of this traditional livelihood gradually got deteriorated in the society, and the hijra are now exclusively dependent on extorting money from others.

Hence, Hossain (2017) argues that the hijra subculture is associated with a lower-class location in the Bangladeshi social structure, and those who join in the hijra community are originated from working-class backgrounds. Therefore, he claims, "hijra is not just any person, but particularly those of the working class, that comprise the hijra" (Hossain, 2017, p. 1421). Aziz and Azhar (2019) state:

> It is notable that the hijra who engaged in traditional livelihoods for the community, such as badhai, often hail from lower socio-economic castes while the hijra who work in non-profit settings often hail from higher socio-economic castes. (Aziz & Azhar, 2019, p.8)

In line with this point with Aziz & Azhar, I would like to argue in light of the fact that placing hijra in a working-class category will not change their socio-economic condition, and I have received similar opinions from my participants in this regard. In contrast, the term 'class' from the Marxist point of view may not be appropriate to classify hijra in Dhaka city. From the Marxist view, 'class' is determined by the social relations of production, where Weber conceptualizes on a class-based form as a general position within the market. Weber (2018) outlines "class situation" as the sharing of a "specific causal component of life chances" (2018 [1922], p. 927). The term "life chances" might be understood by Giddens's idea where he mentioned that 'the chances an individual has for sharing in the socially created economic or cultural "goods" that typically exist in any given society' (Giddens, 1973, pp. 130–131). However, the sense of 'class' has been practiced differently among the hijra, especially after getting the acknowledgment from the government; a hijra is trying to reconstruct herself diversely. Some of my participants do not agree that they have been a part of the 'working class'. They claim their social network, activism, and the utilization of social and cultural capital allow them to access the status of 'middle-classness' in Bangladesh, which is discussed in chapter five.

[19] *'cholla'* also interchangeably use as '*bazar tola'* among the hijra

1.4 Research Focus

This is an ethnographic study that explores the critical aspect of hijra gender and sexuality in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This research also explores what they mean to be and what happens after getting the government recognition of hijra. It applied the postmodern research methodology to explore the critical aspect of hijra gender and sexuality. It uses the Foucauldian notion of sexuality to explore hijra sexuality and Butler's idea of gender performativity to analyze hijra gender performativity in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It is also tied to critically explore the historical and colonial legacy of the hijra dehumanization process even after getting their recognition.

1.4.1 Research Questions

Q1: What it means to be hijra from their lived experience?

Q2: How do hijra negotiate with others in a heteronormative society?

Q3: How do the Bangladesh government and NGO workers perceive hijra?

1.4.2 Rationale and Significance of the Research

By referring to Lourdes Hunter, Susan Stryker said that "every breath a trans person takes is an act of revolution" (quoted in Stryker & Currah, 2016, p. 160). She also states that around the world, every trans individual has suffered multiple socio-political forms of structural violence and struggle regardless of their color of skin, class of origin, income level, citizenship status, education level, or professional attainment. Trans individuals are also perceived and categorized by others as "transgender," limiting the scope of trans individuals' potentiality and exposes trans groups to a higher risk of vulnerability. Transgender discrimination and their identity crisis are not limited to Bangladesh; instead, it is a global phenomenon and has contextual characteristics. Because of the complex nature of the situation, it is impossible to homogenize transgender people's struggles. For example, in America and Australia, access to an appropriate toilet is the current debate, whereas transgender has been acknowledged as a separate identity in Egypt and Iran. Still, their sexual orientation always remains subject to scrutiny. Even though the Bangladesh government recognized hijra as a different gender, they still face a different socio-economic reality, interlinked with power and various discursive practices. The majority of hijra in Bangladesh live in separate communities, and those communities have hierarchical systems that shape their identity (Hossain, 2012). Therefore, this research seeks to develop a contextual framework of hijra studies, which will open a space to discuss the significance of their identity's contextual construction. Moreover, critical insight into the

construction of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh will contribute to make border line between transgender and hijra studies.

Firstly, this research is substantial in light of its academic contribution. Hijra are identified as third gender where an individual is not compatible with their assigned biological sex and gender (Wormgoor, 2010). Serrano (2007) defines transgender based on her concept of "subconscious sex," where a transgender person follows their innate drive, and the gender identity is shaped by their desires, beliefs, and experiences. Johnson (1997) also pays keen attention to the aspects of desire in the formation of gender subjectivities, but whether transgender identity is only an issue of a person's desire or social construction is an important theoretical question. The recent theoretical debate in transgender studies is confined to psychoanalysis and the problem of the heteronormative concept of gender. However, society, social norms and spaces, social roles, livelihoods, and performative gender discourse play a vital role in forming trans identity, which is relatively less addressed in current transgender discussions. Therefore, studying hijra by exploring social constructions and gender performative identity will be a theoretical contribution to transgender studies.

Secondly, this thesis discusses the role of social inclusion of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh. The existing male-female binary conception of gender creates a boundary that restricts thinking about gender diversity and gender fluidity even though they were accepted as a third gender category almost a decade ago. Therefore, the polarization of sex and gender into a "binary system" has primarily erected a space of marginalization of Hijra in Bangladesh. They challenge the idea of gender as fixed and necessarily allied with hetero normativity. When the male-female gender binary category is labeled as "normal", anyone beyond this binary is challenged to maintain their identity in mainstream society. They have often been stigmatized by the heterosexist norms of the social order (Godwin, 2010). In Bangladesh, a hijra is feared, seen as taboo, and is considered "social misfits" (Safa, 2016). They are deprived of opportunities to obtain a formal education, employment and are frequently denied the right to seek general medical care (Khan et al., 2009). They are the target of prejudice in everyday life and experience discrimination in the provision of public services, including education, health, and employment services (Habib, 2012). Social ignorance and stigma make them visibly invisible individuals in Bangladeshi society. The majority of hijra have experienced harassment and have struggled to gain the same rights as other citizens of Bangladesh (Safa, 2016). By observing their everyday lives and analyzing their narratives, this project will explore the complexity of categorizing hijra, the struggle of understanding their gender and sexuality within the conventional discourse. Furthermore, it will also bring forth the incompetent perceptions of government and NGO officials about the hijra along with the hegemonic colonial legacy of dehumanizing them. This project also produces an understanding of the hijra to enhance their social acceptability to ensure their rights. Consequently, this project will enrich the ongoing discussion of hijra gender and sexuality in

Bangladesh by gathering empirical evidence for hijra advocacy that might help the government and NGOs to ensure hijra citizenship and human rights.

1.5 Thesis Structure and Chapter overview

By analyzing the term hijra, this chapter briefly discussed the community's mythological beliefs in Bangladesh. This chapter simultaneously locates them in history from the ancient Vedic literature to contemporary Bangladesh. In addition to mentioning research questions, it also outlines the research theme and its significance.

Chapter Two

The second chapter will review the literature on hijra in Bangladesh. Research and academic literature on hijra have been available in Bangladesh since the 1990s, but most of the scholars who have studied them have focused on the community's HIV/AIDS interventions before 2013. Furthermore, hijra are considered a high-risk group for HIV and STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections), so in 2009 scholars first focused on extreme polarization and exclusion in the discourse on HIV interventions to study the hijra community. Nonetheless, in 2014, the first ethnography was published in hijra, where they were identified as a working-class as well as the individuals who are sexually attracted to men. These two studies were a paradigm shift where issues other than HIV intervention were prioritized simultaneously. After the official recognition of hijra in Bangladesh in 2013, scholars started focusing on their rights-based issues and the politics of hijra recognition.

Yet, hijra scholarship in Bangladesh is primarily based on minimal research, and scholars focus on problems like the legal, employment, education, and other fundamental rights of hijra at this stage. This literature also discusses a number of notable works on hijra in the Indian context as India-centered hijra scholarships predominate in South Asia. In Nanda's (1999) works, hijra have been defined as a cultural category; however, many scholars have criticized her works. Later, Reddy (2005) focused on the hijra multi-dimensional aspects, which is also predominant in Indian hijra scholarship. In addition, Hall's (1995) striking work on language shows how hijra has been constituted through linguistic discourse. Hinchey (2019) pointedly analyzed how hijra identity has been formed, reformed, and influence by British colonial history. Bringing Indian hijra scholarship into the discussion was also essential to show the difference between the Bangladeshi and Indian scholarships and to illustrate that the understanding of hijra cannot be homogenized since the regional cultural perception of hijra is different. Thus, the chapter concludes by commenting that the critical regional understanding of hijra should be resolved as the hijra Scholarship has developed differently in Bangladesh and India. Apart from this, there are many similarities and differences between the

perceptions of hijra in Bangladesh and India. Consequently, there are significant differences between Bangladeshi and Indian hijra scholarship. Additionally, it should be pointedly noted that India-centric hegemonic hijra scholarship is not enough to perceive hijra holistically.

Chapter Three

Chapter three describes the theoretical framework of the thesis. It is going to discuss transgender theory and will further address the intersectional approach to discuss its relevance in perceiving hijra in Bangladesh. It will also discuss the tension between trans and radical trans-exclusionary feminist debates and conflicts in the west to note the difference between the theoretical development between western trans studies and hijra studies in South Asia. It will additionally address the idea of transfeminism, which might not be successful in the west but useful for hijra advocacy and wellbeing in Bangladesh, which will be discussed in chapter ten. This research also took Foucault's understanding of sexuality as a discourse to explore hijra sexuality in Bangladesh. In order to analyze the gender of the hijra in the Bangladeshi context, this thesis will use Butler's concept of gender performativity.

Chapter Four

Chapter four presents the research epistemology, methodology, research setting, fieldwork, data collection method, and analysis. It shows why and how postmodernism has been chosen as research epistemology and ethnography as a research methodology and how I had prepared to reach out to my participants and entered the field. It also demonstrates my report building at the beginning of fieldwork and my interactions with hijra. Moreover, it explains the two-phase of fieldwork. In the first stage, I describe in detail the method of collecting and analyzing ethnographic data among the hijra of Dhaka city. In the second step, I describe the details of Focus Group interviews with NGO officials and in-depth interviews with government officials.

Chapter Five

This chapter will introduce the audience to the dynamic aspects of the life of the hijra community, dealing with the role of hijra social hierarchy, government system, and hijra livelihood. Social hierarchy involves ‘'fictive kinship' ties and a communal hierarchical system. It explains the significance of hijra kinship and the reciprocal relation between a guru and chela. Hijra communities are also influenced by the hierarchical governance system and the power structure of hijra in Dhaka city with the focus that the status of all hijra is not equal in the community; rather, it depends on the social and cultural hierarchical ranking system. Their role in communities is constructed and restructured depending on their status and livelihood. A hijra is not a homogenous entity, and there are variations among them based on sex-related and non-sex-related work. Therefore, different hijra

played different roles based on their livelihoods, and, therefore, their gender roles shaped and reshaped their way of life and their power of authority.

Chapter Six

Chapter six analyzes the complexity of the hijra classification in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and the accounts for referring to hijra as a cultural category in the South Asian context. In the Indian subcontinent and the last two decades, Indian hegemonized hijra scholarship has been predominant in contemporary Bangladesh. However, classifying hijra in religious or cultural categories is problematic. Even the biological classification of hijra or to perceive hijra as intersex is not worthwhile. Although the categories are structurally located with specific characteristics, it is challenging to identify hijra like male or female. However, my study would reveal evidence that hijra cannot be categorized as only either sex or cultural identity; their contextual reality could only categorize them. Therefore, hijra in Dhaka city can refer to such an identity that requires culture, religion, class, power, beauty, body modification, sexual pleasure, contextual reality, and so on. To some extent, the cultural and sex/gender classification axis is important, but it is a useful rubric for discussing other aspects of hijra. Therefore, my argument implies that becoming a hijra is a complex process in Bangladesh's context, which can precisely be perceived through intersectionality because hijra culture, categorization discourses, sexuality, gender performativity, hegemonic colonial legacy, and dehumanization process in contemporary Bangladesh are interlinked and interconnected.

Chapter Seven

Chapter Seven explores the sexuality and sexual acts of hijra based on my ethnographic data. This chapter discovers that their sexual acts have a fluidic nature and additionally argues that the sexual acts of hijra are neither normative nor regulative like homosexuals or heteronormative men and women. Popular discourses about hijra are either they are sexually involved with men or they are sexually disabled. These normative values about hijra sexual acts and sexualities are predominant discourse. However, based on field data, I would argue that hijra are not sexually disabled or simply engage in sexual relations just with men. Also, the sexuality of the hijra is not regulated by society like the normative men and women of Bangladesh, but it is much more fluid. It is also vital that the existing 377 acts prohibit the sexual acts of sexual minorities such as gay, lesbian, and bisexualities, but it does not fully govern the sexual acts or sexuality of hijra. Hijra are, in fact, involved in various forms of sexual relations with different gender based on their contextual reality, demand, situation, and circumstances. Yet, my claim is that hijra are not only involved in sex with men; rather, they engage in sexual relations with men, women, or often with other hijra as well. Therefore, I would like to argue that the sexuality of hijra is fluid, and the dominant regulative or normative heterosexuality,

hegemonic masculinity, and dominant patriarchal discourses govern their sexuality in a different manner.

Chapter Eight

Chapter eight provides an analysis of hijra gender performativity and fluidity to explore gender overt play in Dhaka, Bangladesh. To analyze the gender fluidity and overt play of hijra, I will use the theory of gender performativity. This chapter also discusses how hijra shifted their gender identity from one gender to another to reach certain ends that are deeply rooted in their clothing, body adornment, grooming, and makeup. In this point, my study infers that their gender and sexual activities are not limited to any social chain as Bangladeshi normative women and men are socially constructed. So, I would assert that one cannot be represented as a hijra just by declaring oneself; instead, she established herself as a hijra through her repetitive acts. Besides, a hijra cannot be a hijra without her performative acts, and this performativity is deeply rooted in their contextual reality. Neither the living experience nor their gender performativity is homogeneous. Yet, their gender fluidity, the practice of non-heteronormative gender relationships, and their performative acts constitute them as hijra. Besides, body personification and modification play a significant role in constructing the performative hijra gender.

Chapter Nine

Chapter Nine locates how hijra have been dehumanized in contemporary Bangladesh and how this dehumanization process is deeply rooted in the British colonial perception of hijra. This chapter analyzes how hijra were historically constituted and reconstituted in pre-colonial as well as British colonial periods. The British colonial Criminal Tribe Act 1871 was an Act for the Registration of Criminal Tribes and Eunuch, which historically identified them as criminals and consequently isolated them from mainstream society. Bangladeshi government yet couldn't introduce a revised act to regularize hijra even though they are recognized as a third gender. Accordingly, the hegemonic colonial concept of hijra did not bring about a fruitful change in their lives even after they were recognized as a separate gender by the Bangladesh government. This chapter also details the government's misunderstanding of identifying hijra and the negligence and ambiguity of the officials to treat them inhumanely during the recognition/job interview process. Based on my secondary and field data, this chapter further argues how the government's understanding of the hijra authenticity is deeply rooted in the British colonial legacy.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

The thesis concludes by addressing the preliminary findings of the research in the tenth chapter and summarizes the research project with my argument that hijra ought to be considered as a rather diverse community, than a homogeneous group. This study looked at each aspect of the research questions in detail about the process of dehumanization of hijra and also highlighted the complexity that government authorities had in understanding them. In addressing research questions, this study that hijra are not a homogeneous group; they are fairly diverse. This study, nevertheless, suggests the need to answer these issues for a more comprehensive understanding of the hijra community in Bangladesh, presenting the complexities of using the terms hijra and transgender interchangeably. It discusses how transfeminism can help hijra advocacy and wellbeing to ensure hijra rights by accelerated gender diversity and the feminist movement. Furthermore, it addresses the limitations of the study and closes with a concluding statement.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Bangladesh has a limited amount of ethnographic research and academic literature on hijra. Most of the scholars who studied hijra initially focused on HIV / AIDS. Various studies have shown that Bangladeshi society has kept them as an alienated community since they are born as males and present themselves as female (Islam, 2019; Jabin, 2018; Khan et al., 2009; Shawkat, 2016). However, the hijra were recognized as a 'third gender' by the Bangladesh government in 2013 (Azim et al., 2008, 2009; Chan & Khan, 2007; Islam & Conigrave, 2008; Khan et al., 2009) yet, their lifestyle, livelihood, ritual, and the way they identify their gender are almost absent from mainstream literary work. In contrast, there have been numerous research carried out on hijra in India, some of which I will discuss in this chapter.

2.1.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter is divided into three parts apart from the introduction and summary. Primarily, I will review the research works that have been done on hijra in Bangladesh and the current literature on HIV intervention, especially the most critical issues for understanding the life of hijra. In the second part, I will discuss the significant ethnographic studies conducted in India to explain how those studies are influential in the field of hijra scholarship in South Asia. In the third section, I will focus on the similarities and differences between Bangladeshi and Indian hijra scholarships. In conclusion, I will emphasize how to accomplish the literary gaps in the rest of my chapters.

2.2 Literature on Hijra in Bangladesh

Non-heteronormative gender and hijra-related studies are comparatively less than gender binary studies in Bangladesh. Intensive research and scholarly work on hijra are minimal. From the anthropological, cultural, historical, and sociological perspectives, in-depth research on hijra is rarely found before 2013. Over the past few decades, some NGOs have worked on the risks of HIV. Several scholarly articles on hijra were published after they received government recognition, which I am going to discuss in this chapter. Yet, in 2019 a book was published in Bangla language titled *"Hijra shobdokosh*", edited by Selina Hossain, introduced some general ideas about the hijra community culture in Bangladesh. The book focused on the rights of hijra according to the Bangladeshi constitutions. It also describes some general concepts related to hijra, e.g., transgender, third gender, queer, LGBTQ, gender dysphoria, gender expressions, sexual orientation, etc. It also illustrates the cultural practices of the hijra community, different development projects taken by the government for hijra rehabilitation, and their empowerment. However, the book's methodological framework does

not provide a distinct clarification on how the study was conducted. However, though it has little significance in Bangladeshi hijra scholarship due to the lack of methodological authentication and theoretical contributions, it might be handy to someone who wants to get a general overview of hijra in Bangladesh. The gradual development of the hijra scholarship in Bangladesh is given below.

2.2.1 Hijra in the Literature of HIV Interventions

Initially, hijra got scholarly attention in HIV intervention discourse in Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh formed the National AIDS Committee in 1985. The first HIV case was detected in 1989 in Bangladesh (Islam et al. 1999; Azim et al., .2008; Ahsan Ullah, 2011). The government took a comprehensive policy regarding HIV, AIDS, and STI (sexually transmitted infections) in 1997. Based on UNAIDS and WHO guidelines, the Bangladesh government set up the national HIV surveillance system where hijra identified as selected groups of individuals at most risk of HIV infection (Azim et al., 2008; Islam & Congigrave, 2008). In most HIV research in Bangladesh prior to 2007, hijra only mentioned a high-risk HIV transmission group. Both NGOs', government's HIV prevention projects, and scholars, therefore, significantly only emphasized their concern to develop an awareness of using condom and lubricants during anal sex (Azim et al., 2008, 2009; Chan & Khan, 2007; Islam & Conigrave, 2008; Reza et al., 2020; Usman et al., 2018). Issues like-hijra exclusion, vulnerability, socio-cultural gender, sexuality, identity crisis remains undisclosed in those HIV intervention research.

Khan et al.'s (2009) research article titled "Living on the extreme margin: social exclusion of the transgender population (hijra) in Bangladesh" is one of the important research papers because it was a path-breaking work from the previous research on HIV intervention discourse. They mentioned hijra as transgender people who live in extreme marginal social settings got physically, verbally, sexually abused, excluded, and do not have any socio-political space in Bangladeshi society. According to them, safer sex interventions can be effective on a border scale only by giving them a room in the Bangladeshi gender continuum. Furthermore, they mentioned that the deprivations' prime reasons were not recognizing them as a separate gender. They critically emphasized hijra exclusion in Bangladesh within the HIV interventions paradigm. However, they also stated that hijra in Dhaka city are the highest recorded active syphilis (10.4%) and high-risk HIV transmission group (Azim et al., 2008, 2009; Islam & Conigrave, 2008) among the other risky population, and therefore, rapid HIV intervention is necessary. They found that hijra start partaking in so-called "womanly behavior" during the adolescence period by analyzing the ethnographic data. In their early teens, they prefer to wear women's clothing, wear makeup, be comfortable with housework, and enjoy playing and gossiping with other girls. Society portrays it as a '*meyeli shobhab*' (feminine attitude) in Bangladeshi gender discourse.

Society always wants a boy to behave like a 'man,' who would never be soft in nature. These "unusual feminine development " (Khan et al., 2009, p. 444) in early adolescence stains their family image. It creates a hostile environment in the school, eventually forcing them to live a double life to avoid stigma and discrimination, which leads them to go through an identity crisis. Those who live a double life wear female attire when they visit their peers and inter-community get together, but they pretend to be a boy in public life. Despite having a biological family, hijra feel alienated because they never open up with their gender expressions within their family and relatives. In most of the cases, when family, relatives pressurized them to get married to a woman, physically and mentally assault them for their feminine nature, make them leave their family and join the hijra community. They also do not get access to mainstream jobs because of the image society creates around them. Society doesn't accept any nonbinary individuals in the heteronormative gender continuum. Therefore, a hijra is bound to do 'hijragiri' as their livelihood, including '*cholla*,' '*badhai*.' They again specified that without addressing the gender and sexual diversity in the age of AIDS, would not challenge the judicial system, policymakers, and politicians to recognize the sexual rights of sexual minorities. Moreover, it has revealed that stigmatizing populations for providing HIV interventions is a dangerous endeavor to deal efficiently with hijra within this social system without a gender structure. I found Khan et al. (2009) research article significant because it analyzes the social exclusion process of hijra and critically explains the necessity of hijra gender and sexual health rights for HIV interventions. They also critically raised the question of the socio-cultural gender relations, sexuality discourse, discursive practices in Bangladesh and propose of HIV intervention paradigm shift in Bangladesh's context, which was significantly remarkable in early hijra scholarship in Bangladesh.

2.2.3 Hijra within the Masculinity Framework

Though the ethnographic research on hijra in Bangladesh is minimal, only one predominant full-length ethnographic research was published (Hossain, 2013). He analyzed hijra from the lens of masculinity in arguing asexuality or genital ambiguity is not essential for someone to be hijra; rather, a man's desire is a crucial dimension of hijra subjectivity. Besides, he argues that hijra produce, reproduce, and transform their gender in multiple ways, and their transformative bodies not necessarily sealed their masculine status; therefore, he challenged the idea of "hijrahood as emanating from emasculation" (Hossain, 2013, p. 218), and claims that hijra simultaneously negotiates the gender with femineity, masculinity, and hijraness. So hijra are not always inadequately masculine; they can at the same time be successful as a masculine male figure. Rather a conventional household that follows the rules of masculinity compels them to the limit be hijra. According to him, one becomes a hijra, not because of some erectile failure or genital defect, rathe according to his

interlocutors, they chose to become hijra to be able to explore erotic possibilities of various gender (Hossain, 2013).

He identified *koti* as culturally recognized 'male femininities' who switch from one group to another to locate hijra in the broader matrix. According to him, a hijra may switch to a different group yet variably belong to all other groups simultaneously. They still have some similarities in terms of the desire of a normative man and working-class background. Hence the claims rise; hijra are those male-bodied females who belong to the workings class; in other words, he said, "hijra are a class-specific category" (Hossain, 2014, p. 36). He argues, hijra are deeply rooted in the working-class identity in the view of the middle-class context, which instigates us to treat hijra as foul smell and dirt. Hossain (2012) defines hijra as an institutionalized subculture, feminine male-bodied individuals who desire men for sexual relations and eventually sacrifice their male genitals to the Goddess for spiritual gain.

He argues that hijra live in separate communities and act differently from 'traditional males,' and again, a man's sexual desires for anal penetration are the crucial motivation for an individual to be a hijra. Yet, Hossain's identification of hijra based on sexual desire has some blurred areas because it raises the question that if hijra desire men only, there is no such distinction between being gay and hijra nevertheless leaves a chance to create confusion to recognize them. Moreover, it is too simplistic to describe such a diverse complexity of hijrahood by reducing it solely to sexual drive. The way Hossain explores the relationship between hijrahood and masculinity is quite fascinating. However, I would say he pointedly emphasizes the necessity of de-Indianization of hijra scholarship. He reasons the India-centric hijra scholarship refines our understanding of them and preserves India's spatio-intellectual hegemonic practices, limiting us to explore the hijra microhistories (Hossain,2013; 2018). Therefore, he claims a critical regional approach that might help us to understand hijra in South Aisa holistically. His understanding of hijra is meaningfully different from the Indian hijra scholarship, which will clarify the upcoming sections.

2.2.4 Social Exclusion of hijra in Bangladesh

Habib (2012) conducted her master's thesis on hijra using the qualitative research method and analyzed the data through the system theory and advocacy approach. She reveals the significance of the separate identity of hijra, where her primary concern was how social workers might perhaps work with hijra for an effective outcome to improve their standard of life. However, she also prioritized their legal recognition as a distinct gender and discussed their exclusion from civil, economic, and social rights. From her perspective, a separate gender identity within a legal framework will be a key path for a hijra to access social resources, and she mentioned that religious and social issues could be barriers to creating acceptance in society. In her view:

> Changing the values of the society and religion are the most challenging actions for the social workers because this will affect to break the deeply embedded structure and norms of the family, marriage, sexual life, and future generations. (Habib, 2012, p. 72)

It is evident that society and religion produce ideas that give rise to a fair barrier for hijra inclusion; however, Snigdha (2019) claimed that the religious practices of hijra somewhat help them to adapt to mainstream society. Habib again specified that if hijra would achieve "legal recognition of sex work as a profession could guarantee them a more secure life and would protect them from discrimination" (Habib, 2012, p. 71).

This claim seems to be prioritizing only those who are involved in the sex trade, yet it should be implicitly noted that all the hijra in Bangladesh are not sex workers. Though prostitution is legal in Bangladesh, the reality of sex workers in society is quite reverse. They are nevertheless treated as taboo and living their lives as 'outsiders' and hardly relish any liberty (Ullah, 2005; Chowdhury, 2006). Consequently, legally recognizing hijra as sex workers can provide them with a secure life is an ambitious argument. Henceforth, in my view, Habib's observations on social and religious stigma towards hijra are more significant than her claim on the legal recognition of sex workers would make it possible to secure their lives seems practically unrealistic. It should also be mentioned that when Habib (2012) published this research when hijra were not recognized as a separate gender. Before their recognition as a third gender in Bangladesh, scholars, e.g., Khan et al. (2009) and Habib (2012), supposed that government recognition of hijra as a separate gender would minimize their vulnerability and social exclusion. However, hijra in Bangladesh are still a socially excluded community, and this social exclusion results in unequal power relations (Aziz & Azhar, 2019).

In 2019, Aziz and Azhar also conducted a noteworthy scholarly qualitative research titled "Social Exclusion and Official Recognition of Hijra in Bangladesh". Based on their field data, they proclaimed that the official recognition of hijra as a separate gender does not allow them with any added privilege to register with the local council under the third gender category. For example, there is no option for hijra or third gender to cast votes in the voting ballot paper. Additionally, analyzing their narratives, they claimed that not having access to healthcare services, NGO's deployment, and the lack of employment opportunities lead them to become sex workers. They further emphasized that even after government recognition, the course of discrimination never stopped; their lifestyle and the prejudices the society always held against them remained the same as before. Thus, they continue to strive for belonging in mainstream society because society continues to alienate them.

2.2.5 The Media Representation of Hijra

Stenqvist (2015), in her works she shows how the media represents the struggle of the hijra movement before and after the legislative changes. She uses textual discourse analysis as her method based on three renowned local newspapers: The Daily Star, New Age, and Dhaka Tribune. The research focuses on the media representation politics of hijra rights movements in the public sphere. Her primary concern was how media performs as a communicative tool for getting the audience's attention, keeping society's normative structure. By referring to Khan et al. (2009), she argues that the hijra community's social movement lacks power in Bangladesh due to scarce support from the religious, legal, and political spheres. She analyzes the movement's struggle in Bangladesh into three categories in three different newspapers visibility, representation, and aspiration. She shows a comparative content analysis regarding hijra issues among the newspapers. In terms of visibility, Stenqvist (2015) argued that all of those published a smaller number of articles on hijra before they got recognition as a third gender. There was also very little attention paid to hijra advocacy and agency from 2005 to 2014. After government recognition, there was the highest visibility of hijra issues found in those newspapers. Even after the legislative changes, though, the number of articles increased, but hijra voices were not single out; instead, it was included as a collective voice of all the other minority groups. She also contends the representation of hijra in those newspapers, nevertheless, not beyond the traditional Bangladeshi normative values. So, all the newspapers perceive hijra within the heteronormative social context, and in her concluding remarks, she added that the Daily Star is a platform that has proven to add maximum to conventional structures and values in the society. In terms of the New Age, it reflects on what is going on in society without the slightest relevance as a whole. Lastly, the Dhaka Tribune is a platform that contributes the most to the development of how Bangladeshi society and its readers view subcultures by combining the representation of different situations with the lens for discussion for a change in the ideology of the reader and for a progressive attitude (Stenqvist, 2015).

Stenqvist's work gives an idea of how the mainstream print media represents hijra in Bangladesh before and after the legislative changes; however, it doesn't explore the reason why hijra remain invisible. The paper also lacks clarity to provide an in-depth understanding of the hijra representational politics in Bangladeshi print media. Similarly, Abdullah (2018) tried to analyze the life stories of hijra and its representation from a feminist perspective base on two documentaries, e.g., Sébastien Rist and Aude Leroux-Lévesque directed "*call Me Salma*" (2010), and Lok Prakash directed "*Are We So Different*?" (2012). Based upon the narratives of those films, she proposes, hijra should include “across geographic and cultural borders to join transnational feminist conversations about queer and gender non-conforming identities” (Abdullah, 2018, p. 9). Instead of considering ethnography, hijras would be better understood by focusing on queer and feminist

perspectives.However, the detail on how feminist or queer perspectives can analyze hijra in Bangladesh was hazy in her work.

From the first film, Abdullah quoted that the hijra can never marry a man and cannot have children or a family in general. As to her paper, even though hijra are citizens of Bangladesh in a legal framework yet, they were not given any right to marriage (Abdullah, 2018). This is important to mention that there is no separate law for hijra marriage yet. However, a few of them got married to men by registering themselves as women, which I have found in my fieldwork. Besides this, hijra are also involved in heterosexual marriages, but the documentaries' narratives represent partial truth, which was overlooked in her paper.

By analyzing another documentary Abdullah (2018) argues that the different sexual minority groups, e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexuals keep their sexuality hidden, but even though hijra' socio-economic condition is exceptionally vulnerable, they do not hide their identity. In other words, individuals who identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexuals are in a comparatively better economic condition but live in the shadows of the straight crowd around them. However, the comparison that the paper presented had limitations of political correctness; rather, the risk of life and strict religious taboo is the prime reason for them to hide their sexuality. Henceforth, the multidimensional representation of politics of those narratives was absent in Abdullah's paper.

2.2.6 The Politics and Paradox of Hijra Recognition in Bangladesh

To recognize hijra as a separate gender other than men and women from the Bangladeshi government was a bold step. However, the consequences and the paradox of this recognition gained scholars' attention. Ng (2018) discusses the complicated dynamics of hijra recognition, and he focuses on hijra government job cancellation by the social welfare ministry based on the medical test to find out so-called genuine hijra. He took forensics as both a descriptive and analytical tool for his analysis; he mentioned forensic department enlisted in aid of the ministry of social welfare officials whose job is to verify the authentic hijra to become potential beneficiaries of a government-sponsored employment scheme that he refers to as forensics recognition. Based on his research findings, he claims that a hijra has been perceived as a sign of pseudo-hermaphroditism[20] by Dhaka Medical Hospital doctors. When the doctors found that the applicants were genitally male, they were not pseudo-hermaphrodite; they declared that they were not hijra. Hence, he states:

> Those forensics rely simultaneously on the (belief in the) existence of certain undeniable truths and on specific forms of expertise (and technologies) to interpret evidence in order to get to

[20] Pseudo-hermaphroditism, "which they understood as a category *separate* from the biological male or female " (Ng,2018, p. 32).

> that truth helps to clarify the paradoxical mismatch between official claims of authentic hijra untranslatability and the very reliance on such cross-cultural translation in the process of recognizing hijra medically. (Ng, 2018, p. 30)

Ng (2018) reasons that the government wanted hijra authentication from forensic doctors of Dhaka medical college to illuminate their recognition's complicated dynamics. He claims the forensic doctors' authentication of hijra is a process to transform the cultural category into a biomedical category. He also states that defining hijra authenticity based on medical tests transforms the local gender identity into forcibly concentrated legible western scientific determination of sex. In contrast, Hossain (2017) claims that this recognition translates hijra from a cultural to a legal category and argues that the legal recognition process of hijra essentially mobilizes the discourse of hijra disability. Several interest groups like civil society, the international community, and the hijra themselves corollary have been parties to this disability discourse. Hossain (2017) critically explains how the legal recognition of hijra connected with the disability discourse by mentioning how hijra applicants were rejected from government jobs depending on the medical examination. He argues the popular understanding about the hijra that they are a particular group of people born with genital ambiguities, which delinked from the desire to transform into a disability discourse through this legal category. He says- the process stresses mainly genital ambiguity to identify a hijra as a third gender category. The medical team primarily authenticated hijra from the perspective of bodily difference and genital ambiguity. In the Bangladeshi cultural setting, genital ambiguity is the single most important area that authenticates whether someone can be termed a hijra or not. It nevertheless ignored the emasculation process where genital deformation and sexual disability were the crucial standpoints to recognize hijra as a third gender to provide them with jobs. However, as per Hossain, this idea of deformative genital organs to identify someone as a hijra is embedded in public discourse in Bangladeshi society. His argument on transforming hijra from a cultural into a legal category prioritizing disability discourse is significantly essential to address because this disability discourse creates a barrier to blend them with the mainstream society. In other words, this disability discourse tries to constitute hijra based on the bodily differences or to get medical authentication, to justify one's sexuality are deeply rooted in colonization, and it promotes the new regime of dehumanizing hijra in a different way, which I will further discuss in chapter nine.

2.2.7 Legal Status of hijra in Bangladesh

In recent years, some scholars raise issues about the legal status of hijra in Bangladesh. Based on secondary sources, Hyder and Rasel (2019) claim, a hijra is an individual who is neither male nor a female but having both characteristics. They also state that according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDH), in Article 2,3,7, like every other human being, hijra, as a third gender, have rights not to be discriminated against, punished, forbidden, arrested, and tortured for their gender

identity. According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), both mention that the state party also has some responsibilities to safeguard their rights. The state should make sure none of the citizens discriminate against any other citizen regarding race, color, sex, language, religion, politics or opinions, national or social origin, property, birth, or status. They also discussed The Yogyakarta Principles[21], which contain precepts that intend to apply international human rights law standards to address the abuse of human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), and intersex people.

Hyder and Rasel (2019) claim that Bangladesh is a signatory country to both ICCPR and ICECR. Also, the Bangladeshi constitution, article 28, "prohibits any discrimination only on the ground of sex, gender, race, place of birth, religion, etc." Therefore, they claim, Bangladeshi constitution ensures the rights of diverse sexualities as well as hijra. However, hijra are deprived of various forms of their fundamental rights "due to inadequate legal provisions regarding hijra status " (Hyder & Rasel, 2019, p. 146).

Similarly, Islam (2019) states that Bangladeshi constitution's guarantee all the citizens' fundamental rights, and therefore, hijra also have equal rights like a man and woman. But they are often deprived of property, employment, education, health care, and other fundamental rights. Moreover, most hijra suffer from unlawful penalties, sexual harassment, mental and physical abuse, but the Bangladesh government has not introduced any specific law to protect their rights yet.

Both of the papers are crucial in the sense that they address the legal issues of hijra. Hyder & Rasel (2019) provide excellent details on rights-based conventions, in particular, Yogyakarta Principles. However, they did not suggest any direction on how these principles could be applied in Bangladesh. They overlooked what kind of law provision should be taken into consideration to ensure hijra rights. On the contrary, Islam (2019) gives some general statements on the legal status of hijra. In contrast to the above two papers, Mitra (2018) prioritizes separate rape law for hijra in Bangladesh, which is significantly different from the above two papers, which is essential to address.

2.2.8 Education Rights of Hijra

Recently, some scholars have expressed their attention to the education rights of the hijra community through their works. Islam (2016) used the terms eunuch and hijra interchangeably to claim that eunuch and hijra are known as the third gender in Bangladesh; without education, it would be difficult

[21] The *Yogyakarta* Principles an outcome of an international meeting of human rights groups in *Yogyakarta*, Indonesia, in November 2006.

to survive with respect dignity. He again pointed out that not only for the survival of the hijra community but also for general people to be educated and aware of the rights of the hijra community so that the discrimination can be brought to an end by educating the citizens about the equal rights of all population. He also prioritized special educational environments and training-based education programs for hijra.

As he pointedly remarks, Islam's work should be mentionable to educate the mass people about hijra rights and the necessity of their education with respect and dignity, essential in contemporary Bangladesh. However, a discussion on detailed social barriers and obstacles in their education wasn't pointedly mentioned in the paper (Goni & Hoque, 2020). They use "cocultural theory"[22] by Mark Orbe and Ardener's "muted group theory"[23] to analyze social influences against hijra as the main reason for them to stay away from mainstream education. On the basis of qualitative data, Goni & Hoque claim that the behavior and attitude of the influential class in Bangladesh undermines their desires to continue the studies of hijra, which is the main reason for their dropping out of school.

2.2.9 Employment and Empowerment of Hijra in Bangladesh

Hijra's employment challenge and empowerment issues took scholar's attention in recent years. Hossen (2019) locates the challenges of the right to employment of hijra in Bangladesh by reviewing two different guidelines to explore the policy gaps in hijra employment. Firstly, by examining the manual "*Implementation Policy of Livelihood Development Project of Hijra 2013*", he argues that the policy designed different strategies and activities for mainstreaming hijra. However, this policy neither mentioned employment rights nor clarified hijra employment in the formal sector. Secondly, by reviewing the Bangladesh Labor Policy (2012) he argues that the policy primarily undertakes men and women's rights and likewise emphasizes the other vulnerable groups except for hijra.

Besides policy analysis, he interviewed some of the applicants and government officials and also mentioned the job cancellations of hijra in his paper. Based on participants' narratives, he claims that the government officials lack knowledge of hijra, which is also another challenge for the right to get employment. Additionally, he claims that the institutional and social prejudice, religious, and cultural norms against hijra are the three foremost challenges of their employment rights. Sema and Islam (2020) conducted a quantitative study in Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh, to find out the transgender

[22]Co-cultural theory is used to explore the communicative experiences of those groups who are unrepresented and it is an analytical framework that looks at culture as an uneven site of communicative relations. In other words, it provides an analytical lens to examine the interaction between dominate/major and underrepresented cultural groups (Orbe, 1996, 1998, Orbe & Spellers, 2005). Also, it "strategically adopt certain communication behaviors to negotiate oppressive dominant structure" (Orbe & Spellers, 2005, p.174).

[23] Muted group theory provided by social anthropologist Edwin and Shirley Ardener. Muted group theory is a sociological tool that examine the interactions between dominant and sub-dominant groups—including, but not limited to, men and women (Barkman,2018).

empowerment state in Bangladesh. Based on their research findings, they claim that the social and economic empowerment of hijra is connected with their legal and political empowerment.

2.3 Literature on Hijra in India

In this section, I will review the Indian hijra scholarship based on some prominent research findings. As I mentioned earlier, there is some literature available on hijra in India. Indian scholars classified hijra along with archetypal gender lines outlined as either 'deviant' or as 'liberated' from normative gender categories (Bockrath, 2003; Gairola, 2020; Herdt, 2001; Lal, 1999; Newport, 2018; Pattnaik, 2009). Hijra became an undisputed inclusion in the representation of international lesbian and gay studies in the early 90s (Barale & Halperin,1993; Rich et.,1993) and gradually discussed as a global third gender category (Cohen, 1995; Herdt, 1994). During the 1970s and 1980s, anthropological studies on hijra outlined their role as an alternative 'third' sex or 'third gender,' which is significantly distinct from the western binary model of sex and gender (Herdt 1994, 2001; Nanda 1984, 1986, 1994, 1999).

2.3.1 Historical Analysis of Hijra in Colonial India

Ganoon (2009) argues that Indian hijra subjectivity could be seen as a continuous colonial interest. Hall and Davis (2020) focused on gender outside the colonial CIS-normativity and heteropatriarchy. They tried to analyze gender and sexuality through the semiotic exchange of everyday life among the hijra in northern India. They also argue that hijra were raised as boys and wished to distinguish themselves from their masculine representations in puberty or youth. Society's unwillingness to validate them presented hijra as stigmatized members of the South Asian society. Gupta (2019) states that:

> India has a diverse, complex and elaborate spectrum of same-sex sexual cultures in which sexual minorities have performed their identities in a variety of ways, in a variety of social spaces and without the political rhetoric of the west. (Gupta, 2019, p. 71)

Hinchy (2019) addresses the inquisitive absence of the history of the hijra community from the colonial scholarship in India. She undertakes an impressive, remarkable, and diligent reading of the colonial archive and historical analysis of the little-known colonial project and implementation of colonial law to eliminate the hijra community in the North-Western Provinces (NWP)[24] in colonial India. Hinchy (2019) intriguingly explained why colonialism is significant to understand hijra and argues that hijra's perception in India is deeply rooted and interlinked with the history of British

[24] "The NWP was later known as the United Provinces and also incorporated present-day Uttarakhand" (Hinchy, 2020, p. 1670).

colonialism. During British colonialism, the Criminal Tribe Act, 1871, is also significantly important to understand why and how hijra had been stigmatized historically in the Indian subcontinent.

Hinchy (2019) analyzes police compiled registers and biographical sketches of district-level correspondence on hijra households in Allahabad. Based on the historical archive evidence and secondary sources, she analyses how hijra are historically and politically termed as "castrators and kidnappers" (Hinchy, 2019, p. 141) by police and law in colonial India. She examined gender and sexuality regulation in a provincialized setting to explain how local contexts shaped and reshaped hijra identity based on colonial concerns. Hijra have been stereotyped as 'habitual sodomites' by the colonial officials, and the 'pathologizing' of hijra as a sexual 'type' was substantial in terms of translating colonial anxiety into invasive regulatory law under the Colonial Tribe Act (CTA) 1871. In the CTA 1871, under Part II[25], the colonial administration wanted to restrict the way hijra express their gender and sexual practices that they considered central to the survival of hijra. This included eliminating children from their households, interfering with *guru-chela* relations, and, most importantly, accusing hijra more severely for their emasculation practices under the term castration. The NWP officials thought that such strict policing and law would slowly expel the hijra from colonial India. Hinchy (2019) appropriately restrains against classifying this colonial project as an attempt at cultural genocide,' rather, she employs Patrick Wolfe's (2006) idea of 'logic of elimination'[26] to comprehend the 'multiple strategies' which deployed by the provincial government. She provides historical evidence of how all gender non confirming people have been treated as a 'suspect eunuch' and policed under the CTA 1871. This act was provided for the registration, surveillance as well as control of eunuchs in the North-Western Provinces. However, by practicing everyday resistance, hiding their property, being underground to evading the register, in the 20th century, north Indian officials started to believe that hijra populations were dying out. Nevertheless, Hinchy (2019) argues that some hijra registrations proved that they had learned how to evade the authorities more effectively. Therefore, the officials started to be searching 'reassuring fiction[s]' because they were focusing their attention more on anti-colonial sentiments.

Hinchy's book is the most recent and the first dedicated work on hijra in colonial India, which is a rich contribution to South Asian cultural history. Hinchy stunningly portrayed how hijra was criminalized through CTA 1871 and remained as an 'ungovernable' problem. Her work is considered to be a notable work because of its focus solely on colonialism. While previous scholars overlooked the colonial construction of their gender and identity, Hinchy (2019) systematically and historically

[25] Part II targeted ‘eunuchs’, primarily Hijra on Act No. XXVII of 1871, in British Library (BL)/India Office Records (IOR)/V/8/42

[26] To analysis, the relationship between genocide and the settler-colonial tendency Wolfe (2006) uses the term logic of elimination. He asserts, "I contend that, though the two have converged—which is to say, the settler-colonial logic of elimination has manifested as genocidal—they should be distinguished. Settler colonialism is inherently eliminatory but not invariably genocidal " (Wolfe, 2006, p. 387).

analyzed the root of hijra out of existence. However, she did not emphasize oral history in colonial India to explore hijra's struggles, experiences, and narratives in her historical analysis; instead, she only prioritizes the legal lens analysis of hijra in colonial historiography.

2.3.2 Identifying hijra into the Religious and Cultural Discourse

Nanda (1999) has done extensive research on hijra in South Asia, and her work confers the Western idea of transgender and transsexual as culturally inferior to the hijra. She conducted ethnographic research in an unnamed referred to as *'Bastipore'* in a South-central Indian city in 1981, which provides a compelling argument of the hijra lifestyle. Nanda's ethnographic study describes hijra's subordinate status, and she explored their religious and social role by their narratives. Nanda's work anticipates individual stories to explain how one joins the hijra community living their families and become part of seven hijra houses[27]. She describes how and why one goes through the emasculation process, their community functions, social violence, the *'guru- chela'*[28] relationships, and relationship with men outside the community. However, she illuminates their social role, cultural performances, emasculation rituals, their social organizations, and economic adaptations in Indian society.

According to Nanda (1990), hijra are significantly associated with religion, who dress and behave like women. She enhances that they belong to a religious community as they worship the Hindu goddess Bachura Mata. She further claims that to appease the Goddess and become a hijra, they remove their sexual organs without creating a vagina. The brevity of the mother goddess and the fertility of women embodied the fact that hijra have been given a special place in Indian culture and society, and so they play the role of both men and women.

Nanda (1999) also stated that hijra view themselves as 'not-man,' and the term hijra is a masculine noun that has a similar meaning as 'eunuch'[29] means a man who is less than a perfect man or man minus maleness (Nanda, 1999, p.17). She also mentioned that some hijra who are 'homosexual

[27] Nanda (1999) mentioned that hijra are divided into seven houses in India, Laskarwallah, Chaklawallah, Lalanwallah, Bendi Bazar, Poonawallah, Ballakwallah, and Adipur (this house is not in the sense of household, it refers, hijra's control area and leadership into region to region). These houses are not ranked but follow some rituals like members of each house's hijra are not allowed to wear certain color clothes.

[28] The *'guru-chela'* hierarchical relationship is the most significant relationship among the hijra fictive kinship (Nanda, 1984, 1986, 1999). None can enter into the hijra community without a guru. The word guru means master/teacher, and chela means her to dispel (Khan et al., 2009). One guru can have several chelas below her (Kalra & Shah, 2013). This guru- chela relations has been a detailed discussion in chapter five.

[29] Eunuch has been detailed discuss in chapter one.

prostitutes'[30] were known as *zenana*[31] in the early 20th century. Those zenanas are also hijra, but they are not ideal hijra ritual performers. However, she presented contradictory opinions regarding ascetics, religious mendicants, and erotic sexual relations of hijras in places. Hence, among the hijra community, there is a practice of challenging their authenticity by lifting their skirts to see whether they are real and who are emasculated or 'fake hijra.' Therefore, she argues the practice of emasculation to distinguish the genuineness of hijra. However, Nanda does not discuss the emasculation process in terms of Islamic tradition as well as the Muslim rituals hijra perform. In her account, emasculation appears as the single most crucial rite of passage through which hijra bodies are produced in India.

Nanda's work is influential in anthropology, which emerges hijra studies a new direction in South Asia. However, scholars have criticized her emasculation projection as the ideal form of ritual for being a hijra to emerge as a third gender category. Cohen (1995) takes Nanda's task for being indifferent to what he calls the "bloodied violence" of castration that bound individuals to undergo through emasculation process to constitute herself as an acceptable third category and mentioned, "all thirdness is not alike " Agrawal (1997) argues that her idea of hijra as the third gender qualifies them as a 'discrete gender,' and it should be gleaned. Similarly, Reddy (2005) criticized Nanda and said:

> Nanda's work inadvertently reinforces a division between western dual-gender systems and Indian accommodations of gender variation outside this binary framework….Instead, they [hijra] sometimes adopted cultural symbols that were either feminine or a combination of masculine and feminine, rather than defining themselves categorically as "neither man nor woman. (Reddy, 2005, p. 32)

2.3.3 Reddy's Ground-breaking Ethnography on Hijra Subjectivity

Reddy (2005) provides a complete persuasive analysis of hijra′ gendered presentation. Her work is substantial in reconceptualizing the hijra subject. She was questioning how, as a field of research, 'sexuality studies' is conceptualized and conducted, and she emphasizes that hijra identity is constructed concerning other modes of difference. Reddy highlights:

> This book questions representations of hijra as the personification of the third sex while also challenging the sufficiency of sexual politics and gender performativity as adequate glosses on hijra identification and practice. Ultimately, it endeavors to show how hijra are coherent

[30] Hijra's role was primarily pointed as a form of institutionalized homosexuality in an early psychoanalytical study (Carstairs, 1957). Freeman (1979) described a transvestite group of Orissa, who is a man but dressed like women, who seek out men for sexual relationships, and they were prostitutes. Though Freeman did not mention the term hijra but Nanda (1999) remark that it is reasonably clear that freeman was talk about hijra, who are undoubtedly homosexual prostitute (Ranade, 1985).

[31] Nanda spelt the term as '*zenana*' according to the Indian way of spelling the word, but as a Bengali researcher, I later spelt it as '*janana*' as per Bengali pronunciation.

> identities crafted by diverse ethical practices, practices which do not construct them merely as sexual identities, but identities articulated by and through a multiplicity of morally evaluated differences. (Reddy, 2005, p. 17)

She argues that the subjectivity and hijra' understanding of sexuality of themselves is intermediated through other authors' experience as one grounded in a Foucauldian framework; this book examines numerous axes of identity that assist in constructing the hijra. She examines how religion, asexuality, and the bodies of hijra as sex workers and their performance all work together to construct their gender and sexual identity. To explore how hijra experienced personhood, Reddy (2005) draws on two notions that serve as theoretical parameters by which she organizes and analyses hijra identity. The first one is '*izzat*,' which means respect or honor, each aspect of an identity confers with a sense of respect that presents the individual in a broader social structure. The second one is '*sarm*' (shame), which enables meaning for the individual. Reddy (2005) takes her theoretical standpoint through these two conceptual lenses, and she focuses on the hijra' notions of self and identity.

Also, Reddy (2005) argues many scholars affirm diversified elements of hijra subjectivity in their writings, but they were not concerned about their self-identification. In other words, previous researchers were concern about authors' understanding of hijra instead, concentrating on who is being studied. This methodological criticism is more remarkable than previous academic studies on hijra. A very few researchers identify hijra to speak for themselves in their analyses. Reddy argues that this situation becomes predominantly evident in how researchers overlay stability onto the identities of the hijra, such as anchoring in silence the significant inconsistency, contradictions, and ruptures within which many aspects of their subjectivity can be accessed. To counter this error, Reddy writes an entire chapter narrative about two hijra. She highlights the certainty for the "Ultimate basis" of theorization of identity or difference is centered on embodied experience rather than disembodied knowledge through these narratives.

Reddy's work is significant not because it contributes to hijra scholarship in anthropology, but in a deeper understanding within gender and sexuality studies. However, there is minimal criticism found of Reddy's work. Gannon (2007) criticized that though Reddy emphasis on the historical context in terms of the history of colonial literature, "creative asceticism," Islam, and family in South Asia based on secondary sources but one who interested in analyzing hijra from the Foucauldian aspect might be disappointed because of its lack of historiography, and it does not pay attention to historical analysis. He also mentioned that the lack of focus on historical analysis's complexity might lead to Reddy's observations as misleading.

2.3.4 The Linguistic Analysis of Hijra

Academics gave attention to diversified issues related to hijra in India in the last decades, such as Kira Hall's (1995) ethnographic analysis. Her work contributes a great deal to linguistic anthropology as well as hijra studies in India. According to Hall (1995), their use of language is related to their reality based on cultural isolation, familial rejection, societal neglect, etc. Analyzing their speech pattern, she says, "hijra' speech patterns swing between 'women and men's languages' to express relations of power and solidarity " (Hall, 1995, p. 17). She argues that by examining how hijra performs femininity and masculinity in the vocal sphere. It is possible to identify whether the linguistic traits are associated with either gender or how they choose to map the dominant notions of femininity and masculinity onto the verbal presentation. She also mentioned that hijra' gendered performances become meaningful only because it opposes the dominant gender ideologies which are not autonomously produced. Zimman and Hall (2009) did a comparative analysis of language and embodiment among transsexual men in the United States and hijra in India. They found there is a discursive relationship between language and embodiment among transsexual men and hijra. Zimman and Hall (2009) acknowledges the personification of various forms such as the female or the male is itself a product of linguistic practice. The method of representing their bodies as gender alternative social performers, they experience non-normative materialism, and thus the identity of group members becomes the main area of discussion (Zimman & Hall, 2009).

On the one hand, Zimman (2008) argues that transsexual men's biological sex is linguistically reconstructed to restore a marginalized community's needs in the United States. Consequently, language shapes the understanding of the human body. On the other hand, Hall (2005) claims that language is embodied in hijra gender performance and communicative acts such as hijra deployment of a flat-palmed clap mark them as outsiders to the normative gender binary (Hall, 1995, 1997, 2005). Zimman and Hall (2009) also argue that gender-variant communities such as hijra usually perform bodily transformation practices such as silicone injections, hormone therapy, or the number of surgical procedures that become a marker of their difference. Therefore, the deviant body of a hijra or a transsexual person is a marginalization source and reflects their gender identity (Stryker 1994, 2008; Sullivan 2013). Hence, Zimman and Hall (2009) claim that the body's meaning is not derived from a pre-linguistic natural order, rather the meaning of the body imbued through discourse.

2.3.5 The Significance of the Body and Hijra Identity

Roy (2017) draws an ethnographic and anthropological understanding of 'trans' culture in contemporary Mumbai. She analyzes hijra bodies and embodied practices, such as beautification, enhancements, and surgeries, for locating the specificities of hijra gender and identity. She argues that several hijra in Mumbai have undergone breast-implant surgery to appear more appealing and

beautiful, and these surgeries help them get more money from their clients. On the one hand, some of her hijra participants perform those surgeries to get more attraction and sexual gratification from men rather than desiring to be women. To attract male clients, they use their bodies as erotic capitals and display beautification as their feminine sexualized body parts. On the other hand, one of her participants Titli, a trans and Bengali film actor, underwent gender-reassignment surgery (GRS) to claim herself as a women-only. Hence, Roy (2017) argues two standard trans identities negotiate with gender-reassignment surgery to confirm their gender identity. Therefore, transsexual women and hijra generally deliver radically different views to signify their bodily identity and subjectivity. However, by referring, Judith Butler (1990), Roy claimed that the newly formed breasts appear to be the bodily signifiers after the GRS. They become a feminine symbol to give the impression of being a hijra. In other words, these physical formations are spontaneous 'institutionalized mark[s] of heterosexuality,' which caters to the erotic needs of male consumers, and Roy declares in these regards:

> These feminine consumptions address a popular meaning of public visibilities, by which the hijra identities are re-negotiated and re-interpreted. Further to this understanding, the display of the newly formed body builds into the metaphor of the two dimensions of hijra identification: first, it develops a sense of public understanding of hijra (re)appearance and re-signification; and second, their newly formed visibility creates newly formed discourses of their subjectification— their appearance exhibits a 'visual enactment' between the observer and the observed. (Roy, 2017, p. 177)

Roy (2017) also emphasizes the appearance of hijra by using Nietzsche and Butler's understanding of 'appearance'; she claims that it performs "as a metaphor of the ontological material reality of the body…their bodily signifiers intersect with the visual metaphors of appearance, acts, and performances, which Ultimately project gendered meaning " (Roy, 2017, pp. 178–179). She also claims hijra identifications are located in the patterns of their consumption too. They reformulated and represented themselves through body modifications, beautifications, behavior, appearance, and gender performances, and it reconstructed the traditional meaning of hijra identity. In other words, it is a new articulation of hijra identity, where romantic and erotic interaction leads to unique aspects, and profitability in the hijra business is a significant concern. Roy's work is meaningful to understand how hijra in Mumbai perceived their body and appearance in recent days, particularly hijra who are involved in sex work. Still, it does not provide any details about those hijra who are not engaged in either sex work or identify themselves as the western idea of trans or transsexual. Nevertheless, Roy's work is not adequate enough to present a holistic view of hijra, which is very significant in anthropological research.

2.4 Differences between Hijra Scholarship in Bangladesh and India

In Bangladesh, hijra scholarship grew out of HIV interventions, masculinity, recognition, politics, and rights-based issues, including social inclusion, legal status, education, empowerment, etc. Scholars' focus on hijra studies when hijra received legal recognition. Most of the scholars' primary concerns are related to hijra rights, empowerment, policy, and recognition politics. In contrast, Indian hijra scholarship was developed with critical engagement of hijra long ago before hijra got the legal recognition in India in 2014, making a meaningful difference between both countries' hijra scholarship. Indian hijra scholarship prioritizes the theoretical development of hijra identity, creating a borderline between them. However, this section will discuss the similarities and dissimilarities of the hijra scholarship between Bangladesh and India. This comparative analysis is crucial to present that the hijra scholarship in Bangladesh and India developed differently. Thus, unlike India, the understanding and perception of hijra in Bangladesh are equally different.

Similar to Bangladesh, hijra in India also attracted scholarly attention through the "sexual rights activism and HIV-AIDS prevention findings." Although in both Bangladesh and India, Hijra attracted scholars' attention through HIV discourse, India was one step ahead of Bangladesh. At the same time, scholars undertook an in-depth analysis of hijra; thus, India got two full-length ethnographic research during the 1990s from Hall's work in 1995 and Nanda's study in 1999, while hijra scholarships in Bangladesh were limited to HIV intervention discourse science 2009. And Bangladesh got the first full-length ethnography from Hossain's work in 2014, which is still the only one and, my research will be the second one to my best knowledge. Hence, I would say a severe lack of research on hijra in Bangladesh is a significant barrier to clearly understanding hijra.

Nanda's ethnographic work predominantly produces hijra as a cultural category in the Indian context, whereas Hossain (2013) identifies them as a working-class category in Bangladesh. Furthermore, Nanda (1999) locates hijra as a religious group in India, whereas Habib (2012) noted that religion is a big challenge for hijra social inclusion in Bangladesh. However, both presented that the hijra communities in both the countries follow some similar customs, such as hierarchical kinship among the hijra community, ritualistic practices such a *badhai* and *achla*.

Reddy (2006) locates hijra outside the normative kinship, whereas, in Bangladesh, "many hijra in Dhaka are married to women and simultaneously perform the role of heterosexual masculine householders" (Hossain, 2018, p. 323). In addition, Reddy (2006) argues *izzat* (respect) is central to hijra identity formation. In contrast, Hossain (2013) claims that their desire is paramount for being a hijra in Bangladesh. However, both Reddy and Hossain agree that emasculation is significant for hijra authentication. Nevertheless, Reddy (2006) prioritizes this authentication as proof of the asexuality of the hijra community in India. On the contrary, Hossain (2013) argues Bangladeshi hijra undertake

this "emasculation surgery" not to be treated as 'fake hijra' by the outer society. Therefore, I would say scholar's understanding of hijra in Bangladesh is different from India. Besides, it displays hints that hijra cannot be treated homogenously, and context is also meaningfully essential for understanding the hijra community in Bangladesh.

2.5 Summary

The number of scholarly pieces of literature on hijra in Bangladesh is minimal, but in those studies, less attention was paid to the rights of hijra. To the rights of hijra in all the research. Although hijra were considered a high-risk group in HIV intervention discourses, scholars began to pay more attention to hijra research after they were officially recognized as the third sex in Bangladesh. However, in this limited literature, a few of them are notable for learning hijra, such as Khan et al. (2009), which is a groundbreaking milestone in the study of hijra outside of HIV intervention. Similarly, Hossin's (2013) work lay the first stone in the ethnographic study of hijra in Bangladesh. Besides this, the literature on hijra recognition politics is significantly remarkable too. Ng (2018) analyses how hijra are transforming from a local cultural group to a medical category, and Hossain (2017) explores how this recognition politically connects hijra to the disability discourse. Several researchers have also effectively shown that the government understating of recognizing a hijra is inadequate. Additionally, scholars in Bangladesh also prioritize various rights-based issues, for example, education, employment, and legal status, which clearly showed that bringing them into the gender category is not enough to ensure their rights; Instead, there is still a huge policy gap that needs to be addressed. On the flip side, a substantial amount of research on hijra has been done in India. I have discussed a few important studies on hijra in India, which are influential in hijra scholarship in South Asia. Nanda (1999) was a leading researcher who worked in hijra in India, and she did not identify them as either male or female. She claims that hijra take "emasculation surgery" as a part of religious practice and emphasize them as a religious group. On the other hand, Reddy (2006) has linked this 'nirvana' emasculation process to hijra authenticity. She also prioritizes Indian hijra 'multiplicity of difference'. Other scholars have focused on the politics of hijra gender identity; for instance, Hall (1995) showed how hijra identity is embedded into linguistics, and Roy (2017) exhibited how sexual reassignment surgery is a part of their investment in the sex trade and identity politics. However, Hinchy (2019) explained why colonialism is significant to understand hijra in India, arguing that they still have a historical legacy of legitimate discriminatory attitude on the hijra community that is deeply rooted in the history of British colonialism. Understanding the implications of the Criminal Tribes Act 18171 will shed light on why and how the hijra were historically stigmatized in the Indian subcontinent and why the process of dehumanization of hijra continues today. In academia, hijra are identified as pan Indian phenomenon, what Hossain (2017) pointed as spatio-intellectual Indian hegemonic practices on hijra scholarships, which could lead us to

misunderstand hijra in Bangladesh. In the above discussion, the difference between the hijra Scholarship between Bangladesh and India has been mentioned. Last but not least, I would argue that the study of Bangladeshi hijra in a complex regional context is highly noteworthy, and we should be cautious of the India-centric approach to study hijra as it may lead us to treat them homogeneously that I reasoned in this study.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework of the research. Recently, the term "transgender" has become rather popular among Bangladeshi scholars. As I previously mentioned in chapter two, it is often used interchangeably with the Bangladeshi term "hijra". However, my intention with the theoretical debate here is to ascertain if the term "transgender" or the theory of transgender studies can explain the hijra identity in Bangladesh. The development of transgender theory in the west and the hijra studies in South Asia are significantly different. The term hijra functions as an umbrella term similar to transgender (see chapter five for detailed explanation). However, keep in mind that while identifying the word hijra as transgender might be a permissible approach when addressing a global audience, such interchangeable terms are not to be politically correct in the Bangladeshi context. This is because whatever a hijra may be identified as transgender by definition; yet not all transgenders are hijra in the local Bangladeshi context. Nevertheless, this research is focused on the constitution and reconstitution of hijra gender and sexuality in Bangladesh's context.

This chapter draws the story of transgender theory, and it is a crisis to locate the theoretical gap in transgender studies. It also points to the conflict between some radical feminists and transwomen to address the theoretical debate between transwomen and trans-exclusionary radical feminists. The concept of transfeminism is further addressed to embody the significance of the hijra's political coalitions in Bangladesh. In this chapter, I will discuss the intersection approach that I will expand in chapter six to identify the complexities of hijra identity. This chapter discusses the basic theoretical and analytical tools used in this study to draw the thesis theoretical framework, including ideas about Foucault's sexuality discourse and Judith Butler's gender performativity.

3.1.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter is divided into four sections except for the introduction and summary. The first section discusses the development of the hijra theory and its crisis. It also discusses the relations between transgender and hijra studies, following the discussion on "Third gender" in traditional society and the third category crisis. The second section addresses the debates between transwomen and Trans-exclusionary radical feminist thought. It addresses the concept of 'transfeminism' to explain how the integrations of feminism and trans studies can help hijra access their rights. It also discusses the notion of intersectionality to understand better the multiple categorizations of hijra that are interrelated. The third section discusses Foucault's notion of sexuality and analysis of sexuality as discourse. The fourth

section engages the distinction between sex and gender and explains why Butler rejected the idea that sex and gender are distinct. Also, in this section, I discuss Butler's idea of performativity. This chapter concludes by addressing how I have proposed theoretical gaps in the study of hijra in Bangladesh and applied theories to the rest of the chapter.

3.2 The Development and Crisis of Transgender Theory

Transgender[32] is an umbrella term that aims to group diversely gendered people. Transgender refers to an individual who lives as a gender that differs to their assigned sex at birth (Stryker, 2008). She argues

> I use transgender not to refer to one particular identity or way of being embodied but rather as an umbrella term for a wide variety of bodily effects that disrupt or denaturalize heteronormatively constructed linkages between an individual's anatomy at birth, a nonconsensual assigned gender category, psychical identifications with sexed body images and/or gendered subject positions, and the performance of specifically gendered social, sexual, or kinship functions. (Stryker, 1998, p. 149)

The term transsexual[33] denotes an individual who uses hormonal and surgical technologies to alter their body and sexual identity. In other words, Stryker asserts-

> a transsexual was somebody who permanently changed genitals in order to claim membership in a gender other than the one assigned at birth; then a transgender was somebody who permanently changed social gender through the public presentation of self, without recourse to genital transformation. (Stryker, 2008, p. 4)

Transsexual is also connected with psychiatric notions such as gender dysphoria, which has been associated with the metaphor "trapped in the wrong body". FTM (female to male) and MTF (male to a female) are used to connect with the medical discourse of transsexualism. Additionally, "queer" is a political and theoretical term associated with LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual & Transgender). Foucault and Derrida's philosophies have influenced queer theory that aims to deconstruct the study of heteronormative ideology. In 1990, the term "genderqueer" emerged, which refers to self-identification by individuals who do not subscribe to the traditional binary of male-female and masculine-feminine. The development of trans-theorization has interwoven the concepts of

[32] Virginia Price first uses the term transgender to refer someone like her for the freedom of gender expression (Stryker, 2008).
[33] Dr. Harry Benjamin popularized the term transsexuality in the 1950s which has been offensively and misrepresented use for trans individuals by scholas like Mary Daly, Germaine Greer, Robin Morgan, Janice Raymond, (Stryker, 2000,2008; Stryker & Bettcher, 2016).

transgender, transsexual, and genderqueer. The queer theory used the idea of difference to incorporate transgender to analyze gender diversity (Hines, 2007).

The word 'queer' means out of the ordinary, and queer theory is a study that concerns non-normative gender norms, sexual behavior, gender, and sexuality. According to Catherine Jean Nash (2011), queer space is a place that opens up alternative possibilities such as non-normative formulations of bodies, gender desires, and sexual practices. It creates space for queer individuals to talk about multiple interactions of social injustice. Gender transgressive and disruption of the gender binary is one of the conditions of queerness. Some scholars argue that queerness relies on flexible subjects and creates space to generate new flexible and fluid gender roles (Browne, 2006; Davis, 2005). However, although the queer space is flexible for transgender inclusion, this flexibility cannot accommodate the transforming body because the idealization of the flexibility of queer is also marginalized and regulated the transgender body and identity (Stone, 2013).

According to Susan Stryker (2004), 'trans studies' are a twin of "queer studies," which emerged in the early 1990s and intertwined feminist critique, queer theory, and sexual politics. With the emergence of trans studies, there is tension between the feminist outlook and trans-lives. Heyes (2003) argues that transgender studies have been colonized as a feminist theoretical testing ground in which many famous feminists are anxious about transgender identity. Before 1990, some feminists were hostile in their discussion about trans issues. Janice Raymond's book *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of She-Male* (1979) is one of the best examples. The book is an archetypal articulation of radical feminist hostility to transsexuality. In addition, it had persistent feminist perceptions of transgender individuals when she says, “All transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves. However, the transsexuality constructed lesbian-feminist violates women's sexuality and spirit as well” (Raymond, 1994, p. 104).

In 1994, with a new introduction by Raymond, The Transsexual Empire was re-issued. She claims that the gender transgression by transgender people involves the acceptance of sexist gender roles and consequently fails at genuine gender transcendence. Sandy Stone's *The Empire Strikes Back: A post transsexual manifesto* (1992) is considered a foundation of transgender studies. Stone explored the third position in the ongoing debate between a medicalization view of transsexuality and feminist critique. In her manifesto, she replies to Raymond that transsexuals are not a medical discourse; instead, they are an "oppressed minority." She also emphasizes the academic voice of trans people against a history of scholarly objectification. However, Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1991), Anzaldua's theory of Mestiza (1991), and Judith Butler's early queer thoughts of feminism (1990) incorporate the ideas that trans oppression (Bettcher & Garry, 2009). Nevertheless, Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) opened a new path for transgender studies. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that 'being' is reducible to the form of 'appearing' and formulated a challenge to the ontological status of

gender. She argues that there is no ontological 'truth' of being male or female; instead, every aspect of gender is performed. According to Butler, individual relations to gender are a social category. Nevertheless, traditional feminist scholarship regarding transgenderism aims to resist applications of 'trans' as a gender category, which is necessarily distinct from more established categories such as 'woman' or 'man'.

Hausman (2001), in her article "Recent Transgender Theory," argued that feminists who have engaged with transgender studies conceptualize gender as an analytical category. According to her, if we pursue gender as an analytic concept for transgender studies, it would not be able to challenge dominant structured inequalities that socially define sexual differences. Instead, she suggests taking the ontological view of gender as a necessary social organization system, and without a foundation of gender essences, it would be difficult to theorize transgender practices. Nonetheless, Hausman overlooked the genealogy and struggle of trans studies, which prominent transgender scholar Susan Stryker has described.

In 2006, Stryker & Whittle's edited book *Transgender Studies Reader* was published. According to Stryker and Whittle (2006), transgender studies are a form of knowledge that emerged in relation to clinical discursive histories, social movements, and lived experiences of trans people, which contested both queer and feminist positions. They resist the traditional feminist applications of 'trans' as a gender category distinct from 'man' or 'woman' Transgender people occupy the same gender spaces as non-transgender individuals, and gender is not an established territory but rather a set of practices by which potential biopower is cultivated and transformed. However, where gender becomes several sets of variable techniques or temporal practices, the transgender discussion is connected and circulated between the macro and micro-political lives of nations, states, and capital formation (Stryker & Whittle, 2006).

Trans theorization has also been negotiated with psychoanalysis in recent decades. Patricia Elliot's book Debates in *Transgender, Queer, and Feminist Theory: Contested Sites* (2016) focuses on psychoanalytic theory to negotiate a space between trans people's own accounts of surgery and broader theories of gender. By emphasizing how the binary opposition can be reconsidered through psychoanalytic and feminist theory, Elliot develops a relational approach, which aims to blur these rigid binaries. She contends that non-trans feminists may have something to learn from trans people concerning the nature of embodiment itself and its relation to normativity. According to her, psychoanalysis acknowledges the internal complexity of any identity, and it can provide a better way to understand trans people's struggles. While acknowledging that psychoanalysis has a problematic history of pathologizing transsexuals, she argues that a Lacanian framework can be useful for theorizing transsexuality. This perception might be beneficial to understand trans people's internal

identity complexity, but it is not able to explore the political aspects of trans identity construction and also ignores the tension between the 'wrong body' metaphor and the non-binary model.

On the contrary, Bettcher (2014) argues against both the traditional 'wrong body' metaphor of transsexuality and beyond the binary version of transgender politics. She argues that the wrong body metaphor is invalidating trans-self-identity and concentrating on sexual identity and binary gender disruption, representing all trans people as problematic as a male-female binary. She aims to provide an account of trans politics that marginalized trans individuals who identified themselves within the gender binary. She argues neither the binary model nor the "wrong body" model conceptualizes trans women as a subject of sexual oppression. Her central argument is that trans oppression can be understood when we treat identity as analogous to the use of political expression such as 'women'. Furthermore, she writes that "grounding trans oppression and resistance in a transgender model that necessarily locates the resistant potential of trans people beyond the binary, actually we have been trapped in the wrong theory " (Bettcher, 2014, p. 404).

3.2.1. The Relation Between Transgender and Hijra Studies

This research examines whether these transgender theories can analyze hijra in Bangladesh. In most cases, these western transgender theories do not properly fit into hijra in Bangladesh. In many cases, the term transgender could not be synonymous with hijra (Roy, 2016). Hijra studies in South Asia neither developed based on debates between hijra and feminist thought nor on the idea of 'trapped in the wrong body'. Rather hijra studies have been dominated by Indian-centric scholarship. The term hijra refers to an institutionalized subculture of people who are typically born as males and often sacrifice their genitals to get spiritual power (Hossain, 2018, 2020). Hijra cannot be understood through a single categorization, either a religious category or a class-specific group, which I have discussed in chapter six. Hossain (2018) states, "the India-centric approach not only reifies our understanding of the hijra but also perpetuates the spatio-intellectual hegemony of India in South Asian studies" (Hossain, 2018, p. 321). He also mentioned that this India-centricity of scholarship on hijra reflects India's spotless inclusive dominance within South Asian studies. He proposes hijra studies need to adopt a critical regional approach. Johnson states that, "a critical regional approach with its focus on inter/Intra/trans-regional comings and goings opens up new possibilities for re-understanding the production of hijra as well as helps renegotiate the extant privileging of; 'cultural particularity' " (Johnson, 1998, p. 696).

Hossain argues further that this intellectual expansion would also focus on "national spatial scale in the production of knowledge" (Hossain, 2018, p. 322). I agree with Hossain (2018) in the point that hijra studies need to be focused on critical regionality, particularly because hijra in Bangladesh needs to be understood from their socio-cultural context. Each hijra's individual experiences could be

different, and their gender, sexuality, and identity are parts of a complex process in the setting of Bangladesh. However, few western theories and concepts might be helpful in understanding hijra's gender and sexual identity, as discussed in the following sections.

3.2.2 'Third gender' in Traditional Society and the Crisis of the Third Category

Transgender identities have begun to receive more attention in the last few decades, whereas male to female, female to male, or cross-gender is acknowledged in many traditional societies. Scholars classified hijra along with archetypal gender lines, which were outlined as either 'deviant' or as 'liberated' from normative gender categories (Bockrath, 2003; Gairola. 2020; Herdt, 2001; Lal, 1999; Newport, 2018; Pattnaik, 2009). Hijra have become an undisputed inclusion in the representation of international lesbian and gay studies in the early 90s (Barale & Halperin, 1993; Rich et al., 1993) and discusses the gradually global category of the third gender (Cohen,1995; Herdt, 1996). During the 1970s and 1980s, anthropological studies on hijra outline their role as an alternative 'third' sex or 'third gender', which is significantly distinct from the western binary model of sex and gender (Herdt 1994, 2001; Nanda 1984, 1986, 1994, 1999). Though the third gender category has been recognized in many traditional societies, the notion of the third gender is also related to various factors such as culture, religion, customs, power, social status, and politics. Therefore, the diversified aspect of the third gender among traditional societies cannot be analyzed by only focusing on the gender category. In this section, I will discuss the notion of the third gender in the context of the Bugis in South Sulawesi, the 'Sworn Virgins' of northern Albania in the Balkans, and 'Fa'afāfine' in Samoan society.

Transgender in traditional societies is also linked with various discourses, and each traditional society has a distinct perception of transgenderism. For instance, among the Bugis, in addition to males and females, there are three more gendered categories: *calalai*, *calabai*, and *bissu* (Davies, 2007). According to Davies, *calalai* are females who perform male-associated roles in everyday life; *calaba*i are males who perform female-associated roles, and *bissu* is characterized as both male and female and is thought to possess spiritual power. The Bugis perception of gender and sexuality is not related to a person's desire; preferably, it is interconnected with various discourses and subjectivity (Davies, 2010). Similarly, the 'Sworn Virgins' in northern Albania are associated with various discursive practices of patriarchy. The Sworn Virgins are cross-dressing women who live in northern Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro. The 'Sworn Virgin' is rooted in the customary law '*Kanun of Leke Dukagjini'*, where women deny their female identity and take a vow to be virgins, wear male clothing and act like men in particular social conditions. Families without any male children or widows without any male children are forced by the customary law to be Sworn Virgins (Tarifa, 2007). The reason to be a Sworn Virgin is entirely social, not motivated by sexual desire or any physical changes.

Women who are 'Sworn Virgins' of the Balkans are encouraged to become 'social men' and perform masculine social and family roles. Also, swearing to remain a virgin can be viewed as an escape mechanism from the extreme exploitation of patriarchy and women's subordination (Tarifa, 2007). On the other hand, the Samoan Fa'afāfine are biological males who want to be like a woman, and if parents notice this kind of behavior in early childhood, then they raise their children as female. In western representation, Fa'afāfine is often cited as evidence of the acceptance of homosexuality in non-normative sexualities. However, Fa'afāfine is complex sexuality, which is also interlinked with Samoan social structure and various factors (Schmidt, 2016). The Fa'afāfine identity is entirely grounded in Samoan cultural settings, which gender categories cannot explain.

There is also an ongoing debate regarding third gender categorization in the academic community. Martin & Voorhies (1975) first used the term third gender to show that the male-female dichotomy cannot encompass gender categories in some societies (Towl & Morgan, 2002). Herdt (1994) used the term 'third sex' in studying gender/sex conception in the Sambia community of Papua New Guinea. Herdt realized that this concept might not apply to every society; therefore, he argues that the third term gender or 'thirdness' should not be taken too literally. This finding eventually led him to the theoretical intervention of the dominant western paradigm of sex/gender dimorphism. It would be ambiguous to state that there are only three categories of possible gender classification at all times and places. According to Herdt (1994), 'third' is symbolic of other possible combinations that transcend dualism (Davies, 2010). However, Garber (1994) argues that 'the 'third' is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility. It challenges the western concept of 'binarity' in cross-dressing and cultural anxiety. She showed how gender-crossing and cross-cultural exchanges often collapse into one another in the western cultural imagination. Therefore, whether or not western transgender theorization can analyze the lives of hijra will be examined in this research. What follows is the discussion of trans theorization, which is intertwined in the debate of transsexualism and transgenderism.

3.3 The Tensions between Transwomen and Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist

Since the 1990s, there is an ongoing debate surrounding the politicization and conceptualizing between transgender studies and feminism (Elliot, 2016; Jeffreys, 2014; Patricia, 2016). Feminist antagonism, especially towards transwomen, is visible in the last few decades, and the relationship between feminist theory and transgender has a complicated history (Connell, 2012; Hines, 2019). For example, Mary Daly, the leading theorist of U.S. separatist feminism, criticized transsexuality as a 'necrophilic invasion' of women's spirits and bodies in her book, *Gyn/Ecology* (1978). The place of transgender within feminism and feminist theory has long been disputed, which has become known

as 'TERF' (Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist). Raymond's famous book, *The Transsexual Empire* (1979), is evidence of this stance, where she claims, gender is an expression of biological sex, which depends on chromosomes, and it is impossible to change the chromosomes. According to Raymond, the patriarchal medical system transformed a male into a female to construct subservient women. Raymond's perception of transwomen formed a specific feminist perspective on trans femininity, which has been enormously challenging to dispel in both feminist writing and activism (Hines, 2007; 2019).

Similarly, Germaine Greer, arguably one of the most renowned feminists of the 'second wave,' continues to encounter trans women's self-identities and emphasize the perspective. In her book The Whole Woman (1999), Geer ferociously attacked transgender people, particularly transgender women (Stryker, Currah, & Moore, 2008). Greer (1999) takes an essentialist position and argues that our biology dictates our gender identity, and she refers "to surgical intervention as 'mutilation'" (Greer, 1999, p. 65). Once again, like Raymond, she focused on biology and argued that only those who bear children or have menstruation are 'true' women, and according to her, only those assigned females at birth are susceptible to patriarchal oppression. She connects 'transsexualism' with sex work and compares transwomen to rapists (Greer, 1999). Geer gave an interview on the BBC, and she said:

> I don't think post-operative transgender men, MTF (male transform to a female), transgender people are women. I am not saying that people should not be allowed to go through that procedure; what I am saying that it doesn't make them women. A great many women don't think post-operative even, non-post -operative transsexual M to F transsexual people look like, sound like or behave like women. (Greer, B.B.C., News night, 2015)

According to Jeffreys (2014), transsexual women should not exist at all, and she endures reinforcing Raymond's position about the stability of sex and gender; she was aggressively rejecting the gender identities and expressions of trans women and men. According to Jeffreys (2014), transgender is a social construct, and transgenderism is a chosen role. She argues that transgenderism is an exhibition of male subjugated gender hierarchy used by men to subordinate women (Pela, 2015). However, Feminist support towards trans-sexual women at the level of activism, personal relationships, and practice never entirely disappeared.

Trans scholars and activists, including Riddell (1996), Serano (2007), and Stone (1992), amongst others, have written on how Raymond's book impacted feminist communities in the 1970s and 1980s, making divisions that have been tough to heal. Serrano (2007) coined the phrase 'transmisogyny' to explain why TERFs ridicule transwomen and trans femininity. She argues that many second-wave feminists are embedded into 'traditionally sexist notions' where expressions of femininity are an act to mollify the 'desires of men' and that femininity is inferior to masculinity. She argues that

transphobia is deeply rooted in the media's hypersexualized representation of transwomen, portraying them as 'sexual deceivers' (Serano, 2007, p. 17). This suggests that the expressions of femininity only exist to please men and that women (cis or trans) "have no worth beyond their ability to be sexualized" (Serano, 2007, p. 17). Also, she advocates "that transphobia comes from personal insecurity about the gendered pressures, restraints based on sex assigned at birth, and expectations" (Serano, 2007, p.14).

Riddell opined that "Raymond's book did not 'invent' anti-transsexual prejudice, but it did more to justify and perpetuate it than perhaps any other book was ever written" (Riddle, 1996, p.31). Additionally, these scholars focused on the personal impact of *The Transsexual Empire* as it hampered their safety, damage their careers, and divided communities. And the primary concern of these conflicts is the notion of authenticity. In other words, who is, or can be, considered a 'woman.' Penny (2012) criticized Geer and Raymond's work and argued that their work was narrowly focused and could not adopt a more intersectional approach. There is no doubt while TERFs like Raymond and Greer were vital to second-wave feminism, their work on transgender women has not only harmfully impacted the transgender community but has also delayed the progression of contemporary intersectional feminism. The majority of transgender women lived their lives as women and therefore experienced women's oppression but, the question remains: what does it mean to be a 'real woman'?

Nevertheless, feminist thought also insistently dealt with transsexuality in terms of identity (Connell, 2012). The nullification of trans identities is a fundamental issue in trans politics, and the analytical work of deconstructivism of feminist philosophers contributes valuable light to it. The Deconstructionist feminism, especially Butler's work, focused on the "the subversion of identity" (as in the subtitle of Gender Trouble; Butler, 1990), and its extraordinary success unlocked the floodgates of the transgender movement. It advocates the practical demolition of biological gender identity and that assemble structured heterogeneous transgender identity as T with the pre-existing LGB (Connell, 2012).

Identity debates also rise on a specific ground that of symbolism, meaning, and expression, and it took shape, especially the influence of Foucault and Butler's discussion on subjectivity, discourse, category, performativity, and representation. Besides, the study of the body also became a central concern in transgender identity (Connell, 2012). However, transsexual or transgender women's lives, specifically social stigma, are not well articulated by identity discourses. Therefore, to include such issues as the laboring transsexual body, the nature of transition, workplace relations, poverty, and state organizations' functioning, including policy, health, family services, education, and childcare, become significant. Thus, the necessity of intersectionality and 'trans feminism' took place in transgender studies.

3.3.1 The Idea of Transfeminism

The United States, activists Emi Koyama and Diana Courvant used the term transfeminism itself circa 1992, and transfeminism appeal to both women, non-trans, and transwomen to stand for trans oppression being as a woman by using an intersectional approach (Stryker & Bettcher, 2016). The term transfeminism was coined by Emi Koyama (Bettcher & Goulimari, 2017). According to Koyama (2003), "transfeminism is primarily a movement by and for trans women who view their liberation to be intrinsically linked to the liberation of all women and beyond " (Koyama,2003, p.244). The notion of transfeminism is to extend feminism as a whole, not about taking over the existing feminist institutions (Koyama, 2003). With Koyama's lucid definition, there seems a fundamental uncertainty about whether transfeminism is feminism, which wants to include transgendered women's experience and discourses as a fully emancipated part of the feminist spectrum (Heyes 2003).

Outside of the United States, significant transfeminism writings include Ray Tanaka's work, *Toransujenda¯feminizumu* (Transgender Feminism, 2006), which was focused on the intersection of trans and feminist concerns in antidomestic violence activism in Japan. Another work is Miriam Sola' and Elena Urko's *Transfeminismos: Epistemes*, *fricciones y flujos* (Transfeminisms: Epistemes, Frictions, and Flows; 2013), and Jaqueline Gomes de Jesus *et al.*'s *Transfeminismo: Teorias e pra'-ticas* (Transfeminism: Theory and Practice; 2014). They advocate intersectionality for both trans, non-trans, and women to work against sexual violence and gender oppression. It proposes to give support to all the trans and non-trans women and seek non-trans women to take a stand for the trans women in return. Trans feminists embody feminist political coalitions to stand for each other. Julia Serano's influential work, *Whipping Girl: A transsexual woman on sexism and the scapegoating of femininity* (2007), subsequently popularized this notion. The term 'transfeminism' has also been used replacement for 'queer' (Bettcher, 2017).

Koyama's (2003) idea of transfeminism is based on the concept of 'intersectionality'. Transfeminism is a political standpoint that is trying to include trans women into the liberation struggles of women. In other words, it primarily aimed to give transwomen access to and active participation in feminist spaces (Arfini, 2020). According to Koyama (2003), there are two principles of transfeminism. Firstly, each individual has the right to define his/her gender identity and expect society to respect them. It also includes the right to express an individual's gender without fear and discrimination. Secondly, individuals have solo rights to their bodies, and no political, religious, or medical authority has the right to violate the integrity of their body against their will. In other words, individuals have every right to their body, and society should respect the decision they make.

Trans feminists believe that no one can coerce an individual's personal decisions on his/her gender expression to be a 'real woman' or 'real man' Transfeminism is also concerned about how all women,

including trans women, internalize femininity in patriarchal discourses. Koyama (2003) proposes feminism and transfeminism could align against all those gender and gender role stereotypes which disempower women by denying their agency. Arfini (2020) argues that the inclusion of trans perspectives into the feminist movement is a matter of integration of particular identities into a given community and acknowledging shared needs, experience, and intersecting axes of oppression. In other words, transfeminism is a project of emancipation and coalition-building between trans and feminist movements in many forms. For example, Green and Bay (2017) propose to merge black feminism and transfeminism and state that "black feminism and trans feminism is to submerge oneself in a kind of study of life's interstices" (Green & Bay, 2017, p. 438). They argue that both black feminism and transfeminism's contested platform is the social struggle; they have been positioned against sociality rather than identity (Green & Bay, 2017).

On the other hand, transfeminism successfully endorses new corporeal practices for Brazilian Travestis and transsexuals by connecting transfeminism and decolonization (Egaña & Solá, 2016). Brazilian Travestis are politically and historically situated individuals who construct their subjectivities by assigning meanings to themselves. Travesti means identifying someone who struggles against the gender norms through epistemic disobedience and someone who is using her own body as a battlefield to achieve her social recognition. So, by linking transfeminism and decolonization, effectively working to overcome the epistemic violence of travesties and transsexuals in Brazil (Silva & Ornat, 2016). Besides, Stryker & Bettcher (2016) mentioned that transfeminist exploratory lenses are applied to feminist science studies in the biological sciences, the significance of the new materialism for trans studies, radical hip hop in Germany, Khawaja Sara activism in Pakistan, decolonial readings of gender diversity in South America, and grass-roots health activism in Latin America and the United States. They correspondingly stated that it also questions the resurrection of two-spirit perspectives on erotic sovereignty and assisted reproduction for trans women of color in the United States (Stryker & Bettcher, 2016).

Bettcher (2017) argues that though transfeminism wants to establish an intersectional approach towards the recognition of sexist and transphobic oppression, nonetheless regrettably, this movement impedes to proceeding from a pure intersectional framework. Transfeminism emerged in response to the hostile expressions of' 'TERF,' and it was entirely about trans women's liberation. In contrast, trans men are also a part of transphobia and vulnerable to sexism. Therefore, the purpose of interblending between transfeminism and feminism would be ill-advised to exclude a trans man from its purview. It is also important to mention that feminist theory/politics is historically distinct from trans theory and politics. So, the questions arise about how these two different and distinct movements could interact with each other, only based on intersectionality (Bettcher 2017; McKinnon, 2014).

Now I will discuss intersectionality and its connection with feminism, along with the possible contributions to this research.

3.3.2 The Idea of Intersectionality

The idea of intersectionality emerged in the late 1980s and took significant scholarly attention. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a black feminist, and critical race scholar, coined the term 'intersectionality' to address the U.S. black women's particular experience within the black feminist's political and intellectual traditions (Rodó-de-Záratea & Baylinab, 2018). She uses the term intersectionality to underline the 'multidimensionality' of marginalized subjects' lived experiences" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). Scholars across different disciplines and theoretical perspectives have incorporated intersectionality in different ways; some approach intersectionality as theory, some as methodology, and others as a tool for social analysis (Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019).

Intersectionality brings such an idea that gender, class, race, and nation cannot examine distinctive social hierarchies; instead, it shows how they are mutually constructed and interrelated (Collins, 1998). Intersectionality was primarily developed to explain gender and race could not be studied separately and produce a more complex understanding of power structures and social relations. In other words, it develops a dynamic understanding of social relations and power structures. As a theory, intersectionality provides an analytic framework and set of social practices that include the conjunctions of identities, complexity, and power (Hancock, 2016). By rejecting the single-axis framework, the intersectional lens analyses how different social categories are interrelated through dynamic forces.

McCall (2005) claims that methodologically, intersectionality lacks a clear definition; therefore, it applies rigorous methods for examining multi-categories to evaluate social relations and power in multilevel research. (Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019) argue intersectionality as a concept does not provide any particular blueprint for research. Instead, it provides varied strands of thought, pointing to different methodologies for doing intersectional analysis. Alexander-Floyd (2012) argues intersectionality as a research method authorized by marginalized voices and retains its "focus on illuminating women of color as political subjects and the gender, racial, class, and sexual politics that impact their lives " (Alexander-Floyd, 2012, p. 19).

In transgender studies, intersectionality as a theory, method, and analytical frame becomes meaningfully used by several scholars in the last decade (Baril, 2016; Erel et al., 2010; Johnson, 2013; Nash, 2011). Terriquez, Brens & Lopez, (2018) argue that for undocumented youth activists, such as queer and LGBT activists, intersectionality can perform as a collective action frame that outlines social movement dynamics. In other words, based on the necessity of action, collective action frames

can help to build consensus. They state that intersectionality provides a diagnostic framing by revealing different oppression practices, systems, enlightening their collaboration, and underlining how numerous identities relate to these oppressions. Scholars also prioritize intersectionality for the ally of LGBTQ in feminist pedagogy (Lamantia,Wagner & Bohecker, 2015). Tan et al. (2019) state that intersectionality can explain how people with multiple identities, such as transgender people, experience minority stress. Singh (2013) states that ethnic minority experiences, color, and trans identity are inseparable, to explore their discrimination and prejudice in the southern United States (U.S.). She asserts, "a framework of intersectionality is necessary to understand the complex ways that racism and trans prejudice influence the daily lived experiences of U.S. transgender youth of color" (Singh, 2013, p. 691).

Reddy (2006) also suggests studying hijra through intersectionality in the Indian context, but in the context of Bangladesh, hijra cannot identify with one single category. There are multiple issues such as desire, power, poverty, inter-hijra community politics, networking, sexuality, and significant performativity, substantial to identify someone hijra in Bangladesh. The idea of intersectionality could be useful to claim that hijra cannot be placed within one single category.

3.4 Foucault's Argument on 'Sexuality'

During the late 20th-century, western society started to discuss 'sex' and 'sexuality' rationally (Posel, 2004; Phillips, 2016; Spargo, 1999; Ramsay, 2020; Weeks, 2017). And then some questions emerged, such as: why does sex matter to us? Anthropologist Gayle Rubin argues that:

> The realm of sexuality has its own internal politics, inequities, and modes of oppression. As with other aspects of human behavior, the concrete institutional forms of sexuality at any given time and place are products of human activity. They are imbued with conflicts of interest and political maneuverings, both deliberate and incidental. In that sense, sex is always political. But there are also historical periods in which sexuality is more sharply contested and more overtly politicized. In such periods, the domain of erotic life is, in effect, renegotiated (Rubin, 1984, p. 4).

It seems clear from the statement that sex is not only a biological or natural thing; instead, it is deeply political. Sex has been renegotiated through history and power, which institutionalized sexuality as a regulative norm, and Foucault is the pioneer who locates sex and sexuality as a form of discursive practice. Foucault argues that sexuality cannot be treated as a natural or biological fact of human life; rather, it is a constructed category of experience that originated from a historical, social, and cultural aspect.

Foucault's idea of discursive sexuality is a prime catalyst for queer theory (Callis, 2009; Spargo, 1999). To analyzed hijra sexuality, this research applied Foucault's concept of 'governmentality' and 'sexuality'. Governmentality is a study of autonomous individuals' capacity for self-control, which is linked to forms of political rule and exploitation (Profant, 2013). The idea of governmentality is an interaction between the concept of the technology of self and the technology of domination. To govern the self is not a way to force him or her to do what that the governor wants. Instead, it is a versatile equilibrium between power and techniques that ensure the process through which an individual modifies the self. Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) that the subject's body is not their own; the state governs their body. He makes a connection between forms of power and processes of subjection. Understanding how gender discourses shape hijra bodies and how the regulatory norms govern hijra sexuality is one of the vital objectives of this research. Hence Foucault's perception of sexuality and governmentality is significant to analyze the sexual politics of hijra in Bangladesh.

Foucault's prime concern was to understand and analyze the historical construction of sexuality by adopting the genealogy of sexuality. Genealogy is a method that focuses on historical perspectives that offer an intrinsic critique of the present (Crowley, 2009). It offers the critical skills to analyze and expose the relationship between knowledge, power, and human subjects in modern society. Also, it is a conceptual tool to understand how being (self) has been shaped and re-shaped by historical forces. It aims is to uncover or unfold the history to analyze the multiple, unstable, and contingent origins and the dissolution of inimitable historical phenomena such as sexuality (Clark-Huckstep, 2016; Crowley, 2009; Foucault, 1981; Koopman, 2018; Moore, 2020; Patton, 1998; 2017).

Foucault highlights how during the period of the nineteenth century "when this singular form of experience, sexuality, took shape is particularly complex" (Foucault, 1984, p. 338). He emphasizes the relationship between the experience of sexuality and history; in other words, Foucault points out that all sexual encounters have an exact and distinctive historical genesis. Within the domain of historical emergence, our experience of sexuality is a product of systems of knowledge. According to Foucault, the genesis of sexuality cannot ignore the modalities of nineteenth-century power. He was pointing on how these systems make us subjects and the way systems of knowledge shape us as subjects. After the ninth century, the system of knowledge produced the discourse of sexuality, which also determined how we think and shape ourselves as subjects. According to Foucault, the individual is created through discourse created by systems of knowledge, which is significantly related to power. His inquiry was the 'repressive hypothesis' of the Victorian era, and he analyzes how sexuality is far from hidden and forbidden thought/speech during the last two centuries. His prime focus was the center of an absolute explosion of the discourse of sexuality.

3.4.1 Sexuality as Discourse

In the 19th century, sexuality was starting to crumble under the prime surface of bourgeois decency by prohibitions and repressions. Foucault rejected this 'repressive hypothesis', and he focused not on the rehabilitation of talking about sexuality but on an extraordinary proliferation of discourse about sexuality. Hence, the question arises, what is Foucault's definition of sexuality? Foucault (1978) pointing out how sex acts become medicalized by analyzing the interstices of knowledge, power, and discourse. Also, he explains how the categorization of sexuality has been created through a combination of specification, belief in truth, and discourse. Hence, he focused on the creation of a homosexual person and homosexuality in the west. He stated that "sexuality in western culture is understood as *scientia sexualis*, rather than ars-erotica, or as a matter of science rather than a matter of pleasure (Foucault, 1978, p. 58)". Foucault (1978) argued that sexuality was controlled by various forms of knowledge, such as medicine, biology, and psychology in the nineteenth century. Also, in the 19th century, medicine "created an entirely organic, functional, or mental pathology arising out of 'incomplete' sexual practices" (Foucault, 1978. p. 41). This incomplete sexual practice created such knowledge that put aside all the other forms of sexual practices except the conjugal sexual relations in the discourse of sexuality.

Foucault argues that people understand reality based on the governed rules, and those governed rules are discourse. Discourse contains such rules, norms, and regulations of classifications, inclusions, and exclusion, which govern knowledge content. Also, individuals often unconsciously follow all those norms and are not aware that they are being governed through those discourses (Foucault, 1981). Discourses could be embodied or derived from language (both speech and writing), material objects, and practices, including knowledge (Dant, 2013). According to Foucault, power and knowledge are in wedded relations and directly imply each other within the discourse. He argues, without knowledge, power relations cannot exist, and without a field of knowledge, knowledge cannot be created nor exist without power (Morrow, 1995; Patton, 1998). Foucault said:

> If sexuality was constituted as an area of investigation, this was because relations of power had established it as a possible object; and conversely, if power was able to take it as a target, this was because techniques of knowledge and procedures of discourse were capable of investing it. Between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power, there is no exteriority. (Foucault, 1981, p. 98)

Foucault argued sexuality as a discourse embedded in cultural and historical processes conditions the possibilities of subjectivities and bodies (Priola et al., 2018). Sexuality itself is embedded within the norm, which makes individuals sexual subjects either heterosexual or homosexual. This subject-making process is deeply rooted in the institutional mechanisms of state power. Foucault contends

sexuality has been created through discourse, and discourses outline what sexuality is and what is not. He stated,

> Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct, not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledge, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power. (Foucault, 1981, pp. 105–106)

According to Foucault, sexuality is neither a biological nor a natural fact; rather, sexuality is a constructed category from historical, cultural, and social experiences. Foucault entirely rejected the biological dimension of sexuality and prioritized the significance of the institutional knowledge process that constructed the discourse of sexuality, by which we decide whom we should want, what we should want, and how we want.

Also, Foucault connects a relation between sexuality and subjectivity, which do not exist outside of discourse. For him, subjectivity is entirely discursive and creates a link between sexuality and the subject by pointing sexuality itself is the product of certain forms of power-knowledge which become the most significant source of identity for modern subjects' (Dini & Briganti, 2017; Foucault; 2019; Weeks, 2017). According to Foucault, sexuality and the subject are the creations of discourse, and they don't have any existence outside of discourse, and if it is a fact, then there is no escape to define sexuality from power and knowledge, and human or sexual liberation is impossible within this discursive practice. However, I would explain how Foucauldian analysis of sexuality as discourse does not fit to analyze hijra sexuality in the context of Bangladesh in chapter six because the sexual practices of hijra are neither discursive nor governed in the way Foucault explained sexuality in the context of Bangladesh.

3.5 The Distinction between Sex and Gender

During the 1970s and early 1980s, sex and gender distinction became central among the Anglo-American and Australian feminist theories. This distinction is underpinned by 'essentialism versus constructionism' debates. The motive was to denaturalize gender from biological determinism, and feminists used to take – the view that 'biology is destiny' and highlight cultural diversity and the constructions of masculinity and femininity (Gill, 2008). In 1970, Stoller was the first to distinguish between the terms gender and sex (Mikkola, 2016), which was primarily accepted among feminists. The term sex describes the biological characteristics, and the term gender describes how much

feminine and masculine behavior an individual display (Stoller, 2020). The term sex refers to individuals' chromosomal composition, which determines if one is male or female or intersex (Becker McClellan & Reed, 2017; Oakley, 2015; Stoller, 2020; Unger,1979). On the contrary, "the term gender serves to reduce assumed parallels between biological and psychological sex or at least to make explicit any assumptions of such parallels" (Unger, 1979, p. 1086). Society used to prescribe specific characteristics for men and women based on assigned sex (Bem, 1981; Broverman et al., 1972; Forsberg, 2019; Smith et al., 2019; Vaughter, 1976). Such masculine or feminine qualities have also been assigned based on this sex category (Factor & Rothblum, 2017; Green, Benner & Pear, 2018; Unger, 1979). Money (1988) explained sex as a natural category by developing the linked concepts of gender roles.

On the contrary, anthropologist Rubin (1975) denied the fact that sex plays any significant role in producing social inequality between men and women. Instead, she emphasizes the social structure deeply embedded in feminist politics. Benjamin (1995) claims that gender cannot be understood simply as an attribute of individuals; instead, it is a set of hierarchical relations among the other gendered subjects. However, many studies have focused on sex, and gender is different based on 'sex differences' (Deaux, 1985; Edwards, Honeycutt, & Zagacki, 1989; Eagly, 2013; McGeown et al., 2012) and others have referred based on "gender differences" (Blier & Blier-Wilson, 1989; Eckert, 1989; McGeown et al., 2012).

3.5.1 Judith Butler's Idea about Sex and Gender

Beauvoir's (1973) famous dictum is "one is not born, but instead becomes, a woman" (p. 301). In contrast, Judith Butler argues that gender is neither pre-cultural nor pre-discursive, sex-based on cultural construction; instead of the category of sex itself is a gendered category. According to Butler (1986), gender is something that we gradually acquire. She argued that "if the distinction is consistently applied, it becomes unclear whether being given sex has any necessary consequence for becoming a given gender (Butler, 1986, p. 35)." Later, she stated that "sex is as culturally constructed as gender" (Butler, 1990, p. 10). She proclaims sex as a cultural construction, and one's repetitive acts confirm gender identity through performativity. She argues that there is no sex, which is not always already culturally constructed as gender. As claimed by her, our bodies are gendered from the beginning of our social existence, and there is nothing we can address as 'natural body,' and there is no existence other than social; thus, sex pre-exists in its cultural inscription. She argues that sex is an ideal construct, not a simple fact or condition of the body.

Yet again, Butler is more concerned about deconstructing the binary opposition instead of examining sex and/or gender categories to analyze the essential role of 'binary opposition' and 'compulsory heterosexuality.' Her basic idea is embodied selves "do not pre-exist the cultural conventions, which

essentially signify bodies" (Butler, 1988, p. 526). Instead, she focuses on "the foundational categories of identity the binary of sex, gender, and the body which can be shown as productions that create the effect of the natural, the original and the inevitable" (Butler 1990, p. viii). Therefore, she wants to expose these foundational categories and desire as "effects of a specific form of power" (1990, p. x) in a Foucauldian/Nietzschean aspect of power. She analyzes how 'the regulatory norms of sex perform in the service of the 'heterosexual matrix,' in her book *Gender Trouble*, and later, she discusses how it becomes in the service of the 'heterosexual hegemony' in her book *Bodies that Matter*. Butler argues that subjectivity does not involve the notion of the pre-existing subject of power and discursive act; instead, subjects are formed through their discursive constituted identity.

According to Butler, the ideal normative rigid heterosexuality, accompanied by the consequent misrecognition and non-acknowledgment of homosexuality and other types of sexual diversity, sexual desire, and choices, is a formidable tool for the continuous production and reproduction of the mononuclear and heterosexual family (Arruzza, 2015). Butler also draws attention to lesbian and gay sexuality insights and the desire to claim that reproductive heterosexuality has been treated as a normative ideal as such fictional. She argues that it has been exposed in such a way gender discontinuity in gay, lesbian, bisexual; on the contrary, in a heterosexuality context, gender necessarily does not follow from sex and desire. This normative ideal produces a false sense of coherence and stability, which creates the reproductive heterosexuality and serves to hide the gaps which destabilize the expressive model of gender identity on which it is grounded. Thus, Butler focus on the performative constitution of sexed identity.

Butler (2011) was not concerned about body materiality; in its place, she emphasizes body materialization, followed us to rethink the meaning of the social construction of gender beyond that obscure in the essentialism versus constructionism dichotomy. She develops her performativity theory based on Derrida's speech act theory, and she reworks the approach to focus on how and which bodies are materialized as sexed. This is a crucial change, rework of adaptation of speech act theory for her idea of gender performativity, which makes a significant difference between theatrical models of performance and performativity. Butler opined that "gender is not something one is, it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a 'doing' rather than a 'being'" (Butler, 1990, p. 2). According to her, gender is the repeated stylization of the body and a set of repeated acts within the normative regulative frame that produces and reproduces the appearance of the substance of a natural being (Butler, 1999). Butler is pointing to gender as a process as she identifies, "gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame" (Butler, 1999, p. 43). However, she is not suggesting that the subject can freely choose his or her gender. Because 'the script' gives a limited number of customs for a subject to choose the gender style within the regulatory frame.

Butler competes against an essentialist view of gender and the sexed body. She argues that the appearance of the ontological status of gender is nothing but an outcome of a series of regulatory practices. Therefore, gender is socially constructed, and this social construction of gender makes the body socially visible. Also, as our bodies follow the normative regulations and go through a series of social practices, it becomes gendered. Hence, the claim, the body is not a 'being,' but it is a variable boundary and a surface whose permeability is regulated politically, and it is performed within a hierarchical compulsory heterosexual cultural field.

3.5.2 Butler's Idea on Gender Performativity

To develop her idea on gender performativity, Butler points to the relationship between language, gender, sex, and sexuality. She was also made reference to the relations between body, power, and social regulation, subjectivity. Butler introduces her idea of gender performativity in the first chapter of '*Gender Trouble'* quoting by Nietzsche- "there is no 'being' behind doing, acting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction imposed on the doing—the doing itself is everything" (Nietzsche, 1969, p., 45) to establish her claim. She further said, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1999, p. 33).

Butler (1988), in one of her early papers titled *'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,'* draws attention to the distinction between performance in a theatrical sense and performance in a performative sense. According to her, gender proves to be a performance, and performance constitutes identity. Hence, she said, "gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed" (Butler, 1999, p. 33). However, Butler is not saying that gender is a performance; instead, she focuses on the significance of distinguishing between performance and performativity. She gave an interview on gender performance, and she mentioned that "whereas performance presupposes a pre-existing subject, performativity contests the very notion of the subject" (Osborne & Segal, 1994, p. 33). She also mentioned that linguistic theories are significant in her formulations of gender, emphasizing how linguistic performativity is connected to gender.

According to Butler, gender is an act that brings a being into the names in the context of a "masculine" man or a "feminine" woman. Therefore, gender identities are constituted and constructed by language. In other words, language and discourse 'do' gender, and there is no gender identity that precedes language. Butler mentioned 'I' does not have any meaning outside language until its identity with signifying practice. According to her, the formulaic proclamation of it is a boy or girl, starting from our birth and individuals, family, and society is consciously busy creating and recreating the differences between them along culturally normative lines. The ways we talk about and the ways we

talk with each other are a significant fragment of how gender identities are constituted and understood as normative. Butler emphasizes that "there is no such thing as gender identity outside the ways it is constituted as a social temporality" (Butler, 1990, p. 141).

Based on the theory of performativity, gender is always doing rather than a noun. It is neither considered as an absolute identity nor constitute any fixed locus of agency. Therefore, gender cannot be accomplished by following a settled derive. Instead, 'gender' can be perceived as an identity that is unconvincingly taking shape over time. "Gender could be better understood as a mutating and transitory of cultural intelligibility of agency within the frame of social temporality" (Butler, 1990, p.179). She further stated:

> gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts . . . This formulation moves the conception of gender off the ground of a substantial model of identity to one that requires a conception of gender as a constituted social temporality. (Butler, 2008, p. 191)

Butler claims that gender is the social outcome of a set of regulatory norms and identified with these very regulatory practices having been performed. According to her, gender is not a fact, and gender has neither an 'essence' nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires because various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and there would be no gender without those acts. Therefore, gender is both the sedimentation of a series of norms over time and corporeal styles. Besides, the practices that enact these styles repeating over time, and all those perform gender produce gendered subjects. Time is a crucial factor in both cases to create a gendered subject, and therefore, she defined gender as a constituted social temporality.

This research will apply her idea of performativity to analyze the relation between hijra body materiality and their identity. According to Butler, performativity is a set of norms that are performed rather than a single act, and this will be key to discussing the theoretical dilemma of the hijra identity. Her arguments of the plurality of identity and the analysis of self through interaction with power and society are useful in understanding the dual identity of hijra and their negotiation with regulative gender norms and power structures. In chapter seven, I have used Butler's idea of gender performativity to analyze my ethnographical data and found that no one can be a hijra just declaring herself a hijra; instead, she established herself as one through her repetitive act.

This research will also address the importance of sexuality, body politics, and identity of hijra that are recognized as the core of their identity, especially for those who adopt survival strategies. Such strategies include substantial levels of physical exertion, where a set of rules shapes the sexed body. These strategic places have social appeal, where hijra work to present themselves to the public, create sexual appeal to attract male attention, and earn money in more 'politically correct' ways. These

gestures and expressions are a sign of their gender performativity, which is not only governed by the person or gender rules; instead, it is bound up with the socio-political conditions. Obligatory norms and the reproduction of hijra identities are thus always a matter of negotiation with power.

3.6 Summary

The literature concerning hijra gender, sexuality, and sex in Bangladesh is particularly limited; hence, I distinguished the necessity to apply the Foucauldian thought of sexuality as a discourse to analyze hijra sexuality in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, I have found that Foucault's notion does not fit well enough to verify hijra sexual practices in Bangladesh as a discourse on popular thinking about the sexuality of hijra, which I will establish in chapter seven. In addition, the gender identity of a hijra in Bangladesh cannot be apparent by simply considering the theories of trans studies nor by India-centric hijra scholarship. It may be observed in contemporary feminist thought, particularly during the third wave of feminism, the idea of gender and sex has undergone critical changes, and thus the impression of gender and sex cannot be outrightly different anymore.

Butler argues sex itself is a social construction, gender is related to social temporality, and individual identity is related to gender performativity. Since Bangladeshi hijra do not confine themselves to any particular frame, it may be noted that Butler's idea of gender performativity and social temporality is fairly applicable to perceived hijra in Bangladesh, which I have further detailed in chapter eight. One thing that should be referenced is that there is no evidence of debate or conflict found with feminist thoughts, political movements, practices about hijra sex and sexuality. Rather, in recent days, feminist movements in Bangladesh considered hijra as their allies in some cases, which opened up the possibility that transfeminism could be effective in Bangladesh to establish equal rights. Besides, there is an ongoing crisis on how to define or categorize hijra in South Asia as well as in Bangladesh. Considering all the issues, I would like to say that hijra should not be defined by placing them in a specific category, but there are many differences between them in Bangladesh, which are discussed in detail in chapters five and six. It is nonetheless vital to note that hijra could not be defined either as a cultural or working-class category; neither can they be perceived as a sex category or defined within a specific gender identity. Therefore, I propose to characterize them as a complex gender identity, which could be observed through intersectional lenses, and I have specified this in chapter five. Furthermore, Though India-centric hijra scholarship cannot uncover the reality of Bangladeshi hijra gender and sexuality, apparently, their social and legal dehumanization process is meaningfully interlinked with the British colonial legacy, which I will discuss in chapter nine.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This study applied a variety of qualitative methods to conduct ethnographic research to analyze the dynamic parts of hijra life in Bangladesh. This research is divided into two different phases. In the first phase, I have used participant observation, narratives, and case studies to collect the primary data from hijra. In the second phase, I collected data from the NGO workers and government officials by using focus group interviews, open-ended questioners, and in-depth interviews. The thematic method is used to analyze the data and to maintain the research confidentiality; it uses pseudonyms for hijra and NGO professionals to remain unidentified. This research has got ethical approval from AUTEC to maintain the research reliability.

4.1.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter has outlined the research epistemology, methods, research setting, fieldwork, and data collection method. In addition to the introduction and summary, this chapter comprises six sections. To begin with, I will present how postmodernism as an examination epistemology is suitable for this project. Second, I will illustrate what ethnography is and how ethnography fits this study as a method, and in this section, I will also discuss its reflective nature. Third, I will design my preparation before I start conducting fieldwork. In the fourth section, I will focus on participants' consent to discuss privacy and research strategies. In the fifth section, I will draw the research outline to describe how I accessed my participants and entered the field. In the sixth section, I will design two separate phases of my fieldwork. Finally, I will end with a summary of the fieldwork and methodological research settings.

4.2 Research Epistemology

The epistemological position of this project is postmodernism, one of the most influential philosophical movements of the late twentieth century (Sim, 2013; Nicholson, 2013; Chistyakova, 2015; Silverman, 2017), as a direct reaction to modernity and modernism (Wilson, 1997; Szostak, Navakas & Fiscella , 2007; Hatch, 2018). While modernism seeks universal truths about society and the world and is linked to seeking or uncovering an 'objective truth' (Reiss, 2018), postmodernism emphasizes the diversity and multiplicity of truth and reality (Hansen, 2006). Postmodernism does not seek to 'uncover' absolute or universal truths; instead, it firmly focuses on contextualized analyses and exploring multiple perspectives of truth (Herman, 1993).

There are two core principles of postmodern research. Firstly, there is a skepticism towards meta-narratives and exploring how truth, power, and knowledge operate in society to produce such meta-narratives. Secondly, postmodern research is open to diversity and inclusiveness. It emphasizes the difference and the fragmentation of daily lives. Postmodern epistemology provides a set of tools and distinctive ways of thinking that encourage researchers to critically analyze daily lives and the way many 'truths" are taken-for-granted. It offers a way to set people free to think differently about their experiences, ideas, and practices. In the postmodern aspect, there is no absolute truth, and knowledge is unstable. It is historically and socially contextual, and therefore, is likely to be different tomorrow from what it is today (Nicholls, 2012).

4.2.1 Postmodernism in Gender and Sexuality

Concerning this project, it is important to outline how the postmodern approach shapes my theoretical understanding of gender and sexuality. In postmodern feminism, the notion of a binary and essentialist gender perspective is problematic when investigating power dynamics (Tong, 2014). Postmodern feminists reject the single idea of the truth about 'womanhood'. They promote the notion that there are multiple meanings of gender roles and realities. Thus, they disagree that all women are sharing a particular lived experience.

Individuals were seen as fluid subjects who were continuously renegotiating their senses of self (Allan, 2011). By employing the postmodern frame, Lev (2004) discussed a person's fluidity of identities across the four categories of sex, sexual orientation, gender, and gender role. Postmodern feminists also reject the idea that all women are assigned as females at birth (Jourian, 2015). Butler (1990, 1993, 2004) seeks to de-essentialize gender and argued that sex is a construction, and this construction causes gender, and that gender causes desire. She also argued that gender and desire are flexible, expressed as variables, and not instigated by other stable factors such as sex. Other postmodern feminist scholars have asserted that 'sex' itself is not constant. Wilchins (1997) defined sex as a verb rather than a noun, which contains the sense that we also 'do' sex, as we 'do' gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Hence, postmodern feminism contests the static notion of sex, gender, and sexuality, with the notion that there is an essential and indestructible association between assigned sex and gender identity or expression that gender should be de-essentialized, even when we do consider gender, it should be as a fluid variable rather than a fixed trait.

In addition to the postmodern feminist critique of gender as a de-essentialized and variable construct, the queer theory also concerns itself with the concept of nonconformity and critiquing normativity differently. Queer theory is a set of approaches that deconstructs identity concepts concerning gender and sexuality in particular (Edwards & Jones, 2009). Queer theory counterattacks the notions of

objective truths. It seeks to interrupt the notion of 'homonormativity' (Duggan, 2002; Nast, 2002; Puar, 2006), CIS normativity (Koyama, 2002; Serano, 2007; Hammond, 2010), and heteronormativity as well as identity politics itself. However, 'homonormativity' describes an assumption that sexual, romantic relations and actions between the same sex are as normal as in for the opposite sex. Moreover, homonormativity states and analyzes how certain forms of 'assimilated' homosexuality have themselves become normative and merged within the logic of heteronormativity (Brown, 2009). Therefore, Duggan (2002) proclaims homonormativity as 'the sexual politics of Neoliberalism'. On the other hand, CIS normativity is a belief system underpinning transphobia, which assumes that one's gender identity only matches one biological sex (Pyne, 2011). According to Bauer et al. (2009), the term CIS normativity' refers to such an assumption that all those born as males will certainly become men, and all those born as females will certainly become women.

Butler's (1990) thesis again illustrates its significance here, as she explored the volatility of gender and sexuality and their consistent expressions. She said, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1990, p. 25). These expressions are altered, modified, and change as individuals impact society and, as a society, affect individuals, endlessly producing and reproducing gender and sexuality. However, certain forms of sexualized and gendered knowledge become normalized and privileged heterosexuality and cisgenderism (Foucault, 1978). Heteronormativity and cisnormativity derive from this favoring, which permits cisgender heterosexual individuals to define that which is natural and acceptable. Resistance is a primary force in queer theory, which provides a framework to resist heteronormativity and cisnormativity. Nevertheless, identities are neither static nor assigned to birth; rather it constructed through everyday performance. Consequently, the assigned sex during birth, a person's gender, and sexuality cannot be predetermined.

Therefore, it is not possible to justify any form of research on transgender if the heteronormative conception of gender is not presupposed. Foucault criticized the modernist understanding of gender and its rationale behind the heteronormative conception of it. Furthermore, modernism pursues knowledge and truth to be neutral, objective, and universal as the progress of emancipation. Foucault analyzed them as essential components of power and domination and opened the possibility of multiple discourses and interpretations. Postmodernism emphasizes the dialogues between discourses and interpretations.

The postmodern turn has destabilized the male-female gender identity by disputing the validity of dominant concepts such as sex and gender, woman and man, gay and straight (Edwards & Jones, 2009). Moreover, the transgender theory is rooted in postmodern epistemology, highlighting gender fluidity, sexual ambiguity, and problematized male-female gender categories (Rectenwald, 2018). This research analyzes the problematic notion of hijra gender categorization, gender performativity,

and their sexual fluidity, and therefore, postmodernism epistemology provides a sound basis for this research.

4.3 Research Methodology

Using a qualitative approach in the form of ethnography, I explore the lives of hijra from their narrations, life stories, case studies, and participation observations from their everyday lives in this study. Qualitative research focuses on context and process, which typically involves introductory analysis, where the researcher focuses on the specific behavior of the participants (Hartley, 2004)) Thus, it is an ethnographic project, and it uses ethnographic tools and techniques for data collection and data analysis

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4.3.1 What is Ethnography?

The meaning of ethnography is 'writing about people', where the essential cognitive mode is 'observation' (Gobo,2008). It refers to a combination of both first-hand empirical study, theoretical and relative interpretation of social organization, and culture (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Ethnography is a qualitative approach where the researcher explores aspects of a particular culture, including its values, behaviors, and beliefs. Moreover, ethnography is the science and art of describing a culture or a group (Fetterman, 1998; Butler, 2008; Spradley, 2016). Hammersley (2018) states that defining ethnography is difficult, though the following points have been made (Lutz, 1981; Brewer, 2000; Hobbs, 2006, Mitchell, 2007) to define ethnography:

- Ethnography involves a comparatively long-term data collection process.
- Ethnography takes place in naturally occurring settings.
- The basis of ethnography is participant observation.
- Generally, ethnography is a personal engagement.
- Ethnography employs a diverse range of data recording methods (or includes a diverse range of data) that aim to document what actually goes on.
- Ethnography underlines the significance of the meanings people give to objects, together with themselves, in the course of their actions and activities; and
- The focus of ethnography is holistic.

By referring to Rose (1990), Hammersley (2018) also affirms that "ethnography is frequently not limited to methods of research design, data collection, and analysis, but extends to methodological, ontological, epistemological, ethical, and political ideas. Moreover, indeed, some see ethnography as

a 'paradigm,' incommensurable with others, or even as a way of life" (Hammersley 2018, p., 6). Therefore, ethnography refers to a specific mode of research practice in Anthropology. While ethnography is typically associated with anthropology, it is also suitable for other social sciences. Subsequently, the meaning of ethnography has come from different things to different people. Therefore, 'ethnographic mapping diversity' is a phrase that resists any overarching disciplinary definition (Atkinson et al., 2001). Despite the similarity and disjuncture across the social sciences about ethnography's essential features, there is at least a harmony on what is typically called 'participant observation.'

Participation observation is a form of embodied and embedded practice that constitutes the principal of an ethnographic method. Ethnographers anticipate offering a 'thick description' through in-depth observation and close experience of submergence into the community (Geertz, 1973). The exclusivity of 'thick description' allows the ethnographer to convey the situated knowledge, i.e., the knowledge that rises at the aperture of an ethnographer's extended encounter with the community in an embodied time and space (Faier & Rofel, 2014). The issue of ‘extended encounter' is usually a classical anthropological approach (Faubion & James 2007).

This research focuses on a relatively unacknowledged group like hijra, and the following three reasons stimulated me to choose ethnography as a research methodology for this project. Firstly, ethnographers are always conscious of researching in a naturalistic setting (Hammersley, 2016). Secondly, ethnography's data collection process is holistic, inductive, and dialogic (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Taylor, 2017; Tracy, 2019). Thirdly, my twelve years-long training in anthropology allows me to perform both as an observer and participant to collect the data in multiple ways for triangulation over a year throw ethnography. I subscribe to this view of ethnography as a prolonged engagement into the cultures underneath the study is aligned with this perspective not only because it authorizes an extended 'plunge' into the community to understand hijra lives through the holistic approach, but also because of my previous extensive engagement with hijra in Dhaka city inspired me to conduct this ethnographic research.

4.3.2 The Reflexive Nature of Ethnography

When an ethnographer enters the research setting for the first time, it is an entry into a new physical and cultural setting and an entry into an intricate complexity of power dynamics and social relations in human action and interaction. Ethnographic fieldwork would be more complicated when an ethnographer is privileged by social class, gender, or place of birth—is positioned in a cross-cultural setting where the researched people have been represented as 'underdeveloped,' customarily 'marginalized' and historically 'disadvantaged' (McSweeny, 2019). This additional complication requires researchers to reflect on their own social positions relative to their observation. Reflective

questions include how an ethnographer acknowledges the researcher and researched relation and how the ethnographer's perception influences observation while conducting the fieldwork. It is critical to consider these questions in the ethnographic discussion as underpinning reflexivity.

Historically, most social scientific research excluded the researcher cautiously from the research by viewing the researcher's position as 'disembodied objective knowledge'. However, after the reflexive turn in the 1980s, ethnographic exercise started to question the ethnographer's embodied subjectivity concerning the studied participants (Hossain, 2013). Consequently, the researcher's role in ethnography is distinct from other positivist scientific research methods; ethnographers frequently cross-examined the meaning-making of the data and the method of ethnographic praxis (O'Reilly, K.2012). In other words, the ethnographer's positionality and the people who are studied are also equally significant to ethnography. During the period of postmodernism, the hierarchical relation between the researcher and the researched was continuously interrogated. This hierarchy is tangled in the whole research process, from the fieldwork to the writing of the text (Nilan, 2002). However, this unequal and hierarchical power relation between the researcher and the research could not make it accurate of the research process in other methodologies. In recognition of this entanglement, ethnographers consciously make it explicit to use their privilege, status, and own authorial position to explore the researched people's lives and culture.

4.3.3 The Holistic Approach of Ethnography

The ethnographer's skill relates to one of the essential views of anthropological fieldwork called 'holism.' The advantage of 'holism' is that it permits the ethnographer to view and get a 'fuller' understanding of the studied people. Though the ethnographic virtue of 'holism' is not beyond criticism, ethnography is holistic in the sense that by being absorbed in the ongoing activities of the people over an extensive period, an ethnographer allows learning about the people from different perspectives (Falzon,2016). Moreover, an ethnographer's skill allows completing an incomplete picture of the studied culture or people, which might not be possible through the formalized interview or a structural questionnaire survey (Pink, 2015).

There is a distinctive salience that emerges through a significant alliance of the 'practice' of ethnography. For example, an interview is one of the most used data-collection techniques in social science. The speech, which is gathered through interviews, forms the framework for the following text (Rutter et al., 2003). Ethnographers also conduct interviews and base their research profoundly on the subsequent texts; however, in addition to this interview, the non-verbal ethnographic context is equally significant for a trained ethnographic eye (Pink, 2013). Ethnographers have unique abilities to visualize, to understand the melody of the field, distinctly glance at space, having a profound

interaction with the climate, absorb all the aroma of shrouded words and retain and standpoints under examination to fortify the, generally speaking, ethnographic methodology (Campelo, 2017).

For ethnographic research, another vital issue is the ethnographer's skill is to develop a rapport with participants and gather data over the long term. It is significant to build a relationship involving good rapport with the participants and share life and befriend the participants. In other words, it is about creating a situation where participants feel free to speak openly and confidently about themselves. While social science researchers often similarly used data-collection as their fieldwork, Wolcott (2016) draws a substantial distinction between data-collection and fieldwork. Because ethnography is not about collecting the data, instead it is all about gathering them. Ethnography doesn't collect the data in an impersonal way but rather through long-term intimate submergence in the participants' lives. Therefore, ethnography is now more like a 'performing arts', where the ethnographer is a live performer from the first time entering the field (Pelias, 2018). Is this because of the initial rapport (like interviews), or is it deeper because they see the acts of the participants? Nevertheless, an ethnographer is somehow part of the group, and therefore, it feels easy because they find it difficult to open up with an outsider, that is, how rapport is built by an ethnographer different from rapport built by other social science qualitative researchers.

By adopting ethnography to explore and interpret hijra, I made no dubious claims in favor of scientific purpose. Instead, I acknowledged my position in this project. Because of this partial character of ethnography, several branches of the social sciences consider anthropology as overboard. Yet, for me, it is a disciplined feature that sets ethnography apart from other branches, which gives it a more structured and distinct approach for my study. Instead of discussing all the backdrop of ethnography, it is worth proving how I formed as an ethnographer for my fieldwork with hijra individuals in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and the part below that will discuss my preparation for fieldwork for this project.

4.4 Preparation before Starting the Fieldwork

Although it is difficult to be fully prepared for all the imaginary events that may occur during the ethnographic study, some steps can be taken to be ready. Ethnographic information can be gathered from numerous sources and comes not only from interview results but also from effective investigations. Conversations between participants, their behavior, expressions, observational notes, field diaries, and any other effective media such as events, music, mythological texts, and gossip can all be key aspects of anthropological work (O'Reilly, 2012).

Nevertheless, these sources can produce only a straightforward account of culture, which Geertz addressed as a 'thin description' (Geertz. 1973). A thin description does not label and relates the

findings with the local social codes of those events. Therefore, Geertz expects a 'thick description' in an ethnographic study. Geertz's interest in 'thick description' because shows the desire for an insider's perspective. To critically analyze the hijra gender and explore their lives are the central issues of this study, which can only be entirely understood within a broader contextual reality of hijra.

In preparing for fieldwork, I undertook a number of tasks to produce a 'thick description' of my ethnography. As I mentioned earlier, I had an extensive relationship with a few hijra, and along these lines, I was favored to have my past involvement in them made me all set on the field, it was an added benefit to know the language of the field to enrich the data quality (Beattie, 2013; Spradley, 2016). Hijra have their spoken language called *Ulti*, and I learned this language from my hijra friends before entering the field. Therefore, I was able to take a 'native' ethnographic image to understand their language and culture from their perspective. I was observant of the factors related to the internal-external condition. However, my social and gender identity as a woman in Bangladeshi society made it complicated in some cases because all my participants are hijra, not female. Bangladeshi middle-class society perceives hijra as a taboo, which is also evident in Hossain's work (2014); thus, dealing with them as a middle-class Bengali researcher was not very easy.

Native anthropologists also face some other limitations. For instance, while local anthropologists are accustomed to similar phenomena, it can be significant to look at the things needed during fieldwork. Therefore, when I was ready to work in this field, I prepared a precise checklist considering the limitations of a local ethnographer, such as observation protocols, religious sensitivities specification, consent and protection forms, confidentiality agreements, voice recordings, participant permission forms, research indicator questions, field notebooks, etc. I have prepared the checklist to overcome the potential limitations of 'native' ethnography in my fieldwork. Besides, it facilitated me to gather inside and outside data, avoiding the local ethnographer's limitations, and empowered me to adjust my social life and life as an ethnographer. Simultaneously, the checklist was a suggestion to guarantee harmony between my weight on NGO officials and government authorities, for example, hijra and other social actors.

4.4.1 Research Ethics

The AUT Ethics Committee (AUTEC) was the prime ethics board reviewing this research proposal. While my field was in Bangladesh, I felt that ethical approval was also necessary from Bangladesh. However, there was no ethics committee in Bangladesh, nor was an ethical review system similar to AUTEC. Since AUTEC has an integrated ethics committee, the ethical approval process was very accommodating in preparing my fieldwork. It helped me organize the data collection tools and created a systematic plan for my field in Bangladesh. Nonetheless, I have taken the following steps to ensure

the ethical aspect of this study. This included balancing the need for a western-based ethical approach with the local customs of the hijra.

4.4.2 Participants' Privacy

I was consistently mindful that all contact details and participant information must be kept confidential. I made sure that I could secure all the participants' voice records before I entered the field. I have assured my local university (Jahangirnagar University) to keep a password-protected digital file and all files related to this study in a locked cabinet. I was always careful that the participants' real names are never disclosed, even within the hijra community during participant recruitment. In addition, with the approval of ethics, I have used pseudonyms in the field of research, and not all of the hijra participants have been able to identify them. All hijra participants were informed of their pseudonyms so that they could identify themselves in the study. All of the participants were given pseudonyms. Furthermore, as is the nature of anthropological research, participants can easily find themselves through their descriptions in this thesis paper. By providing participants with a detailed participation information sheet and consent form, they are protected from confusion about the nature of the research so that they can be acutely aware of what they are participating in and consenting to. By using pseudonyms, participants are protected from harm by ensuring their complete privacy, but it is important to note that as I have analyzed the stories of hijra, yet, like a closed community, anyone associated with them has a chance to be recognized by their peers. Nevertheless, it was vital to maintain confidentiality. Besides, participants were not coerced to partake in any way; they voluntarily and willingly contributed to the research and were allowed to detach themselves from the study any time before January 2019.

Similarly, the sensitivity of the study was openly discussed with the participants, and they were allowed to discard completely if they were uncomfortable at any stage to answer a question or if they considered it necessary. Before the interview, participants were asked if they have any particular social or cultural customs that they have adhered to. If so, these are taken into account and monitored during interviews. I used the pseudonyms of the participants in my focus group (NGO officials), but in the case of government officials, I could use their real names because they did not need permission from any authority.

4.4.3 Participant Consent

There was a high chance that most of the hijra participants could not read and write; therefore, most of them were unable to read the participant information sheet and sign the consent form. In addition to that, asking for written consent from hijra may be a potential hazard in their communal context. Moreover, the participants may feel that there is an obligation imposed on them when signing a

written document. It was clear that there are complexities and limitations of getting written consent due to my Bangladeshi background. People from different backgrounds may not be aware of the challenge of getting written consent in the Bangladeshi context, and they may not understand the complexities of the field. Therefore, I had to prepare my strategy before the fieldwork to resolve the issue of compliance. This study involved three groups of participants: hijra, NGO professionals, and government officials. They were all from different backgrounds and from different places, including hijra.

Another aspect of my research ethics was considering multiple ways to approach these diverse groups of participants. For example, one of the research ethics aspects was gaining permission from the hijra participants for the ethnographic interviews. To make the informed consent process all the more culturally fitting, I arranged both the participant information sheet and consent form in Bangla and English. Before starting to collect their information, I wanted to find someone from their households who could clearly read the information sheet and consent form for the hijra participant. Then, I read the English information sheet and consent form to them and asked for their written consent. At the point when I visited hijra, I further attempted to discover somebody from their local area who could peruse the Bangla data information sheet and consent form. I was cognizant that my hijra participants, in any event, ought to have the option to sign their names.

The fieldwork was not limited to data collection from hijra; in its place, NGOs and government officials later needed to work on a set of results to study them. I also included them as research participants for their focus groups and structured interviews on how they understood hijra and how they interact with other social actors in daily life. Compared to the participants in the hijra community, I had no difficulty in getting written consent from NGO professionals and government officials as they informed me, they would not face obstacles in disclosing their identities.

Similarly, reaching out to different participants was not just reaching out to them as researchers; Instead, it allows them to discuss, approve or reject any proposal from a professional point of view. So, my method of data collection was not only interested in the traditional theoretical' form of data collection but was also more involved in the context of its relationship with the participants. Thus, my fieldwork journey required participatory access to participants, my confidence in them, and a clear approach that allowed them to open up with the information needed. In the following section, I describe the research design before discussing my fieldwork in Bangladesh. In the following section, I describe the research design before discussing my fieldwork in Bangladesh.

4.5 Research Design

This project consists of multiple methods. It uses several qualitative data collection methods and analysis that seek to address the three specific research questions. Various data collection methods and data analysis tools are used in this project over two phases.

4.5.1 Research Questions

Q1: What does it mean to be hijra from their lived experiences?

Q2: How do hijra negotiate with others in a heteronormative society?

Q3: How do the Bangladesh government and NGO workers perceive hijra?

There are two modes of data collection with different participants employed to address the above questions:

Phase 1 – Ethnographic fieldwork with hijra (to answer Q1 and Q2); and

Phase 2 – Focus group and semi-structured interview to answer with NGO and government officials (to answer Q3)

4.5.2 Data Collection

Tables 1 and 2 show the data collection methods, participant numbers, and details for phases one and two, respectively.

Table2: Data collection Phase 1

Data Collection Method	Number of Participants	Details			
Narratives, dialogues, and interviews of hijra participant observation	20	Five interviews with high ranked hijra *nayek*, *malik*, and guru	Five interviews with low ranked hijra *chela*	Five interviews with hijra living in their families but affiliated with their families	Three interviews with hijra who live a dual identity in their village, they hide their hijra identity, and in the city, they declare themselves as hijra. And two are in NGO and another profession

Source: Fieldwork (2017-2018)

Table 3: Data collection Phase 2

Data Collection Method	Number of Participants	Details	
Narratives, dialogues, Focus group discussion with NGO Professionals In-depth Interviews of Government officials Social welfare Minister and interviews of hijra participant observation	10	One focus group interview among those who work in an international NGO	One focus group interview among those who work in a Bangladeshi NGO
	3	One government official from the Ministry of Social Welfare One government official from the Human Rights Commissions One government official from the Bangladesh Police	
	1	Minister of Social Welfare in the People's Republic of Bangladesh (2017-2018)	

Source: Fieldwork (2017-2018)

4.5.3 Data Analysis

Table 4: Data analysis Phase 1

Type of Data	Method of Analysis	Process of analysis
Interviews of Hijra	Narrative analysis & Thematic analysis	Lived lives through the narrative The personal stock of memories Cultural stock stories The situation of the individual
Participant observation & field notes	Case study analysis	Identifying the key themes A critical analysis of the themes

Source: Fieldwork (2017-2018)

Table 5:Data analysis Phase 2

Type of Data	Method of Analysis	Process of analysis
Focus Group Discussion of NGO Professionals & in-depth interviews government officials	Thematic analysis	Data transcriptions Looking for patterns Analyzing the themes

Source: Fieldwork (2017-2018)

4.6 An Ethnographic Fieldwork with hijra in Bangladesh

After getting the research proposal confirmation and approval of research ethics from my school at Auckland University of Technology on April 1, 2017, my fieldwork journey began in Bangladesh. I was on the field from March 2017 to January 2019. Following my research proposal, I am drawing my fieldwork in two different steps. The first phase was with hijra and the second phase with NGO professionals and government officials. Before working in the field with NGO professionals and government officials, I wanted to have a deeper understanding of the lives of hijra people. Thus, these two steps were to manage the systematic area while preparing the fieldwork at an early stage and prepare me for another phase of fieldwork. In the following section, I describe my data collection and fieldwork journey in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

4.6.1 Phase One: Fieldwork with Hijra

In this phase of my fieldwork, I have explored the everyday living experiences, negotiation, body representation, and the gender identity construction of hijra. At this stage, research question one; what are the everyday lived experiences of hijra and, how do they perceive their gender? And question two; how do hijra negotiate life in a heteronormative society?

4.6.2 Methods of Data Collection

To explore the research questions one and two during the fieldwork, I have used participation observation (Jorgensen, 2015) and narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2016) as data collection methods. As I mentioned earlier, the participant observation method is considered a principal anthropological study tool, especially in ethnographic research. Participant observation techniques are essential tools for ethnographic studies and have been used for data collection for over a century. The objective of participant observation is to learn the cultural context of the research 'field' and the people (Blomberg et al., 2017). Marshall and Rossman (1989) define 'observation' as a systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in a particular social setting. It is also a process enabling researchers to learn about people's activities in a natural setting (Angrosino, 2016). Moreover, it is a process of learning the day-to-day routine activities of participants through exposure or involvement (Schensul, Schensul & LeComple, 1999). In participant observation methods, the researcher has to be open-minded, non-judgmental, and interested in learning more about the 'other' or other cultures (Jorgensen, 2015). When collecting data, acquiring daily activities through hijra exposure is crucial for this research project. So, I attended all the events, ceremonies, and rituals to observe all their lives, behaviors, conversations, and dialogues with hijra when they used to bless weddings and newborns and marketplaces to raise money. Hence, I have obtained the participation method as an effective tool for my research work to observe how hijra negotiate with others in their daily lives.

Another data collection method is a narrative inquiry. It is a useful technique for capturing personal experiences over time and takes account of the relationship between cultural context and individual experiences (Clandinin & Connelly 2000). The narrative is constructed through lived experiences and woven from the threads of interviews, observation, and documents. Neimeyer (2000) developed the idea of the narrative as a metaphor for reconstructing the self. He described the self as situated in language. Layder (1993) advanced this idea further by claiming that the self is embedded in social relations. The aim of narrative inquiry is not to find one generalizable truth but rather to unmask many hidden truths (Ric & Ezzy, 1999). Thus, this project views the participants as constructing a narrative of their life stories. In this research project, 20 hijra narratives and case studies were collected. Of these, five of them lived a dual life (who acted as hijra in private life and as a 'man' in public life), and narratives of fifteen self-proclaimed hijra were likewise collected. Therefore, their life narratives will be analyzed within their social, cultural, and political contexts from different perspectives.

4.6.3 Setting the Scene for Data Collection

In anthropological research, we all need to identify the field first. Most of the hijra in Bangladesh live in communities, but there is no specific region where all the hijra live together. The entire city of Dhaka is divided into hijra gurus, and each guru controls a few small hijra groups in the suburbs. Hijra groups are organized in a hierarchically structured governance system where the '*mukhi*a*'* is the chief of the hijra house, and *'nayek'* is the second-ranked position. In general, a *hijra nayek* got control of those areas in which her guru ruled. A hijra *nayek* can use her ruled area by using her power relations, money, networking, and strength. Typically, a hijra '*nayak*' (second higher-ranked hijra) inherits her '*para-birit'*[34] after her guru's death. However, sometimes, this '*nayekship'* is declared and distributed among the '*cheals*' (disciples) during the life period of their guru, but in most cases, when a *nayek* dies, the hijra '*mukhiya'* distributes the controlled territory within his *chela* by arranging '*lalsara'*[35].

Since there is a possibility of identifying the hijra participants by their areas, the hijra community, I have used three different pseudonyms for each research field to ensure their privacy. However, I have chosen my field based on my rapport building and access to the hijra *nayeks*. Among my twenty participants, I have done in-depth ethnographic research in the following three different fields, including the ones who live with their families; therefore, there are three areas identified as my research field. These are shown in Table 7.

[34] The different suburb has been divided among the hijra *guru*s; each hijra *guru* holds different areas for their operations, usually called *para-birit.* The detailed discussion is in the fifth chapter.
[35] *Lalasara* is a ritual that usually takes place after the death of the guru when someone is given a place as a *nayek*.

Table 6: Research fields for Phase one

Type of Data	Place of Field work
Field 1	*Rup Nagar*
Field 2	*Kinnari Hut*
Field 3	*Ronger Bazar*

Source: Fieldwork (2017-2018)

4.6.4 Participant Recruitment

Although I have some acquaintance with the hijra world, recruiting participants was not easy for me due to their lack of interest in participating. It was not my intention to include any of my friends as participants in my research to avoid bias because most of my alleged hijra friends are privileged with a westernized transgender life with the aids of education and work. Furthermore, most of them who are NGO spokespersons and staff do not usually live traditional hijra lives and vastly connected with local and international NGOs and the government. Since they are not traditional hijra, they live a life quite similar to mainstream people visiting abroad twice a year to attend various transgender pride, seminars, and conferences. Under the circumstances, as a researcher, I realized that all my hijra acquaintance who like to call themselves transgender, belonging to a high-class privileged society, speaking English, traveling abroad, volunteering, advocating hijra issues abroad and media, doing decent work have allowed them to live a decent life than the traditional hijra who couldn't establish their belongingness in the mainstream society. Thus, to have detailed data from hijra in a different kind, I wanted to explore the traditional hijra lives along with those high ranked ones, and I, in due course, recruited hijra who live in the community, maintain hijra profession, as well as those who uphold being hijra both publicly and privately.

Before I began to recruit participants for this project, I was informed by my hijra friend that the vast majority of them do not have a positive relationship with NGO employees, and they are not happy with the NGOs. Furthermore, they requested me to persuade their gurus first to enroll hijra members in my project. Hence, I have visited the places of numerous hijra gurus to confirm my member enrollment. However, finding a hijra guru was nothing but an easy task as most of the gurus were confined to each suburb made it tremendously challenging to persuade them to meet me in person. Nevertheless, a practical solution to this problem was to employ the following approaches to gain participant's access.

To begin with, I participated in several seminars and programs concerning hijra organized by the Ministry of Social Welfare. There, I noticed that many hijra gurus join to get free allowances in programs that allow me to communicate directly with a few hijra gurus. Secondly, when a hijra friend

informed me that a three-day event called *'chatai'/'ruti'* (an annual gathering of hijra and arbitration arrangement) took place in January 2018, I got the contact number of the hijra *mukhia* of *Shambazar* hijra *ghor* from my hijra friend and contacted her to get permission to participate in *'chatai'*.

At that place, I met more than a thousand hijra and talked to their gurus and disciples about my research project. I handed over their recruitment leaflets and participant credentials to those who were interested. I also took their location detail and telephone number to set up an arrangement to converse with them. At this point, I went to the guru's place more than once to create a rapport, and people who were interested in sharing their everyday routines and letting me take part observing in their daily lives were recruited as participants in this study.

4.6.5 Participants

As discussed in the fifth chapter, hijra in Dhaka city live in different suburbs, and different hijra *nayeks* control each suburb. There are many hijra gurus under one *nayek,* and each guru has two to ten *chelas*. This study's primary data were collected from three different suburbs, such as *Rup Nagar, Kinnori Hut,* and *Ronger Bazar*. Between January 2018 and December 2018, I visited all these places three to four times per week and shared the same experience with them from their daily life. In addition to these, I attended some of their events, personal events, and community gatherings. The number of people I have spoken to at the official level of my fieldwork has reached hundreds. However, I was looking for hijra participants who willingly agreed to share their life stories and experiences, and I took 20 hijra as participants in my initial study for descriptive interviews allowed in their daily lives. Table six shows the final number of selected participants.

As I wanted to explore the hijra lives holistically, I have combined other social actors with hijra participants. Therefore, I have chosen two hijra who addressed themselves as activists whom I found very easy to access. My prime participants are self-declared hijra who live a traditional hijra life and are not easy to access at all. Therefore, out of my twenty participants, fifteen of them are self-declared hijra, three are *koti*[36], and two NGO activists.

[36] Koties who are covertly cross-dressed usually do not go for sexual reassignment surgery (see detail about koti in chapter five). In recent hijra scholarship, koti distinctly got attention from scholars; however, all three participants said they are koties, and a koti is also a form of hijra; therefore, they have been included in this research. According to my participants, each hijra in Bangladesh live her life as a koti sometime before she declared herself as a hijra. When a koti decides to come out herself openly, she takes the hijra identity.

Table7: Participants number list for Phase one

Participants	Numbers
Self-Declared Hijra	15
Hijra Activists	2
Koti	3
Total Participants	**20**

Source: Fieldwork (2017-2018)

4.6.6 Early Fieldwork Encounters with Hijra

When I started my interaction with hijra as a middle-class female-identified Bangladeshi woman, my social and gender identity had to be negotiated and shifted to make me more acceptable. For instance, while some hijra believed me to be *'bejater Neharun'*, not a customary Bangladeshi normative woman, over the long haul, other hijra accepting me as a nearby family member, for the most part in view of my capacity to speak *Ulti* and visit them face to face at their place. I additionally came across many hijra prior to beginning my fieldwork, which gave me a few impressions about the field and hijra lives. However, I encountered some negative episodes with hijra during my fieldwork. In the following section, I will feature a few of my experiences with hijra during the fieldwork to draw the reflexivity of the field.

When I tried to enter the field *Rup Nagar*, the first challenge was to introduce myself to them. Traditional hijra were not aware of the concept of academic research. So, they treated me as a government employee who usually visits them for surveys and puts them in various programs or NGO workers who visit them with structured questionnaires about sexual health and HIV. When I explained to them that I was neither a government official nor an NGO worker, some of them doubted my sexual identity and further supposed that I would provide them with some condoms and lubrication. Moreover, some of them became disappointed when I said I was not there to provide them condoms or lubricants. When one of my participants Urmi (age 29), realized that I was a research student at a foreign university, asked me to provide imported lubrication and told me:

> *Boina*, (sister), as you are coming from abroad, you must be aware of high-quality lubricants and medicines to increase sexual energy. I found out about lubricants from my BIGO boyfriend. Wouldn't you be able to bring some lubricants for me? I need it badly for anal pleasure. I experience a great deal of pain while having anal sex. If you have pain while having sex with your partner, you won't enjoy it, would you? I am certain if a woman has more than one kid, they are consistently busy holding the husband, but the guy loses interest in vaginal sex and prefers anal sex with their wives. Even though I think wives are not as good at anal

> sex as we are. So, I think they use imported lubricants or something to make anal sex pleasurable. I'm sure you know where to find good lubricants. So, next time, if you want to talk to me, you have to give me strawberry-flavored foreign lubricants; otherwise, I will not converse with you (smiling).

The next day I went to Urmi's house with a saree as a *koha*[37]. She gladly accepted the gift and allowed me in her place and started talking about her past life. Although Urmi's above statement made me uncomfortable, it also showed me her knowledge about sexual health, use of lubricants, indicating that hijra are very conscious about anal comfort, and her perceptions of heterosexual relationships is a clear indication of how their notions of relationship evolved dynamically.

When I went to the field to *Kinnori Hut*, some of my participants told me that they never felt like seeing outsiders meet them frequently and spend time with them. In addition, they were curious about my family life and my personal relationship with my husband. They also asked personal questions about my family and me. Since I wanted to maintain an equal and friendly relationship with all my hijra participants, I had to share many stories about my life that I didn't want to. Although I shared many stories of my life in the beginning, they were not convinced by my words. Some of my participants assumed that I might be divorced or that there was some tension between my husband and me, and so I spent the whole day with them. However, I began to spend more time with them as their friends, attending their ceremonies, parties, inviting them to my home, and when they met my husband and family, they changed their minds. But it constantly bothered me to find out the truth that they were more interested in knowing my personal life.

Toward the start of my fieldwork, a part of my field members of *Ronger Bazar* was interested in my sexual practice and sexual relations with my significant other, and they gave me a few recommendations too, which put me in an embarrassing situation. However, each of these embarrassments comes with a decent ending; even being a woman, I have learned plenty of their notions about heteronormative relationships.

> In some cases, I feel satisfied to be a hijra; I'm not a woman like you. I feel like I'm lucky in my surgically reconstructed vagina; if it really turned out to be genuine, I had to endure pain equivalent to yours. I wouldn't like to tolerate motherhood's pain and don't have to stress about the fat body. When I see a woman like you, I feel sorry; I am certain your spouse doesn't have any attraction for you since you gave birth to two children, and you become chubby due to the Cesarean section. Additionally, I can feel that you are investing a great deal of energy with us since your man doesn't care about a young wife like you. What a pity! Try not to mind; your circumstance causes me to feel; I am carrying on with a vastly improved life than a woman. I

[37] *Koha* is a Māori term for a gift. It's a way in which one can express gratitude in the form of a present.

> have surgically reconstructed boobs and a vagina. I can have intercourse like you, simply the only distinction between you and me is the reproductive ability, yet I appreciate mine.
>
> Additionally, in particular, your plumpness has taken away your provocativeness and sexiness. Subsequently, your husband might not find you attractive, he may search for another woman, and you should be sad about that. However, we do not have such a problem with hijra. I have many '*panthis*' (a masculine man for potential boyfriend) who have their wives and children at home, and they stay with me to get sexual pleasure. Additionally, they said they were not interested in seeing their wives in exposed fashion because they are now particularly large in size and no longer attractive. But I am interesting and compelling; they prefer to sleep with me.

Though Oishi's above statement discomforted me, it reflects her ideas about heterosexual and hijra sexual relationship and body differences, which I will unpack in chapter seven in detail. As an anthropologist, this compels me to the challenging perspectives offered by hijra, which I do not object to, yet I overlooked their advice and opinions as part of the ethnographical necessity of open practice. Her statement has rather involuntarily made me think more deeply about how the heterosexual relationship is projected in the eyes of hijra.

A common encounter happened to me when I tried to enter *Rup Nagar*, *Kinnori Hut,* and *Ronger Bazar* separately and share the recruitment advertisement in hijra; they did not want to take the recruitment leaflet. Each of them advised me to talk to their guru first, and then they would have a conversation with me. For several days, I only went to the field just to look for gurus, yet his *chelas* and *grand chelas* advised me to come back on some different days, which seemed surprisingly difficult at first. The following comments from Urmi, one of my participants from the Ronger Bazar,

> *Apa* (Sister), you pick an incorrect method to approach hijra; you need to converse with the hijra gurus first. None of us will talk to you without our guru's permission. My life isn't my own even; however, I carry on with my life; my guru is my chief, which implies that if Allah is the maker of me, my guru is my regulator is the truth of each hijra life. Other hijra, along with me, experience many conflicts and difficulties in continuing life as a hijra and face many challenges with our daily existence, in which a guru is the only person who can help us. It resembles when an individual is in a tough situation, the person may recall Allah's name, yet on account of hijra, she should recollect her guru, and secondly Allah. Since we hijra don't follow Allah's lifestyle, we adhere to just the guru's guidelines for our endurance.

I tried to explore the complexities of the ethnographic field and went to the field every day to talk to them, understand them, and persuade them. Gradually, I found the *guru-chela* relationship comprehensible through their expressions and comments. Most hijra told me that they could not talk to me unless the guru permitted them. Some of them also told me that they have no problem speaking

because I do this research for my study, and they will be happy if they can help me. However, they all hold similar opinions, which also bears a sign of guru-chela relationships' dependency.

4.6.7 Data Organization Process

The ethnographic method for data analysis does not follow a particular method to analyze data, yet a specific data collection technique can be useful for ethnographic exploration. Consequently, numerous scholars depend on a specific design for organizing qualitative data (Ellingson, 2011; O'Reilly, 2012; Peräkylä 2011; Spradley, 2016). Similarly, Spradley (1979) proclaims that "analysis of any kind involves a way of thinking" (Spradley, 1979, p. 92). In other words, to organize the data, we need a vibrant design or plan to deal with our field experiences and research outcomes. Spradley (1979) recommended that depending on a 'systematic examination' for an ethnographer, one could explore the relationship between their research's different aspects.

Similarly, O'Reilly (2012) labels the ethnographic data analysis as 'iterative-inductive' analysis. This type of analysis does not follow a linear model of data collection and analysis during fieldwork. Instead, ethnographers are frequently assigned to return to the field to ask participants more questions or to make additional observations as needed. Along these lines, anthropologists can discover individuals who were missing, or they can gather detailed information on the field that they should not collect data arbitrarily. They can take extensive data at home and manage what they have (O'Reilly, 2012). Hence, O'Reilly said, 'analysis and data collection are interlinked' (O'Reilly, 2012, p.180). Though an 'iterative-inductive' method is a continuous process, yet it follows a design.

Thus, the ethnographic data analysis method is systematic and adaptable, and in this specific situation, it was fundamental to have the arrangement to sort out during the hands-on work. Hence, I prepared a plan to organize the field data to put together from my work's earliest starting point. I also kept a field journal during my ethnographic work. This journal contains my daily experiences, meetings, emotions, moods, perceptions and attitudes, and my perceptions of the limitations of participants, events, and fields. As Spradley (1979) highlights, "a journal represents the personal side of fieldwork; it includes reactions to informants and the feelings you sense from others" (Spradley, 1979, p. 76). Hence, my field journal is a condition of the record of my fieldwork context and field experiences.

I have noted my personal feelings and experiences in my field journal and also kept a notebook to observe and describe the data. An in-depth observation of the field's rituals and events, conversations between each hijra and their friends/family members/gurus were the subject of this field notes. Spradley (1979) referred to two types of field notes as condensed and expanded field notes. Condensed field notes denote images of immediate action consisting of symbols, signs, or parts of sentences. When I got home from the field, I regularly used condensed field notes to retrieve the full

message. I wrote the details of those daily notes so that I did not have to lose any important meaning of their attitude and words. In addition, I took extended fieldnotes when I observed hijra rituals, special occasions, and some interesting statements in their spoken language. Furthermore, condensed notes facilitated me to keep a detailed record of the conversation immediately. I used an audio recorder with the consent of the hijra to keep the interview data accurate, and after the audio-recording, I checked all the transcript and translated form Bangla to English by myself at the end of the daily fieldwork and then added detailed notes for organizing data.

4.6.8 Data Analysis

It is well known that "ethnography is best perceived as a process rather than a sequence of discrete stages" (Brewer 2000, p. 107). Hence, ethnographic data analysis is also not an exact science. It needs to be rigorous and systematic by following some general principles. In this research, I used case studies and narrative analysis for phase one and focused on the stories narrated from the hijra and arranged them chronologically. I have also thoroughly analyzed descriptive and exploratory case study methods in investigating the hijra groups as well as the individual ones. I gathered numerous cases through case study analysis from hijra during my fieldwork, which was broken down to investigate the broadened part of hijra gender, sexual orientation, and their lives. The contextual study underscores the dynamic parts of the information inside a solitary setting (Yin, 2012). By following and re-examining the field notes, critical cases are recognized and analyzed by determining the regular presence of hijra.

The data analysis tool I use is narrative analysis. It is a method by which data is systematically collected, analyzed, and introduced in the manner in which individuals or storytellers recount their accounts (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2019). Narrative analysis is not only a transcription of narratives but also explains the significance of lived experiences (Clandinin et al., 2016). It also fills in the gaps between events and actions. The narrative analysis focuses on the difference and diversity of people's behavior as well. Therefore, the narrative data analysis tool was significant in this study. According to Polkinghore (1995), there are two types of narrative analysis: the pragmatic and paradigmatic models. In the pragmatic model, findings are arranged around descriptions of themes that are common to collected stories. In addition, those themes come across individual experiences within a particular social setting (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). However, in a paradigmatic model of analysis, the categories of themes are based on the relationships among categories. It discloses the commonalities from multiple sources and aims to produce general knowledge from particular stories. I used either the pragmatic model or paradigmatic model based on the nature of the data.

In addition, Transsexual narratives frequently rejected traditional ways of conceptualizing transgender as symptomatic of 'wrong' body experience; conversely, transgender narratives often reflected the significance of the material body. I was also aware that people who wanted to take part in the study might have the most positive stories to tell about their gender reassignment, and people with less positive stories were less likely to contact me. However, as Plummer (1995) suggests, rejecting the idea that narratives represent an essential 'truth' may seem to deem individual narratives' 'untruths.' Thus, I followed Plummer in using Spence's distinction between 'historical truth' and 'narrative truth.' In contrast to the positivist underpinnings of 'historical truth,' 'narrative truth' focuses upon "what people say in the here and now the work of stories in the living present" (Plummer, 1995, p.17 1).

Ethnographic findings and ethnographic discovery are associated, and the production of an ethnographic record performs as a bridge between them. Consequently, ethnographers must think about both findings and descriptions when they transcribe and write an ethnographic record. Ethnographers essentially need feedback from the findings and the ethnographic explanation of the footage of their ethnographic data. For instance, reading and re-reading the field notes during the fieldwork may discover additional data; one may need to go back to the field for the same ethnographic findings to get a comprehensive explanation. 'Ethnographic findings,' in a sense, are not an absolute positivist accomplishment. Relatively, it is an accomplishment of interpretation that is assembled on a gradual growth-building process of understanding to lead to new questions and new interpretations. Reading and re-reading my field notes helped me to think more intensely about my ethnographic data. For instance, when I had started to write an ethnographic finding of hijra, I also needed to consider the context, situation, and the surrounding. Hence, I was not able to transcribe the ethnographic data without my notebook and diary. In a few cases, I had to go back to my hijra participants and contacted them to cross-check my ethnographic findings' clarity. Thus, I would like to argue that ethnographic data gathering and the recording itself are data analysis processes.

4.7 Phase Two: Fieldwork with NGO Professionals and Government Officials

This stage addressed research question three; How social actors like the government and NGOs talk about and understand hijra and how they work to reduce their vulnerabilities. Besides, this phase focuses on how government and NGO workers perceive hijra and the relationship between hijra and other social actors and explores the social construction of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh.

4.7.1 Participant Recruitment

Compared to phase one, it was much easier to recruit participants for phase two. I used a purposive sampling method to recruit individuals for phase two. I use my personal and professional network to distribute participant recruitment advertisements among NGO professionals and government officials. Using my professional network, I collected the email addresses and contact numbers of NGO professionals and government officials who were currently involved in the hijra rights Project or had previously worked with them. I also have collected the contact details of government officials from their website. I also shared participants' information forms with them and those who responded to me; I contacted and hired them as my phase, two participants. However, in the case of government officials, I was particularly selective in choosing participants, especially the director of the Ministry of Social Welfare and the head of the National Human Rights Commission, who controls the hijra wings. Also, I tried to get the social welfare minister's appointment to explore the upcoming government policy regarding the hijra issue. Moreover, I had recruited all three of them along with a DIG (Deputy Inspector General of Police) in Dhaka city who have worked for hijra voluntarily.

4.7.2 Participants

In the second phase, NGO workers and government officials were the main participants. These 14 participants are shown in Table 7. Two focus group interviews were conducted to explore how NGO workers perceive hijra. Each focus group had five participants working in NGOs involved in various projects for the welfare of hijra. In addition, I took three government officials and the Minister of Social Welfare of Bangladesh for in-depth interviews using purposive sampling. Two of them are high-ranking government officials working in the Ministry of Social Welfare; one volunteer was working at the field level for hijra rights.

Table 8: Phase two participant list

Participants	Numbers
NGO professionals	10
Government officials	3
Social welfare minister	1
Total Participants	**14**

Source: Ethnographic Fieldwork 2018-2019

4.7.3 Data Collection

The second stage consists of focus groups and in-depth interviews as a method of data collection. A focus group is an informal conversation between a group of selected individuals about a specific topic

(Mihas 2019). This kind of interview underlines the detailed and holistic description of a particular situation or context (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). The group size can vary, and this method is also known as focus group interviews or in-depth group interviews. It is a panel discussion arranged to examine a specific set of topics (Kitzinger, 2005). Since this study was interested in analyzing the role of NGOs in hijra empowerment, in this case, the focus group method was used for data collection.

Another method of data collection in the second step is in-depth interviewing. It is a qualitative research method that obtains data from intensive interviewers to explore perspectives on a specific topic (Gill et al., 2008). By carrying out intensive interviews with a small number of participants, the project will explore various research subjects' perspectives (Boyce & Neale, 2006). In this study, I used the in-depth interview method to explore different perspectives of social actors about hijra. In phase two, in-depth interviews with three government officials (who are working on hijra social welfare) and the Minister of social welfare were conducted. Also, two focus group interviews were conducted among NGO workers who work on various projects regarding hijra rights.

4.7.4 Data Analysis

I analyzed the data using thematic explanatory analysis and indicative reasoning. The first analytical stage involves a sample review of the transcript to develop descriptive codes for analysis (Creswell & Hanson, 2007). It was then grouped into themes using social scientific notions of structural violence as the theoretical lens to organize them. Discrepancies between thematic groupings were resolved through discussion, and a coding scheme was used to finalize the rest of the data for analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) in-depth interview involves six phases of thematic analysis. It is a technique of analyzing and identifying themes within a data set to categorize the main and recurring ideas across a range of participant narratives. To define a theme, Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the theme must capture something important about the data related to the research questions and represent some level of "patterned" response or meaning within the data set. Thematic analysis is a flexible data analysis tool that can provide a detailed and complex data account. Holloway and Todres (2003) state that thematic analysis is one of the foundational methods for qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis can reflect participants' experiences, meaning, and reality; it also examines various events and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this stage of data analysis, the individual and focus group interviews were read out to identify the themes. Reading and re-reading the data will help to identify and develop the accuracy of the information.Thematic coding is a type of subjective study that involves the recording or identification of text or image entries that are connected by a common topic or allow you to categorize the content and in this way establish a "framework of thematic ideas about it" (Gibbs, 2007). Similar codes then identified relations between the themes

and combined them to make categories. After identifying emerging patterns in each category, the themes were selected for analysis.

Ethnography is a kind of translation (Asad, 1986) and a broader movement to produce a culturally interpretive (Geertz, 1973). As culture includes virtually all aspects of life, it is challenging for an ethnographer to translate culture into a language (Leavitt, 2014). However, considering all those challenges, being a Bangladeshi native speaker, I took the responsibility translate the interview data from Bangla to English with careful consideration of the cultural context. I have used various strategies such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, member checking, and peer examinations to ensure research validity. The issue of transferability is an obvious outcome of this ethnographic research as one of the research outcomes is to produce a text on hijra lives and share their living experiences with other audiences. Additionally, the dialogical relation between government officials and NGO workers allows them to share the research outcome with others. Furthermore, the research findings were shared with my supervisors to ensure data validity. Moreover, the transcription and interpretation of the data were checked by a few of my hijra participants, and the use of these member-checking tools helped to ensure research dependability.

4.8 Summary

Since postmodernism and ethnography are still contested concepts in terms of transgender and hijra studies, it is rather difficult to say which epistemological and methodological aspect is suitable for exploring their lives. Stryker (2007) explains 'transgender phenomena' denaturalizes or disrupts the normative gender and 'transgender feminism' is the expressions of the marginalized gender. Roen (2001) criticized queer theories for ethnocentrism and the lack of careful attention to trans people's lived realities. At the same time, Monro (2000) criticized postmodernism because it fails to perceive the social structure's impact on gender plurality and fluidity. However, both queer theory and postmodernism perceive transgenderism as an ethereal turn of gender deconstruction (Hines, 2006). In order to move beyond the critics and debates of the epistemology and methodological aspect, this research explores the critical aspect of hijra gender identity. Following postmodern epistemology, the project took ethnography as a research method to explore the dynamic aspects of hijra lives in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This study applied multiple qualitative methods to conduct ethnographic research, followed by an exploration to analyze the dynamic parts of hijra life in Bangladesh. Yet, ethnography is an integral part of thematic research where researchers are not free from ideological and cultural values (Gobo & Marciniak, 2011). As mentioned earlier, this ethnography has been conducted into two phases where the primary data were collected from the hijra participants and the rest from the NGO workers and the Government officials. Multidimensional data collection methods and thematic data analysis technic have been used in different phases in this study.

Chapter Five: Setting the scene

Hamsigo duniadari nai,jogemanra khote , kintu hijrago guru-gotiara ja kore ta apnago poribar apnago laiga ta korte pare na. Shob hijra eka abar shob hijra ek loge hate. Hijra go dengu teke montri sobari shate jogajog takete hoy tago nijego laiga. Ekek hijrar khol rosuner ekek khan koya, shob hijrar khol alada, abar shob ekloge, roshuner lahan- Priyanka

['It is said that we do not have a family, but what our guru and friends do for us, your families would never do it for you. All hijra are alone; at the same time, they walk side by side. A hijra keeps connections and relationships with police to minister for their own benefit. Each hijra *ghor* is like a clove of garlic, each clove is separate, yet always stay and allied together]- Priyanka

5.1 Introduction

Hijra[38] is not a distinct social unit; rather, it is intertwined with an expanded communal hierarchical system and connected with diverse social actors. This chapter aims to set the scene to draw a picture of the Bangladeshi hijra community and their diversified communal lives in Dhaka city. It will introduce hijra kinship, power structure, livelihood, and the diversified relations between hijra and other social actors to the audience. During my one-year-long ethnographic fieldwork, I have learned that there is neither any single path of becoming a hijra nor a linearized aspect to explore their lives. Hence, I would argue that the hijra community assigns more like a clove of garlic as it incorporates various layers inside one cover. It has multiple hierarchies of power structure, class, gender, and sexuality within which numerous groups negotiate, contest, and assert their authenticity. Despite their gender and sexual differences, in Dhaka, class within the class, social and community status, grouping, political affiliations, and hierarchical institutional practices are also moulded into the hijra identity. Therefore, a hijra is not only about gender identity; instead, it has various aspects to be understood.

5.1.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter is divided into six sections, following sub-sections including the introduction. The second section will focus on the complexity of the fictive kin-ties and the kinship practices of the hijra community in Bangladesh. It will also explore the dynamic relationships between the guru and a *chela*. The third section will highlight the hierarchical power structure of the hijra community in

[38] I use the singular form 'hijra' to refer to hijra as a community. It should be noted that this chapter focuses specifically on the hijra community. There are two ways for a person to declare herself as a hijra: the most popular way to become a hijra is to take *achla* from a guru to join the hijra community and to declare oneself as a hijra. On the other hand, there are a number of hijra in Bangladesh who have declared themselves as hijra without following any traditional hijra rituals and livelihood.

Bangladesh. Also, I will point out three different origins of hijra *ghors* (houses) and their activities in Bangladesh. In the fourth section, I will talk about the different roles and identities of hijra in Bangladesh with a further explanation of the reasons behind the inhomogeneous treatment towards the hijra. The fifth section will elaborate on how hijra networks work and the relationship between hijra and other social actors, followed by a conclusion.

5.2 Fictive Kinship

The term 'fictive kinship'[39] is a type of social ties that depend on neither direct relations nor marriage than 'real' kinship ties. Rae (1992) identified three types of kin: Conventional kin, discretionary kin, and voluntary kin. Fictive kinship constituted such family ties that blur the boundaries between social and theoretical biological relationships (Lee, 2013). However, fictive kinship is treated differently from Schneider in recent literature. Different kinds of literature labelled fictive kin also as chosen kin (Weston, 1997; Johnson, 2000), urban tribes (Watters, 2003), friend-keepers (Gallagher & Gerstel, 1993; Vivas-Romero, 2017; Baharudin & Ernawati, 2018), self-ascribed kin (Galvin, 2006; Duling, 2008; Kraska-Szlenk, 2018), or voluntary kin (Ehrle & Green, 2002; Braithwaite et al. 2010). Fictive kinship has also been discussed as 'ritual kinship'[40]and 'milk kinship'[41] (Nelson, 2016;). Layton (2008) explains how fictive kinship is related to rituals and also significant to 'milk kinship' among the Islamic jurisprudence. Historically, these milk kinship or fictive kinship practices were widespread in the Arabian, Sunni, and Shia Muslim groups as well as in the Mediterranean, Balkan regions (Guindi, 2018). Among African American Christians, the church gave the single mothers a sense of community where they received emotional and social support, which served as a form of fictive kinship, Brodsky (2000). Several recent works of literature paid a closer look at how fictive kinship plays significant roles in self- defamation, absence of established norms, membership bonding, grit among the marginalized historical communities (Cook, 2010; Alexakos, Jones, & Rodriguez, 2011; Cook & Williams, 2015; Nelson, 2020). Furthermore, fictive kinship often bonded with patronizing the asymmetrical exchange between power relations and social inequality. Fictive relationships have also been practiced among the Blacks as a support system outside of their immediate family (Chatters, Taylor & Jayakody 1994; Nicolas et al., 2008; Stewart, 2007).

Research on 'fictive kinship' implies that practices designating non-biological family as kin, particularly meaningful among the marginalized populations. However, Nelson (2014) argued that

[39]The term "fictive" may be assumed as incorrect, unreal or something that does not exist, but that isn't the situation in reality. Rather, fictive kin relations are partly putative.

[40]When a group of potential allies forms structurally through rituals is called ‘ritual kinship. These kinship forms usually refer to the network of extra-conjugal ties and extra-consanguineal formed through the selection of godparents on a specified occasion (Sayres, 1956; Coy, 1974).

[41]"Milk kinship" refers to such social practices where infants are breastfed by women who are not their biological mothers (Chatters et al,1994).

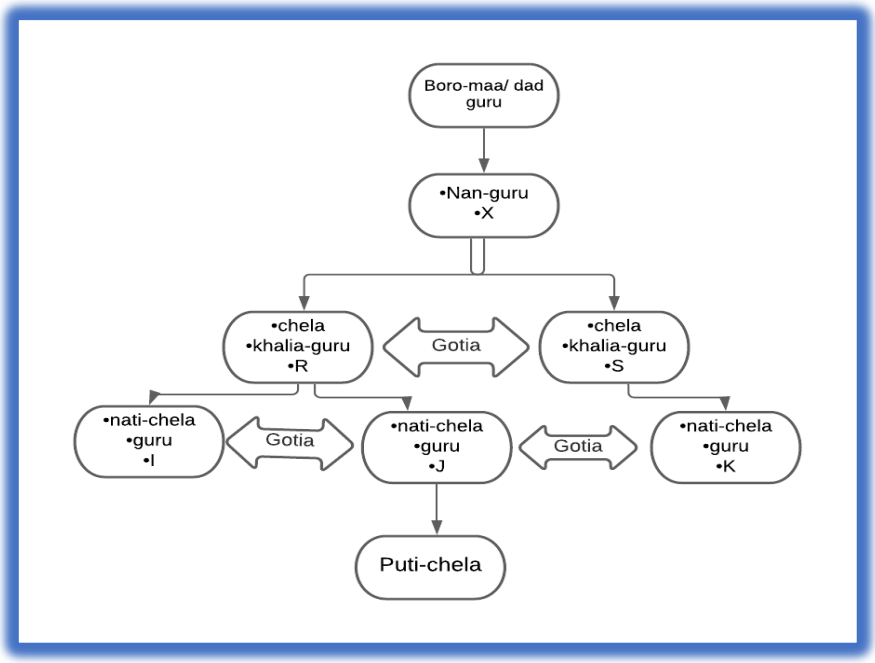
the notion of 'fictive kin' among marginalized groups in the scholarly aspect is mostly assumed rather than empirically demonstrated. Braithwaite et al. (2010) advocated the term 'voluntary kin' replacing 'fictive kin' for the sexual minority groups and argue that 'voluntary kin' may function as a 'supplemental family'. Sexual minorities usually form 'chosen families' by their close friends who play a central role in their everyday lives, especially those who experienced rejection or distance from their families (Weston, 1991). Follins, Walker & Lewis (2014) work among black LGBT individuals and find that the fictive kinships offer black lesbians to resist oppressive situations and minority stress. Hull & Ortyl (2019) worked on LGBT people to locate how family meaning is abstract for them. Therefore, fictive kin ties are a common practice among sexual minorities. Hijra, in Bangladesh, are not different from that. So, within the community, the kinship ties among the hijra are significantly different in the sense that no one can declare herself a hijra without fictive kin. Furthermore, in the next section, I am going to discuss hijra kinship formation and its significance.

5.2.1 A Complex Fictive Kin-ties of Hijra in Bangladesh

In most cases, hijra stays within the community if she wants to take hijrahood as a profession and live the traditional hijra life. Most hijra live either in a particular community or are connected with the community member where they developed a 'fictive kinship' network. So, a hijra is well described as a communal identity than an individual one. Hijra live inextricably connected with fictive kinship networks (Taparia, 2011; Stief, 2017; Sharma, 2018; Gilbert & Thar, 2019). To become a traditional hijra, one must take an '*achla*'[42] under a guru to be identified as her *chela*. Each hijra is identified with the name of a particular *ghor*, and each *ghor* is established with a *nan- guru's* name. Additionally, a '*nayek'* or '*malik'* extends the fictive kinship network, which gradually makes her more potent among the hijra community and is addressed as nan-guru. The following flowchart will describe 'the fictive kin network of traditional hijra'.

[42] *'achla'* is a kind of ritual by which one can entry into the hijra community where guru give the end part of *sharee* (a traditional cloth of Bangladesh which does not have any stitch) upon the *chela'*s head, and take a verdict, she will take care of the *chela* rest of her life. And then use to feed some sweet to the *chela*.

Table 9: The fictive kin network of traditional hijra



Source: Fieldwork: 2017-2018

For example, X is a nayek, and she is the head of her *ghor*. X has two direct *chelas* named R and S. In that case, R and S are considered *'gotia'* (sister). Now, R's *chela* is I and J, and S's *chela* is K, then I, J, and K are *gotia* and holds the same rank. Then, X will be treated as I, J and K's grandmother, which means *nan-guru*, and J and K will address as *nati-chela* of X. Similarly, if I, J, or K get any *chela*, she will be addressed as *puti-chela* of X. Likewise, R and S will be I, J and K's *khalia-guru* and when any *chela* within I, J, or K gets dismissed, then the *chela* is given *achla* to another hijra. Eventually, R and S turn out to be *nun gurus*. If a *nun-guru's* guru is alive, she is called by the name of either *dad guru* or *boro maa.*

5.2.2"*Guru-i maa, guru-I hamsir shami*" - A Guru-Centric Institution

Hijra intertwined through a complex web of fictive kinship network, and this imaginary kinship tie gives them the strength to live without their biological family in South Asia (Hinchy, 2000; Nanda, 1994; Taparia, 2011; Shawkat, 2016; Stief, 2017; Sharma, 2018; Goulimari, 2020). Though many of them keep contact with their biological family, they live and spend their whole life within the hijra community with these fictive kin ties. These kinship ties create their identity and inheritance. A hijra is known by the name of her guru in their community. A guru is addressed and treated as *'maa'* (mother) and also as '*Shami'* (husband). A hijra has no identity without a guru; anybody who wants to join the hijra community must have a guru, and this relation is as significant as her biological kin ties. One of my hijra participators, Mahi, stated that,

> The guru is like our maa (Mother) because without taking an *achla* under a guru, no one can be a hijra. We hijra respect our guru like our mother as well as a husband. When one's guru dies, she wears a white dress like a widow and removes all the gold ornaments as long as she doesn't get the *'lalsara'* or new guru. As the husband is the guardian of a woman, a guru is the guardian of a hijra.

The above statements expressed the dependability of a *chela* upon her guru. It also reflects the power and dominance of a hijra guru who is also present in patriarchal ideology. Patriarchy defines in Bangladesh as a distribution of power, resources, and material based on men's control over labor, property, and income. (Chowdhury, 2009). None of the *chelas* can usually control money and property during the lifetime of her guru. However, when a guru dies, her *chela* inherently gets all of her controlled areas (means *para-birit*). In the hijra community, the term *'shami'* or husband does not mean a conventional husband; instead, it refers to the guru's reliability and intimacy. Ritually, the *guru-chela* is synonymous with a husband-wife relation. For example, After having emasculation, a guru arranges a ritual name *' baraiya* for the blessing of her *chela* and her new life. During the *baraiya* program, if the hijra does not have any *parik* (permanent lover), the guru wears a *sindur* (vermilion) on her forehead for the *chela,* which is a custom of Hindu weddings where a groom puts vermilion on the forehead of the bride as a wedding symbol. Similarly, a *chela* is not allowed to wear full white clothing if her guru is alive, as widows of Bangladesh wear white as a symbol of widowhood. A *chela* wears a full white *saree* after the death of her guru to carry a symbol of the end of a guru-*chela* relationship.

I have also met very few hijra gurus who adopt someone else, chela, as her *'dudh-beti'.* This dudh-beti relation is a kind of daughter-mother relationship, where both parties have responsibilities for each other. It's similar to the adopted child, but among the hijra, there is no age limit for a chela to become one's *dudh-beti*. So, a guru acts as a guardian of a hijra whose significance in their lives is intertwined in a complex way. Guardianship is a form of routine activity that can be located under an umbrella of casual social control by the social norms and social bonds (Reynald,2011). The custody system also often limits individual freedom, and it also gives scopes to dominate a minor (Huang & Tang, 2017). Likewise, hijra gurus dominate their *chelas,* and they limit the freedom of *chelas* in many ways; however, they also perform as a support system. This guru-*chela* relation is not only a depiction of fictive kin ties only but also political. Both gurus and *chelas* politically select whom they are going to take as a guru and whom they are going to take as a *chela.* In the following sub-section, I would discuss how these *guru-chela* relations are knotted with diversified factors and how they become political.

5.2.3 *"Guru chisha to joubon chisha"*- The Politics of Taking '*Achla'* and Getting an Empowered Guru

A guru takes all the communal responsibilities of a *chela* and takes care of her life affairs. A guru must solve all kinds of conflicts raised either among the hijra or with the outer society. If any kind of medical emergency emerges during the emasculation surgery, the guru takes all the responsibilities. However, managing a loving, caring, and empowered guru is not an easy task because a guru does not take everyone as her *chela* randomly. However, to take someone's achla or be a chela of a guru is highly political in many cases. Here, I would like to refer to an extract of Priyanka's story, which was already mentioned in the previous chapter.

> Priyanka came to Dhaka to be a hijra undertaking her emasculation medical procedure. She said, *guru chisha to joubon chisha (*life will be enjoyable if you get a proper guru). Having a proper guru can make a hijra's life successful. However, getting *achla* under an empowered and caring guru is a challenging task. Initially, I was not aware of *badsha-hijra* (empowered hijra) and *lurma-hijra ghor* (non-empowered and week-hijra). I was trying to get '*achla'* from a famous hijra, Romana *Nayek*, for the last two years, because her *ghor* has got beautiful feminine hijra. Also, she takes responsibility for her *nati-chela's* emasculations surgeries. I have even heard that the guru has good communication with the doctor who performs *'magipona-chipty'* (surgically reconstructed vagina for sexual intercourse according to the size of her sexual partner). Therefore, I tried a lot to join this *ghor*. However, Romana hijra is Khuki hijra's *khalia-guru*. She often visits her place, and if she likes a *koti* like me, she accepts her as a *chela*. I was working as a maid without taking any *achla* in Khuki hijra's *ghor* just to get in touch with Romana hijra to persuade her to accept me as her *nati chelas*. When I met her, I approached her to receive me as her *chela*, but she rejected me saying, I didn't have a feminine look (beautiful *koti*); my skin tone was not bright, and my *jok-mashi* (hair) was not noticeable. Then, I stopped getting hair cuts, and after one and a half years, when it touched my shoulder, I approached Romana *nani* (grandmother) one more time and gave khuki guru five thousand takas to convince her to accept me as one of her *nati chelas.* Finally, last year, Rumana hijra agreed, and now, I belong to her ghor, where I got an opportunity to look more feminine and beautiful than before, and it also allows me to enjoy my youth.

The above narratives state that finding a guru and getting a *chelaship* (discipleship) or choosing a chela are neither objective nor apolitical. Likewise, the guru-chela relation is not only analyzed as fictive kin-ties; rather, it is more like political connection, which in turn shaped and reshaped in different contexts. When Romana was selective, agreeing to take beautiful *kotis* as her *chela,* it reflects her concern about the appearance of her *chelas,* which helps her to ensure their earning. Conversely, Prianka is not just choosing a guru to have a family; rather, she is optimistic about having a surgically reconstructed vagina to look more feminine for her gender reassignment surgery. The

'*achla*' is not merely a process; rather, it is a calculative and deliberate progression for both guru and *chela*. Thus, it is well understood that hijra' voluntary, imaginary or fictive kin family forming process is not political or and nonpurposive (Singerman, 1996; Sevenhuijsen, 2000; Zuckerman, 2005; Lopez, 2007).

5.2.4. *"Hamsir gordan hamsir na, hamsir gordan hamsir gurur dan"*- A Reciprocal Relation between Guru and Chela

The association between guru and *chela* is not always an intimate one. I found during my fieldwork; this *guru-chela* relation is highly reciprocal, especially in the case of livelihood. All the *chelas* collect a small amount of money from the vendors and shop keepers as a tradition of *hijrapon* known as '*cholla*'. Each hijra is compelled to pay a *cholla-mangtia*[43]. Also, when a hijra guru pays for her *chela's*"emasculation surgery", that *chela* takes a vow and occasionally sign in a bond to serve the guru for a certain period of time (see Figure 6). The chela can neither leave the guru nor take *achla* from other gurus during this period.

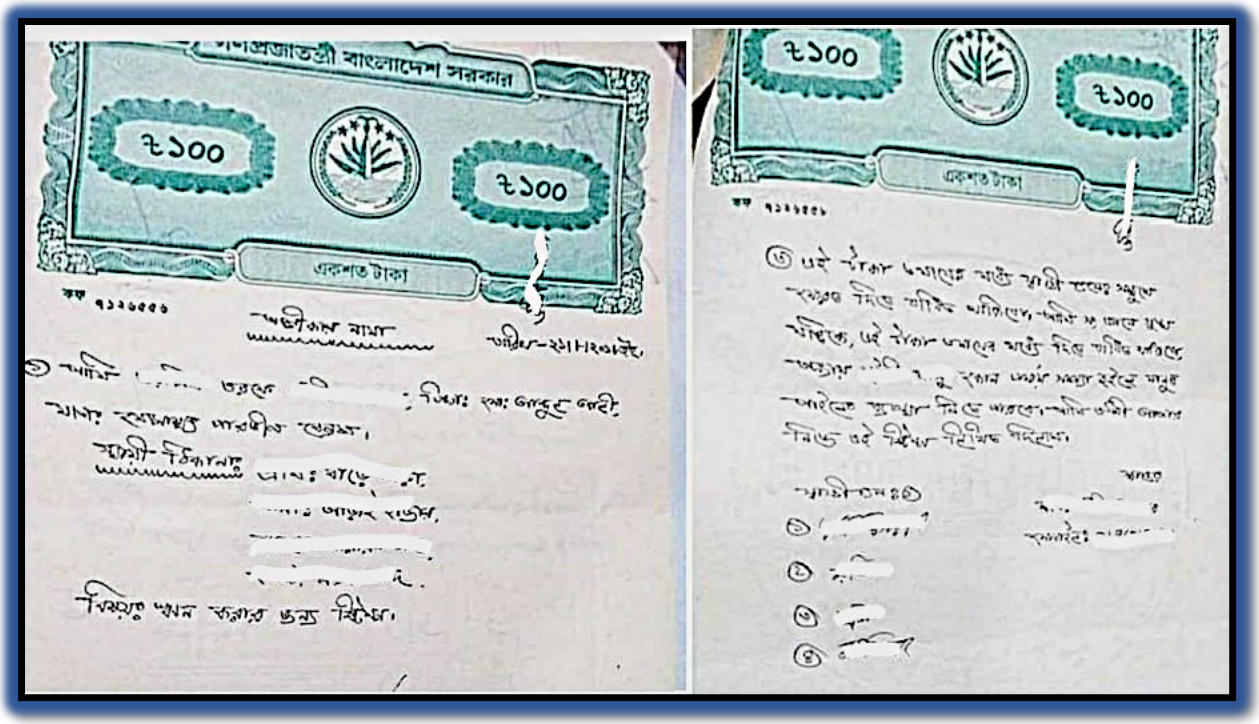


Figure 6. The legal contract paper between a guru-chela

Source: Fieldwork, 2017-2018

[43] A fixed amount of money to her guru from their weekly collection. If any hijra fails to pay that amount of cholla-mangtia per week, she has to pay from her pocket.

If any new guru agrees to pay all the due payment to the previous guru, then the *chela* is allowed to take new discipleship. To clarify the above discussion, I would like to share the story of Koli below.

> Koli was born into a lower-middle-class family. She said- I always felt trapped in the wrong body, I wanted to be a woman, but my family was very conservative. They didn't let me wear any women's clothes and makeup. So, I ran away from home at the age of 14 and took refuge in a hijra *ghor*. There, I got an *achla* under Shima guru. She arranged a *katial* to make me a *hater-Murad*, but I did not want to do that. I wanted to run away from that place, which cost me three lakh *dons* (fine). Until another guru agreed to pay the *don,* I couldn't change that hijra *ghor*. I had to serve her for eight years. I had to take her *brit's cholla* and managed my birit, too. As a result, I couldn't manage money for my"gender reassignment surgery",. But in these eight years, I have expanded my network to find another guru. Finally, I managed Aruna guru to pay the fine on my behalf and gave me her '*achla*'. After eight years, I got my freedom. Aruna guru is just like a mother. She arranged money for my "gender reassignment surgery", in India. She gave me a new life and became my owner. Now, I am a beautiful hijra, which I have always desired for. Only because of my guru, I got my para-birit and got an opportunity to create my own identity. However, I had to pay for this too; she gave me my freedom, I gave her a vow to serve her until my death and have to stay here forever. My guru needed someone whom she could trust and manage all the conflicts and *para-birit.* Do you know how I got the opportunity to get discipleship from Arun Guru? I didn't know that she noticed me when I was living with the Shima guru. Shima guru didn't want to leave me, but once there was a fight between Aruna and Shima guru. Shima guru's *chelas* took *cholla* from Aruna guru's *birit* without informing her. Therefore, the Aruna guru set a '*hijragiri*' (where all the senior and high ranked hijra solve the conflicts where both the arbiters are bound to accept the verdicts). After hearing both parties' hijrapon (statement), it was decided that Shima guru must pay three million takas to Aruna guru. That time, Shima guru didn't have the money; therefore, she asked more times to pay off. At that moment, I took the privilege to propose Aruna guru take me as her *chela.* I told her that I would collect this money through the next two Eids *('Eid-mantigtia'*). It's a country of Muslims; therefore, hijra get an opportunity to earn extra money during this time. They can collect a high amount of 'Eid-*cholla*.' Since then, Aruna guru accepted my proposal and took me as her *chela*. *Hamsir gordan ekhon hamsir na, hamsir gordaner malik Aruna guru* (My head is not mine, it belongs to Aruna guru now).

The above narratives explain the *guru-chela* reciprocal relations. Reciprocal relationships are defined as relationships that have a keen interest in materialistic goals (Wiedermann & Eye, 2020). The *guru-chela* relationships are not limited to emotional bonding only; rather, dominance, money, control, and authoritative hierarchical power relations play a significant role in maintaining these fictive/voluntary kin ties. Furthermore, it also appeared that within the hijra community, there is a certain form of conflicts that exist among the *nayeks* and gurus, which lays impact in their *chela's* lives and also financial negotiations as significant as their kin networking.

5.3 The hierarchical power structure of the hijra community

Minuchin defines hierarchy as "different levels of authority" (Minuchin,1974, p. 52), while Haley (1976) outlines hierarchy as "levels of status and power" (Haley,1976, p. 101). Both Haley and Minuchin use the phrase "power hierarchy," demonstrating the intimate relationship which exists between these terms in their thinking (Simon, 1993). Researchers have shown a different kind of hierarchy that has been practiced in a different cultural and social context (Snibbe & Markus, 2005; Schooler, 2007; Wilson, 2010; Miyamoto, 2013; Curhan et al., 2014). Hijra is such a social group formed based on their non-hetero-normative gender identity and is run by the informal hierarchical system (Rana et al.,2016). Hierarchical practices enhance the opportunity for coordination and cooperation among group members, and therefore, it reduces intra-group conflicts (Halevy, Chau & Galinsky 2011). A large number of hijra live in such a community where hierarchies are the prime principle of their power structure, and power comes in many forms in the hijra community. The key form of power is to access influential people and resources (Kanter, 1977; Reid,1999; Oyserman, 2006; Molho, Balliet, & Wu 2019).

Power hierarchies constitute a system based on the group member's perception of each other's dominance (Gupta, 2000; Lane, 2006). The domination capacity is a measure of the power of the hijra hierarchical governance. The dominant behavior refers to such action that carries the intention to gain control or influence over another person (Schmid & Mast, 2010), and among the hijra community, to be able to dominate others is the primary condition of being an authoritative figure in the community. Among the hijra community, hierarchical power relations are authoritative and institutional. Power has been practiced among the traditional hijra in two ways. Firstly, the hierarchical power follows according to their fictive kin ties. For example, a *chela* is always subordinate to her guru and bound to follow her instructions and commands. Discursively, hijra has to have faith in their guru, and therefore, they have a belief that all those decisions she makes bring a positive impact on a *chela's* life. However, I found that *nan-gurus* is more powerful and influential than gurus as *nan-gurus* are highly ranked and highly connected with other hijra. They access their power by getting *'lalasara'* and become a *nayek*. One of my participants, Badsha, states:

> My gotia Nodi and I took *achla* from Bijli guru, but she is not our main guru. Our *nan-guru* is our foremost guru. Bijli is a *'namer guru'* (proxy guru) who does not understand the *hijrapon*, but we still respect her as a tradition. Because of her, we lost many of our *para birit*. But she is getting old; therefore, we do not disclose anything to her. She lives with us as a friend now. Our head is our *nan-guru*, Anowara. She is the boss, she controls the whole suburb, and we obey her. We can get access to our *para-birit* only if she is happy with us. As

> she is the *nayek*, she is more powerful than a *malik*. Therefore, we always try to make her happier than our guru.

The above statement reflects the hierarchical positional ties and the authoritative power of *nayek* and *malik*. And all those ranks should be achieved based on their skill. None of the hijra get to the top of the hierarchy as a *nayek* or *mukhiya* without any effort. To get the position of a malik or *nayek* is deeply associated with inter-community power politics, financial strength, networking, dignity, status, ability to influence, argue and control. The *nayek* and *mukhiya's* authoritative power is strictly maintained, whereas malik and *chelas* are only following their orders. Every aspect of the hijra community is formed, shaped, and controlled by the hierarchy. So, it is not possible to comprehend the hijra community without a clear understanding of how their hierarchical system works.

5.3.1 "G*uru-malik-nayek-mukhiya"*– The Hierarchical Governance System of Hijra

In Bangladesh, most of the hijra live their lives as a part of the community and must follow the hierarchical communal governance system. Their community structure has an asymmetrical power relation, which ultimately follows a hierarchal system. During my fieldwork, I have found four authoritative hijra ranks that practice and perform different roles in hijra governance. Such as the guru is much lower in the hierarchy and less influential in power structure regardless of the number of *chelas* she has. Simultaneously, some gurus never reach the top of the hierarchy in their lifetime and keep serving as a proxy guru. Those categories of gurus are treated as ordinary hijra guru-maa, and they typically get a few *para-birit*[44] from the controlled areas. These substitute gurus are not allowed to take a position to talk on behalf of anyone or to take any decision during the hijragiri.

[44] Hijra are not allowed to go for *badhai* and *cholla* in random areas. Different suburbs are systematically divided among them depending on the inheritance of their hierarchy. Those areas are called *para-birit*.

Table 10: The hierarchical power structure of the traditional hijra governance system

Source: Fieldwork, 2017-2018

A *malik*[45]can give her *chela a* particular *para-birit* of her name during her lifetime. A malik holds comparatively many areas of a suburb and also controls the ordinary guru maas. She distributes her area among her *chelas,* including ordinary guru maas as well. A *nayek* is the most desired position of hijra in Bangladesh. One who spends her whole life in the hijra community will not necessarily turn out to be a *nayek*. One cannot be a *nayek* until her guru dies. A hijra usually participates in a ritual called *'lalsara,'* for being a *nayek. 'lalsara'* means to take a red cloth after her guru's death. As previously discussed, c*hela*s must wear entire white clothing only after their guru's death. *'lalsara'* is such a ritual that hijra perform when they show their interest to be a *nayek* to the *mukhiya* and other hijra *nayeks*. One who wants to be a *nayek* must pay three million takas to the mukhiya to arrange a death ceremony of her guru and invite all other *nayeks* with two cinnamons. She needs to clear all her dues and fines. If there is any complaint or allegations against her, she has to clarify before taking her *lalsara.* During the death ceremony of her guru, she will wear a whole white dress, and all the *nayeks* will come to bless her by putting vermillion and *alta* (a red dye that is applied on the hands and feet of women). Then, the *mukhiya* puts a red scarf on her head and gives her colorful clothes to wear. In this way, one becomes a *nayek* and lives a regular life. A *nayek* gets all her guru's-controlled area. If the number of *chelas* is more than one, the deceased guru's *para-birits* are equally distrusted among

[45] *malik* refers to those gurus who though rank as a guru in the community hierarchy but held power because they are more influential than the ordinary gurus.

them. If there is any issue raised regarding the *para-birit*, mukhiya decides which *nayek* will control which area. All the *nayeks* are bound to accept the mukhiya's decision because a mukhiya is the chief of the hijra community, and she holds the highest power and the center of the hijra governance power structure. Hijra *nayeks* usually select the mukhiya of a certain house, which is considered a lifetime position. There is no formal way of selecting a mukhiya. They are significantly knowledgeable about the hijra tradition, experienced in *hijrapon,* outspoken, influential, and to some extent contribute religious rituals such as Hajj, Zakat, Ramadan, Durga Puja, and other religious, charitable funding and in due course, get selected as a *mukhiya* by the other hijra *nayeks*. Typically, *nayeks* and *mukhiyas* live more decent life compare to others and hold authoritative power, and they maintain hijra and other socio-political networks. Usually, *nayeks* take their *lalsara* during the *'chatai',* which is very significant among the hijra community.

5.3.3 *'Chatai'*- A Hijra Gathering and Arbitration

'*Chatai*' is a gathering where high-positioned hijra like *nayeks* and *mukhiyas*, *dad-gurus,* or *boro-maas* become judges to resolve their internal disputes. It is a way of settlement where hijra accepts judgment for their inner conflicts regarding *para-birit, 'varavari,* (objurgated), '*don*' (compensation), and *'bakor'* (stealing money from guru's *mangtia*). Generally, the hijra avoid a formal legal system; therefore, they wait for this *'chatai'* for a long time. *chatai* is organized according to the demand of the arbitrations. Like a panchayat system, different *nayeks* advocate on behalf of the accused maliks and *chelas* of each hijra house. The higher positioned hijra perform as judges, and they come in settlement of all the allegations, accusations, and the grievance. However, each of the grumbles identified by the accused is as *'chiton.'*

5.3.4 *'Chiton*' is a Symbol of Accusations

Chiton is a symbol of the allegation. As *chatai* is organized as per need, hijra try to temporarily seek out their conflict by keeping a gold ornament as a mortgage named 'chiton,' taken from the accused person. Usually, the fights between the guru and chela, two different hijra gurus, or two hijra ghors come with a *chiton* to temporarily settle down the conflicts. During the *chatai* session, neither the victim nor the accused hijra speaks for themselves. They recruit a *nayek* who would perform as a defendant and a prosecutor. Each claim treated as a *'kalam',* and that ' *kalam'* come with some solutions with a high amount of fine must be paid immediately in cash on the spot. Usually, the plaintiff comes with lots of her chela to support her and try to convince a few hijra *nayek* to take a position on behalf of her. They present an expensive saree, gold necklace, chain, ring, diamond nose pin, etc., to the hijra *nayeks* so that the judgment goes in her favour.

5.3.5 The Three Hijra Houses in Bangladesh

There are three hijra houses in Bangladesh, *Shambazar, Gumghor*, and *Machuya,* and each house has one chief called a *mukhiya*. According to some of my participants, all those hijra houses are born from the womb of India. Yet, Bangladeshi *hijra-pon* their way of living is far different from Indian hijra culture. As I mentioned in earlier chapters, the Indian hijra has appeal to various mythic tales that valorize religious sacrifices (Nanda, 1999), whereas Bangladeshi hijra do not practice spiritual sacrifice. However, those three hijra groups originated from seven Indian hijra houses, which Reddy (2006) mentioned in her ethnographic work. Though Bangladeshi hijra are highly connected to Indian hijra houses, all three hijra groups in Bangladesh are nowadays separately run their hijra houses.

Shambazar

The word *'Shambazar'* originated from a bazaar identified as *Shambazaar* (Hossain, 2013). According to my hijra participants, *Shambazar's* hijra take *cholla* as their hijrapon (occupation). As they take *cholla* from the *bazaar (market); therefore, this house is called Shambazar*. One of the most dominant hijra houses in Dhaka is *Shambazar*. The *mukhiya* of *Shambazar* is Bakul Haji. *Shambazar* holds the majority of suburbs; therefore, it rules Dhaka. One of my elder hijra participant's Sweety *nayek* detailed that -

> *Shambazar* is a Muslim hijra house. Our dad-guru Reshema haji, who belongs to the *ghum-habra* hijra house in India, performed Hajj many times (those who perform Hajj titled as haji), gave thirty million takas to Indian's *Shambazar* hijra house in 2008 to get us freedom. Because she wanted to help Bangladeshi hijra houses as we are Muslim. Now, *Shambazar* is the only independent hijra house in Bangladesh that has its own governance and free from the control of the Indian hijra house. On the other hand, *'gumghor'* and *'machoya'* are highly dominated by Indian hijra houses. However, that two hijra houses could not create their position in Bangladesh because *Shambazar* is the king of Bangladeshi hijra groups.

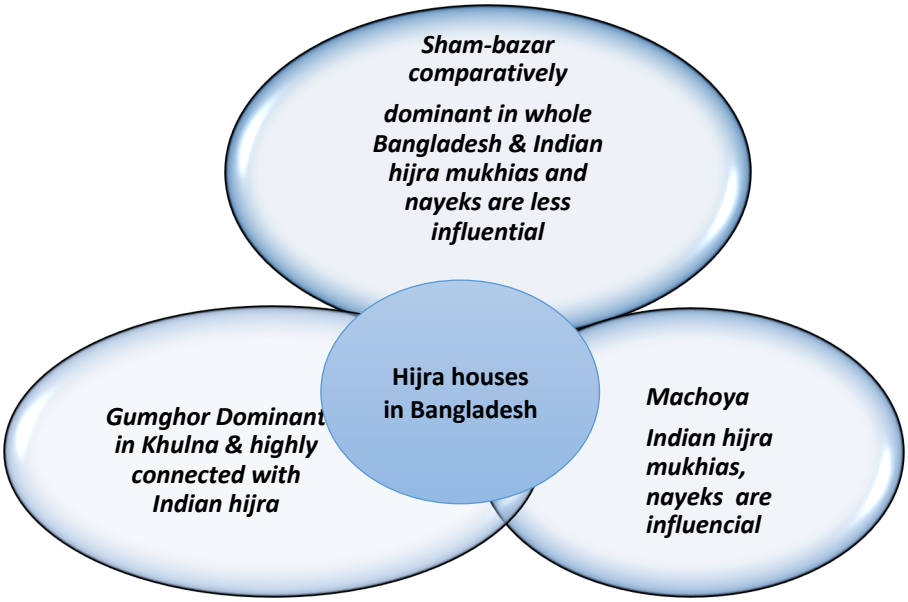
The above statement clearly stated that these hijra ghors are connected with India in many ways, and in some cases, their governance system is also controlled by Indian hijra houses. However, claiming that *Shambazar* is an independent as well as a Muslim hijra house significantly pointed to individual sovereignty.

Gumghor

The house '*Gumghor*' is usually known as '*ghungur*'. Though it means anklet, according to my hijra participants, the term '*gum*' refers to the disappearance. During the British period when the CTA 1871 declared hijra as criminals, many hijra tried to hide (Hinchy, 2019) and eventually ended up in *baiji paras*/*Tari khana* (illegal bars) and started living in local brothels. Some of them had to work in local

bars as dancers and got involved in the sex trade. After the independence, the government closed down all the bars and brothels, and thus, they set a hijra ghor named *gumghor*. Initially, the house was named *Gumghor,* which eventually turned into '*Ghungur*'. Dipali is the *mukhiya* of this house, and it is dominant in the Khulna district in Bangladesh. *Gumghor* hijra is used to take *cholla* in the traffic signals; however, now they are involved in the sex trade. As the sex-trade is a kind of disgrace for traditional hijrapon custom (Hossain, 2013), the '*Gumghor'* hijra house has lower prestige in Dhaka city.

Table11: The three hijra houses in Bangladesh & Indian dominance



Source: Fieldwork: 2017-2018

However, *Gumghor* hijra claim that, as they have less control over *para-birit*, they have no way but to earn money either by taking cholla from the traffic signal or performing the dance, which involves sex-trade. As this hijra house is highly connected with Indian hijra houses, they invite hijra *nayeks* from India to solve the *gumghor mukhiya's* disputes.

Machoya

Machoya is the tiniest group among the three hijra houses in Bangladesh and is a broken part of the *Gumghor* (Hossain, 2013). The *mukhiya* of the *machoya* hijra house is Bedana hijra. This hijra group is located in India and follows the same tradition as *gumghor*. During my fieldwork, I did not get any *machoya* hijra house members; therefore, I did not get any opportunity to crosscheck the information that I have got from my hijra participants. According to Hossain, "There is practically no difference among these three major houses in terms of rituals, and there are no such major symbolic divisions in the way *hijragiri* is organized in Bangladesh" (Hossain, 2013, p. 86). In accordance with Hossain, a hijra is usually known by her guru's name. I do partly agree with him in terms of ritual practices,

yet, in most cases, what I have observed in my studies that *chelas* are usually identified by the name of their gurus. However, in certain cases, a *chela* might introduce herself to others by the name of her guru, but their *hijrapon* and way of living can be differentiated based on which hijra house she belongs to.

5.4."*Hijrapon shudu puch-kaporer pesha pon na"*- Different Roles and Hijra Identities in Bangladesh

Traditionally, hijra occupations are related to singing and dancing, but Choen (1995) mentions that hijra are apparently, 'stolen from them.' They are not cramped in their traditional profession anymore (Reddy, 2006). According to my hijra participants, *hirjapon* is an occupation of five clothes traditionally since they groom themselves with five female attires such as *saree*; a stitchless clothes, a traditional Bangali woman's dress, with *saya* (a skirt to wear under the saree), blouse, *nak-ful* (nose pin) and earrings.

While collecting *cholla* or *badhai*, a hijra presents herself with all these five female attires. Therefore, they address *hijrapon* as *'puch-kaporer pesha pon',* which means five clothes occupations. Things have been changed gradually. Nowadays, a hijra is involved in the sex-trade and engaged with non-government organizations along with their traditional profession, *cholla*, or *badhai.* During my fieldwork, I have found, following six types of hijra occupation in Bangladesh. Although traditional hijrapon has some diversified aspects, every occupation holds different forms of power. Hence, choosing hijrahood as a way of living is varied in hierarchical position and prevailing circumstances.

5.4.1 *'Cholla mangtia and dholer hijra'*- A Traditional form of Hijrapon

A hijra who newly took *achla* from a guru and entered into the hijra community is identified as a *cholla mangtiar*-hijra. Though such hijra are in the foot in the power structure, all the traditional hijra begin her journey as a *cholla mangtier* hijra. '*dholer*-hijra' name is derived from the word '*dhol*,' a traditional Bangali musical instrument. *dholer* hijra perform a particular form of dance named *'bacha-na*chani'[46] by playing *dhol* in a *'badhai*'[47] ceremony. Only *malik* or senior chelas are entitled to dholer hijra and allowed to sing, dance, perform *'bacha nachani'*, and carry the *dhol*. Holding the *dhol* is a respectful job among the hijra tradition, and therefore, it is also very competitive. During my study, I came to know that no '*janana*" are allowed to carry the *dhol* because, in Bangladeshi popular

[46] Hijra go to India take a training on *bacha nachani*, they take the newborn in one hand with a *kula* (rack) and dance with the bgv beat of *dhol*.
[47] When hijra go to the newly born 'home' or to bless a newly married couple, they sing and dance, which is called '*badhai'*.

discourse, general people perceived hijra with genital ambiguity. One of my participants, Urmi, a *dholer* hijra asserted that:

> Those who have *ligam* (penis) cannot perform *badai* and are not allowed to carry the *dhol*. In the last *hijragiri*, our *'mukhiya'* declared that if a *janana* takes a *dhol*, and by any chance, the public gets to know about her ligam, they will *(kachhi kore*) castigate hijra. Also, new *chelas* easily involve in *varavari* (objurgate) with the people compare to senior hijra. Therefore, neither a *janana* nor the newcomer is allowed to take the *dhol(a traditional kind of drum)*. In addition, *dhol* is a sacred instrument for hijra, and someone should not handle it if she is not entirely dedicated to hijrapon.

Table 12: Bangladeshi Hijra's diversified identity

Source:Fieldwork: 2017-2018

5.4.2 "*Hissha khatar* and *Eid cholla mangtiar* hijra"- Everyday labor and seasonal hijra

Hijra of *hissha khatar* is a kind of occupation where the collected *cholla* (money) is distributed among the *chelas*. In this system, a guru does not distribute her *para-birit* among her *chelas* and *nati-chelas;* rather, all the *chelas* and *nati-chelas* collect the *cholla*/*hisha* from the guru's *para* every day. A half share/*hissha* from the collected amount goes to the guru's hand, and the rest is distributed among the *chelas* based on their hierarchical position. However, this way of earning money reduces their chance

to get into a higher position and earn more because, in the hijra profession, a *para-birit* from the guru upgrades her status. Therefore, a hijra who has a future dream to be a *nayek* or would like to get in a higher position in hijra society does not want to be a part of "hissha-khata." According to one of my participants, Sumi :

> *Hissha- khata* is similar to a part-time job where there is no security in life, almost like working as a servant for the guru. I am a *hissha-khatar* hijra. I had to do it because I am a *janana*, but I am not sure if I want to continue it or not. Furthermore, I do not have a decent network among the hijra community; I could not make a proper connection with my guru yet, and therefore, I am working as *hisha-khatar* hijra. Being a *hissha –khatar* hijra, I might not get the *para-birit*, but I can ensure a daily income. But those who long for a bigger dream, it is not for them.

Eid-mangtiar hijra is another form of *hissha-khatar* that hijra do *cholla mangtia* for a certain period of time. It can also be termed as a seasonal hijra. As I mentioned earlier, Bangladeshi hijra take a high amount of *cholla in Eid-ul-fitar, Eid-ul-azha*, and *Pahela baishak*. This time they need extra people to collect the *cholla* to cover their all *para-birit* for a short time. Therefore, they recruit new *kotis* and *jananas* to work for the time being, and they work as *hisha-katahar* hijra. Those hijra also get some offerings if they follow the hijra *reet* (community rites), and sometimes, a guru agrees to give them an extra amount if she is happy with their works.

5.4.3 *'Night kamer hijra'*- Hijra in Sex-Trade

Existing studies on HIV and MSM in Bangladesh and my fieldwork noticed that many hijra are involved in the sex trade. They are called *'night-kamer hijra.'* These types of hijra neither go to the badai nor for *cholla*. They take achla from a guru and pay her guru a weekly *mangtia* (a certain amount of money) to give her protection and support in difficulties. Those hijra are not perceived as respectable community members and do not generally get a *lalsara* to be a *nayek*. However, the *night-kamer* hijra may quit prostitution and can take vows to live a traditional hijra life. However, during my research, I did not find any high-ranked hijra involved in the sex-trade. One of my hijra participants, Boishaki, specified that:

> I am not interested in traditional *hijra-pon*; it does not give me any satisfaction. Though it is difficult to get access to a higher position in the hijra community without living a traditional hijra life, I do not want to waste my life in *dashigiri* (slavery). I pay five thousand *mangtia* to my guru so that I can live with them, and it is a big shelter for me. Sometimes the police arrest me for not being a registered prostitute, but they say nothing when they find out my hijra identity. Thus, I always consider it as a safe way to make money for my future.

The above statement portrayed a borderline between the traditional hijra livelihood and the hijra sex trade. Furthermore, it is evident that hijra sex workers are more independent than the hijra who follow traditional hijra life. The authoritative power of gurus is less regulative for the hijra sex workers.

5.4.4 *'NGO hijra'*- Hijra with Institutional Affiliation

My participants refer to NGOs affiliated hijra as NGO hijra. Nowadays, those who have formal education often get the opportunity to participate in various government and non-government training programs. Yet, in most cases, Non-government Organizations are more concerned with the potential for HIV and other sexual health problems than their well-being. In contrast, the Ministry of Public Welfare is more interested in their empowerment training. Most of the time, educated hijra who are working in NGOs have little influence in the mainstream hijra community.

Despite getting employed in NGOs does not ultimately make a significant difference in the lives of hijra who connects with traditional hijra livelihood, but rather those who got NGO job act as NGO representatives instead of serving the community. However, this is not particularly factual of hijra employees, but it is part of the culture of Bangladeshi NGOs where they are more concerned with providing services to donors than to the target community. Chowdhury's book has a precise reflection of this, which can be better understood by looking at the following quotation:

> Rather than encouraging accountability towards clients, rigorous monitoring mechanisms tend to protect donors' public scrutiny. Staff is trained to prioritize meeting the goals of the NGO and to acquire technical skills like fluency in the English language and drafting reports according to certain formats, rather than to adapt the organization's style to locally-based needs (Chowdhury, 2011, p. 3).

Chowdhury (2011) emphasized the above statement to explore violence against gender in Bangladesh and their relationship with women activists and unsettled allies of local and international development agencies. Although no direct link to NGO hijra was seen in her interpretation, it reflects the accountability of NGOs and in no case excludes hijra employees. Nevertheless, it creates a gap and tension between traditional and NGO hijra. Correspondingly, my research found that these NGO hijra are not well accepted within the mainstream hijra because the community anticipates them to be using their vulnerability to get privileges from various social actors. Most of the hijra start their journey by taking *achla* from a hijra guru; they do not always uphold the same traditional *guru-chela* relations. One of my participants, name Rashi, proclaims that:

> Those educated NGO hijra are *velkibaj (con artist);* they are simply a beneficiary group. NGOs hire hijra for their own benefit and to get recognition. Those NGO hijra are belonging to a high-class privileged society, speaking English, traveling abroad, advocating hijra issues

> abroad and the media, living a richer life, and claim themselves as our representatives on television talk shows, where they do not live our lives or face the daily struggles of hijra. Some of them started labeling themselves as transgenders these days to get privileges from the donors; you may call it another *velkibaji* (cheating); they are not hijra, rather more like *gandu* (negative reactions towards someone) who find pride in labelling themselves transgenders. Those so-called transgenders attend seminars, symposiums and taking all sorts of advantages by publicizing our vulnerabilities, but in reality, they have no honest intentions to enhance our lives.

Rashi's statement indicates a meaningful difference between traditional and NGO hijra in terms of status, privilege, acceptance, and achieving social and cultural capital. Politically, the traditional hijra life left with a very low financial and social class, Aziz and Azhar (2019) stated in this regard:

> It is notable that the hijra who engaged in traditional livelihoods for the community, such as badhai, often hail from lower socioeconomic castes while the hijra who work in non-profit settings often hail from higher socioeconomic castes. (Aziz & Azhar, 2019, p. 8)

In the Bangladeshi context, traditional hijra were undoubtedly considered taboo and were marked as undeclared and unwritten lower castes. It is also evident that hijra who take up traditional hijra occupation are often held lower social standing, and the who work in the NGOs hold higher social positions than traditional community hijra. In addition, most NGO hijra have a negative perception of the traditional hijra profession. Their way of life, thinking, occupation shows a huge difference from the ideal hijra community. One of my hijra participants Chaity, a well-known NGO worker and a spokesperson, asserts :

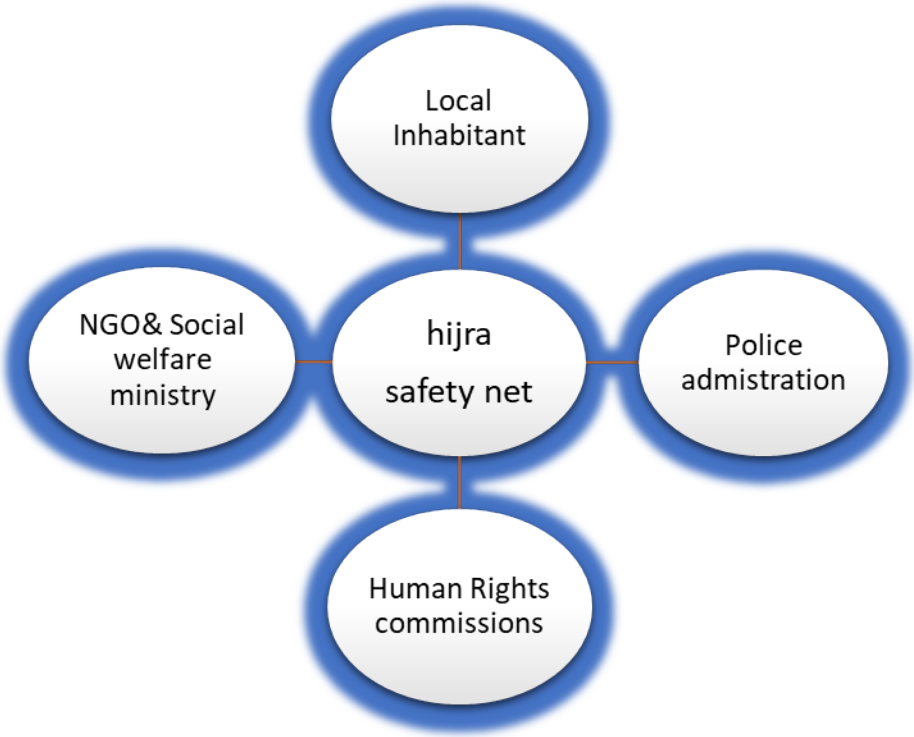
> I don't like traditional hijra life. I spent quite a long time within the community but never enjoyed *hijrapon*. Since traditional hijra act like beggars in the way they raise money, I don't feel comfortable with it, and so, when I received training from ICDDRB, I became interested in working with them. I started this work with project work and later started working as a community facilitator. This job allows me to lead a dignified life, which enables me to go abroad once a year. I got this job because I am more educated and intelligent than the 'street hijra'. I care about my self-esteem and dignity; I do not consider myself one of those beggars.

The statement highlights how NGO hijra distinguish themselves from others; in particular, they address them as 'street hijra' to show that the traditional hijra do not portray a decent lifestyle that trans hijra are representing. My research has found that there is an uncomfortable relationship between NGOs and conventional hijra along the line. However, both parties maintain uninterrupted communication with each other socially to achieve their mutual interests, which I will analyze in a case study in Chapter Eight.

5.5 The Relation between Hijra and Other Social Actors

Current scholarships in hijra studies show that hijra are one of the highly stigmatized groups in Bangladesh (Abdullah, 2018; Hossain, 2017; Hossain, 2012; Safa, 2016). Yet, my experience suggested that this is not similar for all contexts and aspects of hijra's life. Although hijra are stigmatized in the wider society, they have a fairly reasonable acceptance among low-income groups. I have noticed that their neighbors show a kind of care and compassion towards them when they share the same neighborhood. Since the neighbors treat them as a part of their extended friends and family, a social "safety net" works for them in this regard. Since low-income people are not able to take a loan from the bank, so they get the benefit of a loan from hijra with interest money. It is noteworthy that both local and hijra seem to feel comfortable with each other to share different aspects of their social life in a common locality.

Table 13: hijra safety net and relation between hijra and other social actors



Source: Fieldwork, 2017-2018

However, in spite of enduring all the obstacles of life with their uneven presence, overcoming all the obstacles of their regular life, they carry on ensuring their hijra livelihood. Even though they are tabooed, outcasted, stigmatized, they are capable of reaching their survival stage to confirm their agency. Nevertheless, the stigmatization process has always been a part of their existence. It is

commonly believed that hijra are being alienated from mainstream society in many areas of life; apart from all those stigmatizations, I have found they are highly connected with their normative families, different social actors, and the local folks.

5.5.1 "*Ei parar mainshe hijra go kacchi kore na, lohori khay"* - The Relation between Hijra and the Local Folks

In Bangladesh, hijra live with their *gotia* in the same area near their guru's or *nan-guru's* place (guru's home). A *nan-guru* controls suburb, and all her *nati-puti-chelas* live in one of her *nan-guru's birit*. Notwithstanding, most of the hijra live in densely populated areas, either in shared accommodation or a lodge. They maintain suitable connections with their neighbours, council members, and local gangs so that they can peacefully perform their hijrapon in the area. In this context, Rashi (a janana) stated :

> In hijrapon, those who have more connections would survive easily. My guru always teaches me to connect more with the local people as continuous tension works among the hijra to control the *para-birit*. If the local folk are with you, it would be easy to face the other hijra. We hijra live in densely populated poor areas. Our neighbors consider us one of them. If you visit the '*Puran Dhaka*' (Old Dhaka), you may find those local people even know our *Ulti* language. Our neighbors are our friends, and they protect us because we both rely on each other. Also, many of our *nan-gurus* pay a certain amount to the local council member, and, therefore, we take our *cholla* and run the *hijrapon* smoothly. Don't think that a hijra is a fool; we are smarter than many because we take strategic steps for our survival. If a hijra does not have a proper connection with the local people, she fails to keep a peaceful life. We also manage to maintain a constant connection with our neighbors by sharing food and daily necessities. Often, I spend time taking care of my neighbor's young children when their mothers are at work. I treat them as my family. When my next-door neighbor *'Neharun'* (woman) cooks, she shares with me. You will hardly see these types of bonding among the '*borolokes*' (upper-class). Hence, our poor neighbors are the moral support for us.

Rashi's narratives presented a different picture of the social life of a hijra. A common perception lies that hijra are alienated from the mainstream society, but in reality, they are well connected with the lower-income group in many ways, and also, their survival strategy persuades them to maintain a fair connection with the local folks as a part of their agency.

5.5.2 "*Police shade hat milaia hijra ra vat khay*"- The Relation between Hijra and Police Administration

Nowadays, hijra are not welcomed by people in their homes, but in traditional *badhai* culture, hijra usually visit a house where a baby is born. As they often demand a large amount of money, which fuels conflict with the house owner, and subsequently, they call the police. Police try to negotiate between two parties and fix a *badhai* amount. Recently, some senior police officers in Bangladesh support hijra by promoting charity to donate money for small businesses to empower hijra. Nevertheless, in most cases, after a few months of involvement in the new profession, they ultimately get back to their mainstream *hijrapon*. My participant, Bondona, said:

> All these calling police are mare set up dramas! Hijra maintain a rather positive connection with the police force. We need police to protect and support us. Likewise, as hijra are connected to many people, they get easy access to information about smugglers and drug dealing, and that information is vital for the police force. As a result of that, most police officers give us defenses. Therefore, when house owners call the police officers, it makes us more comfortable because we know they will help us get the *badhai* amount.

5.5.3 *"Arial talent sobte manobadikare jay*"- Hijra's Connection with National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh

The National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh (NHRC) is an autonomous constitutional body formed under the National Human Rights Commission Act 2009. The Commission has a thematic committee on Dalit, Hijra, and other excluded minorities (Hossen, 2019, Hussain, 2021). NHRC opens a space for the disadvantaged social minorities and creates a platform for a hijra to file legal claims to ensure their rights. During my fieldwork, I have found that educated and well-connected hijra can file complaints in NHRC. Even if the complaints are very limited in number, they nevertheless start to file complaints legally in NHRC regarding property rights and other conflicting issues with the outer society.

5.5.4 Hijra' Affiliation with NGO and Social Welfare Ministry

In Bangladesh, NGOs are working with hijra in some specific programs such as the necessity to use condoms, MSM, preventing sexual terminated diseases like HIV, and sexual rights are the major focused areas (Khan et al., 2008; Khan et al., 2009). However, in present days, a few local NGOs and community organizations like Rethink, *Bondu, Shustojibon, Sadakalo* are working for hijra rights and

hijra advocacy. Therefore, a hijra is now getting opportunities to work in NGO. The social welfare ministry also takes some initiatives and programs for hijra to improve their lives quality, for instance, 'Program for improving the living standard of the Hijra community.' Simultaneously, the Bangladesh government is allocating money for improving hijra living standards by providing and organizing different types of vocational training programs for them to confirm empowerment.

Table 14 : Money allocation for improving the living standard of the hijra community

Financial year	Allocated amount in taka
2012-2013	72,17,000
2013-2014	4,07,31600
2014-2015	4,58,72000
2015-2016	8,00,00,000
2016-2017	9,00,00,000
2017-2018	11,35,00,000
2018-2019	11,40,00,000

Source: Ministry of Social welfare

During my fieldwork, I found out that most of the hijra are not well informed about all these training programs, and only one of my participants participated in the social welfare ministry's running program named 'Program for improving the living standard of the Hijra community.' However, when I went to the social welfare ministry, I came to know these hijra who have taken part in their program came from outside of Dhaka. As my research field is centered in Dhaka, I might not be able to undertake in-depth interviews of hijra who take part in the government training and livelihood project. However, since I attended a seminar at the Ministry of Social Welfare, I had the opportunity to meet some of the hijra outside Dhaka who were participating in the livelihood program. One of them, Shima, said :

> Hijra who are attending this training program are *janana*s; as you know, *jananas* cannot create a space among the traditional hijra. And those who are indecisive about going for a *'chibrani'* (emsculation surgery) or still could not manage the money for the emasculation are coming to join this program to get some money. In traditional hijrapon, you can earn a lot of cash, and we all know that, so who will come to join these types of programs willingly? ….. I just came here because my guru did *bila* (objurgate) with me. I am looking for another guru to shift, and I need some money to survive for the time being, and the ministry is providing transportation costs. Moreover, if I can manage the loan, I can use it for my *chibrani* as well.

The social welfare ministry is arranging different types of training programs for hijra to improve the quality of their lives. The department wants to encourage hijra to leave their traditional hijrapon and

be involved in small businesses like tailoring, dairy, boutique shops, beauty parlor, etc. They give a certain amount of money to hijra and give them interest-free loans also. One of my participants, who is a government official, Abdur Rajjak Howler, deputy director of Social welfare directorates, said that:

> In most cases, hijra get the training and take the allocated money but do not change their traditional *hijragiri.* Also, we can't follow them up after training because of the lack of manpower and knowledge about them. Moreover, we can't manage the hijra gurus to join our training program. Those gurus, in fact, do not allow hijra to change their traditional *hijrapon* as well.

5.6 Summary

Since hijra live within the community, their life is folded similarly like a clove of garlic that follows diversified norms, rituals, rules, kin-ties, hierarchical powers, and practices. Most of them live either in a particular community or area connected with the community members developing a *'fictive kinship'* network where guru-*chela* hierarchical power relationships are significantly important. In the hijra governance system, to gain different hijra ranks, one should be comparatively political and strategic with having actual social networking. The extreme form of the marginalization is more rhetoric than they consciously created their own bubble that is less visible in open eyes. Though it is commonly perceived that hijra live in extreme marginalization, my findings suggested that they are not living in isolation in their networking. In many alternative and multidimensional ways, they are well connected and maintaining a good connection with diversified social actors for their survival. Hijra could be treated as a deprived and stigmatized gender minority; nevertheless, to treat them as an alienated social unit in the present condition must be illusory. Rather, the process of becoming a hijra is a roundabout way, and it does not follow any unilateral path.

Chapter Six

The Crisis of Categorization: Analyzing Hijra through the Intersectional Lens

Ligam takleo hamsi hijra, ligam potaleo ami hijra, velki chipti takleo hamsi hijra, na takleo hamsi hijra. Khole boia takleo hamsi hijra, cholla mangle hiija, achla nileo hamsi hijra, na nileo hamsi hijra. jodgemana jokon hamsire hijra dake tokhono hamsi hijra, hamsi jokhon nijere hijra chami thokono hamsi hijra, ei somaj jokhon pare na milate neherun ba tonnar loge, tokhon se tar subiday banay hijra hamsire. - Roni

[I am a hijra, whether I have a penis or not; I will remain a hijra if I have a surgically reconstructed vagina or I don't have any surgically reconstructed vagina, I will be considered a hijra if I stay at home; I will remain a hijra when I take money from people as a part of hijra rituals. I will remain a hijra by taking *achla* from a guru as a symbol of discipleship and without taking *achla* as well. I will be a hijra when people address me as a hijra, and I can be a hijra when I feel a hijra. When society cannot take me as either a man or a woman, they made me hijra for their convenience.] (Roni)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is based on the first research question, "What does it mean to be 'hijra' from their lived experiences?" This chapter will argue that hijra cannot be perceived by just a sex/gender/cultural/working class category. To understand their identity, we need to use an intersectional lens. The word 'hijra' has an insufficiency of fixed meaning. Hijra cannot be referred to either only sex or cultural category and cannot be assumed that they are working class only. A hijra is inclusive of diversity, multidimensional experiences of sex and gender fluidity, and pointedly a blending of gender. The perception of hijra is melded with numerous acts and roles; it is not a homogenous discursive identity. They can be perceived in two ways. In the first place, hijra are those individuals who openly disrupt the heteronormative linkages between one's birth sex and assigned gender role, or one's psychical identifications with the assigned sexed body by their diversified gender fluidity, multi-layered sexual practice, and significantly gender performativity. On the other hand, a hijra can be understood through an intersectional lens where a person's contextual reality, self-declaration, diversified sexuality, gender performativity, practicing hijra tradition by joining in the hijra community, and so forth constitute one as a hijra; therefore, if we perceive hijra as sexual, cultural or a working-class category that eventually would give an incomplete, limited, and partial interpretation.

6.1.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter contains six sections, including the introduction. The second section examines why categorizing hijra is problematic, and how they have been perceived into different categories, and the problems of tossing them into that particular category; the third section sheds light on the predicaments of understanding hijra as a 'working-class' category. The fourth segment will discuss the crisis of assuming hijra to be attracted only to men. And the fifth section is going to explain how their thought process merges with the mainstream dominant patriarchal ideology and the desire to integrate themselves into conventional gender roles such as men, women, and hijra to validate their identity. Followed by the conclusion, the sixth section will explore how the contextual reality and circumstances contribute to an overriding role to constitute a hijra and the reasons for considering them through the lens of intersectionality.

6.2 The Relation between Heteronormativity and Categorization of Marginality

Heteronormativity is a hierarchical structure embedded in society that legitimizes a person based on gender and sexual binaries (Jackson, 2006). It is an institutionalized system of social practices that constructs male-female sexual relations in such a way that heterosexuality is superior and preferable to any other gender/sex orientations (Tilsen & Nylund, 2010). Therefore, it significantly contributes to the marginalization of non-heteronormative practices (Carrera, Palma, & Lameiras, 2012). Besides, hierarchical gender categories, women's subordination to men, and binary to non-binary are significantly associated with heterosexuality (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). In other words, genderqueer and queer sexualities are plural, and individuals like hijra, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender are challenging the practice of heteronormativity. Thus, their experiences are highlighted as inadequate, and the heteronormative gender discourses ignore their existence. They have, nevertheless, been marginalized due to political categorization.

Stryker (2006) stated that "'transgender' is a descriptive term for a heterogeneous class of phenomena, merely to use the word is to take up a polemical and politicized position (2006, p. 3) ". Similarly, identifying hijra in a particular category is a part of heteronormative gender politics. Because these categories are rooted in the social hierarchy, they occupy different social status positions, where heterosexuals have higher status than homosexuals. Heterosexuality is thought of as social default, and cultural heteronormative discursive practices promote the superiority of heterosexuality over any other sexual orientation (Dhaenens, 2013; Jackson, 2006; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). Heteronormativity refers to those norms related to gender and sexuality, which keep patriarchy in place and certain heterosexuality related to power such as class system, religious essentialisms, and

so on (Sharma, 2009). Stryker (2008) has argued that transgender experiences contest the very relationship of a predominantly sexed body with certain gendered subjectivity upon which heteronormative systems depend for lucidity. According to her, sexual orientation is not the only substantial way to differ from heteronormativity because homosexuality, heterosexuality, and bisexuality, in fact, all depended on parallel understandings of 'man' and 'woman', which 'Trans' problematized (Stryker, 2008).

The implication of the sex-gender category in heteronormativity has been the vanguard of Tran's engagement. The term 'trans' encompasses the wide range of history and the experiences of the individuals whose sense of self-identification does not conform to their gender at birth (Davis, 2018; McLachlan, 2019; Halberstam, 2005; Stryker, Currah, & Moore, 2008). Some of these individuals feel themselves to be unambiguously male or female; however, they are not socially recognized as belonging to the sex-gender category with which they identify, others feel that their gender identities are not effectively merged by their gender category (Girshick, 2008; Serano, 2007; Stryker and Whittle, 2006; Wilchins, 2004). Intersex individuals, whose physical sex does not fit into any sex categories, similarly peruse that even medical science is socially and culturally constructed (Colapinto, 2000). Furthermore, sex and gender are similarly rigid categories that can be blended and blurred in ways that exceed social systems. Gayle Rubin has described "these sex-gender-sexuality categories as indeed conditional and leaky, " Categories like 'butch', 'lesbian', or 'transsexual' are all imperfect, historical, arbitrary, and temporary" (Rubin, 2006, p. 479).

6.2.1 Recognizing Hijra Based on Biology and the Crisis of the Sex Categorization

On January 26th, 2014, the Bangladesh government officially published a gazette that recognized hijra as 'hijra lingo' (sex). In January 2015, the health ministry of Bangladesh issued a memorandum requesting that 'necessary steps are taken to identify authentic hijra by conducting a thorough medical check-up' (Abuses in Bangladesh's Legal Recognition of Hijra, 2016, p. 2). When the government recognizes hijra as hijra sex, without any further explanation, it creates confusion about their interpretation of hijra sex, which is discussed in detail in chapter nine. However, one of the hypotheses is that the term 'hijra sex' refers to those who have genital ambiguity or are intersex individuals, which displays that they perceive hijra as a biological and sex category. But this sex categorization is excluding a majority of self-declared/ self-identified hijra who are neither intersex nor have any genital ambiguity. When the government tried to execute various hijra's empowerment policies and took initiatives to appoint them to government jobs, the government officials sent all the candidates to go for a medical test to confirm their sex identity. But they found neither any intersex nor any hijra candidates have genital ambiguity or hormonal imbalance. According to the government officials, all

the selected hijra candidates were disqualified in the medical examination, and the medical examination board supposed them as 'full-grown males.' And the department's director, Parveen Mehtab, said :

> As a result, we have to halt the appointment of the 12. These jobs are meant for the hijra. And unless we are sure that they are hijra, we are unable to hire them for the jobs. (July 2nd, 2015. Al Jazeera)

After this incident, some hijra and queer activists were criticized by the individual label. One of the Hijra activists, Joya Sikdar, said:

> The medical tests that the government did were 'an insult' to the whole community. Those candidates may have male genitals, but they behave like a woman, and that should be enough to identify them as hijra according to our hijra tradition, but the government treats only the 'v*abrajer chibry*' (intersex) as hijra.

She expressed her disappointment to the media and said that: 'they should have set a clear definition of a hijra before conducting the medical tests. Conducting these medical tests is not good enough to decide who is a hijra.' (July 2nd, 2015. Al Jazeera)

One of my participants who was a candidate specified :

> *Sorkare amago bal felaite oisob medical test korse* (My foot! government led those medical tests just to abuse us).They have no idea about hijra despite examining these unnecessary medical tests. They ruined our lives. How can a doctor identify whether I'm a hijra or not? Did that doctor live my life? How can a doctor judges my feelings by a blood test or ultrasound? If the government thinks hijra are only those who are '*vabraj*er *chibry*' (intersex), it is entirely wrong. I am educated, and I know a hijra is not a biological thing; It is a part of sociology, but if they do not even know our simple ABC, why did they recognize us first, and if the government recognized us, why did they do this medical test?

The government of Bangladesh tried to confirm hijra identity based on a medical model. One examinee claimed that there were no psychiatrists on that medical examination board and that all medical examinations were performed by physicians, lab assistants, nurses, and medical clerks. Hence, it was evident that the medical examination board did not even try to diagnose them with the concept of 'gender dysphoria[48]', whereas contemporary medical science also changed their view to treat a transgender.

According to the National Health Service report, UK (2016), trans ideology is based on the essentialist principle that there are some differences in male and female brains' so that there is a possibility to

[48]The term gender dysphoria refers to a mismatch between one's physical sex and the gender of a person who feels him or herself (NHS, 2016).

find some people to be 'born in the wrong body' which is termed as 'gender dysphoria'. However, I doubt there is something different exists in terms of male and female brains, but in some cases, hijra can be interpreted by the idea of gender dysphoria, which is elaborated in chapter seven. However, to treat hijra with genital ambiguity or treat hijra as intersex individuals is not worthwhile in Bangladesh because, as I mentioned earlier, most hijra are born as a male. In most of the cases, they are neither impotent nor intersex, and, therefore, hijra could not be treated by just one's biological condition; hence, to treat hijra as a sex category is as problematic as to define them as a medical variety.

6.2.2 The Dilemma of Cultural Categorization - the Problem of Treating Hijra as a Cultural Category

Hijra have been identified as a religious category in the Indian context. Nanda writes, "The hijra are a religious community of men who dress and act like women and whose culture centers on the worship of Bahuchara Mata, one of the many versions of the Mother Goddess who is worshiped throughout India" (1990, preface). She also asserts- "hijra are viewed as vehicles of the divine power of the Mother Goddess, which transforms their impotence into the power of generativity" (Nanda 1990, p. 5). Accordingly, she defines hijra as 'neither man nor woman' and identified them as a religious category which came to challenge through other's scholars (Gannon, 2009; Hall, 2013; Hossain 2013; Jami & Kamal, 2017; Reddy, 2006; Rehan et al., 2009).

The hijra communities in Bangladesh perform various forms of rituals such as *achla*, *baraiya,* etc. In general, some of these rituals are similarly considered by the hijra as rituals of Hinduism. Even if they observe most of these rituals as a community, they see them as a part of their hijra tradition or custom. It should be mentioned that the hijra in Bangladesh are more connected to Islamic rituals such as Hajj, Ramadan, *mazar* visit, participating in *orosh* and *shirni* (Islamic rituals in Bangladeshi Framework), etc. and whoever becomes a haji by performing Hajj is more influential over the community, although, these cannot ensure one's status as a hijra. However, the process of becoming a hijra includes one's sexuality, contextual reality, the demand of sexual desire, circumstances, livelihood as well as the surrounding in which someone gradually evolves; therefore, in the setting of Bangladesh, it is difficult to treat a hijra as a religious community or a cultural category. If I consider hijra as a cultural or religious category, the biggest crisis I see here is that the gender essence of the hijra gets deemed. Thinking and practicing beyond heteronormative lives while living in a heteronormative society is fairly critical even though hijra' livelihood is an important part of their lives. So, I suppose there is no way to see faith and tradition as one. If we look at hijra as a religious category, then the difference they have created in terms of gender and fluidity, the reality of their livelihood, various forms of sexual desire, contextual reality, necessity, and demands of their regular life, all these things are ignored. However, these things are very important to be analyzed through an

intersectional lens; only then will we be able to get a holistic idea about hijra in Bangladesh. The following statements can be helpful to clarify. One of my participants, Shimla, a guru, stated :

> One can call it an occupation of the Hindu religion as it is a part of the Hindu belief system, but this is not valid for us. '*hijragiri*', '*hijrapon'* is not our religion at all. Though hijra believes in the myth of Mayaji and Taramoni, we perform and follow Muslim religious culture. And often, we practice religion to earn respect. For example, many of our hijra gurus perform Hajj, even some of our Hindu hijra perform Hajj to be influential in the hijra community, such as Trishna haji, Rhesma haji, Nagin haji though they all were Hindus, they performed Hajj to gain respect and power. Though our hijra society does not follow religious norms, we do practice many mixed religious rituals for our acceptance.

Another participant, Oishi, a chela, detailed:

> I don't think hijra have any religion because none of the religions accepts us apart from the Hindus. In addition to Hinduism, none of the religions allows a person born as a man to have sex with another man. So, we hijra are not a part of any religion in reality. We do perform Hindu rituals as a *hijrapon* (occupation), but most of us are Muslims, and we do not mingle with religious beliefs and our *hijrapon* together. However, some mukhia performs Hajj to get the title haji so that they can be more influential. I don't think they believe in religions because if they do, they won't either take money from *hijrapon* or run any hijra *ghor.* I become a hijra because I did not have any other choice.

The above narratives show that in Bangladesh, hijra are out of bound to any particular religious norms. Yet, a part of their customs is associated with Hindu religious culture as part of Indian hijra tradition. None of my participants associated hijra identity as a religious custom in my fieldwork. Rather, being a hijra is a broader perception than a singular notion coupled with diversity and multidimensionality. For example, hijra normally perform a Hindu ritual when they traditionally get their penis castrated. However, they affirmed that they do not link this with the Hindu religion; rather, it is a part of their tradition. A community can practice a variety of rituals. Based on that practice, it is hard to put them within a certain category. Instead, Bangladeshi hijra prefer themselves to be called Muslims, which gives them social acceptance. Nevertheless, the contextual differences between Indian and Bangladeshi hijra are also significant. Even hijra who are Muslim in India are different from Bangladeshi hijra.

Reddy (2006) conducted ethnographic research among the Muslim hijra in Hyderabad and Secunderabad in South India. In contrast to Nanda, she showed that hijra are not only related to the Hindu religion but also significantly related to Muslim culture. In her fieldwork, her analysis displays that despite the significance of the Hindu mythological construction of hijra, one of the majors believes among the Hyderabadi hijra, and according to her participant's- "all hijra are Muslims"

(Reddy, 2006, p. 99). However, Reddy states that they could identify generically neither as Muslim nor as a Hindu religious category. Instead, according to Reddy (2006), hijra identity could be understood by the multiplicity of differences, including gender, sexuality, religion, kinship, and class. Therefore, she located hijra within the matrix of diverse and shifting identity categories instead of a religious category. She also mentioned that hijra are interconnected with numerous modalities of caste, class, language, desire, locality, and respect (*izzat).* She portrayed hijra by foregrounding the way sex and gender differences are embedded within another form of social variance and vice versa.

Reddy's approach to studying hijra subjectivities is a multiplicity that shaped my ideas to study hijra in Bangladesh in terms of diversity, although treating them just as a shifting identity category is problematic because any form of categorization of hijra identity circumscribes the hijra gender performativity and sexual fluidity. Reddy (2006) locates hijra from 'outside the normative kinship and procreative heterosexuality' (Reddy 2006, p.150). However, in my fieldwork, I have met several hijra who maintained their hijra lives with the normative kinship ties and heterosexual relations in their personal lives, which will be elaborated on in chapter seven. Moreover, performing and practicing hijra gender in different circumstances also plays a crucial role for someone who wants to be a hijra, which will be discussed in chapter eight.

6.2.3. The Crisis of Treating Hijra as a 'Class-Specific Category'

Hossain (2013) conducted ethnographic research among the Bangladeshi hijra and identified them as 'a class-specific category' (Hossain, 2013, p. 36). Based on 'middle-class' perception of hijra, he categorizes them as a working-class, and he asserts " hijra in Bangladesh are not only vituperated on account of their positioning within the working-class milieu but more importantly constantly produced and reproduced via middle/upper-class cultural imaginings" (Hossain, 2013, p. 98). I partly agree with Hossain's above statement that hijra have been produced and reproduced by middle/upper-class cultural imaginations and, a hijra gets treated as an outcast individual. Mainstream 'middle-class' believes that hijra are unsuitable for the middle-class society, and their traditional *hijragiri* is unacceptable, and therefore, hijra are ignored, neglected, and abandoned. Neither the middle-class nor the upper-class individuals usually fraternize with hijra because of their 'lower status positionality, which Hossain termed as 'working class'. He said- "Hijra is a working-class subculture of people assigned a male gender at birth but who later either identify as female and desire 'masculine' men" (Hossain, 2018, p. 323).

During my fieldwork, I found some hijra who refrained themselves from adopting a hijra lifestyle and profession, although they professed themselves as hijra. Some of them are students, NGO professionals, garments workers, private hospitals nurses, cleaners, office assistants, and a few of them are entrepreneurs, immigrants, elected union leaders, professional singers, and dancers.

Interestingly, those who are not involved in the traditional hijra profession always try to distinguish between them and the ones who lived a traditional hijra life. For instance, one of my participants, Farzana, who is a student, said:

> Though I am a hijra, I hate begging and *hijragiri* such as *cholla* and *badhai*. I am not a beggar; I am a hijra but not that type of hijra whom you see every day in the street. I never imagine living such a life. Those who went for *cholla* and *badhai* do not have any class; they take off their clothes openly just for collecting a hundred takas. They can do all these nonsenses because they are uncultured, and they are classless.

The above statement clearly states that all the hijra are not involved in the traditional hijra profession. Even though Farzana identifies herself as a hijra, she does not believe in hijra tradition and livelihood, and she consciously differentiates herself from others who are in the hijra profession. She is an undergraduate student in a public university, a theatre artist, as well as a professional dancer, and therefore, she has a distinct form of 'cultural capital' to identify herself as an individual hijra.

6.2.4 The Use of the Different Form of Capitals for Situating the Class Position

Cultural capital indicates pieces of knowledge, skills, advantages, and privileges that come with the membership of a particular group and class (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu defines a class as a diversity of 'capital' where capital could be perceived as a multidimensional space of power that shapes and reshapes the actor's dispositions and opportunities (Wright, 2005). Bourdieu's cultural capital can be interpreted in many ways and often criticized as he failed to grip the altering relations of production and the specificity of a culture of capitalism (Pennell, 2015). Also, he has been criticized for ignoring the reification of material culture to overstretch his model of culture as class symbols (Dalleo, 2016; Gartman, 1991; Mu, 2019; Reed-Danahay, 2005; Santoro, 2011; Tittenbrun, 2016).

The cultural capital is not necessarily related to knowledge, skills, and privileges; rather, it sometimes contextual and politically used for individual identity construction. When Hossain (2013) categorized hijra as a working-class, the use of diverse forms of cultural capital to constitute their distinct class-status remains hidden, unexplored, and neglected. Furthermore, if we categorize them as the working-class, it homogenously identifies hijra, whereas many hijra do not believe that they belong to the working-class category. Rather, it is another form of stereotyping hijra which the mainstream ideology has constructed. The perception of the 'class' is very different among the hijra in Dhaka city. The sense of class-status among the hijra is different, related to status, power, respect, beauty, and networking. The following case would outline the class position among the hijra in Bangladesh.

> I was on a live TV show titled 'hijra reality in contemporary Bangladesh' with Ananya, an NGO professional and a hijra activist, and one of my participants, Priyanka Nur, a traditional hijra chela. Priyanka usually goes for *cholla* (money collection) and badai (visiting newborn

to bless and demand money) as a customary hijra occupation. Both are my participants and good friends. Priyanka was overjoyed to be on national television for the first time in her life. She bought a new saree for the talk show. When I complimented her that she was beautiful to look at, she said, 'Since people think we're ugly, I want to show the world that we can be beautiful, I'm not the one you see begging on the street, I have a different style (Loud jiggling).'

She added, 'My beauty is my strength, which sets me apart from other hijra. We are all hijra, but we are different from each other; Those who have beauty belong to different hijra classes. Because each hijra who continues *hijragiri* and reaches the level of a *nayek* has a lot of money, and when money comes, it makes her powerful; however, this does not mean that she is as valuable in the community as the beautiful hijra. If she is not beautiful and doesn't have a (permanent lover/partner), she will not be given equal value among the hijra.'

On the other hand, Anaya got up very casually and appeared on a TV show. When she saw Priyanka, she started feeling uncomfortable; I noticed, Annaya spoke so confidently about the crisis in the life of the hijra and did not allow Priyanka to talk too much. Later, when the talk show was over, Annaya said to me, 'Apa, how can you make her come to this show with the look of such heroines? I replied, 'She came here with her style, and who am I to tell her how to present herself?' Annaya replied to me, *"amar ekta man-morjada ache ar oto ekta rastar hijra"* (I have a class and status, whereas she is a street hijra); she should be on the street, not sitting next to me. She has no status or class like me. Do you think she should have come here like this?

I replied to Anaya, "She came here in her style, and you brought your style here, and I'm not talking about advising anyone in a specific way to attend". She continued, 'in terms of class, social status, even in the hijra hierarchy, she does not have that status, I am her senior, and she is my junior, and she will always be my junior for the rest of her life. Also, I am working for hijra for so long, and I know very well that these types of hijra make people foolish with their beauty. Though their beauty prioritizes them, yet she cannot be compared to me at all as I am not like the other hijra.

The scene above shows that both Priyanka and Ananya are very conscious of portraying themselves differently from other hijra, and they have got a very different idea of class-status. These class-status senses indicate that they do not treat themselves as 'working class.' Therefore, locating all the hijra in Bangladesh as a working-class category restrains the scope from exploring the class-status sense among the hijra. When Annaya addresses Priyanka as a '*rastar* hijra' or street hijra, it reflects her perception of those involved in the traditional hijra profession, and it echoes her ideological position of hijra tradition and her perception about class. Annaya's expressions of belongingness on upper-class positionality deeply rooted in her social network and connectivity, which may be understood by Yosso's (2005) discussion of 'social capital' as an extension, and states- "social capital can be

understood as networks of people and community resources" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Annaya's social contacts and community relations help her to reach a distinct social position and identify as an upper-class hijra.

On the contrary, when Priyanka states that her beauty gives her a different class status among the hijra, which Roy (2017) found in Mumbai hijra, she defines it as 'erotic capital.' According to her, hijra casts off this erotic capital to attract male clients, and these beautiful and beautifications are significant because it fascinates their male clients so that they would pay more for sex. However, in Bangladesh's context, erotic capital is not simply applied to earn money; rather, beauty often brings status among their peers. During the fieldwork, I found many hijra are much concerned about their beauty and appearance, which I will further discuss in chapter eight. Therefore, classifying hijra as a working-class, religious class, or sex workers does not represent all hijra in Bangladesh alone.

6.3. The Crisis of Identifying Hijra with The Desire for Men and The Dominance of Masculinity

Hossain (2013) argues that in the dominant masculine discourse, hijra have been treated as non-men, and the desire of a normative man is essential to the sense of being a hijra. A further problem arises with this understanding of hijra as follows:

> Desire is central to the sense of being a hijra brings into view complex processes of the construction of masculinity within which hijra subjectivities and hijra erotic and affective relations are formed. (Hossain, 2013, p. 10)

While Hossain (2013) argues that hijra are concerned with the dominant masculine norms and discursively construct themselves as non-men. Hansan, Aggleton, & Persson (2017), on the other hand state that to explain hijra as a form of masculinity is a part of patriarchal politics. The sexual desire towards a man to become a hijra can often be significant, though it is not an absolute truth for all hijra in Bangladesh. Because a hijra does not necessarily prefer a unilineal sexual practice, which I discussed in detail in chapter seven, hijra neither always desires a macho man nor prefers a normative heterosexual relationship. During my fieldwork, I found many hijra who are in heterosexual relationships get married and have their children, but they live their lives as *kotis* or *jananas*; however, when they adjudicate to pursue a hijra career as their livelihood, most of them go through the emasculation process. A few hijra prefer another hijra as their partner. Also, I met several hijra sex workers who usually serve male clients and are also sexually involved with women; therefore, it is difficult to claim hijra sexual attraction towards a woman is entirely absent. However, most of them look for a committed lover. Furthermore, when hijra feels betrayed in some cases, they do not desire any normative man in their lives. Therefore, a desire to get a male partner cannot be the only condition of being a hijra; it is only a partial truth of hijra in Bangladesh. As proof of evidence

of my argument, I would like to address the following story of Chandni to give reason against Hossain's claim. Another part of Chandni's story will be discussed in chapter seven.

> Chandni lived with her guru Shanaz for two years. She was the only son of her parents. She said that she had an intimate relationship with another hijra. Since we commonly perceive that hijra are only sexually attracted to men, in the case of Chandni, her desire is to have a relationship with another hijra individual. When I asked Chandni if you like male partners, she replied in a negative saying, "I don't have any desire for men or women. I like hijra only. I suffered a lot; When I was studying in a madrasa (Islamic school), many people raped me at different times. Many of my madrasa teachers even force me to do *'butli- mashi'* (anal sex)*' and mukh- mashi'* (oral sex); They tortured me between the ages of seven and ten, so one day I ran away from the madrasa and begged my father not to send me there again. My dad loves me a lot, but I couldn't tell him what happened to me in these three years. He thought I wanted to be with my family; However, I left the madrasa and enrolled in a high school.
>
> After this incident, I started hating all my male relatives and felt ashamed to see myself as a man. Nonetheless, Still, when I tried to be with the girls, they made fun of me for my feminine attitude. But finally, when I meet Maya, she was the only one who liked me for who I am.
>
> Although I always like to groom myself as a woman. I fell in love with her even though I was a *koti*. When I found Maya sleeping with men to make money, I became very violent. Then we had a big fight, and she started to keep her distance from me. Later one day, Maya insulted me by calling me *'Maigga'* (female boy) in front of some of her friends in the *bazar*. He said to me, 'You are a vagabond and a part-time hijra. To leave the *tonnapona* (masculinity) is not; it is not whether the *'ligam'* (penis) is either straight or inactive. You are a *koti*, and you will always be a '*koti*.' You cannot become a hijra. Hijra needs guts and bravery, but you are a *maigga*; if you are passionate about this hijra life and have that courage, why don't you cut off your *ligam* and then come to me and stay with me.'
>
> After that insult, Chandni came to Dhaka to be a hijra. She enters into Sweetie's ghor (each hijra known by her nun guru's name named as ghor) because she wants to be a '*chibry*' and return to her place to have her own' *birit.*' Chandni stated that 'I did not have any intention to be a hijra. I liked to dress up, cook, and clean up. I am the only son in my family; therefore, my parents never forced me to do anything. I was happy in my family, but I was stubborn, and I could not tolerate Maya's insult. How can a hijra like Maya, who does not even know how to read and write, humiliate me? She could only do this just because she knew I am not a *'silsapporwala hijra'* (those hijra who did not declare her hijra identity publicly). And after that, I left my home and came to Dhaka to join this *ghor* and start living with my guru Shahnaz; I am now in a relationship with my guru. '

The experience of Chadni (i.e., sexual abuse), is not unique; instead, most of my participants have experienced some form of sexual abuse in their life, and they develop some from post-traumatic stress reactions too. However, because of those violent experiences, Chadni was hurt and avoided men as intimate partners. Still, she could not stay with the girls because of her feminine attitude. Thus, Chandi's story can be analyzed in two ways. First, her childhood trauma and circumstances connected her to the hijra community pushed her to be a hijra. Several researchers referred that the journey of a hijra is related to traumatic experiences (Arya, 2016; Finzi et al. 2019; Mal, 2018; Pande, 2018; Shawkat, 2016; Safa, 2016). Both Shawkat (2016) and Safa (2016) argue that the hijra in Bangladesh often go through physical, emotional, sexual, and mental abuse, which create traumatic stress and a growing sense of helplessness, pushed them to get oriented with the hijra community.

Secondly, it cannot be denied that Chandni's sexual desire persuaded her to join the hijra community. Her discomfort with the male, her sense of fear, ambivalence, and prejudice, might contribute to her anxiety, which influences her sexuality, and in turn, could be identified as 'trans lesbians.'

The term 'trans lesbian' refers to those trans women who have intimate relations with another trans woman (Wild, 2019). Though according to the western concept, trans and hijra are different in many ways. The idea of trans lesbianism could be useful to understand hijra sexuality in some cases. Therefore, it is very problematic to confine a hijra within a particular frame that men only have sexual desire. It is also clearly evident that a man's desire cannot be the only single condition of becoming a hijra. One's desire for being a hijra might have a vigorous aspect, but it is not the single most essential factor for being a hijra. Therefore, when Hossain asserts that- " desire is a very significant dimension of hijra subjectivity: it is on account of the desire for men that one becomes a hijra. " (Hossain, 2013, p. 10), it is somewhat of a partial argument. It has also been seen that many hijra have sexual desires for both women and men at one time, which will be discussed in detail in chapter seven. Therefore, it would be a stereotype notion of hijra sexuality that they only have desires for men.

6.3.1 'It's Not Just a Desire to be a Woman'- The Blending Gender

Abdullah (2018) argues that hijra are identifying themselves as women and focus on hijra femininity to perceive hijra in Bangladesh. On the contrary, I would say hijra who live in the community are more comfortable identifying themselves as hijra than women. Though hijra usually identified themselves as women, their gender performativity and sexual fluidity showed that being a hijra is pointedly related to a gender blending. One's circumstance also intertwines this gender blending process and is deeply connected with the mainstream dominant patriarchal ideology.

Bangladesh is a patriarchal society where controlling male's behavior is central to masculinity's normative performance (Yount et al., 2016). On the contrary, women are treated as men's property

where men systematically control their everyday sexual activity both in public and private space (Ahmed & Tarannum, 2019; Khan, 2017). Therefore, some fixed gender roles are practiced in Bangladesh. For example, in Bangladesh, it is expected that a boy child would grow up and take responsibility for his parents, siblings, and families (Chowdhury, 2009). Similarly, I found most of the hijra in Dhaka city took responsibility for their family and performed their duties like normative men. In contrast, a daughter usually expects to be a ' good wife' and ' good mother' in the future. In general, parents or family members do not expect a daughter to earn enough to empower or take care of her family (Sultana, 2010). During my fieldwork, I have seen that the hijra community is influenced by this mainstream patriarchal ideology and plays a different gender role. Though hijra behaved like women, they may play other gender roles as well. One of my hijra participants, Badshah, said:

> Hijra don't want to see themselves as ordinary women except for grooming themselves as a heroine's dress and attire; Still, they're not interested in making it like 'farm chicken', white soft but not so good in taste. I want to look beautiful, hot, and sexy so that *'hamsi toona go dhuranor jonno koshaite pari'* (I can attract boys to have sex with me). Girls are unwise, weak, and emotional; they don't have sexual strength; men are intelligent, daring, stout, and brave. If you have intercourse with a woman for two or three hours, she will become unconscious, but hijra are not like that. Hijra can do *batli-mashi* and *mukh-mashi* for hours.
>
> When I asked Badsha, "How do you feel about yourself?"
>
> Badsha proudly replied, 'I feel I am like I am a mixture of everything, like *jogakichuri* (hodgepodge). I am a woman, man, and hijra all in one. Like me, all the hijra are a blending of all kinds of genders. We hijra want to be beautiful like a woman and brave like a man. We hijra are soft-hearted as a woman but brave and courageous as a man like Labanno hijra, who openly attacked the blogger killer and helped the police to put the criminal in the cage. However, no woman can do it on her own. Women can only produce children and take care of the home. We hijra can manage both public and private lives; We are not weak. A hijra should be tough and robust so that she can manage people to give money. Being a hijra means being beautiful, fearless, bold, and courageous, who can work both day and night.

By analyzing the above discussion, it can be seen that a hijra's perception of relationship is in no way different from the other general people of Bangladesh. The above statement proves how the notion of hijra about men and women is similarly dominated by patriarchy. Notably, hijra who live traditional lives believe that all the *kotis* only become a hijra when they can adopt both the beauty of a woman and purport the courage of a man at the same time. It is also clear that hijra play more of a sexual role than a specific one. Therefore, I have identified that hijra is a category where different gender principles and gender roles blend their gender. So, it is difficult to say that hijra are simply

those who are born as a male but wanted to be women; rather, they are usually constituting themselves in a very different form where patriarchy and patriarchal ideology, regulative gender norms play a substantial role. Thus, it is difficult to say that hijra were only those who were born as men but wanted to be women; rather, they usually continue to constitute themselves separately where patriarchy and patriarchal ideology, regulative gender norms play a substantial role to become a hijra.

6.4 The Significance of Contextual Reality and Perceive Hijra Through Intersectionality

Labelling someone as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender is a way to classify certain types of people. Similarly, a person's self-image is also related to which category he/she wants to belong to. Categorization is the process of putting a person into a particular grouping (Tajfel & Turner 1979; Bodenhausen, Kang & Peery, 2012; Brown & Pehrson, 2019). The gender binary sex categorical discourse produced the normative behavior to idealize a man and woman; it also constructed the social image of hijra. Therefore, in Bangladesh, the popular perception of hijra is that they have a genital ambiguity, impotence, and a hijra must not have a penis, and therefore, a hijra is bound to go through the emasculation process. Also, the prohibition of same-sex relations sometimes creates a context that bound individuals to identify themselves as hijra. The following story might help us clarify how a contextual reality constructs an individual's hijra identity.

> Rani lives a hijra life for the last 20 years. She is 37 years old *janana* who was born with natural circumcision and grew up as a boy. She said, 'I never wanted to live a hijra life. I have no female spirit, nor do I want to wear feminine clothes. This was my survival strategy. I fall in love with a boy named Zahir when I was 13, and we had an intimate relationship. Both of us loved each other, and we had an affair for two years. I was a teenager and in class seven at that time. One day, while we were performing *'dhurpit'* (having sex), his mother caught us. Then, his parents make it an issue that I am destroying and manipulating Zahir. At that time, we did not know our relationship's name as I did not have any idea about the gay ship, MSM, and all. Zahir's parents declared me a gay person. They raised an allegation against me and informed my father that I am deploying Zahir, and my father beat me with his shoe. After that, we secretly met each other, but they found us together again. Then they arranged arbitration in the local mosque. As you know, in Bangladesh, the gay ship is prohibited, and if anyone is declared gay, the *'mollas'* (Islamic fundamentalist) ruin them. And when the imams cursed me and ordered others to beat me, my father begged to save my life.
>
> Suddenly, my father said, "My son is not gay; he is a born hijra. I hid it from everyone. He has a tiny little *'ligam'* (penis), so he is ashamed to face a girl. Zahir is his best friend, and as they are young, they made mistakes. I promise he will not do that again, and he will live a hijra life from today". After hearing my father's statement, the local people and the Imams

> calmed down and stopped beating me. The local chief mosque imam announced that he would reduce the punishment. But they accepted me as a hijra because they thought that Allah had made me that way. Since we have been publicly caught, they have publicly punished us for setting an example for young people. Therefore, they made necklaces out of shoes and put them around our neck, and made us go around wearing them all around the village. At that moment, I lost all my self-esteem and dignity as a human being; I became angry with *abba* (father). I didn't realize that *abba* did it to save my life from that violence. Initially, I had a very negative notion about hijra, but now, I realize circumstances may make a hijra. Then one night, I ran away from home and came to Dhaka empty-handed. I had to sleep for seven days in Ramna Park without a shower, food, shelter, and money. There I met some hijra and was fascinated by their way of earning money by selling sex and tried to find some male clients. Seeing them, I tried to attract men too, but none of them paid attention to me as I appeared like a man. Then I realized that being a hijra can be a way to be noticed by men. My journey began on the path to hijrahood because I can only choose to survive in a big city like Dhaka; that was the only option that I can choose.

The story of the Rani questions the perception and classification of others in the hijra. This case is also a manifestation that the hijra in Dhaka city cannot be perceived and categorized as either an intersex or an individual who is born as a man but wants to be a woman. Instead, it reflects how the hijra identification has been constructed, shifted, and adopted in a circumstantial context. Also, it echoes that a person can adopt the hijra identity for her as a survival mechanism. In addition, according to the 377 Act, a same-sex relationship is a criminal offense, and therefore, people who are in a same-sex relationship are always at a life risk, which made them socially isolated, alienated, and undergrounded. In Bangladesh, the fundamentalist Islamic groups murdered some gays. In particular, an economically disadvantaged gender nonbinary person has to face more social stigma than others.

In contrast, though hijra is also stigmatized but legally accepted, the Islamic rights group is not as homophobic to hijra as gays, lesbians, or MSM Two hypotheses can be the explanation of this tolerance. One explanation for tolerance is that the perception of hjras is not clear to them, and many of them believe that they are intersex or impotent, and Allah created the hijra differently, and we should accept them as incomplete human beings. Hence, I would argue that someone's contextual reality, social security, a survival strategy, intolerance, attitudes, violence, homophobia, etc., could be an influential factor for a person to be a hijra. In a nutshell, hijra itself is a distinct inclusive category that can be considered beyond the heteronormative men-women gender binary in Bangladesh.

6.5 Summary

Many scholars categorize hijra either as a sex or a cultural category (Abdullah, 2018; Herdt,1996; Hossain, 2013, 2017, 2018; Master & Santucci, 2003; Nanda, 1999, 2015; Khan, 2001; Kalra 2012; Stief, 2017; Vatsyayana, 2002). Though hijra have been perceived as a 'male-bodied female', this perception does not fit in all contexts. There are no fixed and static characteristics that could identify a hijra. Consequently, the government's perception of hijra, the non-government organization's perceptions, and even hijra's perception about themselves are sometimes dialectical and contradictory. The government perceives hijra as a sex category; conversely, and scholars identify them as a cultural category. I would argue, neither the sex-categorization nor the biological-cultural categories can enlighten the dilemma of hijra identity. Society draws upon specific categories to make a person's normative socio-cultural norms and gender roles. Also, categories structurally locate an individual with particular characteristics and reflect subjectivity in various ways (Hegarty, 2017). These categories may produce a reflexive understanding of the relationship between categories and the context of deep-rooted structural inequalities. All those dilemmas, contextual realities, structural inequalities, patriarchal ideologies, and many other factors could be understood through an intersectional lens, where a person's contextual reality, situations, self-declaration, desire, sexual relations, sexuality, gender roles, hijra livelihood could be analyzed holistically.

Chapter Seven

'Sex is fluid, and hijra are not different': The Sexual Practices of Hijra in Bangladesh

> *Hijrago dhurpiter oto banda dora kono niom kanon nai, jar loge mon chay tar logei duray, er laigai to manishe amago karap koy. Hijra tonnago dur khay butlite, keo abar nehurung dury ek loge, abar hijra hijrago loge chipuubaji kore,ar duripit nia amago apnaho moto oto matahbetha nai deikato amra hijra"* – Arifa
> [There are no fixed rules for sexual practices for a hijra. A hijra can have sex with whomever she wants, and therefore, the public calls us bad. A hijra can have sex with men, women, and also with another hijra, and we don't have the same headaches as you (heteronormative men and women); hence we are hijra. – Arifa]

7.1 Introduction

As a response to my research question two about how a hijra negotiates with others in a heteronormative society, this chapter will shed light on how hijra integrate with others based on their sexual acts and practices. In dominant discourses, hijra are perceived to be asexual or be born with genital ambiguity. Conversely, ritualized dismissal of the penis or emasculation is typically considered to be the only reason for desiring men as their sexual partners, which produces such discourses that hijra practice certain forms of normative sexual acts. It implies a discursive form of sexual practices that propagate as an ideal form of hijra sexuality, indicating that hijra are either asexual/impotent/intersex or have an essential sexual desire for another man. This chapter will argue that hijra sexuality is not limited to those ideal forms of sexual norms. Given my field research, I would also like to argue hijra sexual acts are not governed by those dominant discourses of asexuality, impotence, intersexuality, or sexual desire of a man. Instead, their sexual acts are repressively governed by the dominant discourse of heterosexuality, patriarchy, and hegemonic masculinity. This chapter will also explore that hijra sexual acts and practices are diverse and fluid. My field data shows that hijra are involved in a sexual relationship with men, women, or even with another hijra. Their sexual acts emerged from their circumstances, desire, and sexual pleasure. However, their sexual acts are also connected to their traumatic experiences, love affair, sexual habit, survival strategy, marital relationships, social security, and so on.

7.1.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter encompasses five sections. In the beginning, I would like to focus on how society perceives the sexual behavior of hijra and the widespread discourse of their sexuality. In the

subsequent part, I will take a closer look at the Foucauldian approach of sexuality as a discourse about how important it is to incorporate one's sexuality and how diverse sexual practices of hijra differ from the predominant thoughts. In the third section, I will further discuss how sexuality has been practiced in Bangladesh. The fourth section will explain the multidimensional form of sexual practices of hijra in Bangladesh, which will, in turn, provide evidence of their sexual fluidity. And therefore, my argument in that section would specify that the sexual behavior of hijra does not always fundamentally follow the dominant sexual discourse of hijra. Rather, it can be noticed to be less regulative and repressively governed by the dominant discourse of hegemonic masculinity, patriarchy, and certain cases, even heterosexuality. Based on the research findings, the fifth section will explain how hijra's sexuality is primarily influenced by the dominant hegemonic insights of masculinity and patriarchy, although they display all shapes of fluidity. The fifth part will clarify that although hijra sexual practices are fluid, their sexuality is essentially still affected by the prevailing authoritative power of masculinity and patriarchal society.

7.2 The Discourse of Sexuality of Hijra

The categorization of sex in South Asia is relatively different from that of the western perception of sex. While the heteronormative gender binary is the ideal form of sex in western society, there are three forms of sex that have been acknowledged in South Asia. In chapter one, I have previously discussed, the sex of human beings has been divided into three separate categories in Vedic literature. These are *puns-Prakriti (*male), *stri-Prakriti* (female), and *Tritiya-Prakriti* (Third nature) (Srimad Bhagavatam 8.3.24, Manusmriti 3.49, Sushruta Samhita 3.3.4). Sanskrit word '*prakriti'* literally means 'nature,' and '*Tritiya'* means 'third'; thus, the literal meaning of '*Tritiya-Prakriti'* in 'third-nature.' So, the idea of non-heteronormative gender/sex has been longstanding among the South Asian mind, yet the sex and sexuality of hijra in Bangladesh perceived as an 'unscrupulous' issue to discuss. However, there is a lack of detailed historical studies in South Asian sexual theory, and the absence of the focus on hijra sexuality in South Asian literature enabled me to analyze their sexual practices from the Foucauldian approach.

7.2.1 Foucault on the Discourse of Sex and Sexuality

Foucault (1978) argues that sex is less about the erotic desire of bodies in modern society, but it is about technologies of government and technologies of the self. State and society govern all from of sex and sexuality through discourse and discursive act/practice. According to him, sex is a physical activity, and it produces a person as an individual who belongs to a network of relations and associations, the network in which family property and family values are transferred (Danaher et al.,

2000). In contrast, 'Sexuality' is an 'individual matter' relating to a person's desires, fantasies, and pleasures, connected with discourse and governmentality. Foucault said:

> The truth of sex was, at least, for the most part, caught up in the discursive form. Moreover, this form was not the same as that of education (Sexual education confined itself to general principals and rules of produce), nor was it that of initiation (which remained essentially a silent practice, which the act of sexual enlightenment or deflowering merely rendered laughable or violent). As we have seen, it is a form that is far removed from the one governing erotic art. (Foucault, 1976, vol.1, p. 62)

Foucault alleged, at the macro level, sex and sexuality are also significant to understand how social relations should be organized and of what constitutes ethical behavior of sex/ for sex, i.e., accepted in social situations or families. Foucault also emphasized the way discourses and technologies on sex produce categories of sexual practices and sexual identities by which society marked particular kinds of subject as normal or deviant. Hence, though the ethics and the rules of social and sexual conduct may vary dramatically across society, history, and cultures, it is the sexual discourses on practices, identity, and body type that contribute significantly to how societies establish the 'truth' of the subject, and the norms for the relations that subjects should have with themselves and others (Danaher et al., 2000). Although one may argue that sex is a social construct and an outcome of power and knowledge, it is still unquestionably a bodily function. Foucault uses the term micro-power to explain how the body's discourses shape the way bodies are understood and function.

According to Foucault (1978), sex and sexuality encompass a set of practices, behaviors, rules, norms, and knowledge by which an individual is produced. The discourse of sex guides us on how our body should perform and the mechanics of an individual's sex. It is a form of knowledge on physical activity that is interconnected with meanings and power, and it consists of one's relation to the self as much as one's relations with others (Danaher et al., 2000). Furthermore, Foucault thought that all forms of sexuality that is heterosexuality or homosexuality, or even bisexuality are discursive acts, as society and state regulate all forms of sexuality through law, behaviors, norms, and discourses.

7.3 Discursive Practice of Sex and Sexuality in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, male-female sexuality is governed by the state and society through laws, regulations, and discourses, but the sex and sexuality of hijra were hardly noticed by the state. Heteronormative relation is the only accepted form of relation in defining sex and sexuality. All other possibilities have been considered 'unnatural sex' and considered a criminal offense according to the 377 Act, which was discussed in earlier chapters. By this law, state and society regulate 'unnatural sex,' i.e., homosexuals and bisexuals; but hijra sex and sexuality are not as much regulated. In Bangladesh,

discussing sex and expressing one's sexual preferences is taboo. Sex and sexual acts are more like a bedroom job (Khan et al., 2002). Besides, a woman is not supposed to have a sexual relationship with anyone else except for her husband, whereas if males have sex with more than one woman considered either a 'lucky' or a 'stud,' which will be discussed in the following sections.

7.3.1 Regulated Sex in Bangladesh

A heterosexual relationship is a primary establishment in Bangladesh which regulates the sex life of both male and female. Men who have money and power, high-status work, sexual prowess, and physical strength are considered a '*sottikarer purush'* (real man), which distinguishes them from a *purush* (a perfect man). Man plays a dominant role in heteroromantic sexual practice. On the other hand, controlling women's sexuality is a larger socialization process in Bangladesh. (Khan. et al., 2002). The dominant cultural ideologies of masculinity and femininity in Bangladesh consider that uncontrolled sexual desire is 'natural' for men regardless of their status. In contrast, marriage is the only approved context for women where sexual practices and sexual expressions are considered appropriate. Moreover, women's sexuality is institutionalized as procreative and ideal sexual practice (Sultana, 2010). In contrast, homosexuality is not accepted because of the result of the dominant heteronormative cultural influences in Bangladesh (Hassan et al., 2015). Beyond the heteronormative gender binary and heterosexuality, people, for instance, hijra, who are neither deviant nor ethical/ideal/normal, are regarded with suspicion and are certainly not well accepted or treated as a 'normal' person. According to Rubin (1984/2006), sex is not a natural or a biological fact, rather it is profoundly political, and therefore, she asserts:

> The realm of sexuality has its internal politics, inequities, and modes of oppression. As with other aspects of human behavior, the concrete institution, all forms of sexuality at any given time and place are products of human activity. They are imbued with conflicts of interest and political maneuvering, both deliberate and incidental. In that sense, sex is always political. But there are also historical periods in which sexuality is more sharply contested and more overtly politicized. In such periods, the domain of erotic life is, in effect, renegotiated (Rubin, 2006, p. 143 (originally published 1984)).

In line with Rubin's arguments, I would like to argue that sex is political, and all form of sexuality is politicized in a certain context. In particular, in my view, even non-binary sex is politically constructed and linked to historical periods that are visible through the Indian Penal Code 377, which I have discussed in the introductory chapter. In Bangladesh, the number of the case under section 337 is limited but still exists. The prohibition of the non-heteronormative form of sexuality, such as gay, lesbian, and bisexual relations, has become secret forms of relations in Bangladesh (Khan, 1997). In some cases, homosexuals live a double life to hide their sexual dimensions from the public sphere.

(Chopra et al., 2000). As Khan (2004) stated, in patriarchal South Asian societies, homosexuals face legal pressure and are more likely to experience gender-based violence. However, it is worth mentioning that some forms of sexual practices of hijra still exist in Bangladesh, which I will discuss in the following section.

7.3.2 Unregulated Sex in Bangladesh

Bangladeshi state and society vividly regulate many aspects of hijra's life and their community apart from their sex and sexuality. During the colonial period, hijra's sexuality was a criminal offense, discussed in chapter nine. It is important to note that sex categorization in south Asia is different from the western perception of sex. In comparison, the heteronormative gender binary is the ideal form of sex in western society. Publicly, a hijra has been perceived either with a born genital ambiguity or transformed from male to female. As a result of not having much idea about their sexuality, both the authority and the general people are unaware of hijra's sexual practices, which gives them the privilege to take undue benefit in certain areas. A hijra usually involves sexual with men, and therefore, scholars like Hossain (2013) emphasize sexual derive towards man is a primary condition to become a hijra. However, although hijra usually declare that they are attracted to other men with sex, this is one of their standard sexual practices. Still, it is not the only form of their sexual practice that this study will reveal in the following section.

7.4 Are there any Sexual Norms among Hijra?

Current research on hijra sexuality is limited in Bangladesh. The existing ones claim that a specific form of sexual practice exists among hijra. Hossain (2012) reasons that it is typical for a hijra to desire "macho men". He further argues that hijra are born as males and want to have a sexual relationship with another male (Hossain, 2013). It is likely that many hijra wish for male sexual partners and there is evidence of a variety of other sexual practices preferred and performed by hijra. Traditionally, regulatory norms play an essential role in discursive practices in all societies. "Norm is the group's observation of itself; no one has the power to declare it or establish it" (Ewald, 1990, p. 155). Rose and Velverde (1998) expressed that individualism that ensures people's uniformity according to normal qualities is worth makes contrasts, disparities, and imbalances noticeable and executed among people, and hence standards are verifiably plural. Regulatory norms have governed sexuality and sex; norms are psychological and social entities that constitute a significant socialization process (Hermans, 1996). However, the norm is neither same as the rule nor the same as law. Butler said:

> Norms may or may not be explicit, and when they operate as the normalizing principle in social practice, they usually remain implicit, difficult to read, discernible most clearly and

> dramatically in the effects that they produce. The norm governs the social intelligibility of action, but it is not the same as the action that it governs. The norm appears to be indifferent to the actions that it governs, by which I mean only that the norm appears to have a status and effect that is independent of the actions governed by the norm. The norm governs intelligibility, allows for certain kinds of practices and activities to become recognizable as such, imposing a grid of legibility on the social and defining the parameters of what will and will not appear within the domain of the social. (Butler, 2004, p. 41–42)

Norm endorses such actions and social practices that govern our everyday as well as sexual life. Therefore, both male, female sexuality, gender behavior, and lifestyle are governed by regulatory norms articulated by dominant gender discourses. Here I would like to explore: Is a hijra only asexual or someone who only desires a macho man? If there is an essential condition, then is it the regulative norm among the hijra? And if it is a fact, then hijra sexuality has a specific discursive form. However, I would argue there is no such unilineal regulative discourse of sexual acts that hijra follows. The following stories might give us a distinct insight to understand it.

> I met Chandni at a tea stall. I approached her, saying I was researching hijra, and inquired as to if she would share her life story with me; she agreed. After a few meetings, we slowly became good friends. She later met me on several occasions and gradually began to share her life experiences with me. I have been in touch with her for more than six months. One evening she invited me to her place, and it started raining. Usually, Chandni and others finish their collection in the early evening, but that day they wanted to finish the collection early due to rain. Chandni changed her wet clothes and put on a blue skirt. She played Bangla soft-pop music. Offering me a cup of tea, Chandni started preparing khichuri (a traditional Bangladeshi food). She was in a very tender mood and all of a sudden, said, 'The weather is romantic, and perfect for performing *dhurpit,* (sex) with someone. I asked Chandni, 'do you have any partners?'
>
> Chandni replied, "right now, no, but I had one; I was born with an active penis. I can have sex with a woman, but it does not give me any pleasure. I feel more comfortable with a hijra as a sexual partner. I can still remember those days when I was in an intimate relationship with Maya. When I had *dhurpit* with her, she made me lie down below her and put my *ligam* (penis) into her nehurn *chipty* (surgically reconstructed vagina) and perform *dhurpit* for hours. And when I remember her *nilki* (surgically reconstructed breasts), it was an unforgettable moment when her *nilki* was dropping on my face; I could not control myself".
>
> Hearing her, I became curious to know the rest of the story since a common perception among researchers and people is that hijra prefer men as their sexual partners. Nevertheless, Chandni's story says otherwise. I enquired why she prefers a hijra over a woman or even a man.

> Chandni replied It is common among the hijra to have a male sex partner. Especially those who do *night kam* (sex work*)*. But I hardly find interest in having anal sex with men because a man cannot satisfy me like a hijra. Trust me, hijra are leonine performers in the bed, and therefore, many men come to hijra instead of sleeping with a woman. For me, neither men nor woman is sexually attractive like a hijra. You know, both men and women have some limitations, whereas a hijra can completely satisfy me. She claimed, women are atrocious at oral and anal sex, and therefore, many men prefer hijra as a sex partner. Equally, the tough guys come to a hijra to perform anal sex. But the sad part is that even though guys are always looking for anal pleasure, they never care about the hijra partner's satisfaction or concern about the sexual urge. On the contrary, a hijra is a complete package that can serve as a man and a woman if she is a *jnana* (who has the penis). A hijra has tremendous sexual stamina and can have the ability to satisfy others sexually. And equally very good at intercourse with women. 'A *jater* hijra' is sophisticated, well behaved, educated, and knows the art to stimulate all the sex organs, and can make anyone crazy.

This story gave us a distinct insight that while Chandni may have an active penis, she never found pleasure with a man, which disrupts the notion of the dominant discourse of hijra sexuality. The way she expresses her sexuality questioned the normative norms that indicate the practice of sexuality as a spectrum that cannot be confined into a continuum. As my fieldwork progressed, I discovered Chandni is not an exceptional case; rather, she is among many others, if not all, who were never represented within the hijra sexual discourses that we came across. Chandni's story also clearly indicates the fluidic nature of hijra sexuality. As my fieldwork progressed, I discovered Chandni is not an exceptional case; rather, she is among many others, if not all, who were never represented within the hijra sexual discourses that we came across. Chandni's story also clearly indicates the fluidic nature of hijra sexuality. As my fieldwork progressed, I discovered Chandni is not an exceptional case; rather, she is among many others, if not all, who were never represented within the hijra sexual discourses that we came across. Chandni's story also clearly indicates the fluidic nature of hijra sexuality. This raises the question of whether the discourse that hijra are born male and desire a sexual relationship with a "macho man" is right? Or is there a more profound question: Is the hijra sexual act discursive?

7.4.1 "*Hijra duriteo pare, dur kaiteo pare*"- The Diversified Sexual Practices among Hijra

Chandni's account of her own sexual life pointing to that she is neither asexual nor has a desire for the ' macho man'. Instead, I would opine that there is an absence of stable normative norms in hijra. However, a hand full of hijra themselves, as well as the scholars, claimed that the hijra desire men as their sexual partners. A heteronormative ideology, in reality, plays a dominant role in producing these

ideas. As a result of that dominant discourse, a common understanding has created among general people that the hijra prefer males as their sexual partners, especially among those who do *nightkam*. However, I experienced a different image in my fieldwork. If we look at what Chandni disclosed about her interest in choosing a partner, it is a lot different from our dominant discourses. As she says, "I hardly find interest in having anal sex with men, but a man cannot satisfy me like a hijra." She finds hijra more attractive than a man or women. She supposed that both men and women have some limitations, whereas a hijra can completely satisfy a man. According to her, a hijra is a complete package because she can serve as a man and a woman if she is a *janana* (who has the penis). She claims a hijra has tremendous sexual stamina and has the immense ability to satisfy others sexually.

However, Chandni is not an isolated case. During fieldwork, I also came across many hijra who are similarly interested in other hijra or are also interested in either men and/or women. Arifa is one of the participants among them. She is 42 years old, a self-declared hijra, living a double life. She is a *janana*. She had a wife and fathered two sons. In her village, she identified herself as a male, but only close family members and friends are acquainted with her hijra identity. Her wife had left her last year. According to Arifa, she had a happy married life that lasted for ten years. She spent all her money to make her wife and sons happy. But once her wife got a government job, she left her. Arifa had not recovered psychologically after that incident. Now she dislikes women because of her wife's betrayal. Arifa said:

> All those *neharun* (women) are *durani* (An expression of someone's lustful sex derive); they are born to be fucked. Still, I always wanted to be a woman. However, my family forced me to marry a woman. Initially, I thought I would not be able to continue my marriage, but after a while, I started to love her as my everything. I felt interested in being a hijra because I like to dress up, but my parents didn't let me be one, but my wife always supported me. She knew how I felt about myself, and her approval pleased me a lot and made me accept her completely. She taught me how to perform *dhurpit* with a *neharun*. Thus, I started enjoying both types of sex. Previously, I always enjoyed *dhurpit* with strong men, and I used my *butly* (anus) to have sex with them, but my *ligam* was always for my wife. Yet, she left me. Since she cheated on me, I no longer like any *neharun* from my heart. So, I occasionally like to have sex with *neharun,* who shows interest in performing *dhurpit* with me. For the last ten years, I have been involved with both men and women, and nowadays, it turns into my habit.
>
> Arifa continues, "Presently, I am thinking of being a *chibry* (who receives sex reassignment surgery) because if you want to gain power among the hijra community, you have to be a *chibry*. But I was indecisive about cutting my *ligam* and turning into a *chibry* because of my sexual habits. As I told you earlier, I like both men and women to have sex with. This situation puts my life in a devastating state. I gave my consent and married a woman who I never wanted at the beginning. Having sex with my wife made me fall in love with her and changed my

> appetite in terms of sex. Thus, I started living a double life. When I was in Dhaka, I used to sleep with men, and when I visited her in my village, I slept with my wife. But after getting married, I never slept with any other woman. However, I started to sleep with women occasionally when she left me last year. I often have a feeling that my wife left me because I might not give her enough sexual pleasure. So right now, whenever I have sex with other women, it makes me feel energized, and when I go to my village, I have sex with either one of my sisters in law or my friend's wife, or my cousin's sisters. I am now involved in sex with women because of anger and revenge, but I have received both the love and pleasure of my ex-wife, who left me alone.

Getting married to a woman is not an unusual practice among hijra. However, hijra consciously hide their marriage to a woman from outer society, yet the community members are aware of this fact. The reason for secrecy is to follow the dominant discourse where hijra has been perceived as 'asexual' or 'impotent' or 'sexually disabled.' Here, it has been apparent that the dominant discourse also governs hijra, but they are governed in a relatively different manner in practice. However, many hijra are getting married to women because of social pressure. One of the reasons for this is family and society's pressure because their biological kin (parents/siblings) do not want to reveal their hijra identity. Therefore, hijra who are married to women in different cities move to Dhaka to join the hijra community. Most of them who get married are *janana* (who have the penis) and live with two different identities. Nevertheless, they can't recessively defy all forms of regulative norms governed by heteronormative discourse. Sexual habits and appetite seem to be significant in hijra sexuality, which is also undeniably influenced and governed by the dominant discourses of heterosexuality.

7.4.2 *"Shovab jayna dhuile, khaislot jayna more"*- Individual's Habits is also Influential in Hijra Sexuality

The sexual practice of hijra cannot be confined solely by sexual derive, urges, orientation, or erotic desires; rather, it is sometimes inspired by individual habits. In certain cases, hijra' sexual practices can be relevant by Bourdieu's (1977) celebration of the concept of habitus. As indicated by Bourdieu, habitus is a social formation that develops over an individual's lifetime and is shaped by social setting, such as gender and class position. According to Bourdieu's argument, habitus structurally allows a person to navigate cultural and practical steps with a combination of regular habits, abilities, and dispositions (Lizardo, 2004). It occurs so that people can internalize and integrate into the social world around them that is associated with power relations. As I have gained experience from my fieldwork, the economic status of hijra and their life experiences, as well as their attitude towards sex, have been meaningfully influenced by their habits which ultimately shape and reshape their gender

identity. Here, I would share Sumi's story to clarify my argument. She has been living this hijra life for the last ten years. Sumi said:

> I was a boy from a poor family background. I lived in a village with my parents and other family members. My father used to run the family by doing small jobs. We didn't have much money. I might want to specify here that everyone said that I was a very attractive young man to look at when I was young. When I was 14 years of age, an extremely unforeseen incident occurred in my life. A distant uncle of mine came to visit us for a few days. One early evening he took me to the woodland close to my village to fetch honey. I was extremely eager to find out about the honey collection, and we both smeared ourselves with oil so the honeybees would not nibble us when we went to fetch nectar. After gathering honey, my uncle asked me to swim in the pond with him. Since I take a bath every afternoon in a pond nearby with my friend, I thought it would be nice to swim with him. Then we went swimming in the pond nearby. As I was about to take off my clothes and jump into the water, he grabbed my hand and wanted me to play with him. I agreed. He then said, "To play this game, you have to follow some rules and make a bet with me." He would pay me 500 takas (10 NZD) if I could win by floating in the water with my tied legs and hands. It was a lot of money, and as a young boy, no one had given me that much money before. I was looking forward to winning and get the money. So, I took the challenge and let him tie me with a rope.
>
> As soon as he tied me up, he grabbed me tightly, pushed me to the shallow side of the pond, started kissing me, and suddenly pushed his *ligam* into my '*butli'* (anus). It happed so unexpectedly that I couldn't realize what was going on. It hurt me so much that I desperately tried to free myself from his monstrous fist. But he didn't let me go as long as he wasn't satisfied. Finally, when he finished the *dhurpit* (sex), I found myself bleeding badly. I almost lost my senses to see the blood and started telling him I would tell my father what he had done to me. Then, he gave me 1000 taka (20 NZD) and persuaded me to keep it a secret between us. When I was younger, I didn't get that much money from my father since he made very little money. Whenever I met him after that, he would pay me instead of having '*butli'* (anal) sex with him. Then I realized that earning some extra cash in this way is not a bad idea. After a break of three months, my uncle came back from Dhaka again and told my father that he had got a very good job for me which would make my future much safer, and on hearing this, my father let me come to Dhaka with him.
>
> When I started living with him, we had *dhurpit* (sex) with me almost every night. He used to send money to my father each month as my salary. One night, a friend of his came to his house for a party, and he said if you can satisfy both of us, we'd buy you a mobile phone. I was a teenager then; I desperately wanted a mobile phone and agreed to make them happy. I was with him for a year; he would often bring friends with him, and I had to please everyone. However, I got bored living with him and, at that time, felt like I was in jail. One evening, I went to Ramna Park and met some hijra sex workers who offered to have sex with men for

money. Out of curiosity, I asked one of them how much she earns as a sex worker. Her name was Lipi; she told me that she earns enough money to survive on her own.

I also wanted to make money so that I would not have to live with my uncle and live on my terms. I made up my mind to attract customers like them and started trying to gain men's attention, but it didn't quite work. Then, Lipi gave me the idea that if I wanted to make money as a sex worker, I would have to be a hijra to protect myself. I wanted to know why she was advising me to be a hijra instead of a male sex worker. She added, "male sex is illegal in Bangladesh, so, if you are a male sex worker, the police will be after you." Then I gave it a deep thought that taking the risk of being a male sex worker would be dangerous for me because my father does not have the money to release me from prison. Therefore, I chose to become a hijra in place of an MSM, took *achla* under Lipi guru, and joined the hijra community two years ago. Last month, I went to *karkhana* (Karkhana is the place where hijra secretly undergo castration surgeries) to castrate my *ligam* (penis).

I asked him thenceforth, "Why have you decided to follow the emasculation process?"

Sumi replied, "My first sexual encounter was with a man, and I became accustomed to them. It's my misfortune that I was involved with a man at a very young age, and because of my habits and greed, I could not stop myself from having sex with men even after I got married to a woman, and it has now become my addiction and habit.

The above story makes apparent that even though Sumi proceeded with sexual associations with men, it was not just to satisfy her needs but also implement her teenage incident and survival strategy, which led her to remain engaged with male partners, which later turned into her habit. Even after his marriage to a woman, he could not get rid of his habit, and this episode inspired him to become hijra. As I mentioned earlier, Bourdieu argued that individual social structures and classes were deeply intertwined with their habitus, which is highly visible in Sumi's case. Her family's economic position and social class persuaded her to choose sex work which in the long run prompted her to identify as hijra. In line with this, Adam Green (2008) developed a bridge between Bourdieu's accounts of gender habitus and the psychodynamic process of sexual desire. He argues sexual fantasy is an outcome of an unconscious structure that is embedded in the psych society interface. In particular, individual choices, sexual desire, imagination in an "unconscious sense of self as a social object" (Green, 2008 p. 622). In keeping with Green's argument, it can be stated that the concept of 'erotic habitus' is relevant on account of Sumi, where he argued that the position of individuals in a particular social chain affects different levels of a person's habits which in turn affects their sexual habits as well. Although these habits may still be associated with someone's desires, it is more connected to one's gender identity, which I argue is related to a person's positionality in the power structure.

Nevertheless, 'erotic habitus' can be associated with a person's sexual pleasure. Holding onto this idea, it can be said that the sexuality of a hijra consists of personalized sexual habits and feelings that set them apart from others. Therefore, the combination of sexual habits and practice plays an important role in achieving sexual pleasure for them, and this sexual pleasure is associated with power at the same time. Foucault asserts in this respect, "power-operated as a mechanism of attraction; it drew out those peculiarities over which it kept watch. Pleasure spread to the power that harried it; power anchored the pleasure it uncovered" (Foucault, 1978, p. 45). As claimed by Tuzin (1995), the perceptions of sex, memories, social prescriptions, and situational factors are the guidelines that impact the individual's impulse to sexual pleasure. In line with the concept, Spronk (2014) stated that sexuality refers to such a social arena where power relations and moral discourses with sexual behavior are played out. Looking at the cases discussed earlier, it is evident that whether it is sexual practice or pleasure, their sexual practices are not associated with dominant discourses, but rather multiple layers of sexual practices in hijra are visible. Hijra who undergo emasculation surgeries, especially *chibrys,* also engage in some form of sexual practice, which I will discuss in the following section.

7.4.3 *"Chippubaji kore, lahori kay chupechupe"*- The Relations between a Hijra with Another Hijra

Traditionally, there is a difference between the sexual practice of *janana* and *chibry*. Likewise, '*karkhanar chibry'* (who undergoe medical sex reassignment surgery) either acquiring surgically reconstructed vagina for aesthetics (*neherun chipty*) or a particular measurement of a hole (*magipona chipty*) and can perform intercourse with a man. In contrast, '*hater chibry'* (who cut their penis by the traditional professionals called *katial*), do not have an implanted vagina and cannot perform vaginal intercourse with a man. They often perform sex with other hijra and their gurus.

> Chandni told me a story about Akashi, who ran away from Motijheel because her *gotia* Supriya whom she was in love with, committed suicide. Supria and Akashi used to have '*chippubaji'* (A hijra having sex with another hijra), having *chippubaji* made her fall in love with Supria. But she did it all for fun. Every time Akashi manages a *parik* (permanent lover), Supriya manipulated Akashi's *parik* in such a way that they leave her. When Akashi found out that she had argued with Supriya and when she expressed her feelings to Akashi, she rejected her offer; thus, Supriya could not bear her denial, humiliation and consequently committed suicide. Akashi then fled from Motijheel.

Hossain (2012) referred to one of his participants' statements that chibry has to release a kind of liquid every month, similar to a woman's menstruation. According to him, without releasing that liquid, hijra bodies become 'heat up.' Using the egg's sticky substances and then smearing them over each

other's *chippu* helps release their bodies' heat. The statement may be partially agreed upon but releasing body heat is evidently not the only reason for smearing egg substance. During my fieldwork, I have found that this is not an uncommon practice among the *chibrys* whose parik (boyfriend/lover) use egg substances on their external genitalia, which could be evident from a hijra *malik* Shoshi's narratives:

> I am not beautiful, and therefore, I couldn't manage any *panthis* or *Parik* in the last five years. I am a *karkhanar chibry*, and I have a *pan chipty* (implanted vagina) since I was 20. I did this because I wanted to get more *para-birits*. When I haven't got my *chibrani* (emasculation) done, I had a relation with a *tonna* (boy) named Ashik. He was my best friend, and we did *dhurpit* quite frequently. I chose to be a hijra because I was a *maiga*. He also had a relationship with a woman. Yet, he used to come to me because he could not perform *dhurpit* in *butli* (anal sex) with his wife. Many men come to me for having sex in *butly,* but it's pretty painful, and I got syphilis because of *butly* sex.
>
> I cannot manage *panthis*/*pariks,* nor can I perform anal sex, but that does not mean I don't have any sexual derive. Everyone requires sex and has desires to have someone to have sex with. Thus, I chose one of my *chelas* for the *dhurpit*. We use the sticky substances of egg in our *chipty* and then smear it over each other's *chipty,* which makes anal sex easy. Nowadays, NGOs give us lubricant, but it's not always available. Therefore, we use the white part of the egg. Guru-chela *dhurpit* is one of the hidden sexual practices among the hijra; a guru is like a *shami* (husband), and a wife must make the *shami* happy. However, no one talks about the sexual relations between guru and chela. Many other hijra gurus like me use their chela as their *dhurpit* partner. However, we do not disclose guru chela's sexual relationships as it's a threatening and shameful act for a guru. Thus, we do it covertly.

It has been discussed earlier that homosexuality has been treated as a sin (religiously) and unlawful in Bangladesh, which is one of the reasons for hiding such sexual practices. Since sexual practices between two hijra can be identified as homosexual behavior, they put them in a risky situation and create stigmatizing situations inside and outside the community. Another reason for concealing such sexual relations between a hijra guru and a chela is related to dignity, by which the guru can be accused of inciting such activities as he could not find a *parik* or *panthis*. It also indicates that their loneliness, situation, trust, loyalty, confidentiality, and privacy are significant for their relationship to get less exposure to the outer society. Consequently, it is evident that although sexual fluidity has been noticed among the hijra, yet they are strategic to navigate the state governed sexual norms as a survival mechanism.

7.4.4 *"BIGO chaile shudu velki dhurpit, e kora jay na tonnage bicha lahori-o kahano jay"*- The Online Sex Life of Hijra

The term 'cybersex' refers to a subcategory of online sexual activity that is different from seeking sexual information or a romantic relationship online; instead, it involves sexual gratification (Danebac Daneback, Cooper, A., & Mansson, 2005). 'Filtering' is another term Goffman (1983) uses for the 'quiet sorting' of potential sexual partners. Davis et al. (2006) argue that filtering allows systematic planning of sexual meetings, enlightening the construction of sexual culture in users' actions. Online dating or sex is a place where people can discuss to hide their identities. By creating and editing profiles in the online app, users can promote them and establish their credibility and publicly express their sexual desires.

In recent times, an app called BIGO Live has been launched in the cyber world, which has become fairly popular among hijra. As the app has become acquainted among them, hijra have been spending most of their spare time searching for cybersex from it. Hence, they are connected to this application to find virtual sex, but many of them are using it for different purposes, such as looking for friends, love, spouses, male clients, etc. BIGO Live gives clients the option of uploading photos and joining various private groups, where they can chat with other members and attract users to perform on cybersex, make friends and search for potential partners, and many more. Therefore, this app gives hijra a great opportunity to openly explore their sexual and social life in cyberspace, where they are not hesitant to express their desires.

In contrast, female sex workers could do sex work legally in certain registered brothels in Bangladesh (Katz et al., 2016). Only licensed brothels are legalized for female sex workers in Bangladesh, ruled by the Bangladeshi High Court in 2000; hence, sex work in hotels, houses, or other places is not legal (Islam & Smyth, 2012). Besides, during my fieldwork, a couple of female sex workers informed me that cyberspace or online sex applications could be treated as an offence because of the Digital Security Act, and they do not find cybersex safe because it can reveal their social identities and there is a high risk of arrested. Therefore, Male and female sex workers need to keep an eye on social fears; however, hijra are less likely to preserve the same social distress, and for which this app has become a very pleasant opening point for them to explore their lives. Thus, they are comfortable using such platforms. The app is designed for use by a niche community and gives users the ability to limit their profile and activity views to feel comfortable and secure managing their profiles. Additionally, hijra can work as freelancers, while sex workers (both male and female) tend to be governed by their agents. Freelancing gives them more freedom to disclose their identity without fear of repercussions.

More fascinatingly, this cybersex practice among the hijra opens up a new window for them to explore their sexual fluidity in a broader spectrum. Although some of them are interested in same-sex partners

but cannot publicly disclose their homosexual identities, BIGO allows them to express their true selves. Additionally, they can actively engage with a broader group of clients (gay, bisexual, or straight) and role-play according to their clients' needs. Whether the client is straight, bisexual, homosexual, hijra, no matter what their sexual orientation is, hijra can mould themselves according to the need of their potential customers, lover, or spouse. Therefore, I would like to argue, hijra's sexual acts and sexual practices are fluid and diverse and can adapt to any required circumstances. As sexual practices of hijra are diverse and fluid, 'online sex' has added a new dimension to their lives.

During my fieldwork, I found my participants viewed sex as their prime source of entertainment. Recently hijra appear to invest their time searching for sex on the web, and most of my participants run BIGO live. Consequently, they are utilizing the application for an assortment of purposes; to find companions, life partners, and male customers. BIGO added another aspect in their sexual coexistence, and this application got famous among the hijra because they have openings to deal with express their sexuality. Internet access opened up a whole new opportunity for them to look for a relationship, a potential life partner such as a *parikh*, *panthi*, or a client, a sexual partner, and even a groom according to their needs. To support my argument, I would like to present the case of Priyanka:

> Beforehand, I had relationships with several *panthis,* but over the last three years, I have one *bandha parikh*. But I have decided not to live with him anymore because he is a *garia* (stubborn). I heard about BIGO app where you can find potential *panthis* or *parikhs*. So, I started using it to find someone who would take care of me and cover all my expenses. On the application, the majority of the users are Bangladeshi laborers living in either Malaysia or Saudi Arabia. After a few days of using the app, I found different groups where the *'bideshi tonnaras'* (Bangladeshi migrant workers) are available. Those *'bideshi tonnas'* are living abroad alone and have lots of money to spend on cybersex. Since they are away from the country, they always look for companionship. They are crazy about online *dhurpit* and agree to send money to mobile bank accounts. So, I uploaded my sexy photos to get their attention. I was intrigued to connect with some of them who would send me money, but as I don't have my *nilkki* done yet, they do not want to spend a decent amount of money on me. Therefore, I tried to convince them to have 'BIGO *mukh mashi'* (phone/audio sex) and initially chat with the Malaysian workers in this way. However, I don't like the Saudi Arabian uncultured/unsmart workers because they don't fall in love with the hijra, they like *neharuns* only, but Malaysian workers are much better than them. They are open-minded and comfortable with us.
>
> Last year, I met Megh in a closed group on Bigo. A few days after the meeting, he started chatting with me privately. He is educated and now working in Malaysia as a construction labor. At first, we became good friends, and then he taught me how to dress appropriately.

> When we got closer, he started sending me money to buy sexy clothes, my boobs surgery for online *dhurpit*. He trained me how to seduce a *tonna* so that they '*jhinni-billi*' (ejaculate) quickly. Megh was very caring towards me, so I thought he would be a better choice as a partner, so I broke up with my partner and managed Megh proposed to me last year for marriage. However, my ex *parik* is still crazy for me because he thinks he will never get such *butly* (anal) pleasure from anyone other than me. Since he is a *gandu,* I don't want him anymore. Now I'm in a relationship with Megh, and I also like the way he communicates, respects, and takes care of me. I never thought of meeting anyone like him who will invest so much in me. In the real-world, hijra do not get well-to-do *pariks* because people do not allow those boys to get acquainted with us. Nevertheless, because of BIGO, I could find a broad-minded man who agreed to marry a hijra. My life has changed a lot since I got married to Megh.
>
> After hearing Priyanka's story, I asked her, "Have you identified yourself as a hijra in the marriage registry?"
>
> He replied - no, I registered myself as a woman because there is no option in the marriage registry to keep the hijra as a bride or groom, and so I had to introduce myself as a woman. Nevertheless, I informed the magistrate that I was a hijra, and then he spoke to Megh and confirmed that the groom and all the witnesses were aware of my gender. I am so lucky to have had the opportunity to access this online application where I got Megh; it made a huge difference to my lifestyle, my sexual preferences.

By breaking down the above story, it is notable that online sex might be one of the major reasons for hijra for using the app BIGO, but it also allows them to connect with the outside world and present themselves with their pride and identity. Searching for a sexual partner online and looking for potential clients can be one of the main reasons, but if we take a closer look, it is clear that they are using this app for many more reasons. Also, by running such an app, a hijra can access potential clients, encounter diverse forms of sexual practices while performing different sexual roles. Hence, cybersex enhances their sexual fluidity and diversity, which the dominant sexual practice might not govern, but it evident that Priyanka's sexuality is repressively controlled by a man, which echo the dominant heterosexual discourse.

Furthermore, this app is not only for a hijra to look for online sex; instead, it creates an opportunity for her to make a space where she can expose herself, her sexual desire, and expression fearlessly. It also gives them opportunities to choose a lover, *parik, bandha parik* even a spouse. It should be noted that the BIGO app is not the only reason for them to get involved in married life. Rather, getting married to men or women was not a rare practice among the hijra. Even when hijra get married, they pay a certain amount of money to their gurus called '*chanan'* to get approval from their gurus. Interestingly, when a hijra goes for a heterosexual relationship, she gets a lot of exposure and is also

celebrated in their community. However, this kind of marriage usually doesn't get public exposure, and, in most cases, they tend to hide such relationships. Probably due to the lack of openness of such relations, the discussion of registered marital relations of hijra with men is significantly absent from the previous literature of Bangladesh. In comparison, discussions of their long-term lover or relationship with *parik* are more explicit in previous research works.

My argument as a researcher is that having a distinct understanding of such an enlisted marriage relationship of hijra is somewhat fundamental to explore their sexual practices and gender identity. The absence of marriage provision as a hijra in the registration form and the discursive politics of the gender-binary encourages a hijra to identify herself as a woman instead of a hijra, and this is significantly an outcome of dominant heterosexual marital discourse. These influences of the discursive practices constitute and reconstitute the heterosexual relationship and are a constant discouragement towards the practice of gender non-binary. Simultaneously, this process also encourages the hijra body embodiment, sexual reassignment, and emasculation process that ultimately shapes and reshapes the overriding masculine discourse. Not only are heterosexual relationships governing hijra lives, but hegemonic masculinity has also profoundly affected their daily lives and perception of sexuality which will be discussed in the following section.

7.5 The Sexuality of a Hijra Related to Masculinity and Femininity

The hierarchical gender order consistently puts a higher value on masculinity than on femininity (Connell 1987; Schippers 2007). Likewise, femininity and masculinity are not only the property of male and female bodies; the outlooks and meanings for being men and women differ both culturally and historically across the interactional settings. Normative expectations for men and women maintain hierarchical gender order and inequality; hence masculinity pushes men to 'dominate,' and femininity pushes women to 'submit' (West & Zimmerman 1987). Masculinity ascribes properties like muscular, hard, strong, brave, and control. On the contrary, femininity characteristics are a list of adjectives that are not ascribed to masculinity, such as weak, emotional, and soft (Reeser, 2010). A hijra is such an individual who carries both masculine and feminine adjectives. A hijra's sexuality is a combination of both masculine and feminine features; however, they tend to carry the values of masculinity and perform the norms of femininity. For instance, most of them predominantly practice motherhood as a normatively defined for a woman but carries a father's values.

During fieldwork, I met many hijra who have adopted orphans by taking on the role of a father to obtain guardianship and then also perform a mother's role. In many cases, they perform their duties as a normative family would provide. A hijra's appearance differs from their assigned biological sex identity, but masculinity's discourse has a dominant influence on constructing the hijra sex-role/gender roles. However, they form their image on their own, and they do have control over their

sexuality. Additionally, hijra's sexuality is also highly connected to body formation and body transformation, which plays a significant role in hijra psychosexual subjectivity. Hijra, whether with a penis or without a penis, cannot fit into the traditional form of masculinity and femininity. However, a hijra participates in the process of 'hegemonic masculinity'[49], and by performing a feminine lifestyle, they encourage femininity.

The central focus of the term' hegemonic masculinity' is to primarily critique masculinity (Donaldson, 1993). Hegemony does not entail any violence, but it could be supported by force. Hegemony means dominance achieved through ideology, culture, institution, and persuasion. Hence, normative women appear as potential sexual objects for men, while men are not commonly treated as sexual objects for women. The following conversation with Tania alludes to the matter.

Tania took *achla* from her guru when she was 16 and declared herself as a hijra at the age of 18. She had her *ligam 20 years ago*. She said:

> Having a *ligam* was a horrible feeling being a hijra. Even though I had one, I could not act like a man. The way I walked, dreamed, and talked was not manly at all. It was shameful for a man if he could not justify his *ligam*. However, to have a penis is also a blessing because this is a man's world. Society will not accept anyone who has one but doesn't have the attitude of a man. Therefore, I was confused about myself because I was a *tonna,* but the way I behaved was just like a *neharun*. It is not easy to be a real *morod.* I was also a man, but not a real one. People taunt the hijra as a *maiga* (half ladies), but I would say all the hijra are half *morod* who need a 'full' *morod* to live this life. After joining the hijra community, I have managed many *panthis* in this hijra life, and now I have a *banda parik. Parik* is someone who can give mental, financial, and moral support and, therefore, hijra prefer someone as a *parik* who is a real *morod* (man). My *parik* is my strength, which makes me secure. Among hijra, I have been treated very differently because my *parik* is a real man. I get sexual pleasure when I take *akkhar chis panthis ligam* (large attractive penis) into *my butly. Durkhaor panthi* (sex partner) and a *banda parik* (permanent lover) are far different.
>
> Tania suddenly asked me, "Can a woman survive without a man?". I kept silent, and Tania continued, "I don't think she can, hijra's life is quite similar to *neharun,* but we are not week like them. For example, you are a *neharun*, and you must not have a happy married life; otherwise, you cannot spend hours and hours with us. And, I have noticed that your *shami* (husband) does not even call you when you are with us, that means he does not care for you, but you cannot leave him because you are a *neharun,* but we hijra can live our life alone as we are half *morod*.

[49] Hegemonic masculinity refers to a pattern of practice that allowed men's dominance over women to continue. 'Hegemonic masculinity' is different from other masculinities, in particular, subordinated masculinities. It made men culturally dominant and certainly normative (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

I ask Tania, "So aren't you a woman?"

Tania replied, "Not just me; most of the hijra are '*velki neharun*' (fake woman). Hijra only want to groom themselves as a girl and always wants to take a strong *ligam* into their *butly,* and none of the hijra is a pure feminine soul. We like to be a *neharun*; therefore, we sacrifice our *ligam,* but we have *tonna* seeds. A hijra is not afraid of losing modesty, but only a *neharun* must have the fear to lose *lojja (*modesty).

I asked Tania, "So why do you think hijra do not have modesty?"

Tania replied to me, "A hijra also has a sense of *lojja* (modesty) like the other people, but they do not have *lojja* like a neharun. Hijra don't have anything to lose like a woman. Those words like *choritrohin* (characterless), *lojjashil*, (timidity), *durbol*, (week) fit only *neharun,* not the hijra. A hijra is a fighter; they know how to get rid of an uneven situation. I have met many married *panthis, b*ut they do not enjoy their sex life with their wives, they develop a sexual relationship with hijra, and yet, they are hiding it to the society, but the hijra fight against their family to live their life the way we want.

The above conversation shows how hijra's thoughts can be influenced by hegemonic masculinity. They also hold the idea that a woman is subordinate to a man and thus actively participates in the practice of man and woman's regulatory norms. Hijra cannot be confined to only masculinity or femininity; rather, they embody both attitudes where the heteronormative norms hegemonize them in many cases. The way Tania expresses the notion of real man and women decisively reflects the dominance of the psychosocial patriarchal ideology, which constitute the sex/gender roles of men, women, and even hijra. It also indicates that hijra have a notion of 'cultural genitals' of a man, which is assumed to exist as a part of a dominant cultural practice of sexuality. It again connects with the power relations, which nevertheless can be understood through Foucauldian discourse of sexuality.

Though the sexual acts and practices of hijra are not limited to the normative forms of sexuality, it is more or less governed by the heteronormativity and patriarchy. However, it has been evident in many cases, hijra sexual acts and practices are strategical, political, and habitual, which I have discussed in chapter six. Therefore, to confine hijra sexuality within a certain frame within the sexual desire, sexual pleasure, or having a sexual relationship with only men is problematic. There is, certainly, a form of power relations and power practice that recessively governs a hijra. A hijra creates a distinct identity keeping in between man and woman and perceives the same ideology concerning gender role according to the heteronormative gender discourse. The thinking of hijra nevertheless is not immune to male-centric culture.

7.6. Summary

Non-marital sex has always been viewed as a taboo in Bangladesh. However, heterosexuality is the only socially acknowledged form of sexual practice for men and women in Bangladeshi society. From this point of view, male sexuality is designed with definite values and, as a result of these taboos and the imposed values, subjugate women to a certain controlled sex role. On the other hand, homosexuality and all other forms of sexual behaviors and acts are governed through religious discourse, social law, and state policies. In this respect, my study has found that the sexuality of hijra is not so much governed by the state, social or religious discourses. Furthermore, there are no unilinear forms of sexual behaviors found among hijra; rather, they practice their sexuality according to their needs, desires, habits, and preferences. Interestingly, their sexuality is largely influenced by hegemonic masculinity with the idea that men are always above and superior to women. Despite being controlled by masculine ideologies, hijra still perceive sex as a part of their everyday life, causing their sexual behaviors to become diverse and fluid. In other words, their sexuality is not seen to be entirely influenced by popular understanding of hijra sexual discourse. Hijra are involved in various forms of sexual relations with different gender based on their contextual reality, demand, situation, and circumstances. Yet, my claim is that hijra are not only involved in sex with men; rather, they engage in sexual relations with men, women, or often with other hijra as well. Therefore, I would like to argue that the sexuality of hijra is fluid, and the dominant regulative or normative heterosexuality, hegemonic masculinity, and dominant patriarchal discourses govern their sexuality differently.

A hijra has no singular or figurative sense because it does not have any prescribed or authoritative meaning. The cultural and sex/ gender categorical axis, the sexual desire of a man, and desire to be a woman might be significant, although it is a useful rubric for discussing other aspects of being a hijra. It cannot refer to either sex, cultural, working-class category or cannot be perceived that one's sexual desire for a man is the only condition of becoming a hijra. Instead, a person's circumstances, situation, and contextual reality appear as an influential factor of being a hijra. My participant's narratives offer us to consider how hijra in Bangladesh are drawn upon their contextual realities. Therefore, I would argue that perceiving a hijra through a single category is beyond question. It is not possible to define hijra within a certain framework, which can clarify what it means to be. As I previously mentioned, my idea was shaped by Reddy's (2005) approach, where she refers to the hijra identity as being constructed through a 'multiplicity of differences." Similarly, hijra in Dhaka city refers to such an identity that requires culture, law, religion, social status, network, beauty, body modification; in addition to contextual reality, situations, self-declaration, desire, and sexual relations; sexual fluidity is a significant condition of becoming a hijra. In the category of hijra, we need to use an intersectional

lens to treat them with an inclusive of diversity, multidimensional experiences of sex and gender fluidity, and pointedly a gender blending.

Chapter Eight

Gender Overt Play and Performativity

Hijra ki shobsomoy hijra take naki apa? hijrara neharun hoy, abar konosomoy tonna saje, karibeshe koti saje, dogloapone take, abar bazare ntun aise, jara eku lekah pora jane , hera nijre age koito hijra, ekon koy trans, mane trans koia nijer ijjot baray. Apni maiyamanush, chaile pola shajte parben na, hijra hoite parben na, abar, ekta pola, chaile maiya sajjte parbo na. Kintu amra hijra ra shob hoite pari. Amago na tonna hoa baron, na neharun hoa baon, nato hijra hoa baron, amago kase ei sob kisui ekta rong tamasha,velkibaji., somaj amago eisob ulujulu nite pare na deikahi somajer eto jala. (Nadira)

[Do you think a hijra consistently a hijra, sister? A hijra turns into a woman, a man, yet again occasionally groom as *karibesher koti* (when a feminine boy appears in men's cloth), and those who are slightly educated and previously identified themselves as hijra, at present they like to call themselves 'trans' to promote their dignity. By denying being a man, you can be a woman if you want, but being a regular man, you can't be a woman or a hijra, but we hijra can become everything. We are not forbidden to be men, women, or hijra; for us, all those are fun, illusion, and fantasy. Society could not take our *ulujulu* (fun), and therefore, they could not take us.] (Nadira)

8.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will argue that hijra is an identity that is constituted by a complex process. Hijra treat their gender as an overt play; they frequently shifted from hijra to men, hijra to *kotis*, and *kotis* to hijra through the interest of time, place, and context. In addition, they shift and play with different gender identities to reach distinct gains; yet again, to confirm their agencies, they perform different gender roles to adapt to their contextual reality. However, the lack of protection rights and the absence of provision for hijra compel them to use their birth sex identity to access their inherent property rights. For example, hijra in Bangladesh use their birth sex and identify themselves as men to access their inherent property rights. In response to research question two, this chapter will address how hijra negotiate with others in a heteronormative society.

In contrast, they, in general, deny their male identity to either identify themselves as women or hijra. One can constitute herself as hijra by performing repetitive acts at the same time. Therefore, from time to time, hijra want to achieve their gender through interaction, and yet again, it can be analyzed by undoing gender, and at times, it can be understood by the notion of performativity, where they follow the unwritten norms. I would argue all those identities become theatrical for hijra, and they play with different genders based on their situations, demands, and necessity. The social stigmatization and dehumanization of hijra, and the lack of access to fundamental rights, compel them to do overt gender play. I propose analyzing the hijra gender in a pragmatic way where, sometimes,

the hijra gender can be understood by doing gender and sometimes by undoing gender or repetitive performative acts. Moreover, the hijra gender is not static, continuously switching from one gender to another gender based on the contextual demand, given condition, and circumstances. The hijra's gender is not enclosed with the essentialism of any particular gender roles.

8.1.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter contains five sections, excluding this introduction and summary. The second section will discuss how hijra are negotiating their gender identity to access their specific goals and how the idea of doing and re-doing gender can analyze the hijra gender in the Bangladeshi context. The third section will discuss the idea of gender performativity and how the performative theory can lay out to understand their gender. In the fourth section, I will discuss how all those performative acts are related to body embodiment and how the body becomes the capital or project for constituting their gender in Bangladesh. In the fifth section, I will explore how contextual reality constitutes the performativity of hijra and their gender fluidity to shift their identity simultaneously. This chapter would summarize that the hijra gender is not static, fixed, steady, uniform, and consistent; rather, it's fluid, blended, fluctuated, and inconsistently melted with various forms of gender.

8.2 Hijra Turn into a Man to Inherit Property

In Bangladesh, the Muslim community follows Islamic inheritance property laws. It originates from Islamic scriptures such as the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Under Muslim law of succession, in distributing inheritance property, daughters receive half the property of sons following the Quran says:

> Allah charged you concerning (the provision for) your children: to the male the equivalent of the portion of two females, and if there be women more than two, then theirs is two-thirds of the inheritance, and if there be one (only) then the half. (Quran, 4:11).

This principle regulates Bangladeshi Muslim property rights. The share of the property in the religious provision is highly discriminatory and dominated by one's birth sexual identity (Sourav, Thompson & Hussain, 2018). Besides, there is nothing mentioned on hijra's inherent property rights in Islamic provision, and this absence puts them into such a context where hijra compel to claim their property based on their birth sex. Interestingly, according to the Bangladeshi constitution, it has been mentioned in article 27 and 28:

> 27 All citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law.
>
> 28. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, etc.

> 28. (1) The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
>
> (2) Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the state and of public life.
>
> (3) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to any place of public entertainment or resort, or admission to any educational institution.
>
> (4) Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making special provision in favour of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens.

Though article 27 guarantees equal rights for all the citizens, and article 28 ensures equal protection for every citizen of Bangladesh but hijra do not get facilities from those provisions in practice. The constitutional rights do not prohibit hijra from gaining their inheriting property in Bangladesh (Sourav, Thompson & Biswas 2018). However, society's hijraphobia and the prejudice towards hijra present that since there is no specific provision for the distribution of property for the hijra as described in Islam, they have no right to get similar intrinsic property. Hence, many cases in Bangladesh show that hijra is deprived of their inheritance property (Jebin, 2015; Mitra, 2018; Hyder & Rasel, 2019; Snigdha, 2019). The flowing story might be relevant to explain the situation.

> It was about dawn when a phone call from one of my key informants, Romana, a hijra nayek, age 45, woke me up. She requested me to visit her place as soon as possible. I asked her, "Is everything, all right?" She replied in a distressed tone, "I am going to the Human Rights Commission, and I need your help; I complained against my brothers for claiming my inherent property. I deserve the same share of that property as my other brothers because I was born as a son and not as a hijra". She continued, "you know; my brothers used to beat me during my childhood and teenage forcing me not to behave like a girl, they never accepted me for who I was, though I was born as a male, I am a woman inside, and therefore, I am a hijra today. When I wanted to get my inheritance property being a male heir, my brothers said I should get my share of the property as a sister gets; I cannot claim the male heir's share. Why do they want me to behave like tonna (man) when I need to take the responsibilities as a son of the family, and now, when it is time to distribute the property, they make me a *neherun* (woman) to deprived me?". She added in a firm tone, "But I know how to ensure my rights. So, I lodged a complaint in the Human Rights Commission against my brothers. They requested us to visit their office at 1 pm that day. But I am worried that my brother may convince the Human Rights Commission claiming that being a hijra, I do not live with mainstream people. If you are coming with me, I will get mental and moral support and can confirm that hijra can also live with other people like you in harmony. Would you kindly go there with me, apa (sister)?" I assured Romana not to worry; I will be there.

Thus, the above story raises three different issues:

Firstly, in the given context, to resist the deprivation and access to the property, a hijra is bound to use their birth sex. Hence Romana wants to receive her inheritance property share as a man, not as a hijra, and she is ready to negotiate her identity as a hijra in the given situation.

Secondly, the absence of a specific provision on hijra inheritance property rights supports hijra go through all sorts of discrimination and deprivation to inherit equal rights on the property. Therefore, they need a distinct protection right to access their civil rights and well-being, which is further detailed in chapter nine.

Thirdly, patriarchy discriminated against hijra in the same way it disadvantages women in Bangladesh. Though a patriarchal ideology highly dominates them, they are at the same time also victims of patriarchal practices, which is discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, at the time of inherent property distribution, Romana's brothers treated Romana as a woman to give her less share of the property.

Interestingly, when Romana denied her hijra identity and wants to use her birth sex to access her inherent property, she portrays the idea of doing gender, where sex performs as an analytical tool that reminds me of Dozier's explanations:

> Sex is a crucial aspect of gender, and the gendered meaning assigned to behavior is based on sex attribution. People are not simply held accountable for a gender performance based on their sex; the gendered meaning of behavior is dependent on sex attribution. Whether the behavior is defined as masculine or feminine, laudable, or annoying is dependent on the sex category. Doing gender, then, does not simply involve performing appropriate masculinity or femininity based on the sex category. Doing gender involves a balance of both doing sex and performing masculinity and femininity (Dozier,2005, p 314).

Romana was worried about her interaction with the human rights commission officers as she wants to convince them to get her property as a man. In this context, she did not want to establish her hijra identity, rather constituting a distinct identity by doing gender. In the following section, I would discuss "doing gender" and how it could help to analyze the hijra gender in some given situation. I will also examine how hijra consciously plays with their gender based on the contextual and situational demand and constitute themselves through social interactions.

8.2.1 Doing and Re-Doing their Gender

According to West and Zimmerman (1987), gender is not something we are; rather, it is something we do, and they state that- "gender itself is constituted through interaction" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 129) and it is "an ongoing activity embedded in everyday interaction" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 130). It also refers, gender always socially reconstructed considering the 'normative

perceptions' of men and women. These normative perceptions of men and women differ across time, social situation, and ethnic groups, but the prospect of behaving as manly men or womanly women is abundant (Deutsch, 2007). Thus, they argued gender is an enduring emergent part of social interaction. They discuss the concept of doing gender-based on Garfinkel's case of Agnes, "a transsexual raised as a boy, who adopted as a woman" (Garfinkel, 1967, p.118–140) and analyzed how gender is created through interactions. West and Zimmerman also stated that, doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine "natures" (p. 126).

West and Zimmerman distinguished between sex, sex categorization, and gender. They argued that sex is an initial clinical assignment of the newborn to justify it as a male and female based on the male and female genitalia. However, sex categorization includes the presentations and recognition of socially regulated external insignia of sex (e.g., dress, deportment, and bearing). And, to define the relation between sex categorization and gender, they state :

> The relationship between sex category and gender is the relationship between being a recognizable incumbent of a sex category (which itself takes some doing) and being accountable to current cultural conceptions of conduct becoming to—or compatible with the "essential natures" of—a woman or a man. We conceptualized this as an ongoing situated process, a "doing" rather than a "being" (West & Zimmerman, 2009, pp. 113–114).

'Doing gender' is contained in two parts: gender accountability and gender performativity (Darwin, 2017). Moreover, according to West and Zimmerman, 'accountability' has three parts: accountability to self, accountability to society, and accountability to others (Hollander 2013). Because of this universal structure of accountability, 'doing gender' becomes compulsory where "individuals are always accountable to socially constructed understandings of masculinity and femininity, even when they deviate from them" (Darwin, 2017, p. 2). However, some scholars oppose the idea of doing gender or gender is done; rather, they advocate gender might be undone (Butler 2004; Deutsch 2007; Risman, 2009). For example, Deutsch (2007) argues gender can be undone during interactions and become gender neutral. Butler (2004) argues that the norms constitute gender, but in the case of intersexuality or transsexuality, the subject 'I" undone gender by being gender. According to Risman (2009), gender is undone whenever the "essentialism of binary distinctions between people based on sex category is challenged" (Risman, 2009, p. 83). On the contrary, West and Zimmerman (2009) argue, all those shifts are not undoing gender. Rather, those indicate re-doing of gender and gender always present, even though in a less obstructive form. However, Darwin (2017) argued that this un/re/doing gender debate is not only about a person's accountability of feminine and masculine ideals; it also about accountability to the gender binary itself. Therefore, the question arises on its own, how does this un/re/doing gender work for the non-heteronormative gender binary people, and

how sex becomes an analytical category for them. And in the following section, I will explain how the concept of gender doing can be a useful analytical tool for hijra in some contexts.

8.2.2 "*I do not want to be a hijra today*"- Doing Gender and Negotiating Hijra Identity

When I got to Romana's room, I saw her getting dressed to go out, and I found that she had dressed relatively differently than on other days. She was wearing a light pink salwar kameez (trousers and long T-shirt) instead of a saree. She put on very natural makeup, pastel pink lipstick, a deep mascara over her eyes, and regular glasses. She usually wears a lot of gold jewelry, but that day she was simply wearing a white gold pendant around her neck, a diamond ring on her ring finger, and a Titan brand watch on her right hand. She asked Nasima, one of her *chelas*, to give her shoes. Nasima brought a high heel, and Romana shouted at Nasima, saying, "Are you stupid? Do you think I am going for hijragiri? How can you bring these golden high heels? Bring me the silver flip flops that I had bought from India last year." Romana looked at me and smiled and said, "thanks for coming, apa. I am so grateful to you." I replied to her, "I am happy to be with you." She asked me, "How do I look today?" I replied to her that she looked lovely and different from the other days. Romana smiled and replied,

> *Jei desh she vesh, apa,* means groom yourself depending on the needs of a situation. I do not want them to feel uncomfortable. If I am going there being a hijra, they might not feel the difference between me and other hijra. I want to take them by my side and make them feel that I am a part of this society, even though I am a hijra. I don't want them to look at me like a hijra; I want them to feel that I am representing someone in this society who is deprived of his rights. After having my *cibrani* (castration), I look more like a woman than a man; I look terrible in men's clothing. Otherwise, I wouldn't wear a man's cloth today. However, I do not want to present myself as a hijra today. Hence, I groomed myself differently so that my brothers do not get the chance to establish that I am one of the hijra who causes trouble for them.
>
> I asked Romana, but you complained to the human rights commission as a hijra, yet, you do not want to establish yourself as a hijra. Why do you want it, and how do you identify yourself as a hijra in terms of your clothing and body styling? Romana replied - I do not want to introduce myself as a hijra because I know those upper-class officials do not like hijra from their hearts, but they show sympathy as a part of their work. Therefore, I do not want to show myself as a hijra right now. Being a hijra, I might appeal to get empathy from the human rights commission, but I know how to present myself in front of them. She further added that – nobody could be a hijra simply to claim herself one; if you are a hijra, you must customize

> your body, clothing, and stylizing your body differently from man and woman. For example, if I would go for a hijragiri today, or I will be in my everyday attire, I will not take off all my gold jewellery. I will not wear light color clothes, a diamond ring, this salwar kameez, and never go outside without getting glam makeup. I would be more sexy, good-looking, and appealing when I am a hijra. A hijra would never have a sober and soft look, whereas, today, I consciously tried to appear politely, gently, and soberly because this *'vodroloki vushon'* (affable look) will allow me to create an acceptance in them. All I want to get is to ensure my property rights, and I know when and how to gain them. I am a hijra (loud laughing); I can mold myself in any form; the so-called ladies and gentlemen cannot change themselves so frequently like us. Still, we hijra can do, we know when we should behave like a man and when we should behave like a woman, and most importantly, we know how to do and whom to do; otherwise, we hijra will not survive. Romana twinkling her eyes at me and covering her head with the scarf, and said, now I am done, let's go, *apa* (sister); I have booked a private car for us today.

From the above narrative, Romana wants to constitute her gender identity through interaction with government officials. As we all are strategic in our lives, Romana is not different. To influence human rights officials, she did not want to be a hijra on that day; instead, she wanted to reshape her appearance to gain the inheritance property of being a man. She feels that mainstream society is being prejudiced against hijra. Therefore, to the human rights officers, she consciously presented herself separately to make a borderline distinction between herself and other hijra. The concept of doing gender could represent this gender overt play of Romana, where she strategically constituted her gender through change. Besides, there are multiple aspects presented in Romana's gendered behavior. Being conscious of her gender acts, Romana customizes her clothing and appearance to achieve a different gender identity in a different context. By performing a certain act, Romana liberated herself simultaneously to shift from one gender to another. Interestingly, this is not a unique case for Romana, but in my fieldwork, I found most of my hijra participants perform their role, constantly shifting their gender identity based on their situation and circumstantial demand. Therefore, I mentioned before, the hijra gender is a gender blending. Most of the time, they perform like a hijra; sometimes, they act like a woman, and occasionally they like a man.

On the other hand, when they want to establish themselves as a hijra, they tend to perform individual performative acts, including dressing, clothing, stylizing the body, grooming, body modification, and behaviors. Furthermore, the contextual reality also plays a significant role for someone to be a hijra, which I have discussed in chapter six. A hijra is the one who decides how to carry her body, groom herself, and whether to act like a hijra or a woman or a man based on the context. Hence, a hijra consciously performs certain repetitive acts to be a hijra, and every hijra goes through a contemplative

state of mind to decide how to perform and establish her performative gender identity. Now, I will discuss how Butler's idea of performativity could help to analyze hijra gender.

8.3. The Idea of Gender Performativity

Butler's idea of gender performativity leads us to perceive gender differently. According to Butler (1990), gender is not an expression of what one is; instead, gender is something that one does. Gender is neither essential nor innate. Gender is what we have and what our behavior is. There is no prototype or model of gender performance, which can be imitative, and gender performativity is self-designed and, through its continuing repeated acts, confirms one's identity (He, 2017). Butler said, "performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (Butler, 1999, preface, p.xv). In other words, performativity is not a single constitution that subjects bought into a being; instead, it is recitation and repetitions to constitute one's gender (Lloyd, 1999).

Butler argues that gender norms are predetermined. In her view, norms act on us before we have a chance to act, and when we do act, we repeat those norms, possibly in new or unanticipated ways, but we always are in continuous relation to the norms that precede us. The body has implicated this norm in specific ways (Joy & Venkatesh, 1994). We are far from being sovereign individuals capable of independent decisions simply because we are the products of the ongoing process from which our view of self and the world are derived.

In Butler's view, gender is not a state of being but as an action, "gender proves to be performative" (Butler, 1999, p. 33), which means gender is performed through repetitive acts of social interaction and intelligibility. These repeated acts cannot exist in a vacuum; instead, it is a constant companion with an external society. In other words, one's gender performative acts are not for oneself but for an audience that makes one's identity. Therefore, clothing, dressing, body adornment, stylings body, specific body movements are a significant part of hijra performative gender identity. In the following section, I would explain how the theory of gender performativity could analyze hijra gender.

8.3.1 Hijra Gender Performativity

Hijra gender acts could be analyzed by Butler's idea of gender performativity because, occasionally, by doing some repetitive performative acts, one constitutes herself as a hijra. Though there are no unilineal gender roles that are fixed for Bangladeshi hijra, there are some unwritten norms, such as hijra *'tali'* (clapping), body styling, and cross-dressing, play a significant role to constitute one as a hijra (Pamment,2019). Hijra *'tali'* (clapping) is considered as their "signature clap" (Roy, 2015, p. 1)

and a central marker of hijra identity throughout South Asia (Reddy, 2006, p.136; Zimman and Hall 2009, p. 175). Hall (1995) argues, hijra clap is an "important index of hijra identity" which functions to presents a hijra in the society as "neither man nor woman," and also designing them as an "embodied alterity." It likewise resists them to assimilate into normative gender binary social scripts (Zimman & Hall, 2009, p.175). Among the hijra, it is believed that there are males and females in our hands. By striking through the clap of flat palms, hijra makes a loud sound to show the symbolic pleasures of the "joint forces of male and female powers" (Tripathi 2017). In contrast to the traditional applause, hijra's claps commanding aural and visual attention that express their '*jowban*' (youthfulness), protest, anger, and happiness (Pamment, 2019). Gayatri Reddy names the hijra clapping as "'troubling' performances" (Reddy, 2005, p.136), which constitutes an unstable performative act, and its effects depend on the context, spaces, and temporalities upon which it is unleashed.

In the previous chapter, I have argued the sexual acts are fluid and diversified; their sexuality is not governed like the heterosexual man and woman. However, apart from the sexual act, hijra tends to follow the regulatory gender norms to perform as a hijra, a woman, and sometimes a man. Hijra, though, disrupt the regulative normative norms but customizing themselves and by performing some repetitive acts confirm their hijra identity. Thus, it can be argued that one cannot be a hijra just by declaring oneself a hijra; instead, she forms herself as a hijra through her repetitive performative acts. Now I am going to discuss how a hijra is formed through a few repetitive acts and the significance of hijra performative acts for declaring oneself as hijra.

8.3.2 *"Porchi sharee, gechi hijra bari"*- Clothing and Body Adornment of Being a Hijra

Clothes have been used for so long to hide biological sex differences and include a specific code for gender. Clothing creates a complex interplay between the sexual body and gender identity and reproduces sex as a form of body style (Twigg, 2015). The dressing also has a semantic meaning through which a person gives a message about him/herself (Danesi, 2018). However, the meaning of clothing is not constant; it is linked with the intention between the wearer and the observer's interpretation (Twigg, 2015). Hence, one's identity and clothing have been theorized in terms of performativity, regarding clothing's role of self-realization, intention, and representation. Clothed bodies become a tool for self-management related to expressivity, agency, intention, choice, and agency (Finkelstein 2013, Polhemus 2010).

Additionally, clothing is highly linked with our body, and putting on clothes is an embodied practice (Entwistle, 2000). Theorizing clothing and body are associated with either the semiotic approach' body as parchment' (Conboy, Medina, & Stanbury 1997; Griffen 2007; Shilling 1993) or 'body

project' (Featherstone 1991; Giddens 1991). However, both notions seem to be problematic. According to 'body as parchment; perspective, body perceived as the blank page where the social discourses are adorned, and people chose their clothing by following those discourses. And, on the body project', the body is perceived as a container of our identity, which refers to a "visible carrier of self-identity" (Giddens, 1991, p. 31). The body has been perceived as an individual responsibility, which is shaped by the dominant cultural standards (Ruggerone, 2017). In the case of hijra in Bangladesh, both "body parchment" and "body project" perspectives are significant in relation to hijra identity and clothing. Moreover, the clothing sense of hijra is their conscious performative act by which they establish their performative gender identity. The following conversation between me and two hijra *gotia* (friends) will reflect how clothing is a part of the hijra performative act and how it relates to body parchment, body project, and body performativity concurrently.

> Nadia is a 27-year-old hijra guru and a *janana*. She has a few *chelas* too. She declared herself a hijra 12 years ago. Nadia's friend Priyanka is a 27-year-old *chibry*. The two joined this hijra *ghor* ten years ago. They both live in the same place and work together. I used to visit them twice a week depending on their available time, sometimes in the evening and occasionally in the afternoon. One day, Nadia invited me to go to her place in the morning, and she said she would not go to work that day. I went to their place and saw Nadia lying on her bed, and Priyanka could not decide which saree to wear. When they saw me, both were happy, and Priyanka said, *apa*, you choose what *saree* I should wear. Laughing loudly, Nadia replied to Priyanka, "*Neherun koibo tore hijra sajbi kemne*? (How can a girl tell how a hijra should dress up)?" Priyanka replied to Nadia, "She will be the best to suggest because she is one of the majority people whom we target, and I am sure she must have an idea of how a hijra should look like, Isn't it"? Nadia replied to Priyanka, "She is not going to be the right choice because she doesn't hate and afraid of hijra. You will take money from those who are afraid of hijra, hate us, and so they give you the money quickly. You can get suggestions from her about tomorrow's event. She will be the best to suggest what you should wear in tomorrow's TV talk show."
>
> Priyanka looked at me and said, "You will be here all day today, I will show you all my clothes, and you will help me decide which one to wear on the TV talk show tomorrow. Now I have to groom like a 'street hijra,' but for tomorrow I will be a '*vodrolok hijra*' (polite and gentle look hijra), and you will ensure that." I ask Priyanka and Nadia, what do you mean that you have to look like a "street hijra" for now and "*vodrolook* hijra" for tomorrow? Both start laughing, and Nadia took one of Priyanka's *blouse* from Almira and gave it to me, and said, "This kind of blouse is the symbol of street hijra *apa."* The blouse was black and had a long sharp V-neck. Priyanka smiled and said, "I am going for a collection (taking money from shopkeepers and vendors) now and, I must make sure I look 'sexy' and 'odd.' A hijra must look

'hot,' 'sexy' and 'odd' when she goes out for her collections. Otherwise, people will doubt me. This is how people understand hijra. "I asked, 'What do people think of a hijra?'

Nadia replied, "People have an image about hijra. They think a hijra can never be beautiful because they are male-bodied females. The public always wants to ensure whether we are real hijra or not." I asked, how can you make sure that you look like a real hijra? Priyanka took off her tops and showed me her surgically reconstructed boobs and said, "I take them in my confidence by showing my boobs and male voice, and if they still suspect whether I am a hijra or not, I show them my *'pan-chipty'*. Then, Priyanka took off her trousers and started wearing her *petticoat* (kind of skirt that she wore underneath the saree). Nadia let Priyanka wear a light blue sari; Priyanka said, "I am not going to sleep with my *panthi*, give me a *saree* that will make people feel like I am *'arial durani'* (sensual sexy). Nadia threw her thin black georgette saree from almirah and said, "now you will be a full *kanki* (slut)". Priyanka happily started to wear that black saree. Most of her body parts were visible slightly from the saree, and her boobs were also significantly noticed because of the sharp long V-neck. Priyanka started putting on makeup; she deeply put kohl over her eyes and eyeliner with a smoky eye shadow and wearing red lipstick.

Nadia found some golden and black Jewelry for Priyanka and said to me, "this is called a hijra look. If you do not look pointedly different and noticeable, you cannot be a hijra." I asked Nadia, what do you mean by a hijra should be noticeable? Nadia replied to me, "See *boina* (sister), when you are wearing something, you need not worry about your clothing because your clothing will not change your identity; whatever you wear, you will be a *neharun* (female), but hijra have to establish their identity through their dressing, grooming, and makeup." I asked Nadia, do you think hijra always groom herself and wear the cloth in this way to establish herself as a hijra? Priyanka said to Nadia to teach me how to be a hijra; I am going for the collection", then she looked at me and said, "*boina*, I am leaving, now, I will see you this afternoon," and Priyanka left the room.

Nadia started cooking and continued, "*shorlier kapor ar velki milay to hijrago jibon"* (The Clothing of the body and illusion produce the identity of a hijra). A hijra life is like a movie actor, and in that film, we play the role of heroin, so we should always be aware of our clothes and makeup. (Nadia laughs out loud). Referring to the leading actress of 'Titanic' she says, only a heroine and a hijra can take their clothes off to show it to the public, Ironically removing her clothes, she gets the Oscar, and we get despite. Some of us take off clothes simply to confirm our authenticity, but it's all *velki* (illusion).

As you know, Priyanka does not have her *ligam* (penis); she always wears a saree to claim herself a hijra because it is a single piece of cloth that can easily be taken off quickly to create nuisances to collect the money. On the other side, I am a *janana*, and I have my ligam; I could not wear a *saree* like Priyanka as I am not able to take off my clothes easily because people

> will not accept me as a hijra with my *ligam*. Therefore, I wear salwar kameez with a *hijab*; if they doubt, because of this hijab, no one will publicly ask me to take off my clothes. It is like a safeguard for me. Moreover, as I did not cut off my *ligam*, and I don't have a long *joke* (hair), I look more like a man than a woman. Therefore, salwar kameez and *hijab* give me an ideal look.
>
> *Boina*, a hijra is nothing but a dressing, clothing, and makeup. However, we hijra can change and shift our identity from one gender to another. See, when I visit my village, I always wear a male dress, and I start behaving like a man. When I go to the mosque, I dress and behave like a man. When I go on a date with *panthis*, I dress like a female, whereas in the case of my collection, I dress like a hijra. Compared to man and woman, our body and identity are more elastic. I can be a hijra, man, or woman by dressing myself up for the people, but neither I nor my body belongs anywhere.

Nadia and Priyanka's above narrations illustrate a reflection of the significance of clothing for being a hijra. It also highlights the elasticity of the hijra body and the flexibility of hijra identity. Though most of the hijra go through body modification surgery, they customize and shape their bodies through dressing and makeup. Hijra capitalize and customize their bodies to constitute their identity, and their body performativity also depends on body modification. They politically choose their dressing and grooming for a specific purpose, and by their dressing and body grooming, they constitute their hijra identity. For example, when Priyanka is going for hijragiri, she chooses to dress as 'odd' and 'sexy' to become a hijra to seek people's attention.

On the contrary, Nadia wears a very different type of dress to establish her hijra gender identity. Correspondingly, she wears a male dress when she went to the mosque to establish herself as a man because she feels comfortable addressing herself as a man during her prayer. So, the performative acts of hijra are also neither unilineal nor homogenous; rather, they are highly personal, strategical, political, and contextual.

The body of a hijra cannot be considered her physical reality; instead, working on the body with that garment in a certain context is the daily living reality of the hijra's lives. On the one hand, when Priyanka consciously grooms herself as 'sexy,' 'hot,' and 'odd,' her body and dressing produce a social discourse of hijra, which in fact, follows the body parchment theory. On the other hand, when Nadia narrates that her body does not belong in a static place, it follows the theory of someone's body as a project. However, both Priyanka and Nadia significantly describe that they act and perform differently in different dresses. So, they dress differently and present themselves according to the environment and the necessity of the time, which echoes their fluidity, flexibility, and performativity. Thus, I would argue that a hijra is not just a corporal identity; one cannot be a hijra only by doing her body modification surgery or announcing herself as a hijra. Being a hijra means customizing the body

through dressing, grooming, and stylizing to ensure that all her performative acts are significantly different from men and women.

8.4 *"Hamsir shoril hamsir na, tumi hijra, hijra na, ligam jodi chibrao na"*- The Significance of Body Embodiment

In Dhaka, Bangladesh, a body of a hijra is the focus of attention for their social interaction, and they make physical changes for their aspirations to ensure their gender identity and for their daily social interaction. Body modification refers to taking control of one's body in order to gesture against one's natural body and the oppression of its habitus formation (Featherstone, 1999). Body modification is also centred on social interaction (Ellis, 2015; Featherstone, 2010; Wohlrabetal et al.2009; Martin & Cairns, 2015). Social interaction is such a process that includes reciprocal response or stimulation between two or more individuals (Michael,2017; Sherif,2017). Social interaction is significantly related to an individual's actions, which cannot be justified by him/her; rather, it is understood in social communication (Mondada, 2016). Turner (1988) defines social interaction as " social interaction is the process whereby the overt movements, covert deliberations, and basic physiology of one individual influence those of another, and vice versa" (Turner, 1988, p. 14).

In the context of Bangladeshi hijra, body modification in the feminine form are ubiquitous, and therefore, hijra have tendencies to change the body in different forms. During my fieldwork, I have found hijra claiming that their body does not have any corporality. On the other hand, most of the hijra take female hormones such as *'famicon,' 'mayabori'* (birth control contraceptive hormone) to increase the size of their breasts, yet again, most of them who are in the traditional hijra profession go through emasculation; some of them undergo gender reassignment surgery which I have mentioned in chapter seven. Among the body modification technologies mostly used by hijra are silicone boobs, sexual reassignment surgery, castration, and oral hormones. However, the body transformations of hijra do not enable them to deploy feminine grammatical forms in constructing a multitude of gendered meanings to their identity. Some research draws attention to how the modified person experience stigma (Martin & Cairns, 2015; Padilla et al., 2016) and develops their strategies to mitigate their disgraced status (Ellis, 2015). Hence, those who perform body modifications develop their techniques to recover their performance through interaction (Irwin, 2001). Padilla et al. (2016) had done ethnographic research among the transgender in Puerto Rican and states that the trans person goes through body modification because of stigmatization.

In the Butlerian understanding of gender, performance is significant, whereas biological sex determination is believed as an extraneous mark of individuals' bodies. Nevertheless, in my research, I have found that gender performance among hijra is as significant as the sexual form of individuals

within the hijra community; in some cases, the contextual reality and a person's desire to become a woman force them to modify their bodies. As I have mentioned in chapters six and seven, femininity is what hijra struggles for, not femaleness puts it, wish to feel like women' (Goffman, 1963; 2009). Alternatively, as Kulick (1998). Mentioned body transformation is a never complete process of gaining status in the Brazilian travesti community and achieving the desire to be sexually attractive to men in a muscularly heteronormative society. Borba and Ostermann (2007) have worked in Southern Brazilian travesties and showed how the embodiment enables travesties to incorporate feminine and masculine ideologies to construct their identity. They argued that embodiment allows transgender people to construct the performance of gender (Butler, 1990). It contrasts with their biological determinations and making transgender identity highly fluid. However, Shilling (2018) states that the embodied processes are also connected with habits, customs, knowledge, techniques, and beliefs, and those are also central to the production and reproduction of culture and social groups. Hence, Borba and Ostermann (2007) claim travesti's body is a 'project,' a model upon which her social identity will be repetitively moulded and reinvented. Transgender women often use makeup, dye their hair, and take female hormones to 'feminize' their bodies. The embodying of transitivity is fully accomplished through the hormonal treatments, which seem for them to be a 'ritual of passage'. They also argued that trans individuals transform the body to transgress their biological limitations, and they are moulding their bodies to acquire their desired gender shapes, and, therefore, transgender individuals juxtapose systems of signs that produce them as culturally trans. In contrast, a hijra is such a gender identity, which is significantly connected with body modification and body embodiment, but this embodiment has little effect of confirming their hijra identity.

Now the question arises if the body modification and body embodiment process do not confirm the hijra identity, then why most of the hijra in Bangladesh perform body embodiment by modifying the body. What I learned from my fieldwork in the context of this question is that the body embodiment is 'a ritual of passage' among the hijra community, and it encourages them to personify the body. It is also substantial for their performative gender identity, and in some cases, it is even a part of their contextual reality. To clarify the issues discussed, I would explain Nodi's story below.

> Nodi is a self-proclaimed hijra who joined the community twelve years ago but underwent surgery prior to two years and had her penis emasculated. She has now found a place as a guru but will soon become a *nayek*. Her guru Anwara hijra died two years ago, and following the hijra ritual, after adopting her *'lalsara'* (a hijra community ritual to get new rankings after the guru's death), she will be able to increase her *para-brit*. Nodi did not want to remove her penis because she wanted to keep it for her wife. She was a *koti* and loved to dress like a woman, but she did not want to remove her penis. Nodi said, "I was born as a complete man, but always carried the soul and mind of a woman. I love to wear female dresses and grooms like women. I love to do women's chores such as housework, cooking, and feeding my children. I have a

wife and two sons in my family, and therefore, I did not want to be a *chibry*. If I wasn't a hijra, I wouldn't be able to earn money because society doesn't allow a man to behave like a woman. I have tried to get other jobs, but I was rejected everywhere. People laugh at me, scold me, abuse me, and sometimes men physically assaulted me. I failed to survive within mainstream society. Afterward, I have decided to join the hijra community to feed myself and my family. Therefore, both my wife and sons accept me as hijra.

However, it was not so easy to survive such a long time being a hijra with the *ligam* because nowadays, many fake hijra work seasonally to make money, but they don't have any passion for being a hijra. On the off chance that you have a penis, it won't be conceivable to be persuasive in the hijra network because all our hijra *nayek* have done their castration and become a *chibry*. Moreover, it is very perilous to live a hijra life with *ligam*. Sometimes, when we go for a *cholla* and argue for money, we must take off our clothes to create a public nuisance for money. People from time to time become very suspicious about whether we are real hijra or not. To escape from this situation and to convince them, we take off our clothes and show our defective surgically reconstructed genital. People perceive that individuals who have defective genitalia are real hijra. Hence, we usually perform the *chibry* to prove ourselves genuine hijra. It was not compulsory before, but now it has become an obvious attempt and practice as a part of the hijra ritual.

People invest money to do their business, but our business depends on our bodies. So, either physical exercise or body change is the key to becoming a hijra. My body modification process started when I turned into *janana* from a *koti*. Because when upon entering the hijra community, I first took birth control hormones to get a natural feminine look and to have boobs. Nevertheless, I could somehow spend ten years as a hijra with my penis, but my other hijra *gurus, maiks*, and *gotias* abused and threatened me. They called me '*doporata', 'dogala'* (refer to those hijra who perform sex with male and female) as I use to have sex with both men and women. Besides, I often had fights with my other *gotias* to have control over my *para- birit*. A couple of years ago, the media sent me to cover up as a fake hijra. After this media coverage, some hijra attacked me and broke my leg, and I was in the hospital for a month.

Then, my guru arranged a *hijragiri* for my protection, and all the older hijra decided that if I could remove my penis, I would only be able to take control of my para-brit. They also have threatened me, saying, "*hamsir shoril hamsir na, tumi hijra, hijra na, ligam Jodi chibrao na,"* - a hijra body is not her own; you cannot become a hijra without the emasculation. If you don't have any urge to be a woman, you cannot be a hijra and did not have any rights to give *achla* and have your *chela.* My guru declared, my *hucca- panibond* (neither able to groom herself as hijra nor permit to contact with other hijra and become Ostracized) if I cannot show my dedication to being a hijra. Therefore, I underwent my sex reassignment surgery and had a *pan-chipty* in. Notwithstanding, I did not want to have *chibrani,* but it was beyond my control.

> My body was not mine at all; the hijra community-controlled it at the very time I put my name in the hijra world. I was neither passionate about being a woman nor wanted to be a hijra, the core of my emasculation process was only to be validated in the hijra community, which eventually obliged me to undergo surgery.

Nodi's narrative draws the attention that her body and body modification decision was not in her control. Whereas most of the literature states that transwomen body embodiment significantly relates to their desire to be a woman, the body modification of hijra in Bangladesh is quite different. The embodiment and body modification of hijra in Bangladesh is a part of a complex process of social hijra identity constitution. During my fieldwork, I have met several hijra who have removed their penis to survive in the hijra community. Going through emasculation and being *chibry* helps a hijra get a position in the hijra community, and it secures them to continue with the hijra profession. Therefore, it seems there are some unwritten norms practiced in the hijra community that constitute their identity. In some cases, a hijra who has a penis is scolded by their gurus and other hijra, and because of being insulted day by day, they make the decision to go through sexual reassignment surgery. In some cases, a hijra is intimidated by their guru and other hijra, and because they are humiliated day after day, they decide to go through sexual rejuvenation surgery.

Additionally, their body is more like capital for them, which they modify and groom to conduct the performative act to establish their hijra identity. Also, the personified hijra body ensures their identity and confirms their living among the hijra community. The body embodiment nevertheless is such a tool by which hijra negotiates with others in their everyday lives. Social and mental pressure is also a crucial reason for their body modification. Furthermore, it's observable that the performative act and body embodiment of hijra is significantly connected with the circumstance and contextual reality.

8.5 The Contextual Reality and Hijra Gender Performativity

A person's situation, circumstances, and context impact one's behavior, and behavior will be inconsistent across time and place (Fleeson, 2004; Funder, 2006). As such, hijra tend to behave very differently based on their circumstances and context. Thus, her gender performance may vary depending on her circumstances, who she is with, and what she wants to do. In late 1980, Deaux and Major (1987) proposed a contextual model of gender. Their contextual model supports a socially constructive approach to gender that states that heteronormative practices do not reflect a person's personality traits but that femininity and masculinity reflect a person's interaction in their immediate context (Deaux & Major 1987; Leaper 2000). Oosterwegel et al. (2001) argued that context could be incorporated into an individual's self when they are reflecting on their interaction with context. Hence, it has been argued that all gendered traits, including gendered behaviors and attitudes, are dynamic and context dependent (Deaux & Major, 1998). Gendered attitudes and behaviors are emergent,

dynamic, and continuously ratified, altering across time, relationships, and social context (Anselmi & Law 1998; Berenbaum & Beltz, 2011; Deaux & Major 1987, 1998; Leszczynski & Strough, 2008; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

In the recent trans study, context and situatedness have prioritized exploring trans lives (Browne et al., 2010; Hines, 2010). For example, Hines (2010) studies how being situated into different professions and work influences people's trans identity. Thanem and Wallenberg (2014) argued that trans lived experience could not define simply as a transgressive category rather trans lived experience and the contexts that mediate their experiences to appreciate the nuances surrounding being trans. Likewise, several transgender scholars draw attention to the politics of transgender mobility that pursues to capture the complexities of lived experiences and identifications. For example, Hines (2010) argues that researchers adopt situated understandings of embodied transgender life, while Connell (2010) suggests a contextual view. However, some researchers pay attention to how particular spaces and places (Browne et al., 2010; Halberstam, 1998), professional roles (Pitts, 2000; Connell, 2010), embodied or material negotiations (Thanem, 2011), social contexts (Namaste, 2000) and interactions (Davis, 2008) influence transgender life and outline transgender experiences.

Different contextual realities also play an essential role in hijra performativity in Bangladesh. Hijra gender performative acts are usually performed based on their surroundings, status, circumstances, and context. Some hijra uses their body as capital, and some use their bodies as a project for their gender performativity. Body embodiment is such a performative act that has been conducted by many hijra in Bangladesh, but the journey of '*chibrani*,' emasculation process, or the sexual reassignment surgery is not the same for everyone. In addition, how hijra will perform their body, stylizing, and grooming depends on their situation and context. Because of their gender fluidic nature, hijra shift and transform their identity on the contextual demand. Therefore, it is significant to explore what performative acts they perform to confirm their identity in which context. The following story will disclose how hijra performative acts are related to the situated context, circumstances, and contextual reality.

> I meet Shanu in a seminar organized by the social welfare ministry of Bangladesh. She was seeking help from the director of the ministry of social welfare to get her job back. Shanu was dressed as a man, and the director said to her, " How can you claim to be a hijra? Neither are you a medically proven hijra, nor do you look like a hijra. I can't help you". Shanu seemed to be very upset and said to the officer, "If you cannot help us, then why do you invite hijra to all those stupid seminars. I am a hijra; ask any of my gotia, ask my guru. Then, Nadira, one of the hijra gurus, supported her and then scolded her in *Ulti*, "*tonna beshe ashba ar billa kaba na tai ki hoy*?" Which means you dressed like a man, and how could you expect people to

accept you as a hijra? Shanu kept silent and sat quietly. When the seminar finished, I asked Shanu what happened? She said she would meet me next week, and she would give me a call.

Next week, we met in the tea stall. At first, I could not recognize her look because she dressed like a woman and was wearing bangles, neckless, and earrings. I asked her, why do you dress like a woman today? She replied, "*tonna takle ki ar mainshe hijra vabbo*?" which means that people will not believe that I am a hijra if I dress like a man. Then I asked why it's so essential for you to consider others that you are a hijra? And, how could you confirm to others that you are a hijra? Shanu said, "I am 25 years old, and I passed my life as a '*koti*' for more than 15 years. My father did not allow me to be a hijra, so I could not express myself. When he died, I only can disclose the matter that I am a hijra. Also, as I have had my job, I do not need to join the hijra community and behave like them. Honestly, I did not like hijra, the way they are."

I asked, what do you mean? Why don't you like hijra? Also, if not, then why do you live your life like one of them?

Shanu replied, "Hijra tend to behave very rude, rough, speak loudly and very vulgar, which I do not like. For me, hijra means carrying a woman's soul and, love a man like a woman. It is not necessary to dress like a woman and behave differently, but, in practice, it is all about acting. Many hijra do not have a female soul, but they claim themselves as a hijra because of their situation. You saw me in the meeting. I did not want to groom myself as a hijra. I was happy with my *koti* life, but my circumstances put me in a context that I could not but act like a hijra."

According to Shanu, she joined as a cleaner in a reputed private hospital in Bangladesh five years ago. When she got the job, she entered her sexual identity as a male as she used to wear male dresses at that time and tried to hide her hijra identity because of her family pressure. Her father was a cancer patient, and she was the only one who took care of him. Because of her father's illness, she could not manage to go to work sometimes. When her father died, she could not go to work for one month, and the hospital fired her. Shanu was upset, and she met one of her hijra friends Lira to share her pain and sorrow. When Lira heard that Shanu lost her job, she gave an idea to Shanu to appeal to the Human Rights Commission to get back her job as a hijra.

Shanu said, "when my *goitia* Lira told me to appeal to the NHRC, I started to think whether I should do it or not. Then I decided to do it to get back my job. I and was hiding my hijra identity because of my father, and now my father is no more. So why would I not declare myself as a hijra now? Also, I calculated in my mind that I do not have anything to lose for appealing. If fortune favors me, I will get my job back; if not, then I will be hijra for the rest of my life. I was a hidden hijra when my father was alive, now I am a part-time hijra, and if I don't get my job back, I will do my emasculation, and I will be a full-time hijra".

Shanu appealed to the human rights commission and the NHRC support Shanu as a hijra, and they order that hospital to recruit her again. When Shanu came to join the hospital, the hospital authority said she would get a new appointment letter as a hijra. Because in her previous appointment, she was recruited as a male, now they want to offer her the job as a hijra and wish to follow NHRC's order. Therefore, they request Shanu to do a medical test as a formality and to get her new appointment letter in a week's time. One-week later, when Shanu went to the hospital to get her new appointment letter, the hospital authority said they could not appoint her as they found, Shanu is a complete male, and she has neither any genital ambiguity nor hormonal imbalance to justify herself as a hijra. Therefore, they could not appoint her as a hijra and were not bound to follow the NHRC's order. After that incident, Shanu filed a case in the judicial court against Bangladesh medical, and for the last three years, she is struggling to get her job back. Moreover, during this time, she started to make a good connection with other hijra. She managed a guru to give her an '*achla*,' and now she has become a part of the hijra community.

I asked Shanu why she decided to join the hijra community when she does not like to behave like one; as she previously mentioned, "if you place yourself in my situation, you will realize, I do not have any other option without that. That context was different when I do not like all those traditional hijra behavior, but I am helpless now. Under the pressure of the situation, whether I like their tradition or not, I must behave like a hijra in this context. Therefore, I was forced to behave like one of them and start dressing and grooming like women. I am also learning the way hijra walk and talk to turn myself into fully trained hijra. Since I didn't get the job back, I have to survive as a hijra now. All in all, even if I get my job back now, I still have to behave like a hijra so that no one will doubt that I am not one of the hijra. I have already spoken to my lawyer and guru for my *chibrani*, but my lawyer advised me to have surgery later as it could affect my case. However, my guru asks me to do the *'chibrani'* soon and dress like a *neharun* to show my devotion to being a hijra. At the moment, I have no choice but to undergo castration surgery and act like a hijra. Eventually, I had to sign a stamp paper stating that I would be doing my *chilbrani* next year when the case was over. My guru took the stamp paper with a *'chiton'* as a symbol of my commitment.

In Shanu's case, her situation and context shed light on how her life is affected and how different contexts shape her gender identity through performance. Furthermore, due to gender fluidity, hijra like Shanu can transfer their gender identity based on their reality and status quo. The capacity to break up this sexual orientation and the ability to dissolve this gender-fluid relies upon the need of the circumstance to assist them with changing men to hijra and again from hijra to men. Nonetheless, social stigma combined with family pressures creates a hijra bound to hide her identity and live as a man. Nonetheless, hijra are often forced to live as men because of social stigma along with family pressures.

However, due to the conscious mind's state, a hijra like Shanu comprehend assuredly in which setting her character ought to be performed. Be that as it may, the performative gender identity of hijra is neither unpretentious nor apolitical. For examples, when Shanu's father was alive, she used to carry on with her life as a '*koti*' which implies a "covered up hijra" however, when she lost her employment, she deliberately took the hijra identity and began to carry on with her life as a 'Low maintenance hijra' to land back her position. It is additionally imperative that Shanu didn't care for a significant number of the hijra's acting performances; however, she began playing out each one of those goes about as she had no real option except to build up herself as a hijra is a required setting. It is also noteworthy that all the hijra do not expose their performative gender identity in the same way. For instance, at the beginning of this chapter, I discussed how Romana developed herself as a woman when she applied to the NHRC to claim the inherited property. In contrast, Shanu was consciously acting like a hijra, and most significantly, after the argument between the social welfare director and Shanu, she decided that she will conduct her sexual reassignment surgery to establish herself as a 'full-time hijra.'

In contrast, Shanu was consciously acting like a hijra, and most notably, after an argument between the social welfare director, she decided that she would undergo her sexual reassignment surgery to establish herself as a 'full-time' hijra. In this way, it is evident that not all performative acts of hijra are alike, and hijra performative activities are profoundly associated with the contextual reality and circumstance. Similarly, the performative acts of hijra are deliberately taken the decision to guarantee their agency. These performative acts are not just related to their gender; rather, those acts are also related to their necessity, demand, desire, and livelihood. Therefore, though Shanu dislikes certain hijra performative acts previously, she embraces each one of those demonstrations to land back her job. Landing the position back is her primary worry in the present circumstance, and she is doing this kind of work to fabricate herself as a hijra to communicate her objectives to get the job back.

8.6 Summary

A hijra is such an identity that is constituted by a complex process; although it does not follow certain regulative unilineal norms, some unwritten norms have to be followed by the individuals to become a hijra. Nonetheless, being a hijra does not necessarily mean; that they do not entirely practice the heteronormative gender binary; rather, hijra's gender can be constituted by doing gender and undoing gender. The gender representation of hijra is not a static dynamic; one ideally turns into a hijra by performing repetitive acts. A person who is a self-declared hijra consciously may transform her gender identity from hijra to man, hijra to woman, hijra to trans, and trans to hijra and this gender shifting depends on time, context, and situational demands. In Bangladesh, hijra are not bound to follow the heteronormative gender norms, and they can choose and perform different gender roles in a different context. Hijra does not follow any homogenous gender performative act to accept gender

liminality. Neither their living experience nor their perception of hijra is universal. Still, their gender fluidity, the practice of non-heteronormative gender relations, and their performative acts constitute them as a hijra.

Body embodiment and body modification nevertheless play a significant role in constituting the hijra performative gender. A hijra cannot be a hijra without her performative acts. Therefore, Butler's idea of performativity can justify their performative acts. However, she emphasizes the repetitive acts to confirm one's performativity, which is also true for a high, but it is the context based on which she decides which act should perform repeatedly. Furthermore, in most cases, hijra performative acts are consequences of consciousness, applied agency, and survival strategies, which means their gender performativity is neither impartial nor apolitical. Perhaps, it is not enclosed with the essentialism of any particular gender roles. In a nutshell, it can be noted that hijra often treat their gender performance and gender performative acts as a fun game, challenge, and strategy by simultaneously shifting their gender to achieve certain goals. And therefore, I contend though hijra gender is a complex accumulation of doing, re-doing, and gender performativity, indeed gender is an overt play for hijra in Bangladesh.

Chapter Nine

"Unzipping Your Pants"- The Dehumanization of Hijra and its Colonial Legacy

Hamsigo shorkare shirkrity dise, hamsi hei shikrity nia, na pari hijra proichoy dia kam korte, na pari valo ghor vara nite, na pari hijra poricoye songshar korte, na pari shompotti nite, taile shikrity dise ki korte? age manishe kase hat maiga kaite partam eknon odikar dear por hat mangle ulta jodgemanra hamsigo khote- odikar diase amra ken hat pati taile? hamsir kam korner shujog nai, ghor bandoner shujog nai, cholar kono tik nai, matar upor sad nai, ase shudu shikrity.- Sumi

[The government gives us recognition. But with that recognition, I could not get any job with my hijra identity, could not rent a proper house with my hijra identity, could not make a family with that hijra identity, could not access my property rights with my hijra identity then, why they give us the recognition? In previous we hijra manage money by begging from people but nowadays when we ask money from people, on the opposite, they ask, the government gives us recognition, then why do we beg? I cannot have the opportunity to work, don't have the chance to make a family, don't have certainty of my living, don't have any shelter upon my head, I only have this recognition]. Sumi

9.1 Introduction

Hijra have historically been dehumanized in various ways and were legally classified as 'criminals' by the British Raj (1858 to 1947). Nevertheless, by outlining section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, 1861 and the Criminal Tribe Act (CTA) 1871, turned hijra into a 'legal category.' Similarly, though hijra got recognition as a separate gender outside of men and women in contemporary Bangladesh, this acknowledgment transforms them from a local cultural group into a 'legal category', (Hossain, 2017). Ironically, this recognition and legal categorization evidenced be unable to rehumanize hijra in contemporary Bangladesh. In response to research question three, this chapter will analyze how this dehumanization process shape, reshape, and continue even in contemporary Bangladesh. Furthermore, it explores how the NGO workers and government officials perceive hijra in Bangladesh. Along this line, it will examine how the government's partial understanding of hijra has dehumanized them differently in contemporary Bangladesh by analyzing the government employment and interview process of hijra, arguing that the government official's understanding of hijra is limited and prejudiced. It will explain how hijra have also been treated as a medical verity rather than a regular citizen. The discrimination against them has become even more apparent when the government has sent them for medical examinations to determine if they are actually hijra. After receiving the medical examination results, the government announced that none of those who came for the interview was a hijra, they were all full-grown men, and that is why they canceled the government recruitment program. All of these candidates were accused of being 'fake hijra' with

representations in the media as 'criminals', which would be justified as a deep root by the influential British colonial legacy.

9.1.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter has five sections besides the introduction and conclusion. The first section discusses how hijra have been legally dehumanized during the British colonial period by outlining section 377 in 1861 and the Criminal Tribe Act (CTA) in 1871. The second part focuses on the dehumanization process of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh and how it connects with the colonial legacy. The third section will show how hijra have been perceived by the NGO workers and government officials and dehumanized in contemporary Bangladesh even after getting recognition. It will also explain how the government's understanding of hijra is inadequate, insufficient, and incomplete and how the colonial legacy influences their perception.

9.2 The Idea of Dehumanization and the Legal Dehumanization of Hijra in the British Raj

Dehumanization lies at the root of severe social problems ranging from intergroup violence to everyday prejudice and discrimination (Al-Amoudi et al., 2017; McLoughlin & Over, 2018). Dehumanization refers to a situation where an individual or group is deprived of positive human qualities that indicate inhumanity, inhuman conditions, violence, and cruelty (Esmeir, 2006). In other words, dehumanization is the diminution of having human characteristics and human rights (Esmeir, 2006; Wardani, 2010). The process includes- suspension of fundamental rights, discrimination, social exclusion and deprivation, and so on. When a particular group of people is dehumanized, they are deprived of engaging in their feelings, thoughts, desires, or perceived individuality (Fincher, Tetlock, & Morris, 2017). These disadvantaged groups of people are viewed as low-status groups or recognized as less 'evolved and civilized' than high-status groups, states, authority, and people using blatant expressions of dehumanization to express prejudice toward other groups (Bruneau et al., 2018).

As I mentioned in the opening chapter, the British heteronormative eyes failed to classify the hijra beyond the gender binary, sexual relations, they also imported a legal culture of sexuality and a code of sexual morality (Bhaskaran, 2002). The British colonial authority also treats hijra as 'habitual sodomites'. Besides, 'effeminacy' was another marker to identify the sexual difference in the nineteenth century. Tosh (2005) states that "Effeminacy was the primary signifier of homosexuality which highly represented the homosexuals as harmful and disgraceful and turned them into a threatening 'other' in Britain during 1800 to 1914" (Tosh, 2005, p. 338).

It was also evident from the British colonial officials' documents that the company officials' treated eunuchs and hijra as a violent and unrestrained form of masculinity. For them, the failure of masculinity was as significant as the failure of the administration. Hence, articulating the definitions of appropriate and unappropriated forms of governance in terms of Masculine behaviors was crucial for the British East India company officials (Hinchy, 2014). Thus, the British officials perceived hijra and *Khwajasarais* as ferocious hyper-masculine figures in Muslim despots. While in the Mughal period, eunuchs or hijra used to picture asexual; the British colonial officials labeled them either hypersexual or criminal (Alter, 2018; Hinchy, 2014; Mohan, 2018; Newport, 2018). The criminalization process has a far-reaching consequence in the life of hijra, turning them from culture into a legal category officially through section 377, 1861 and CTA 1871.

Hijra started to face extreme prejudice and discrimination in every step of their life, which historian Hinchy (2019) pointed out in his work. They were again legally dehumanized during the British rule when their way of living was not only criminalized but someone who was a hijra considered as a criminal. In the following section, I will discuss how hijra were dehumanized by introducing section 377 of the Indian Penal Code together with the Criminal Tribe Act 1871 as the context and consequence of those acts.

9.2.1 Penal Code Section 377 and its Impact on Hijra Sexuality

In 1861, the British Raj introduced Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which regulates all forms of sexual behavior other than heterosexuality which is perceived as disruption of 'nature's order'. In other words, section 377 prohibits all forms of non-heteronormative and non-reproductive sex under the term 'unnatural offense'. According to the act:

> Unnatural offenses- Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine. (ACT NO.: XLV OF THE PENAL CODE 1860)[50]

This section prohibited all forms of non-heteronormative sexual acts and attempted to naturalize the 'unnatural', and because of it, all the other form of sexuality beyond heteronormativity turns into a legal offense. In other words, the naturalness of heterosexuality is hegemonized through the elimination of sexual diversity. It was a significant attempt to alienate the non-heteronormative individuals and gross error in a conflation of identities and desire (Hinchey, 2019; Hossain, 2020).

[50] In act is modeled on the Buggery Act 1533 (formally— An act for the punishment of the vice of Buggerie). The Buggery Act 1533 was passed by the parliament of England during the reign of Henry VIII. The act was to introduce prohibited same-sex relationships. Nevertheless, the introduction of the Buggery Act 1533 is as Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code has to announce denied not only same-sex relationships but also hijra sexuality.

9.2.2 Criminal Tribe Act (CTA) 1871 and Its Impact on Hijra

British colonial government introduced the Criminal Tribe Act, 1871, in criminalizing entire communities by classifying them as 'habitual criminals.' Under the CTA, ethnic or social communities in India were defined as "addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offenses" such as thefts, the government systematically registered habitual sodomites. As I discussed in chapter one, the idea of eunuch was associated with courtly culture in the pre-British era, whereas during the British period, the social visibility of hijra and their gender identity was erased by planting the seeds of CTA 1871. The British Raj transformed hijra from the cultural category into a legal one by using CTA 1871 and deployed the term 'eunuch'. Denoting to this establishment, eunuchs were introduced into a new genre -' the act defines eunuch vaguely and widely - 'The term 'eunuch' shall…be deemed to include all persons of the male sex who admit themselves or on medical inspection appear, to be impotent.' [CTA: 24]. Later added in the act that '[eunuch] appears, dressed or ornamented like a woman.' After the introduction of CTA, diversified gender vibrant, e.g., *'khoja'/'khawajasarais'* or hijra, was brought into one single term broadly defined as a eunuch (Gannon, 2009; Hinchy, 2014; Hinchy, 2019). Since then, the term 'eunuch' refers to those who lose their sexual ability to either forcefully or willingly decide not to be involved in reproductive sexual intercourse (Ringrose, 2007). Yet, there is a difference between the natural eunuch and those who undergo 'castration'[51] , but according to CTA, including intersex, crossdresser, impotent, castrated ones, hijra, *khoja, 'khawajasarais'* all are termed as one category called 'eunuch'.

The British Raj wanted to keep eunuchs under surveillance and eradicate them from the public space. Most of all, British Raj suspended their Right as human beings and classifying them as 'criminals'. Their sexuality has been considered a criminal offense; their way of living and livelihood is an indispensable part of their identity. Furthermore, no one could challenge the criminalization of eunuch in the courts as there was a bar of jurisdiction of courts in questioning the judgment of the Act [Section- 6 of CTA]. British Raj restrained their life in all possible ways. Here are the reverent passages from the act:

> Section 24. a) a register of the name and residences of all eunuchs residing in any town or place to which the local government specially [especially] extends this part of this act, who are reasonably suspected of kidnapping or castration of children or of committing offences [offenses]; under section three hundred seventy-seven of the Indian penal code, or of abetting the commission of any of the said offences [offenses]; and

[51] The term 'castration' refers to the removal of sexual organs and to remove the penis, testicles, scrotum called total ablation (Ringrose, 2007).

b) a register of the property of such of the said eunuchs as under the provisions hereinafter contained, are required to furnish information as to their property.

Section 26. Any eunuch so registered who appears, dressed or ornamented like a woman, in a public street or place, or in any other place to be seen from a public street or place, or who dress or play music, or takes part in any public exhibition, in a public street or place or for hire in a private house, may be arrested without a warrant, and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years or with fine or with both.

Section 29. No eunuch so registered shall be capable—

(a) of being or acting as guardian to any minor,

(b) of making a gift,

(c) of making a will, or

(d) of adopting a son

CTA of 1871 bounded hijra to be homeless, they have been deprived of their fundamental rights, the inheritance laws had not permitted them to transfer their properties to their disciples and to claim alms, hijra lose their administrative positions and come under state surveillance (Hinchy, 2014; Hossain, 2019; Jain, 2017; Khan, 2016). CTA, 1871 also created doubts on their authenticity and figure and marked them as 'failed masculinity', impotence, and sodomy (Darr, 2017; Gairola, 2020; Gichki, 2020; Gonon, 2009; Hinchy, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2019; Hossain, 2019; Roy, 2015). The act of 1871 forced hijra to list themselves with the local police, banned their public performances, and prohibited them from wearing women's clothes. In 1873, the provincial administration made another principal suspect 'eunuch' and published a circular by mentioning that wearing female clothing and performing in public were 'prima facie grounds for suspicion'. Thus, the systematic dehumanization of hijra has started through the introduction of section 377 in 1861 and the introduction of CTA, 1871. Hijra were suspended from the fundamental rights which other Indian colonial subjects received. Furthermore, through the criminalization of hijra individuals and livelihood after the introduction of CTA in 1871, hijra alienated from the mainstream society (Awan, 2018; Hinchy, 2019). Yet this situation continued even after the end of the British colonial rule.

9.3. The Dehumanization of Hijra in the Post-colonial Era

In 1947, British India became two independent states - India and Pakistan. Both countries adopted British Indian criminal laws. CTA, 1871 was withdrawn in 1949, but the hegemonic prejudice towards hijra continued in the post-colonial era. The visible presence of hijra in post-colonial India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh proves that CTA, 1871 and section 377 of the Penal Code, 1861 failed to

eliminate them. Still, they were succeeding in stigmatizing, marginalizing, and stereotyping hijra significantly. Though Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India challenged the post-colonial law by recognizing hijra, yet they adopted the British colonial prejudice and policies to identify and intensified hijra. The systematic dehumanization of hijra during the British Raj is somehow influential in producing prejudice and discrimination associated with stereotypes, which are about how male and female bodies should appear and how they should behave. Hijra neither fit into those stereotypes nor follow the normative male-female gender discourse, which turned them into a social 'other'. This 'otherness' is also tangled in regulating who is 'us' and who is 'them', and dehumanization happened through the process of 'others' making (Haslam, 2006; Kronfeldner, 2017; Over, 2019).

In 1971, East Pakistan became an independent state- Bangladesh and adopted the Pakistan Penal Code derived from the British Indian Penal Code (Global Human Rights Defence, 2015). When Bangladesh became an independent county, it adopted the British Indian Penal Code section 377, which prohibits all forms of non-heteronormative and non-reproductive sex under the term 'unnatural offense'. However, the sexuality of hijra individuals is non-heteronormative and illegal in Bangladesh. The government's acknowledgment of 'hijra' as a separate gender contradicts section 377 of the existing colonial Penal Code, which identifies 'unnatural sex', i.e., non-heteronormative sexual practices are illegal and a criminal offense whereas their sexual practices are an essential part of their identity. To acknowledge them as a 'hijra gender' is to accept their sexual practices, but their sexual practices are non-heteronormative, which is a criminal offense according to existing Bangladeshi penal laws.

The twenty-seventh Article of the Bangladeshi Constitution states that all citizens are equal before the law and are eligible for equal protection under the law. Non-discrimination and equality are the principal of the constitution, but in practice, it is far away in the case of hijra. Thus, acknowledging them as a separate gender contradicts section 377, and the Bangladesh government has not taken any initiative to resolve this issue. Section 377 of the colonial Penal Code has not been overturned in the country. And according to the law, the sexual practices of hijra individuals are an offense through the lens of the criminal act 377, though, in practice, no evidence is found where a hijra is ever accused under the same act.

This was also the situation for the other neighboring countries, such that India and Pakistan, but they have reconciled their legal contradiction. India[52] amended section 377 of the colonial Indian Penal Code, and Pakistan passed a bill declaring that the hijra are the exception to section 377 of the Penal Code. Indian supreme court has overturned the 158-years-old colonial penal section 377 of the IPC

[52] Recently, activities and NGOs in India challenged the law. In India, the Naz Foundation, a Delhi-based NGO, filed a lawsuit in the Delhi High Court in 2001, seeking decriminalization of homosexual intercourse between consenting adults. In consequence, the Supreme Court of India decriminalizes the 158-year-old Section 377 of the IPC

on 6th September 2018. Consequently, the Supreme Court of India decriminalized non-heteronormative sexual practices, i.e., same-sex relationships, but it would be a difficult choice for the Bangladesh government, as it is a predominantly Muslim county, and same-sex relationships are prohibited as stated in the religion. In accordance with Islam, "Allah cursed the males who appear like females and the females who appear like males" (Karim, 1994, Vol. 1, p. 613), On the other hand, in May 2018, Pakistan's Parliament permitted the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018. This act's legislation results from several years of concerted judicial activity, public discussion, and activism by transgender people in Pakistan. This act allows practicing hijra rights in Pakistan. However, the Bangladesh government neither takes any initiative to reconcile this legal contradiction of section 377 to ensure hijra sexual rights nor constitute any property right laws for hijra. Yet, this recognition is contradictory to the existing (section 377 of the) Penal Code, 1861.

9.3.1 The Dehumanization of Hijra and in Contemporary Bangladesh

As I previously mentioned in chapter seven, in Bangladesh, same-sex relations are not legally or culturally acceptable, and it is also prohibited in Islam. Therefore, the Islamic fundamentalists, extremists, and few militant Islamic groups actively pose their position as anti-atheist and anti-LGBTQ activists, and they are significantly life-threatening for LGBT activists, bloggers, writers, publishers, free thinkers, and atheists in Bangladesh (Ashraf, 2015; Gohel, 2014; Mizan & Ahmed, 2018; Patel, 2018; Rahman, 2016; Wolf, 2015). Several secular bloggers, writers, free thinkers' publishers, and LGBT activists were attacked and killed allegedly by religious extremist outfits in Bangladesh between 2015 and 2016. Bangladeshi blogger and writer Avijit Roy who is an American citizen advocated LGBT rights and published books on same-sex relations were murdered. His book publisher Dipan was murdered too. Publisher Tutul, who published Roy's book on homosexuality, was attacked but luckily survived. Secular blogger Niloy Nil who wrote in Roy's blog Mokto-mona (Think free), was also murdered. Xulhaz Mannan, who was a gay, LGBT activist and the founder of the only LGBT magazine Roopban in Bangladesh, and his partner Tonoy were hacked to death in Dhaka between 2015 and 2016 (The Guardian, 2015, 2016; BBC, 2015; The Telegraph, 2019). Hence, it can be assumed that the LGBT community, even those who advocate LGBT rights, activists in Bangladesh are under life threat. In contrast, hijra are slightly better than gays, lesbians, and bisexuals in terms of their legal acceptance in Bangladesh. But that does not mean that hijra can ensure their rights and be well accepted in society.

Even though the Bangladeshi government had acknowledged the hijra as a separate sex/gender in 2013 yet, they are deprived of fundamental human rights; that is to say, in Bangladesh, hijra are dehumanized. They have been dehumanized in terms of legal, sexual rights, and social and cultural acceptance. Furthermore, the government's perception of hijra is influenced not only by the British

colonial perception of the "eunuch," but also the legal and social reality of the life of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh is shaped by colonial policies. Now, I will discuss how the government dehumanized hijra concerning authenticity through the following story.

> One evening, I went to a cafe to meet Riya, a hijra activist, and NGO worker, but she was half an hour late. Still, she showed up and took a seat opposite me. She smiled at me and said, "Sorry for being late—rush hour traffic— I am glad to see you once more, Apa." I smiled and replied, "It is all right; how are you doing?". Riya replied, "The most recent two years have been difficult; Xulhaz vai and Tonoy were murdered by the Islamic far-rightist groups, since they were gay and LGBT activists, and the government is doing nothing, notwithstanding, they made some hijra's life miserable." I inquired as to why it happened.
>
> Riya replied—one of her *gotia chela* (Friend's disciple), Chaity, applied for a government job as a hijra. At the final stage of the assessment process, her application was turned down after the medical tests. Since then, she is depressed. I was curious to know more about the interview process, and I asked Riya what happened to Chaity during the medical test. Riya looked confused; she is not sure whether she should continue the discussion or not. She nevertheless said:
>
> *Apa,* you do not have any idea what happened during the screening process. The government has compelled them to undergo a medical test to confirm whether they are 'real hijra' or not. Chaity was selected for the job, but she failed in the medical examination. She was the only '*chibry*' among the other hijra candidates and was traumatized the most. When Chaity went for the medical test, she was asked to unzip her pants in front of the word boy, nurse, lab technicians, and doctors. It was a humiliating experience for her to undress in front of everyone. Still, she felt more embarrassed when the doctor pushed the catheter through her surgically implanted *maggi chipty* (a surgically reconstructed vagina) and declared her a man like others. The doctor said she is a 'male' and went through surgery to become a hijra.

I also sought to reconfirm the story, so I crosschecked with the newspaper during that period and discovered that none of the hijra were given any job. Instead, they were leveled as 'fake hijra.' Correspondingly, some newspapers reporting termed those applicants as 'fakery' (Hossain, 2017), published their photos and male names, which put them into a more vulnerable position (Rajeeb, 2019). The Human Rights Watch Report on hijra in Bangladesh 2016 asserts:

> Following these abuses at the hospital, photographs of the 12 hijra were released to online and print media, which claimed the hijra were "really men" who were committing fraud to attain government jobs. Some hijra reported that publication of the photos sparked increased harassment from the general public and economic hardship for those involved—even informal economic activities were compromised as former begging and sex work clients refused to

> engage with the hijra following the exposure. (Abuses in Bangladesh's Legal Recognition of Hijra, 2016, p. 2)

Nevertheless, this medical checkup undoubtedly put hijra into a susceptible and vulnerable situation. Riya reasoned in this regard; the government also refused to offer her a job. Riya again mentioned that this is not the end of Charity's misery; she worked for an NGO, but when the ministry of social welfare office declared her as a 'fake hijra', she lost her job at NGO too. Furthermore, when the news spread (i.e., Chaity reported as 'fake hijra' by the doctor) along with the hijra community, other hijra developed suspicious of her identity, which has alienated her from the hijra community whereas, she has been a member of their community for seven years. Currently, Chaity is so depressed that she tried to commit suicide by taking sleeping pills. Riya said with deep agony:

> During the medical test, the hijra candidates were not treated as humans; they were treated like a *leri kutta* (street dog). As a consequence, most of them could not live with their families, could not get jobs, and could not survive even in the hijra community. The government did not care for all those hijra candidate's future and mental state whether they will be able to endure it; they only cared to confirm whether they were hijra or not. How could they decide who is hijra or who is not? If anybody has the right to raise a question about their authenticity, that is us, our community people, not a doctor.

Riya's above statements reflect how hijra authenticity is more important to the government than to give them jobs rather than considering their struggle and privacy. The hijra authentication process has also significantly restricted their freedom in gender expression, individuality, and body rights. Likewise, the medical test declared them as 'full-grown men' and constructed them as 'fake hijra', which ultimately violates their human rights, hinders their livelihood, leads them not to live as hijra, and survives in society. However, before I move on to the next section, it is momentous to discuss the perception of 'fake hijra' as this fakery is one of the foremost reasons for the hijra dehumanization in present Bangladesh.

9.3.2 The Perception of 'Fake' Hijra

According to the government and the common people, 'fake hijra' or fakery are not the same as their own perception of hijra. However, all three groups, such as the hijra community, general people, and the government, perceive 'fake hijra' differently. In line with my hijra participants, 'fake hijra' are those individuals who wear wigs, put on heavy makeup, dress like women just to beg money from the people. Still, they neither have a dedication to transform their gender identity nor have any genital ambiguity; all of them are 'fake hijra'. One of my participants, Sweaty, said, "those who are not *koti*, or *janana*, neither *vabraj* nor *chibry*, but only collect money from the street, traffic signal, on trains, and buses by wearing wigs and wearing female dresses are not real hijra, they all are fake hijra."

Another participant, Chandni, said, "Hijra who are neither connected with the community nor a *maigga* but take hijra occupation as a way of earning are fake hijra."

On the contrary, the general public perceived hijra as either intersex or impotent males. Furthermore, when I have asked one of the government officials, who are fake hijra, according to him. He replied, - "Those who are declared medically incompetent but still claim to be hijra can be called fake hijra." So, the government perceived fake hijra as those who are medically disqualified. However, Hossain (2017) proclaims:

> Emasculation, in the Bangladeshi context, confirms one's status as a 'fake' hijra as the public understands a real hijra to be one who is born with an innate genital defect. It is precisely because of such an understanding that all the hijra candidates were recently prevented from joining the Social Welfare Ministry. (Hossain, 2017, p. 1421)

My opinion differs from that of Hossein on this issue, as emasculation confirms the distinguishable position of the people as 'a fake-hijra' for two reasons. First, because most of my participants told me that they could use this emasculation process to publicize their hijra identity and show their devotion to the community, they added more; emasculation allows them to take off their clothes in public if anyone suspects them. And, when people see them in an emasculated state, they no longer question whether they are real hijra. Secondly, as I previously mentioned, historically, when hijra went through the emasculation process, it helped them confirm their identity socially and culturally. Therefore, if one is emasculated, it does not make her 'a fake-hijra'; instead, someone who pretends to be a hijra with a penis to find an easy way to earn quick money by wearing female clothing is supposed suspiciously, and general people distinguish them as fake-hijra. On the contrary, the government considers intersex individuals with genital ambiguity to be the real hijra, and the rest of the hijra are the fake ones.

9.4 Government Policy of Hijra Employment, 'Fakery' and its Consequences

After giving the recognition, the ministry of social welfare took several projects such as programs for hijra's well-being, scholarships to support their childhood education, a stipend for college-going students, vocational training for self-empowerment, and elderly allowance to bring a positive change in their lives. Still, the outcome of those projects could not make any visible difference. However, in some cases, the government's rehabilitation program for the development initiatives became a big failure to favor hijra, and, sometimes, it turns into the worst and becomes a part of dehumanizing hijra. For example, in December 2014, the ministry of social welfare announced that the government would recruit hijra for low-ranking positions such as security guards, attendant office assistants, and

clerks in government institutions like orphanages, schools, shelter homes, and daycare centers. The monthly salary of those positions was ranged from 6900 takas (USD88) to 7800 takas (USD100) per month based on the job location. Most of the posts were based in Dhaka, two positions were proposed in Munshigonj, and two were in Chittagong (Knight, 2016).

About 40 hijra applied for the job position, and they all began to dream of a new life. However, the interview session at the Department of Social Welfare was swiftly turned into an abusive one (Knight, 2016). The interview panel also raised questions about their attire, and several members of the interview panel asked them offensive, disrespectful and unexpected questions about their sexual and personal life that was not related to their jobs at all. I met Mahi in a closed community event where she was sharing her experience with us, saying:

> I earned more than 15000 takas per month by doing traditional *hijragiri*, which is much higher than the salaries they have offered, but I still wanted to get the government job to have a respectful life. I was very optimistic about getting this job as I worked as an office assistant in a private company before entering into the community. I applied for that job with the hope that I would be considered a potential employee like everyone else and would make my parents proud, but it turned out to be a nightmare.
>
> On the day of the interview, I was formally dressed in the expectation that my appearance would not make me look like a traditional hijra because I wanted to get a job to present myself as a conventional Bengali man. Although I knew when I put on pants and shirt, I looked very manly and formal, but that was a wrong decision because they think hijra wear women's dresses and always having heavy makeup. Therefore, an officer told me, you look like a man; You don't look like a hijra; how should we make sure you are a hijra? I was extremely shocked to listen to such questions and did not understand what I should say. However, I replied that I was a complete hijra, and that was what I felt inside. I'm just like a woman and attracted to a man. I'm looking forward to marrying a man. Then they all started laughing at me. Another interviewer asked me, "Don't you think that if we hire you, all the other male staff will feel uncomfortable and pressured to work with you because you are looking for a man to be your husband?" They didn't ask me any questions about the job or even about my previous work experience.
>
> After this insult, I regretted why I went there, and I understand by then, they will not give me that job. I was very broken at the time, but when I found out what had happened to those who had been elected, I prayed a double *'nafal' namaz'* (special prayer) and was thankful to Allah that He had saved me from so much humiliation; Some of the experiences I had in the initial interview were already unfair, the intensity of the humiliation I faced from other hijra was not at least what I had experienced; Otherwise, I will lose all my dignity. As an expression of our

> resentment towards society, we often take off our clothes in public for money, which does not mean that we have to do it in a formal setting to satisfy us elsewhere or even to get a job.

The above statement clearly stated that how the hijra candidates were abused, discouraged, harassed, and humiliated during the interview sessions, which devaluated their self-esteem. It also expresses that the interview panel was not interested in judging candidates' qualifications; instead, they were more concerned about finding real hijra. They judged more on how they should behave, think, and appear rather than considering their employability. However, there is an opposite case found in this regard, Knight, who was researching hijra recognition in Bangladesh for the Human *Rights Watch Report 2016,* mentioned how another candidate was humiliated because of wearing women clothing during the interview, and he said one of his participant's name Turvi's (pseudonym) stated:

> So, they said: "you can't have a job [looking] like this." Then what do I have to do? Then they said, "you have to work wearing men's attire. You can't do it like this. People will be scared of seeing you." So, I said, if I get a job, then I can change myself. I can wear pants and [a] shirt. [They told me] there will be several high-ranking officials where I'll do the job. If they are scared of me, then they won't be warm to me. They will humiliate me. So, yes, I can. I can do everything, including cutting my hair. Then they said, ok, then do it all. Keep the hair short and wear a pant-shirt to work. (*Human Rights Watch Report,* 2016, p.16)

The above statement shows that Mahi's statement was in stark contrast to the Human Rights Watch report. According to Mahi, she was questioned about her identity as a hijra as she did not present herself at the interview with the girl's outfit and did not dress as a traditional girly hijra, as traditional hijra appear with female attire with heavy makeup. On the contrary, Turvi said that she was insulted because of her long hair and female clothing, which were contradictory to her body. Still, both the statements clearly show that the panel members were prejudiced towards hijra. Despite the differences in both opinions, it is undeniable that the government officials constantly wanted to confine them within a certain frame that could be regulated, controlled, and governed, and it further reflects that how the dehumanizing process is systematically shaped and reshaped in contemporary Bangladesh.

The highest form of the dehumanizing process becomes visible in the next step of the interview process. After the initial selection, all those selected for the next episode were asked to undergo a medical examination, and all were declared 'full-grown male' and disqualified by the decision to remove him/her without penis and testicles (Hossain, 2017). Despite claiming their legitimacy and authenticity from the hijra community, after getting the medical examination report, the social welfare ministry immediately terminated the candidate's appointments on the ground that they were a group of male-bodied people who impersonated hijra to obtain government employment (Ng, 2018).

If we take a closer look at the whole interview process, we can see that the hijra were dehumanized in various ways in different steps of this interview process. Although they have made two different statements, they were severely discriminated against throughout the interview process, and that cannot be ignored. The government's interview has been such that they had no idea why they were expelled in the next step and why this was happening to them. Those who passed the initial stage of the interview had no idea what happened in the second round, but most hijra thought they would get a government job very soon.

That is why most of the candidates changed all their mannerisms, appearances, hairstyles because they took the government official's advice seriously as they were very optimistic that they would get the job. For some of them, the work was so important that they moved away from the rules of the hijra community, the way hijra present themselves to people, or the way they present themselves in front of their community, just to get a job. In the end, the result was very sad and tragic. None of them got a job and were not able to return to the hijra community. Many were trying to change their feminine attitude, clothes so that they could get the job. Few of them quit sex work and are distanced from the hijra community because they don't want to live the traditional communal hijra lives anymore. One of my participants, Oishi, said:

> When I was shortlisted, I thought I would get the job because my uncle was a government official and told me that there would be no further interviews after the viva. I was so excited about getting the job that I took the government officials' advice very seriously and tried to change myself from every aspect. I even stopped talking loudly, whereas we hijra are loud. I stopped going to fetch *badhai* and *cholla,* the worst thing I did was to *kachhi* (argue) with my guru for the first time, saying that I could no longer pay her because I had the idea that since I would get the job, there was no need for me to keep her happy as I didn't have to be her chela anymore. You may know that if you want to be in a hijra *ghor*, you have to pay *mangtia* to the guru as well as to listen to her and follow all the rules. As I did not go for *cholla* or *badhai*, I was incapable of paying her any further. Also, as I thought I would have the job, I wouldn't have to care about my guru nor any of my *gotia;* I do not want to be a subordinate anymore. I always wanted to live my life with freedom and dignity.
>
> When I found out later that I would never get the job because of the medical test results, I felt like the sky was falling over my head. As a consequence of the whole situation, I had to pay my guru *don* (fine) to return to the community. Since I didn't get the job and moved away from the hijra *ghor*, I could no longer be a part of them. I had nowhere to go. Only Allah knows how I survived for six months after that incident. I then sought refuge with another guru's *ghor,* but no one accepted me as a chela anymore. Wherever I tried to seek refuge, the gurus said that the government's medical test showed that I was not a hijra, how my guru could keep me in the community. Now, if I go and fetch *cholla* and *badhai* and if anyone suspects me, the public might call the police, and she *(guru*) would no longer be able to protect me.

> My presence can cause problems for the community; the police can jail the person with the *ligam* (penis) to pretend to be a hijra and accuse them of cheating on others. I did not have any better option left out other than going for emasculation to have my *ligam* cut off as proof of my dedication towards *hijragiri.* Earlier this year, I borrowed money from my *guru*, signing on a stamp paper to have my emasculation surgery done, which I would never have dreamed of that I would go for it. Even after putting so much effort into negotiating with my guru, I have not yet received permission from her to go for *cholla* and *badhai*. After all those incidents, I can no longer have faith in the government that they have an intention to empower hijra. On top of that, the hijra community has lost faith in me. This government job fantasy ruined my life. In previous was just a *janana* hijra, but I have my life, always had an option to live a regular life. But now I am a *chibry* hijra, and I was bound to cut my *ligam,* and I am a *dhurani* (sex worker) because that medical test and media journalist did not leave me any other option.

All of Oishi's decisions were based on her hope of getting a job. But it turned out that those decisions had twisted her life upside-down. Oishi's statement clearly specified that how hijra have been suffering, and she was highly disappointed by the rejection. As an outcome of the government's act and ignorance, the lives of many hijra were at greater risk and vulnerability than ever before. This process makes them ill-protected and unguarded from their community safety net, which eventually accelerated them into melancholy. It also indicated that the government officials have a fragmented, partial, and inadequate idea about what a hijra means to be, which radiated the dehumanization process of hijra in Bangladesh. Similarly, the medicalization process of hijra was entirely inhuman.

The observations made by Knight (2016) and Rajeeb (2019) in this regard as those who went for a medical test were treated inhumanly. During this period of medical tests, the doctors, nurses, technicians mocked them and were also rebuked by the female lab technicians. The hijra candidates were told to take off their clothes to show their genitals in front of a crowd in an open room. Not only did they have to expose their genitals in front of a doctor, but a guard and bystander came and examined them, and then they had to do X-rays and ultrasounds in the second step. After completing all the medical examinations, the doctors of Dhaka Medical College Hospital declared them as full-grown men, in other words, 'fake hijra'. This hijra gender confirmation process and government officials' announcement was isolating. The consequences of this job rejection and third gender reassurance process have put them in a much riskier situation, and it also reveals how much dehumanization has grown towards them. In this regard, one of my participants, who is an NGO worker, said that:

> The government did not announce in their job advertisements that such medical examinations would be held for the recruitment of hijra. They later issued a memorandum of medical tests, which they did not inform the hijra candidates before. After the medical examination, when

> they said that they had terminated the recruitment process, there was a lot of damage to these hijra who were selected at the initial stage. As soon as government officials declared them 'full-grown men', they fell into an identity crisis into what they were known as hijra in their families, communities, and NGOs. Yet, after the government officials' announcement, they have been constructed as 'fake hijra' and alienated from their society, from their community.

Many national newspapers raised the issue of concern that all the candidates were 'full male' based on the government's official announcement. National newspapers carried the headline, 'Real men are pretending to be hijra.' Even photos of 12 selected hijra were published in the media (Rajeeb, 2019), which ultimately alienated them from every space. The manner in which the government officials treated the candidates during interview sessions, medical examinations, and ultimately the media coverage was the most humiliating and painful event of their lives. Undoubtedly it was an offensive experience for them, which in the end didn't leave any stone unturned to dehumanize the hijra in every way.

This sex-determination strategy to authenticate hijra has caused controversy, which raises the question of why they should be kept within a certain structure and why it is so important to confirm hijra authenticity. This raises another question of who would take the authority to determine the authenticity of a hijra and who will not. It further elevates a serious question about whose knowledge regarding hijra will be accepted and authorized and who's not (Hossain, 2017). It also significantly reminds the CTA-1871, where the British Raj defined eunuchs as 'the male sex who admit themselves or on medical inspection appear, to be impotent' [CTA:24]. To identify hijra and the urge to confirm their authenticity through medical inspection was not a random decision; instead, it's a reproduction (repercussion) of British colonial legacy. Because to identify authentic hijra was a major annoyance for them to justify hijra as criminals. In substance, the British Raj ignored the multiple factors of being a hijra; instead tried to locate them with a physical condition and turned them into a medical variety.

The government of Bangladesh has also decided if an individual is a hijra based on the state of being, for example, intersex or impotent. However, this research evident that hijra could possibly be a man who wears *sharee*, or someone like Chaity who implanted *'magi pona chipty'*, or an individual like Oishi who has not had a vagina but a *ligam*, yet none of them were considered as hijra to the public authority in view of their partial incompetent information about what a hijra is. In this manner, the government authority grouped somebody as a 'fake hijra' who is living in a hijra community, who make money through hijra livelihood, a disciple of a guru, an individual who goes through castration or surgically reconstructed vagina —all these give rise to a serious question about the intension of the government as to acknowledge hijra as a separate gender.

9.5 The Government Perception of Hijra in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's government officially recognized hijra as a separate sex/gender on 11th November 2013. It should be mentioned that in Bangla, there is no difference between sex and gender. Both sex and gender are termed as *lingo* in Bengali. The government uses the terms sex and gender as one's sexual identification. However, the ministry of social welfare published a handbook titled *"Policy and Plan to improve the life of hijra- 2013* (*hijra jonogoshthir jibon man unnyon karjokrom o bastbayn nitimala"* - 2013). In the handbook, the ministry of social welfare defines hijra as following:

> The English terminology of the word hijra is transgender. According to medical science, people with congenital disabilities due to chromosome defects, which cannot be included from any category of women or men for physical or genetic reasons, are known as the hijra community. Hijra refers to a person who is known as hijra in society and who does not feel heisted to introduce herself as a hijra. (Hijra manual, 2013, p. 2)

The above definitions might create confusion in many ways; for example, the first sentences mentioned that the term transgender is synonymous with hijra, which is misleading because there is a significant difference between local understanding of hijra and the Western perception of transgender, which I mentioned in previous chapters. On the one hand, the term hijra refers to male-bodied famine identified people who could be eunuch, transvestites, or intersex (Hayder & Rasel, 2019; Hossain, 2017; Islam, 2019; Jebin, 2019). On the other hand, transgender is an umbrella term representing many forms of gender non-conformity and indicates those individuals whose gender does not match with their biological sex (Green et al., 2018). Now I am going to discuss how the above definition and the government's perception of hijra is problematic in the following sections.

9.5.1 The Government Identified Hijra as 'Sexually Disable'

In the subsequent sentences, the ministry of welfare tried to define hijra biologically based on chromosomal defect and identified them as 'sexual disable', although hijra have never been a part of the disability discourse in South Asia (Kusters, 2016). To treat hijra as a chromosomal defect is medically associated with the term called Disorder of Sex Development (DSD). Warne and Raza (2008) define the Disorder of sex development "as a congenital condition in which the development of chromosomal, gonadal, or anatomical sex is atypical" (Warne & Raza, 2008, p. 227). They also emphasize the cultural aspect of genital ambiguity and define hijra as a 'mixed individual', but I have found hijra are not necessarily intersex or hermaphrodites during my fieldwork. Hijra are diverse, and because of their sexual diversity, it would be better to focus on their gender rather than chromosomal sex formation. One of my focus group participants Farhana, an NGO official, said:

> If we focus on the chromosomal defect, it might consider only intersex people as hijra, but it is not the truth in practice. I have worked on hijra reproductive health and sexual rights for the last couple of years and never found any intersex. Even to treat hijra as sexually disabled would be misleading. Hijra is neither chromosomal disabled nor physically handicap; instead, they are socially disabled because society does not allow them to live a normal and regular life like you and me.

The above narratives are echoing the message that hijra are not sexually disabled; instead, they are molded by the 'social model' of disability. In the social model of disability, people are 'disabled' neither for functional limitation nor for the medical condition. Somewhat they are disabled by society's discriminatory reactions like societal neglect, stigmatization, stereotypes, and prejudice (Barry & Levi, 2019). Despite the difference of intention, the Bangladeshi government is also dehumanizing the hijra like the British colonial government. British Raj has thought hijra are hereditary criminals where the Bangladeshi government thinks they have congenital disabilities due to chromosome defects. Moreover, defining hijra as disabled will increase their vulnerability, which will hamper their ability to act. In either case, hijra are interpreted in a faulty manner that prevents us from having a clear idea about them. Therefore, the government of Bangladesh is in an indecisive state to give hijra precise recognition.

9.5.2 The Indecisive Position of the Bangladeshi Government to Perceive Hijra

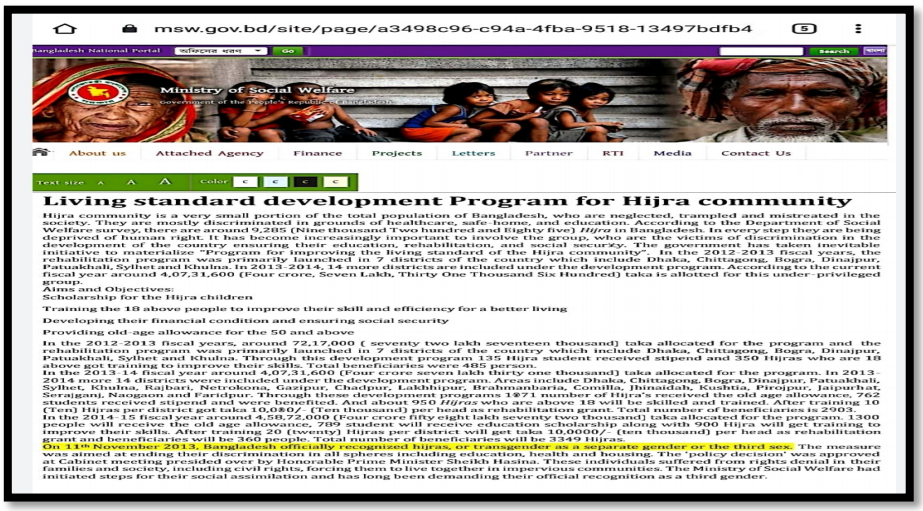
On 26th January 2014, the Bangladesh government officially published a gazette with one single sentence which mentioned: "The government of Bangladesh has recognized the hijra population of Bangladesh as a '*hijra lingo'*[53] (sex)". The government came up with a new term, '*hijra lingo,'* but the gazette does not clarify the meaning of '*hijra lingo'*. As I mentioned previously, in Bengali, there is no difference between sex and gender. Notwithstanding, I presume that the government recognizes hijra as a separate sex identity for the following reasons.

Firstly, they treated hijra as sexually disable, which indicates they want to define hijra as intersex individuals. Secondly, when the government bound hijra candidates to go for medical tests for the government job to confirm their sexual identifications, they also want to define hijra either on genital ambiguity or intersexuality. However, neither the gazette nor the social welfare hijra manual mentions who is a hijra. Rather all those documents showed that the government is confused and jumbled with various thoughts on hijra. For example, the cabinet ministers consider hijra as 'transgender.' Whereas the ministry of social welfare's latest updated web portal in 2020 mentioned that "On 11th November 2013, Bangladesh officially recognized hijra or transgender as a separate gender or the third sex".

[53] The difference between sex and gender does not exist in Bangla language. The term 'lingo' uses to refers both for sex and gender. However, in this case, government use 'hijra lingo' as hijra sex.

Thus, it can be argued that the Bangladeshi government does not hold a precise understanding of who the hijra are. However, Human Rights Watch Report (2016) claims that the absence of a clear guideline created an immense difficulty in policy implementation. But, if we critically analyze the Bangladeshi government's understanding of hijra, we will discover that there are two dominant discourses on non-heteronormative sex that have influenced the government's understanding.

Figure 9: Ministry of social welfare web portal


msw.gov.bd/site/page/a3498c96-c94a-4fba-9518-13497bdfb4

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Living standard development Program for Hijra community

Hijra community is a very small portion of the total population of Bangladesh, who are neglected, trampled and mistreated in the society. They are mostly discriminated in grounds of healthcare, safe-home, and education. According to the Department of Social Welfare survey, there are around 9,285 (Nine thousand Two hundred and Eighty five) *Hijra* in Bangladesh. In every step they are being deprived of human right. It has become increasingly important to involve the group, who are the victims of discrimination in the development of the country ensuring their education, rehabilitation, and social security. The government has taken inevitable initiative to materialize "Program for improving the living standard of the Hijra community". In the 2012-2013 fiscal years, the rehabilitation program was primarily launched in 7 districts of the country which include Dhaka, Chittagong, Bogra, Dinajpur, Patuakhali, Sylhet and Khulna. In 2013-2014, 14 more districts are included under the development program. According to the current fiscal year around 4,07,31,600 (Four crore, Seven Lakh, Thirty One Thousand Six Hundred) taka is allotted for this under-privileged group.

Aims and Objectives:

Scholarship for the Hijra children

Training the 18 above people to improve their skill and efficiency for a better living

Developing their financial condition and ensuring social security

Providing old-age allowance for the 50 and above

In the 2012-2013 fiscal years, around 72,17,000 (seventy two lakh seventeen thousand) taka allocated for the program and the rehabilitation program was primarily launched in 7 districts of the country which include Dhaka, Chittagong, Bogra, Dinajpur, Patuakhali, Sylhet and Khulna. Through this development program 135 Hijra student received stipend and 350 Hijras who are 18 above got training to improve their skills. Total beneficiaries were 485 person.

In the 2013-14 fiscal year around 4,07,31,600 (Four crore seven lakh thirty one thousand) taka allocated for the program. In 2013-2014 more 14 districts were included under the development program. Areas include Dhaka, Chittagong, Bogra, Dinajpur, Patuakhali, Sylhet, Khulna, Rajbari, Netrokona, Gazipur, Chadpur, Lakhhipur, Brahmanbaria, Comilla, Jhinaidah, Kushtia, Pirojpur, Jaipurhat, Serajganj, Naogaon and Faridpur. Through these development programs 1871 number of Hijra's received the old age allowance, 762 students received stipend and were benefited. And about 950 *Hijras* who are above 18 will be skilled and trained. After training 10 (Ten) Hijras per district got taka 10,000/- (Ten thousand) per head as rehabilitation grant. Total number of beneficiaries is 2903.

In the 2014-15 fiscal year around 4,58,72,000 (Four crore fifty eight lakh seventy two thousand) taka allocated for the program. 1300 people will receive the old age allowance, 789 student will receive education scholarship along with 900 Hijra will get training to improve their skills. After training 20 (twenty) Hijras per district will get taka 10,0000/- (ten thousand) per head as rehabilitation grant and beneficiaries will be 360 people. Total number of beneficiaries will be 3349 Hijras.

On 11th November 2013, Bangladesh officially recognized hijras, or transgender as a separate gender or the third sex. The measure was aimed at ending their discrimination in all spheres including education, health and housing. The 'policy decision' was approved at Cabinet meeting presided over by Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. These individuals suffered from rights denial in their families and society, including civil rights, forcing them to live together in impervious communities. The Ministry of Social Welfare had initiated steps for their social assimilation and has long been demanding their official recognition as a third gender.

Source: Bangladesh Ministry of Social welfare web page portal-2020

To justify hijra either based on impotence or to confirm they are legitimized through medicalization can be summed up as a quintessence of the colonial legacy, which is more visible when we go back to CTA 1871 act defined eunuchs. Furthermore, the colonial legacy is more vividly appear when section 377 is still in action to control hijra sexual practices even after getting recognition. Ironically, both in British Raj and contemporary Bangladesh constituted them as a legal category that ignores the necessity, reality, and multidimensionality, which subjugated them from their fundamental human rights other than categorizing them legally either as 'criminal' or a 'separate lingo.'

9.5.3 What Went Wrong

This obscure recognition complexity is not limited to the declaration itself; it also shapes and reshapes hijra identity that causes dehumanization of hijra in various ways. During the fieldwork, I have asked the government and NGO officials how they perceive hijra. What I got in response was a partial understanding of what they meant by hijra. The government officials, including the social welfare ministry, responded in the same way. One of the government officials clearly stated:

> Honestly speaking, we did not know the complexity lies in defining hijra before the declaration. We were not aware of the multiple aspects of hijra sex. We decided to recognize

> them because we got an order from the Prime minister's office to take a prompt initiative to rehabilitee the hijra populations. Since our neighboring countries, e.g., Nepal and Pakistan, had recognized hijra, it would be trendy and the best step forward to give them recognition at that very time.

The above statement reflects that the recognition is neither a result of any hijra movement or demand nor an outcome of policy research. It is even difficult to accept that this recognition policy is followed by the other neighboring countries like Nepal and Pakistan. When I interviewed the government officials, I found that the government ignored the reality of hijra in a different context, which creates a gap among the hijra in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. For example, hijra in Pakistan achieved their recognition as a consequence of continuous protests and movements (Pamment, 2019). Whereas, in Bangladesh, there is not a single movement done by the hijra community on demanding their rights, which shows a significant difference between Pakistani and Bangladeshi hijra. While hijra in Pakistan is aware of their rights but hijra in Bangladesh neither protested collectively for their rights nor took any initiative to access it yet.

A small number of hijra recently started to raise their voices against their deprivations, which I have discussed in chapter six. As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, a few hijra are contacting National Human Rights Commission, Bangladesh, through a local NGO name Bandhu Social Welfare Society (BSWS) due to losing their jobs or for depriving them of their inheritance property. Yet, they did not collectively take action for their rights to establish their identity, education, health, work, and living. Whereas the continuous social exclusion (Aziz & Azhar 2019; Khan et al., 2009) and the dehumanization process they have been through turns Bangladeshi hijra into a melancholic group, which does not even imagine getting equal rights and opportunity like men and women in Bangladesh.

9.5.4 How do NGO Workers Perceive Hijra

Bangladeshi NGOs are more interested in incorporating hijra in health research and treating them as a 'risk factor' than creating a platform to achieve their rights. Those NGOs conducted several research projects on HIV, STD, and Sexual health of hijra to do so. Aziz and Azhar (2019) argued that hijra had been exploited by NGOs sometimes. Many NGOs have taken to arrange rallies for hijra to participate in important events like world HIV day, transgender week, hijra recognition day, etc., but they have been ignored for the rest of the year. Some of my hijra participants informed me that NGOs' actions are limited to their talks than to work for their well-being and empowerment. However, it is pointed out in chapter two that the Bangladeshi NGOs are interested in sexual health of, but the continuous violation of sexual and health rights was overlooked in the HIV intervention program (Hossain 2017; Khan et al., 2009). Some NGOs conducted several pieces of research among the hijra in Dhaka city, but unfortunately, apart from the sexual health, those NGOs neither raised their voice

to ensure the medical services of hijra nor could they provide any other health facilities yet (Khan, 2007; Khan et al., 2009).

However, there are multiple reasons for prioritizing HIV and ignoring the other issues related to their basic human rights. One of the vital reasons for such attitudes of NGOs pointed out by one of my participants, who is a member of the Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission, is detailed here:

> Whether it is an HIV NGO projects itself or those working on those projects, they don't know how to deal with it, but they certainly know one thing that they have a problem with them, and usually, they do not consider those people as human beings with fundamental human rights. They consider all those hijra and MSM as 'risk factors' that could spread HIV into society, and therefore, they also consider hijra as a threat. NGO's do not have any apprehension about their rights until the Right based development period arise. However, even in Right-based development, HIV and STD were still their prime consideration under the name of sexual health rights.

Notwithstanding, it is essential to understand that not all hijra are necessarily involved in sex work. And it would be misleading to think all of them are in Bangladesh are at health risk because of their non-heteronormative sexual practices and sexual orientation. To relate hijra with the 'health risk' factor is not a unique practice in contemporary Bangladesh. Instead, it also has a British colonial legacy because it was associated with British Contagious Diseases Acts (CDA) 1864, which was introduced in British India in 1868. The goal of CDAs was to prevent venereal diseases, and it required legal registration who were engaged in prostitution (Bettes, 2017). However, in Britain, CDA's prime target was those involved in prostitution, but it was not limited to women in colonial India. These CDAs were more like a tool than an act for the Company officials to govern colonial sexuality and prevent the company officials from sexually transmitted and contagious diseases. And, in recent days, all those NGOs who have been working on HIV have been carrying the hegemonic colonial perception of hijra. Therefore, they have still been targeted as 'risk factors' in contemporary Bangladesh following the colonial legacy.

9.6 Summary

To sum up, it can be argued that the Bangladeshi government's acknowledgment of hijra has failed to ensure their rights. Their incomplete, partial, and indecisive understanding dehumanized them in many ways. Furthermore, though they got recognized by the government, they have been deprived of their basic civil rights, and this deprivation of fundamental rights is not a recent phenomenon, rather it started during the British Raj through criminalizing hijra by introducing criminal penal code section

377, which criminalizes all forms of a sexual act apart from the heteronormative sexual relationship, and later in 1871, British Raj introduced Criminal Tribe Act 1871 to criminalize hijra (Eunuchs) as a community. Nevertheless, section 377 of the Penal Code, 1861 still in place in Bangladesh. All in all, the Bangladeshi government's understanding of hijra is inadequate, limited, and disordered, and influenced by the British colonial legacy. However, I believe the government's main intention is to reduce the historical dehumanization process and enhance the quality of their lives, well-being, and empowerment. The colonial perception of hijra prejudiced the government to understand and legitimate them in many ways.

Additionally, their inadequate and indecisive understanding of hijra could not allow them to execute their well-being guidelines. Consequently, it is necessary to constitute a distinct hijra protection rights act to ensure their rights to change their lives positively. The Bangladeshi government further requires having a comprehensive arrangement to improve their livelihood depending on the identity and reality that the hijra live in. Therefore, without a clear understanding of hijra and providing a separate act for their rights, this recognition alone could not positively change hijra quality of life.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

10.1 Establishment

This research adopted postmodern epistemology to explore the complexity of hijra gender and sexuality by conducting a one-year-long ethnography in Dhaka, Bangladesh. By applying Foucault's concept of sexuality as a discourse and Butler's ideas of gender performativity, it aimed to present an ethnography to critically analyze the diversified sexual practices and gender overt play of hijra through performativity. This study also explores the multiplicity related to the hierarchical classification of gender, sexuality, and the dehumanization process of hijra, respectively. This research further explored the complexity of understanding hijra within a certain category and discussed why they should be understood more inclusively through an intersectional lens.

10.2 Research Findings

This study highlights that hijra are not homogeneous; rather, their gender and sexual practices are fluid and diverse. Since they are relatively diverse in their sexual practices and repetitively shifting from one gender to another, their gender is simultaneously blended and influenced by a certain form of normative norms, hegemonic masculinity, and sometimes patriarchal discourses. This research found it problematic to brand them into a single idea or within a specific frame to understand hijra because it has no fixed or sanctioned meaning. On these grounds, it could be said that the everyday lived experience of a hijra and their gender constitution process, sexual practices cannot be perceived through any meta/grand narratives, which eventually justify the postmodern epistemological position of this research. This research conveys ethnography as a method to understand hijra holistically. Nevertheless, this ethnography explored three research questions that shed light on the complexity of categorizing hijra and their fluidic nature of sexual practices, doing, undoing their performative gender constitution, and reconstitution. Furthermore, it identified the crisis of the government's inadequate understanding of hijra, which gives rise to the dehumanization process even after recognizing them in a divergent manner. The key findings of this research are given below.

10.2.1 The Complexity of Categorizing Hijra

This study explored if it is conceivable to bind hijra to a specific category to answer research question one—what it means to be hijra from their lived experiences. Hijra are referred to as a cultural group in India-centric scholarships, which appropriately influences Bangladeshi hijra scholarships. However, I would argue that the regional understanding of hijra and their scholarship in Bangladesh

is entirely different from that of India. Hossain (2018) proclaims that hijra are a local cultural group, and the legal recognition of hijra in Bangladesh, identify them as 'sexually disabled' and transforms them into a sexual category to a local cultural group. I would argue the concept of hijra as a 'sexually disabled' discourse of the Bangladesh government is historically, culturally, and politically linked to the British colonial hegemonic legacy.

In line with the research question one, what it means to be hijra from their lived experience, this research found that hijra have no singular and fixed meaning. Furthermore, the term 'hijra' cannot refer to either only sex or cultural category because they are not a part of a genital-based gender identity like male or female. This misleading genital-based categorization of hijra eventually confines them into either intersex or impotent category, which carries a partial representation of them. Scholars in previous studies (e.g., Hossain, 2013), claimed that the desire for a masculine man is the most crucial condition needed to become a hijra. However, I would argue that the desire to become a woman or only having a sexual desire for a man cannot be an essential condition for becoming hijra. However, based on this study's findings, it is apparent that it would be problematic to claim that sexual desire towards a man is the indispensable condition for being a hijra. Rather, individuals' surroundings, circumstances, sexual pleasure, habit, traumatic experience, contextual reality, and community affiliation all together create an impact to declare oneself as a hijra. It further shows that hijra cannot be considered only as a religious or cultural category, nor can they be treated as a working-class category. Moreover, hijra should not be perceived through a single category because there is no socio-cultural or institutional definition of hijra, which can distinctively clarify the concept.

This study added that hijra could not be considered merely a sexual category, or the third gender category is significantly problematic because they continuously break the norm of male-female binary discourse, which disrupts the norm of the ideal sexual reproductive system. However, hijra are not a homogenous discursive identity; they are included in the variance with a varied diversity rather than a certain category melding with numerous acts and roles; thus, I would argue that hijra are inclusive of sex, gender, religion, community, kinship, body embodiment, emasculation, beauty, performativity and so on and therefore they should be better understood through an intersectional lens.

10.2.2 The Fluidic Sexual Acts of Hijra

To explore research question two of how hijra negotiate with others in a heteronormative society, I significantly prioritized the sexual practices of hijra. The research findings indicated that hijra's sex and sexuality are neither normative nor regulative like the heterosexual gender binary; rather, it's fluid. This research examines the Foucauldian perceptions of sexuality as a discourse to explore hijra sexuality. Foucault argues that people perceive sexuality based on normative norms, which are

governed by discursive practices through various institutions. In Bangladesh, sex and sexuality for men and women are predominantly governed by religious discourse and legal law.

On the contrary, the conventional religious discourse of sex cannot distinctly identify hijra sexuality. Furthermore, though the 377 acts exist to prohibit anal sex in the name of 'unnatural sex', however, hijra don't usually follow this legal discourse solely. Likewise, institutions could not yet produce any sexual discourse for hijra through the government perceive them as 'sexually disabled', and the general public perceives them as impotent or asexual, but in reality, hijra sexual practices are more fluid than those discourses.

In light of the field data, I found the vast majority of the hijra in Bangladesh are neither 'sexually disabled', asexual, nor impotent. Rather, they are involved in diversified sexual relationships. They are often associated with men, sometimes with women, occasionally with both men and women, and in few cases with other hijra. Despite having sexual fluidity and diversity, their understanding of sex and sexuality is recessively controlled by the dominant discourse of heterosexuality.

10.2.3 Hijra Body Modifications: More than just Desiring to be Seen as Women

Hijra, most of the time, go through body modification to confirm their authenticity, expand their authoritative power in the community, uphold traditional hijra livelihood, and everyday social interaction with others. The embodied body ensures their identity and confirms their power and status among the hijra community. Specifically, hijra body performances play a central role in social interaction to negotiate with other social actors. In the Butlerian understanding of body and gender, performance is central to identity, where biological sex determination is an extraneous mark of individuals' bodies. However, body modification and body embodiment processes do not confirm the hijra identity. Analyzing ethnographic data, I have argued that the performative acts are as significant as an individual's sexual identity to constitute someone as a hijra. From my fieldwork, I have learned that emasculation has become a 'ritual of passage' in the hijra community in recent days that has encouraged them to personify their bodies. It is also noteworthy that emasculation and body modification is crucial for their gender performativity, discussed in chapter eight. The body embodiment has turned into a tool by which hijra also negotiate with social and mental pressure. Furthermore, the performative act and body embodiment of hijra are significantly connected with the circumstance and contextual reality. The body is more like capital for hijra, which they modify and groom to conduct the performative act to establish their hijra identity.

It is evident in some cases, their community members are scolding a hijra with a penis, and they are unable to do otherwise than to go through sexual reassignment surgery as an escape from this

humiliation. However, contextual reality and an individual's desire to become a woman also encourage them to undergo body modification, but that is not the only reason for them to go through this process. Most of the hijra in Bangladesh go through a transformation due to their circumstances, aspirations, situational demands, and inter-community politics. However, scholars related this body modification to their personal desire, or to get more clients, but the politics of this body embodiment is absent in their discussion, which is a gap in Bangladeshi hijra literature. To contribute to this literary gap, I thoroughly discuss the body modification process of hijra, showing that it is not only a part of their desire to become women or have more clients but also a part of their complex gender constitution process. Nonetheless, feminizing body modification among the hijra is common in Bangladesh, and therefore, they modify their bodies in various forms. In my fieldwork, I have observed different body modification technologies, including silicone boobs, sexual reassignment surgery, emasculations, and hormone therapies is used. Even after going through this process, their body not necessarily enables them to transform into feminine structures.

One of the prime reasons for emasculation and body modification is to confirm the positionality as a hijra within their cultural and social setting. During my fieldwork, I met several hijra who removed their penis. I have been informed that going through emasculation and being a *chibry* is a strategic tool to gain acceptability, and it also provides them a communal and social security to continue their hijra profession. Similarly, hijra are overly cautious about their' bodily beauty', not just to get more clients; instead, it enhances their importance and an approach to finding a *parikh* as a part of their cultural capital and social security discussed in chapter six. Moreover, it is also a strategy to get more attention from the public, collect *cholla,* and get a high amount in *badhai*. Additionally, implant *nilki* and *chipty* are significantly related to authenticating themselves in the heteronormative society, which I detailed in chapter eight. Therefore, it could be argued that there are many other reasons for body modification than to become a woman or to get more clients.

10.2.4 Gender Is Fluid, Gender Is Blended, and Gender Is Fun among the Hijra

In addition to answering research questions one and two, this research finds hijra as part of a complex gender constitutional process that may be the best illustration of gender fluidity in Bangladesh. According to hijra, they could not be hijra without their performative acts. In light of my field data, it has been further established that they have identified themselves as hijra on the basis of contextual realities and circumstances; yet again, their performances have played different gender roles that are not fixed or static. In Bangladesh, hijra do not always follow gender norms, and they can play different gender roles in different contexts. Their living experiences or their perceptions of the role of hijra gender are not homogeneous; however, their gender fluidity, the practice of non-heteronormative gender relations, and their performative acts constitute them as hijra. They constantly switching from one gender to another gender based on the contextual demand, given condition, and situation.

Moreover, the gender of the hijra is not bound by the necessary essentialism of any particular gender role. Additionally, body personification and body modification play an important role in incorporating performance acts of hijra. Therefore, this study claims hijra is inclusive of multiplicity and a complex identity where gender is fluid, blended, and fun, which breaks the normative gender stereotypes.

10.2.5 Hijra As a Complex Performative Gender Identity

As I mentioned earlier, responding to research questions one and two, this research found that the constitution of hijra gender is distinctly different from heteronormative men and woman. The gender performativity of hijra is considerably influential in constituting their gender identity by doing and undoing gender. Butler (1990) argues that gender is not a fact, neither an 'essence' nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires. Because various acts of gender create the idea of it, and there would be no gender without those acts. Based on performativity theory, gender is always a doing word, a verb rather than a noun that acts. It is neither considered as an absolute identity nor constitutes any fixed locus of agency. According to her, gender cannot be accomplished by following a settled derive. Instead, 'gender' can be perceived as an identity that is unconvincingly taking shape over time. She also argues there is no gender without expressions, and those expressions are a person's repetitive acts, which she named performativity. Performativity is a set of norms that are performed rather than a single act, and this could be the key to discussing the theoretical dilemma of the hijra identity. Based on field data, this research claims that gender performativity is significant to perceive hijra in Bangladesh. One cannot be a hijra by doing only her body modification surgery or announcing herself as a hijra. Being a hijra means customizing the body through dressing, grooming, and stylizing the body to ensure that all her performative acts are significantly different from man and woman. A hijra does not have any fixed and static gender roles like women and men. A hijra sometimes acts like women, sometimes acts like men, and most of the time, they perform such repetitive acts that identify them as hijra.

A hijra usually performs different gender expressions to identify themselves in different gender roles based on circumstances, situations, and contextual demands. They follow few regulatory gender norms to perform as a hijra, a woman, and sometimes a man. However, hijra do not follow the norm of how they should be, but they continue to customize themselves and perform some repetitive acts to confirm their gender identity. Consequently, no one can be a hijra just by declaring herself as one; rather, they establish themselves through their performativity. Hijra constitute their gender by styling the body, clothing, grooming, and behavior. Furthermore, they politically choose their attire and adornment for a specific purpose, and by their dressing and body grooming, they constitute their identity as a hijra, which is detailed in chapter eight.

10.2.6 The Dehumanization of Hijra and Colonial Legacy

To explore research question three on how government and NGO workers perceive hijra, I disclose how hijra are systematically dehumanized historically, which continue in contemporary Bangladesh due to the hegemonic colonial legacy. It also discussed how hijra is being deprived of their basic rights even after being recognized as a third gender in 2013. In this research, I analyzed secondary data on how hijra were treated in Pre-British colonial India and how they become marginalized and stigmatized from mainstream society by the British colonial law, which is discussed in chapter one and nine. In Ancient India, hijra have been laid out as the distinctive sexual category, aside from males and females in Vedic literature, which comprises them as natural, impotent, or asexual (Dutta, 2012). As it was discussed earlier, *Khojas* (eunuchs) arrived in India with their lords during the Mughal empire (Chatterjee, 1999). They were portrayed as 'artificial' castrated eunuchs, born impotent, forming their groups with specific religious practices (Nanda, 1999), and they merged with hijra for certain similarities and dissimilarities.

Notwithstanding, one of the noticeable similarities between *Khojas* and hijra was impotence and asexuality. Nevertheless, *Khojas* were traced with Mughal elitism, and hijra has been socially and culturally accepted in precolonial India, which turned into a major worry for the British colonial authorities (Hinchy, 2019). Besides, by executing the 1871 act, hijra were identified as a 'criminal,' and their sexual demonstration also changed into 'criminal offense' during British India. Those acts of legal discourses of hijra as sodomy and identified them as a medical variety (Ng, 2018), which proceeded dehumanizing measure in contemporary Bangladesh that I have discussed at the beginning of the thesis and analyzed in chapter nine. The British colonial legacy of hijra recognition is fundamental to explore the politics and legislative issues of the legal recognition of hijra and the dehumanization process in contemporary Bangladesh.

This deprivation and the dehumanization of hijra is not a recent phenomenon, but it started during the British Raj through criminalizing and controlling their sexuality by implementing the Criminal Penal Code 377. Although hijra got recognized by the government, the Penal Code is still in place in Bangladesh that indicates the recognition is not enough to ensure their rights. This study also explores the government's inadequate, limited, jumbled understanding of hijra is broadly influenced by the British colonial legacy. Even though the Bangladesh government aimed to reduce the historical dehumanization process by improving their quality of life, welfare, and empowerment, yet the colonial prejudice against hijra still affects the perception of hijra in various ways, which is discussed in chapter nine. Additionally, the government's inadequate understanding of hijra and the flawed identification process did not improve their lives at all. Therefore, a separate protection rights law needs to be enacted to ensure their rights to bring about positive changes in their lives. Furthermore,

The Bangladeshi government needs to understand hijra holistically before taking any further initiatives or policies. Not understanding the hijra appropriately and providing separate laws for their rights, this recognition will not bring positivity to their livelihood.

10.3 A Couple of Concerns

Throughout the research process, I came across many ideas and literature that were not directly related to this research focus but being a researcher, I have realized there are a couple of issues that need to be addressed.

10.3.1 The Term Transgender Cannot be Synonymous with Hijra

Many Bangladeshi scholars started using the terms transgender and hijra interchangeably in connection to colonial and post-colonial domination. Scholars identify hijra as transgender, particularly transwomen in Bangladesh (Hussain, 2019; Islam, 2019; Khan et al., 2009; Nasrin, 2020; Sema & Islam, 2020). Ironically, even though the non-Bangladeshi scholars pointedly mentioned the exportation politics of the term trans or transgender but Bangladeshi scholars hardly pay attention to that. As Stryker stated, "the term transgender without any doubt is a category of the first world which presently being exported to the third world for consumption" (Stryker, 2006, p.14). According to Chatterjee (2018), the term transgender eliminated the diversified gender subculture of hijra jogtas, jogappas, aravanis and thirunangis, shiv-shakthis, kotis, and many others non-conformity in the Indian context. Moreover, this universal classification of transgender creates a "scalar hierarchy between transnational/universal/ cosmopolitan and local/ particular/vernacular discourses or categories" (Dutta & Roy, 2014, p. 328). Therefore, I would argue, the use of transgender as synonymous with hijra is problematic.

Hijra is not a homogenous group; it is diversified and versatile in Bangladesh, which is visibly evident that *vabraj, janana, chibry*, oftentimes *kotis* are also an expression of being a hijra. Based on my research findings and my experience by exploring them, I would propose hijra as an umbrella term like the western expression ' transgender'. However, The Western idea of 'transgender' or 'trans' is not replaceable with the expression of Hijra in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, hijra are often categorized as transwomen, yet according to my research participants, hijra are not just transwomen, but many verities lie to become a hijra. Therefore, although labeling hijra as transgender might help connect them with the western audience, that might create a possibility of misrepresenting and misinterpreting to perceive the variety of hijra in Bangladesh. Besides that, the following three reasons can be considered.

Firstly - Hijra is a performative gender identity where a hierarchical community culture is significantly influential. A certain form of cultural practices, e.g., rituals, kinship, livelihood, hierarchy, reciprocity, community judicial system, body modification, and certain performative acts (clapping, dressing, *Ulti* language, etc.), are embedded in hijra identity, which is pointedly different from the western perception of transgender. On top of that, transgender men and women follow normative gender roles for being men or women whereas, a hijra is a form of gender blending rather than a representation of a particular gender. Hijra's gender role is fluid, switch from one gender to another gender, and, most significantly performative, and politically constitute themselves to ensure their agency, which is detailed in chapter eight. In contrast to the idea of western transwomen, a hijra is a complex gender identity that can't be replaceable with the name transgender.

Secondly - Hijra is at present the only recognized non-binary gender in Bangladesh. A person can be identified as hijra, either with genital ambiguity or a biological born male who feels like a woman and declares herself as a hijra and confirms it through her gender expressions. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the community has a significant influence to constitute hijra identity; therefore, theoretically, hijra is also significantly different from the western idea of transgender.

Thirdly - Hijra have historically been acknowledged as a distinct form of a gender other than men and women in precolonial India that shaped and reshaped during the British colonial period. Based on my previous discussion, I would like to argue that it was a colonial project to constitute hijra as 'criminals' and eliminate the non-heteronormative gender identity in British India. Still, this colonial legacy influences the hijra dehumanization process in contemporary Bangladesh. It cannot be denied that it was a historical crime that we should be taken into consideration because those colonial projects have a significant influence on perceiving hijra in contemporary Bangladesh. Even if the British colonial hegemonic understanding of hijra recessively affected the hijra dehumanization process during the post-colonial era. Therefore, we should be concerned about political domination and explore how colonialization eliminates our local culture and practice. To import the western idea of transgender is also a new form of cultural superiority to politically eradicate our local gender and sexual diversity even in the post-colonial era. The above claim about the colonial legacy of the dehumanizing process of hijra in current Bangladesh will be mentioned further in the next session.

10.3.2 Transfeminism in Hijra Advocacy

There is an idea known as transfeminism that I previously discussed in Chapter Three. Transfeminism seeks to establish an intersectional approach to open in recognition of sexist and transphobic oppression and is concerned with how all women, including trans, internalize the patriarchal discourse of femininity. The notion of transfeminism is to extend feminism as a whole, not about taking over the existing feminist institutions (Koyama, 2003). As I mentioned earlier, trans women are also

included in feminist discourse, and there was ongoing tension between trans scholars and trans-exclusionary radical feminists in the west. However, transfeminism successfully works for trans liberation outside the US. Now, one might ask if hijra is not necessarily transgender and why I feel transfeminism might help hijra advocacy. The reasons are given below-

Firstly, Transfeminism prioritizes intersectionality, which is significantly vital for Bangladeshi hijra that I mentioned earlier. Transfeminism uses an intersectional approach to explain how transgender people's marginalized identities experience specific forms of minority stress (Tan et al., 2019). Intersectionality address that an individual may have multiple identities that make them stand out as a distinctive individual and puts into a form of collective experiences (Parent e, DeBlaere & Moradi, 2013). However, transfeminism also uses intersectionality to incorporate beyond the binary thinking into feminism. However, transfeminism uses intersectionality to incorporate beyond the binary thinking into feminism. Hijra are the ones who openly practice beyond the heteronormative gender binary in Bangladesh; however, the concept of transfeminism can be intermingled and enrich each other outside of binary thinking.

Secondly, Transfeminism is not solely about transwomen; rather, it is an ally with feminism to stand against gender suppressions. In Bangladesh, both women and hijra are pointedly suffering from gender oppression. In Bangladeshi society, both women and hijra are victims of hegemonic patriarchal ideology, yet in a dissimilar way. Nonetheless, hijra are lag far behind in terms of rights than women in Bangladesh. They are constantly struggling for their fundamental rights; nevertheless, hijra performative gender expressions are a slap of dominant toxic masculinity that feminists in Bangladesh have started to address. When hijra perform feminine gender expressions, it questions the dominant hegemonic masculinity and normative masculine gender roles and attitudes. All of this can contribute to Bangladeshi feminism taking a further step to raise awareness against gender-based discrimination and violence. Historically, there is no conflict found between hijra and feminists in Bangladesh yet. Instead, feminists are showing their interest in them recently because of gender suppression. Furthermore, feminist in Bangladesh has conducted many significant movements for their rights, whereas hijra did not organize any structural campaigns for their own rights and wellbeing. Therefore, I think it would be an opportunity for hijra to have an alliance with Bangladeshi feminists, and the idea of transfeminism might help hijra advocacy accordingly.

10.4 Research Limitations

Research limitations can be identified as a systematic bias beyond the researcher's control (Price & Murnan, 2004). It is crucial to address the research limitations for the research credibility correspondingly. "The need to spell out the limitations of social research arises from the power of

research to convince (Shipman, 2014, p. vii)". In other words, research limitations show the scope of further research. This study additionally confronted a few constraints; some may go out of my control, yet a few have been acknowledged during the research process. Some research limitations are given beneath.

10.4.1 Limitations of the Research Field

The study was conducted in three separate zones around the city of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. Because of its ethnographic nature, I had to visit the field in a series on a regular basis; I chose three separate regions that were comfortable to travel with. Therefore, I could spontaneously find enough information for hijra living in urban areas but could not collect enough information from rural transgender people. While working in the field, I met many hijra who came from villages or cities, and when I interviewed them, I found that the life experience of rural hijra is different from urban hijra. Also, my participants informed me that hijra community culture, classification, customs, lifestyle, hierarchical practices, and social acceptance outside of cities differ from urban culture, which I could not explore in person due to the research field's choice.

10.4.2 Limitations of the Participant Selections

I selected research participants from three different groups, including hijra, NGO professionals, and government officials. In doing this research, I experienced three types of limitations in selecting research participants.

Firstly, due to producing an ethnography. I had to work with a limited number of participants. Toward the start of my fieldwork, most of the hijra were hesitant to share their stories with me. However, gradually they become comfortable with me and spontaneously participated in my research that encourages other hijra (who were not the research participators) to share their stories later. Nevertheless, due to the limitations of the number of participants, the nature of the ethics, and the ethnographic nature of this study, I could not present them all as my participants or include their stories. However, working with a limited number of participants helped me understand the multidimensional complexity of hijra gender more deeply by adding a multitude of narratives of their life stories.

Secondly, during the fieldwork, I encountered many hijra family members, such as their biological parents and siblings, *banda parikhs* (long-term lovers), husbands, wives, and neighbors. Throughout the data analysis, I found them significantly important as participants but could not place their views due to the limitations of the number of participants and to maintain the primary focus of the study.

Thirdly, since governments and NGOs are important social actors in a variety of ways related to hijra, I could observe them through Focus Group interviews whether or how much their initiatives have improved hijra lives. However, this study has not been able to explore common people's perceptions about them, which is also vital to understand in analyzing popular discourses of hijra and their lived realities.

10.5 Closing Statement

From my standpoint, being a hijra is not just explicitly related to one's desire; rather, it provides an understanding of gender that transcends heteronormativity and gender binary which ultimately omits to follow normative gender and sexual discourses. Hijra in Bangladesh also question the essentialism of gender binary, normative roles, regulative sexual norms, and so on. I contend hijra is a complex identity where gender is an overt play, fluid, blended, and performative, not bound by regulative gender norms and sexuality. Notwithstanding, certain forms of cultural practices are embedded in them, yet not an absolute truth for all the hijra in Bangladesh. Furthermore, the sexuality of hijra is much different from that of public discourse, where they are considered 'sexually disabled' or asexual, but in reality, hijra are not confined to those popular discourses yet are engaged in diversified sexual practices where their sexual acts are fluid, relevant, contextual and multidimensional. Indeed, even to choose a sexual partner, acts, activities, and orientation hijra do not necessarily follow the same normative rules as the heteronormative or cisnormative individuals follow. Relatively, their sexuality involves intimate relationships that transcend binary or simply non-binary roles. Consequently, I argue that the sexuality of hijra has a fluidic nature, where their individual life experiences, necessity, sexual need, choice, livelihood, desire, trauma, social reality, and context lead a hijra what type of sexual acts she would perform, whom she will have sex with, and what might be her sexual orientation. Hence, I would prefer not to outline them inside a specific structure.

However, a form of ideological, cultural practice has been embedded among the hijra where they live, how they live, which is primarily driven by their local life of everyday interaction with others. Nonetheless, it ought to be referenced that all hijra don't uphold hijrahood as their profession or live within the hijra community. Accordingly, either hijra culture or hijrahood as a profession couldn't be a definable factor for one to be a hijra; rather, different variables work to articulate oneself as a hijra. Therefore, I claim that the identity of hijra can be understood through an intersectional lens to perceive them comprehensively and encourage a gender-neutral society where we ought to prioritize individual decisions of expressing gender over biological and cultural practices of gender determination.

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Appendix-I

রেজিস্টার্ড নং ডি এ-১

বাংলাদেশ গেজেট

অতিরিক্ত সংখ্যা
কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক প্রকাশিত

রবিবার, জানুয়ারি ২৬, ২০১৪

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
সমাজকল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়
কর্মসূচি-১ শাখা

প্রজ্ঞাপন

তারিখ, ০৯ মাঘ ১৪২০/২২ জানুয়ারি ২০১৪

নং সকম/কর্ম-১শা/হিজড়া-১৫/২০১৩-৪০—সরকার বাংলাদেশের হিজড়া জনগোষ্ঠীকে হিজড়া লিঙ্গ (hijra) হিসাবে চিহ্নিত করিয়া স্বীকৃতি প্রদান করিল।

রাষ্ট্রপতির আদেশক্রমে

মোঃ মুখলেছুর রহমান খান
সহকারী সচিব।

মোঃ নজরুল ইসলাম (উপসচিব), উপপরিচালক, বাংলাদেশ সরকারি মুদ্রণালয়, তেজগাঁও, ঢাকা কর্তৃক মুদ্রিত।
আবদুর রশিদ (উপসচিব), উপপরিচালক, বাংলাদেশ ফরম ও প্রকাশনা অফিস,
তেজগাঁও, ঢাকা কর্তৃক প্রকাশিত। web site : www.bgpress.gov.bd
(৯২৯)
মূল্য ঃ টাকা ৪·০০

Translation of Appendix-I

Registered No D A-1

Bangladesh **Gazette**

Additional Count

Published by the authorities

Sunday, January 26, 2014

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Social Welfare
Programme-1 Section

Communique

Date, 09 Magh 1420/22 January 2014

No sokom/work-1/hijra-15/2013-40____The government recognized the hijra community of Bangladesh denoted as hijra *lingo*.

By order of the President
Md. Mokhlechur Rahman Khan
Assistant Secretary

Printed by Md. Nazrul Islam (Deputy Secretary), Deputy Director, Bangladesh Government Press, Tejgaon, Dhaka.

Published by Abdur Rashid (Deputy Secretary), Deputy Director, Bangladesh Forms And Publications Office, Tejgaon, Dhaka. web site : www.bgpress.gov.bd

(929)

Price: Taka 4.00

Appendix-II Ethics Materials

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

5 July 2018

Sharyn Graham Davies
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Sharyn

Ethics Application: **17/28 Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A critical ethnographic study**

On 15 March 2017 you were advised that your ethics application was approved.

I would like to remind you, that it was a condition of this approval that you submit to AUTEC the following:

- A brief annual progress report using the EA2 Research Progress Report / Amendment Form, available at http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics/forms, or
- A brief Completion Report about the project using the EA3 from, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics/forms. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 15 March 2020 or when the project is completed;

It is also a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified if the research did not proceed or any adverse events occurring during the research. If there has been any alteration to the research, (including changes to any documents provided to participants) then AUTEC approval must be sought using the EA2 form.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

Yours sincerely

Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary

Appendix II (A): An advertisement for the invitation of Hijra

Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study

- **Are you a gender non-confirming individual who lives in Bangladesh?**
- **Are you interested in sharing your journey of being a hijra?**
- **Are you willing to talk to a researcher about your everyday life, struggles, discriminations, desire and dreams as a part of Ph.D. Research?**

If so, we are looking for you to participate in a confidential Narrative inquiry and in-depth interview for a Ph.D project Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study

If you are interested in being a participant or would like more information, please contact:

Rezwana Karim Snigdha

Phone number: +88-01718528064 (Bangladesh)/ +64 -0220939965 (New Zealand)

Face book contact details: Snigdha Rezwana @ facebook.com.

Email: Sksnigdha@gmail.com / rezwana@juniv.edu

Primary Supervisor

Sharyn Graham Davies

Phone: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8467

Email:sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on…….. AUTEC Reference number ……..

Appendix II (B): Email invitation for Government Official

Hello,

I am Rezwana Karim Snigdha, assistant professor, Department of Anthropology, Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. I am currently perusing my Ph.D.at the Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. My research title is **"Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study."**I am writing to invite you for an in-depth interview to share the government initiatives, policies and plans forhijra welfare.

Participating in this research is voluntary, and you will not get any harm or embarrassment. You can end the focus group discussion anytime without giving any reasons.

The interview will take two to three hours and all the information will be translated into English by me. As very few government officials are working on hijra projects it might easy to identifying you as a participant, but all your contact information and answers will be kept confidential; this means that I will not share them with anyone Your contribution is valuable and highly appreciated. Thank for your kind attention considering this invitation.

If you are interested in being a participant or would like more information, please contact:

Rezwana Karim Snigdha

Phone number: +88-01718528064 (Bangladesh)/ +64 -0220939965 (New Zealand)

Email: Skanigdha@gmail.com / rezwana@juniv.edu

Primary Supervisor

Sharyn Graham Davies

Phone: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8467

Email:sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on…….. AUTEC Reference number ……..

Appendix II (C): Email invitation for NGO workers

Hello,

I am Rezwana Karim Snigdha, assistant professor, Department of Anthropology, Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. I am currently perusing my Ph.D.at the Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. My research title is **"Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study."** I am writing to invite you to a focus group discussion to share your working experience with hijra.

Participating in this research is voluntary, and you will not get any harm or embarrassment. You can end the focus group discussion anytime without giving any reasons.

The focus group will take two to three hours and all the information will be translated into English by me. Each focus group will have 3 to 5 participants and focus group data will be kept confidential among the focus group participants. All your contact details and answers will be kept confidential; this means that I will not share them with anyone. Your contribution is valuable and highly appreciated. Thank for your kind attention considering this invitation.

If you are interested in being a participant or would like more information, please contact:

Rezwana Karim Snigdha

Phone number: +88-01718528064 (Bangladesh)/ +64 -0220939965 (New Zealand)

Email: Skanigdha@gmail.com / rezwana@juniv.edu

Primary Supervisor

Sharyn Graham Davies

Phone: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8467

Email:sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on…….. AUTEC Reference number ……..

Appendix II (D): Participant information Sheet for Hijra

Date Information Sheet Produced:

30th January 2017

Project Title: Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study

Project supervisors: Sharyn Graham Davies (Primary Supervisor)

Pani Farvid (Second Supervisor)

Primary researcher: Rezwana Karim Snigdha (primary researcher)

Hello,

I am Rezwana Karim Snigdha, assistant professor, Department of Anthropology, Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. I am currently perusing my Ph.D. at the AucklandUniversity of Technology, New Zealand. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project on Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study.

Participating in this research is voluntary, and you will not get any harm or embarrassment. You can end the interview anytime without giving any reasons. You can read this participant information sheet, or you can ask the researcher to read it for you. If the researcher reads this sheet for you, the audio record will be usedto ensure that the research reads it correctly. After you read or listen to this participant information sheet, you can decide to participate in the interview or not.

The meeting will be eight to twelve hours in total over a number of sessions. Your contact details and statements will be kept confidential, and all the informations will be translated into English by me. However, there is a possibility your friends or relatives could identify you if they come across the research outcome.

Your contribution is valuable and highly appreciated. Thank for your kind attention considering this invitation.

Thanks,

What is the purpose of this research?

The primary focus of this research is exploring the lives of hijra for a critical analysis of hijra identity.

How was I identified and Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You responded to advertising displayed at XXXXXXXX, or you have heard about this research through word of mouth (At XXXXXX, or from a friend). The study invites hijra who lives in Bangladesh. You have been self-selected as fitting these criteria and have contacted me for more information.

What will happen in this research?

Thisresearch will use Narrative inquiry/ in-depth interviews, where I will come to your home, or a place that suits you – and talk about your experiences of being as a hijra. You are invited to participate in the interview, and you will play an active role as the informationyou share will shape the research outcomes.

What are the discomforts and risks?

As we will be discussing a sensitive and personal topic, you might feel a bit uncomfortable at times during the interview. If this happens, I will ask if you are okay and if you would like to have a break or stop the interview. I will make sure that you do not carry on if you do not feel like talking anymore, and after the interview is over, I will provide you with a list of local support services you can access.

What are the benefits?

There are a variety of advantages of this research. You will have a chance to share your experiences in a supportive and non-judgemental environment. You will also be providing valuable experiences that will advance research and help to know the critical aspect of hijra lives and identity. This research canhelp to understand the stigmatization process and the struggles of hijra. Moreover, the research might contribute in hijra advocacy in the near future.

How will my privacy be protected?

All of your personal information will be anonymised and kept confidential. Any identifiable information you note in the interview will be changed when I transcribe the data. The recording of our conversation will be destroyed once the research has been completed. All the files related to this research will be kept in password-protected digital files or a locked cabinet. Your name will never be associated with your data. However, there is a possibility your friends or relatives could identify you if they come across the research outcome.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no costs of taking part in thisresearch except the time for spending in the interviews.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have one week to consider this invitation – after that, I will contact you to see if you would like to take part. You are under no obligation to do so at any time.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you are happy to take part in the research, you can message or call via Facebook or my private mobile number. My mobile number, email or Facebook details are below, and we can arrange an interview at a time/place that suits you.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

The research finding will be summarized and translated into Bangla language. The participants will get a hard copy of it. If they are interested in the final thesis report of this research, it will be available online on the AUT Scholarly Commons URL http://aut.researchgateaway.ac.nz/ - or I can send it to you.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Concern about this research can be notified to the first supervisor, Sharyn Graham Davies, her email: sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz, and phone +64 9 921 9999 ext 8467. If the participant's concern about the conduct of the research, they should be notified to the Executive Secretary or AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 extensions 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

The primary researcher: Rezwana Karim Snigdha e-mail: sksnigdha@gmail.com. +64-0220939965(New Zealand), or + 88-01718528064 (Bangladesh). Facebook contact details: Snigdha Rezwana @ facebook.com.

Project Supervisors:

Sharyn Graham Davies (First Supervisor), e-mail: sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz, phone:+64 9 921 9999 ext 8467.

Pani Farvid (Second supervisor), e-mail: pani.farvid@aut.ac.nz, Phone: +64 921 9999 extension 7326.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on…….. AUTEC Reference number …….

Appendix II (E): Participant information Sheet for Government Officials

Project Title: Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study

Project supervisors: Sharyn Graham Davies (Primary Supervisor)

PaniFarvid (Second Supervisor)

Primary researcher: Rezwana Karim Snigdha (primary researcher)

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am Rezwana Karim Snigdha, assistant professor, Department of Anthropology, Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. I am currently perusing my Ph.D. at the Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project on Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study.

Participation in this research is voluntary, and you will not get any harm or embarrassment. You can end the interview anytime without giving any reasons. Please read the enclosed participant information sheet. After you read this participant information sheet, you can consent to participate in the interview or not.

The interview will take two to three hours. All your contact details and answers will be kept confidential, and all the data will be translated into English by me. However, there is a possibility you could be identified by your position because currently, the government is running few projects toward the well-being of hijra.

Your contribution is valuable and highly appreciated. Thank for your kind attention considering this invitation.

Kind Regards,

Rezwana Karim Snigdha

What is the purpose of this research?

The primary focus of this research is exploring the lives of hijra for a critical analysis of hijra identity.

How was I identified and Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You responded to the email at XXXXXXXX, or you have heard about this research through word of mouth (At XXXXXX, or from a friend). The study invites Government officials who have worked or currently working for hijra rights and welfare. You have been self-selected as fitting these criteria and have contacted me for more information.

What will happen in this research?

The research will use In-depth interview, where I will come to your office, or a place that suits you – and talk about your experiences to work with hijra and to discuss the government policy and recent government initiatives to ensure hijra rights. You are invited to participate in the In-depth- interview, and you will play an active role as the informationyou share will shape the research outcomes.

What are the discomforts and risks?

As focus group discussions are all about the working experience with hijra and current government projects for hijra welfare, the chances of discomfort are minimal. However, if any sensitive issue rises, I will ask if you are okay and if you would like to have a break or stop the discussion. I will make sure that you do not carry on if you do not feel like talking anymore.

What are the benefits?

There are a variety of advantages of this research. You will have a chance to share your experiences in a supportive and non-judgemental environment. This research canhelp to understand the stigmatization process and the struggles of hijra. Moreover, the research might contribute in hijra advocacyin the near future.

How will my privacy be protected?

All of your personal information will be anonymised and kept confidential. Any identifiable information you note in the interview will be changed when I transcribe the data. The recording of our conversation will be destroyed once the research has been completed. All the files related to this research will be kept in password-protected digital files ora locked cabinet. Your name will never be associated with your data. However,there is a possibility you could be identified by your position because currently, the government is running few projects toward the well-being of hijra.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no costs of taking part in thisresearch except the time for spending in the interviews.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have one week to consider this invitation – after that, I will contact you to see if you would like to take part. You are under no obligation to do so at any time.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you are happy to take part in the research, you can message or call via Facebook or my private mobile number. My mobile number, email or Facebook details are below, and we can arrange an interview at a time/place that suits you.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

The research finding will be summarized and translated into Bangla language. The participants will get a hard copy of it. If they are interested in the final thesis report of this research, it will be available online on the AUT Scholarly Commons URL http://aut.researchgateaway.ac.nz/ - or I can send it to you.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Concern about this research can be notified to the first supervisor, Sharyn Graham Davies, her email: sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz, and phone +64 9 921 9999 ext 8467. If the participant's concern about the conduct of the research, they should be notified to the Executive Secretary or AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 extensions 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

The primary researcher: Rezwana Karim Snigdha e-mail: sksnigdha@gmail.com. +64-0220939965 (New Zealand), or + 88-01718528064 (Bangladesh). Facebook contact details: Snigdha Rezwana @ facebook.com.

Project Supervisors:

Sharyn Graham Davies (First Supervisor), e-mail: sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz, phone:+64 9 921 9999 ext 8467.

Pani Farvid (Second supervisor), e-mail: pani.farvid@aut.ac.nz, Phone: +64 921 9999 extension 7326.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on…….. AUTEC Reference number ……

Appendix II (F): Participant information Sheet for NGO workers

Project Title: Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study

Primary researcher: Rezwana Karim Snigdha (primary researcher)

Project supervisors:

Sharyn Graham Davies (Primary Supervisor)

Pani Farvid (Second Supervisor)

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am Rezwana Karim Snigdha, assistant professor, Department of Anthropology, Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. I am currently perusing my Ph.D. at the Auckland University of Technology,New Zealand. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project on Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study.

Participating in this research is voluntary, and you will not get any harm or embarrassment. You can end the focus group discussion anytime without giving any reasons. You can read this participant information sheet, or you can ask the researcher to read it for you. If the researcher reads this sheet for you, the audio record will be usedto ensure that the researcher reads it correctly. After you read or listen to this participant information sheet, you can consent to participate in the interview or not.

The focus group will take two to three-hour could be mention that each focus group has 3 to 5 participants and focus group data will be kept confidential among the focus group participants. All your contact details and answers will be kept confidential, and all the data will be translated into English by me. Your contact details and statements will be keptconfidential. However, there is a possibility you could be identified by your position as few NGOs are working toward the well-being of hijra.

Your contribution is valuable and highly appreciated. Thank for your kind attention considering this invitation.

Kind Regards

Rezwana Karim Snigdha

What is the purpose of this research?

The primary focus of this research is exploring the lives of hijra for a critical analysis of hijra identity.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You responded to the email at XXXXXXXX, or you have heard about this research through word of mouth (At XXXXXX, or from a friend). The study invites NGO workers who have worked or currently working for hijra rights and welfare. You have been self-selected as fitting these criteria and have contacted me for more information.

What will happen in this research?

The research will use Focus group, where few NGO workers who work with hijra will meet and discuss together. The researcher will invite all the focus group participants tocome to a place that suits you all and talk about your experiences to work with hijra and to discuss what should be the role of NGO and government to ensure hijra rights. You are invited to participate in the focus group, and you will play an active part in this research as the information you share will shape the research outcomes.

What are the discomforts and risks?

As focus group discussions are all about the working experience with hijra, the chances of discomfort are minimal. However, if any sensitive issuesarise, I will ask if you are okay and if you would like to have a break or stop the discussion we can. I will make sure that you do not carry on if you do not feel like talking anymore

What are the benefits?

There are a variety of advantages of this research. You will have a chance to share your experiences in a supportive and non-judgemental environment. You will also be providing valuable experiences that will advance research and help to know the critical aspect of hijra lives and identity. This research

canhelp to understand the stigmatization process and the struggles of hijra. Moreover, the research might contribute in hijra advocacy in the near future.

How will my privacy be protected?

All of your personal information will be anonymised and kept confidential – this means only my supervisors and I will have access to the data. All participants will be told not to share information outside the group. Any identifiable information you note in the interview will be changed when I write the data. The recording we will make of our interview will be destroyed once the research has been completed. All the files related to this research will be kept in password-protected digital files ora locked cabinet. Your name will never be associated with your data. However, there is a possibility you could be identified by your position as few NGOs are working toward the well-being of hijra.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no costs of taking part in thisresearch except the time for spending in the interviews.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have one week to consider this invitation – after that, I will contact you to see if you would like to take part. You are under no obligation to do so at any time.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you are happy to take part in the research, you can message or call via Facebook or my private mobile number. My mobile number, email or Facebook details are below, and we can arrange an interview at a time/place that suits you.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

The research finding will be summarized and be translated into Bangla language. The participants will get a hard copy of it. If they are interested in the final thesis report of this research, it will be available online on the AUT Scholarly Commons URL http://aut.researchgateaway.ac.nz/ - or I can send it to you.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Concern about this research can be notified to the first supervisor, Sharyn Graham Davies, her email: sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz, and phone +64 9 921 9999 ext 8467. If the participant's concern about the conduct of the research, they should be notified to the Executive Secretary or AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 extensions 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

The primary researcher: Rezwana Karim Snigdha e-mail: sksnigdha@gmail.com. +64-0220939965 (New Zealand), or + 88-01718528064 (Bangladesh). Facebook contact details: Snigdha Rezwana @ facebook.com.

Project Supervisors:

Sharyn Graham Davies (First Supervisor), e-mail: sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz, phone:+64 9 921 9999 ext 8467.

Dr.PaniFarvid (Second supervisor), e-mail: pani.farvid@aut.ac.nz, Phone: +64 921 9999 extension 7326.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on…….. AUTEC Reference number ……..

Appendix II (G): Consent Form of hijra for Narrative Inquiry

This form will hold for six years

Research Title: Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study

Research period: 1st of April, 2017 – 1st April, 2018

Supervisors: Sharyn Graham Davies (Primary Supervisor)

Pani Farvid (Second Supervisor)

Researcher: Rezwana Karim Snigdha

- I have read/listen and understood the information provided about this research project in the participation information sheet dated on ----------.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taking during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed from Bangla to English by the researcher.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for the project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- My contact details and statements will be kept confidential. However, there is a possibility my friends or relatives could identify me if they come across the research outcome.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the researcher (please tick one): ☐ yes ☐No

Participant's signature: ……

Participant's name: ……

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

……

……

……

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on…….. AUTEC Reference number ……..

Note: The participants should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix II (H): Consent Form for Government Officials

This form will hold for six years

Research Title: Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study

Research period: 1st of April, 2017 – 1st April, 2018

Supervisors: Sharyn Graham Davies (Primary Supervisor)

PaniFarvid (Second Supervisor)

Researcher: Rezwana Karim Snigdha

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the participation information sheet dated on ----------.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taking during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed from Bangla to English by the researcher.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for the project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- My contact details and statements will be kept confidential. However, there is a possibility I might be identified by my position.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the researcher (please tick one): ☐ yes ☐No

Participant's signature: ……

Participant's name: ……

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

……

……

……

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on…….. AUTEC Reference number ……..

Note: The participants should retain a copy of this form.

This form will hold for six years

Research Title: Exploring the lives of hijra in contemporary Bangladesh: A Critical Ethnographic Study

Research period: 1st of April 2017 – 1st April, 2018

Supervisors: Sharyn Graham Davies (Primary Supervisor)

Pani Farvid (Second Supervisor)

Researcher: Rezwana Karim Snigdha

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mm yy.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that identity of my fellow participants, and our discussions in the focus group are confidential to the group, and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed from Bangla to English by the researcher.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- My contact details and statements will be keptconfidential. However, there is a possibility I might be identified by my position as few NGOs are working toward the well-being of hijra.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was a part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature: ……

Participant's name: ……

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

……

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on…….. AUTEC Reference number ……..

Note: The participants should retain a copy of this form

Appendix -III

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর
মহাখালী ঢাকা।

নং-স্বাঃ অধিঃ/প্রশা-৩/বিবিধ-৩/২০০৮/ ৪৭২ তারিখঃ ২৭/০১/২০১৫ ইং।

বিষয় ঃ হিজড়া জনগোষ্ঠির জীবনমান উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচি বাস্তবায়নের নিমিত্ত প্রকৃত হিজড়া চিহ্নিতকরণের বিষয়ে ব্যবস্থা গ্রহন প্রসংগে।

উপর্যুক্ত বিষয়ে স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়ের স্বাস্থ্য অর্থনীতি ইউনিটের জেন্ডার, এনজিও এন্ড স্টেকহোল্ডার পার্টিসিপেশন ইউনিটের ০৮/০৯/২০১৪ খ্রিঃ তারিখের স্বাপকম/স্বাঃঅর্থঃ/জিএনএসপি/জেন্ডার/সকমবিঃ/৬৪/২০১০/২৬৯ নম্বর স্মারক এবং সমাজ কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়ের ২৪/৬/২০১৪ ইং তারিখের সকম/কর্ম-১শা/হিজড়া-১৫/২০১৩-৩৭৬ নম্বর স্মারক পত্রের প্রেক্ষিতে মাঠ পর্যায়ে হিজড়া জনগোষ্ঠির জীবনমান উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচির আওতায় প্রশিক্ষণ কার্যক্রম, ৫০ বছর বা তদুর্ধ্ব অক্ষম/দূঃস্থ হিজড়াদের ভাতা কার্যক্রম এবং বিভিন্ন স্তরের হিজড়া শিক্ষার্থীদের মাঝে শিক্ষা উপবৃত্তি কার্যক্রম বাস্তবায়নের নিমিত্ত উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার পরিকল্পনা কর্মকর্তা এবং জেলা পর্যায়ের সিভিল সার্জনের মাধ্যমে ডাক্তারী সনাক্তকরণের বিষয়ে প্রকৃত হিজড়া চিহ্নিত করার প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহনের জন্য নির্দেশক্রমে অনুরোধ করা হলো।

২৫/০১/১৫
ডাঃ মোঃ ইহতেশামুল হক চৌধুরী
পরিচালক (প্রশাসন)
স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর, মহাখালী, ঢাকা।

নং-স্বাঃ অধিঃ/প্রশা-৩/বিবিধ-৩/২০০৮/ ৪৭৫ তারিখঃ ২৭/০১/২০১৫ ইং।

প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহনের জন্য প্রেরন করা হলোঃ

১. পরিচালক (স্বাস্থ্য), ----------বিভাগ, ----------(সকল)।

২. সহকারি পরিচালক (এমআইএস), স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর, মহাখালী, ঢাকা। পত্রখানা ই-মেইলের মাধ্যমে সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের নিকট প্রেরন এবং ওয়েব সাইটে প্রকাশের জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

৩. সিভিল সার্জন, ----------(সকল)।

৪. উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার পরিকল্পনা কর্মকর্তা, ----------(সকল)।

সদয় অবগতির জন্য ঃ

১. সচিব, স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়। দৃঃ আঃ উপ-প্রধান, স্বাস্থ্য অর্থনীতি ইউনিট।
২. সচিব, সমাজ কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়। দৃঃআঃ সহকারি সচিব (কর্মসুচি-১ শাখা)।
৩. মহাপরিচালক, স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর, মহাখালী, ঢাকা। দৃঃআঃ সহকারি পরিচালক (সমন্বয়)।

২৬/১/১৫
ডাঃ মোঃ মাসুম আলী
সহকারি পরিচালক (প্রশাসন-১)
স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর, মহাখালী, ঢাকা।

Translation of Appendix-III

The People's Republic of Bangladesh
Department of Health

Mohakhali, Dhaka

No: department of health/administration-3/part-3/2008/475
Date: 27/01/2015

Subject: Regarding the identification of actual hijras in order to implement the living standard development program for the hijra community.

In regards to this subject, based on the memorandum of the Family and Health Administration's economic units gender, NGO and sector holder participation unit dated as 09/08/2014 shapkom/department of health and economy/GNSP/ gender/sokmobi/64/2010/269 sector and from the social service administration 06/24/2014 sokom/work-1/hijra-15/2013-376 sector, we request that necessary steps are taken to identify authentic hijras by conducting a thorough medical check-up with the help of the officials of the Upazilla Health Complex and the doctors of District Hospitals in order to provide field training under the living standard development program for the hijra community, to grant financial assistance to hijras 50 years old or above who are weak and unable to work and to provide educational scholarships to different levels of school going hijras.

Dr. Mohammed Ihteshamul Haque Chowdhury
Director (Administration)
Department of Health
Mohakhali, Dhaka

Number-department of health/administration-3/part-3/2008/875 Date: 01/27/2015

They are sent to take important steps:

1. Director (health),.....sector,.....(all).
2. Assistant Director (MIS), Department of Health, Mohakali, Dhaka. I am requesting to send the letter to everyone via email and publish it on website.
3. Civil Sergeant,.....(all).
4. The officials of State Health and Family Administration,.....(all)

For your kind information:

1. Secretary, Department of Health and Family Development. Director of economic unit,
2. Secretary, Social Service Administration. Assistant senator (workprogram-1)
3. Director, Department of Health, Mohakali, Dhaka. Assistant Director

Dr.Masum Ali
Assistant Director (sector-1)
Department of Health, Mohakhali Dhaka

Appendix-IV

[1]The Penal Code, 1860

(ACT NO. XLV OF 1860)

[6th October, 1860]

CHAPTER XVI

OF OFFENCES AFFECTING THE HUMAN BODY

Of Unnatural Offences

Unnatural offences

377. Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with [2][imprisonment] for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.Explanation. Penetration is sufficient to constitute the carnal intercourse necessary to the offence described in this section.

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[1] Throughout this Act, except otherwise provided, the words "Bangladesh", "Government", "the Government" and "Taka" were substituted, for the words "Pakistan", "Central or any Provincial Government" or "Central Government or any Provincial Government" or "Central Government" or "the Provincial Government" or "Provincial Government" and "rupees" respectively by section 3 and 2nd Schedule of the Bangladesh Laws (Revision And Declaration) Act, 1973 (Act No. VIII of 1973).

[2] The word "imprisonment" was substituted, for the word "transportation" by section 19 of the Penal Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 1985 (Ordinance No. XLI of 1985)

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Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs

Appendix-V

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

(ACT NO. OF 1972)

PART III

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Equality before law

27. All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law.

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Appendix-VI

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

(ACT NO. OF 1972)

PART III

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Discrimination on grounds of religion, etc.

28. (1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

(2) Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life.

(3) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to any place of public entertainment or resort, or admission to any educational institution.

(4) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making special provision in favour of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens.

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Appendix-VII

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

(ACT NO. OF 1972)

PART III

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Equality of opportunity in public employment

29. (1) There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in respect of employment or office in the service of the Republic.

(2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office in the service of the Republic.

(3) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from –

(a) making special provision in favour of any backward section of citizens for the purpose of securing their adequate representation in the service of the Republic;

(b) giving effect to any law which makes provision for reserving appointments relating to any religious or denominational institution to persons of that religion or denomination;

(c) reserving for members of one sex any class of employment or office on the ground that it is considered by its nature to be unsuited to members of the opposite sex.

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Appendix-VIII

ACT 027 OF 1871: CRIMINAL TRIBES ACT, 1871 [REPEALED]

Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 [Repealed]

ACTNO. 27 OF 1871
10 December, 1871

Repealed by Act 3 of 1911

Passed by the Governor General of India in Council.

(*Received the assent of the Governor General on the 12th October 1871.*)

An Act for the Registration of Criminal Tribes and Eunuchs.

PREAMBLE

Preamble. Whereas it is expedient to provide for the registration, surveillance and control of certain criminal tribes and eunuchs; It is hereby enacted as follows:

Section 1. Short title Commencement

This Act may be called **The Criminal Tribes' Act, 1871**, and it shall come into force on the passing thereof.

Local extent. This section and section twenty extend to the whole of British India: the rest of this Act extends only to the territories under the governments of the Lieutenant-Governors of the North-Western Provinces and the Panjab, respectively, and under the administration of the Chief Commissioner of Oudh.

Part II

EUNUCHS

Section 24. Registers of eunuchs and their property

The Local Government shall cause the following registers to be made and kept up by such officer as, from time to time, it appoints in this behalf:

(*a*) a register of the names and residences of all eunuchs residing in any town or place to which the Local Government specially extends this Part of this Act, who are reasonably suspected of kidnapping or castrating

children, or of committing offences under section three hundred and seventy-seven of the Indian Penal Code, or of abetting the commission of any of the said offences; and

(*b*) a register of the property of such of the said eunuchs as, under the provisions hereinafter contained, are required to furnish information as to their property.

Eunuch defined. The term eunuch shall, for the purposes of this Act, be deemed to include all persons of the male sex who admit themselves, or on medical inspection clearly appear, to be impotent.

Section 25. Complaints of entries in register

Any person deeming himself aggrieved by any entry made or proposed to be made in such register, either when the register is first made or subsequently, may complain to the said officer, who shall enter such person's name, or erase it, or re kin it, as he sees fit.

Every order for erasure of such person's name shall state the grounds on which such person's name is erased.

The Commissioner shall have power to review any order passed by such officer on such complaint, either on appeal by the complainant or otherwise.

Section 26. Penalty on registered eunuch appearing in female clothes

Any eunuch so registered who appears, dressed or ornamented like a woman, in a public street or place, or in any other place, with the intention of being seen from a public street or place.

or dancing in public, or for hire. or who dances or plays music, or takes part in any public exhibition, in a public street or place or for hire in a private house,

may be arrested without warrant, and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

Section 27. Penalty on registered eunuch keeping boy under sixteen

Any eunuch so registered who has in his charge, or keeps in the house in which he resides, or under his control, any boy who has not completed the age of sixteen years, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

Section 28. Maintenance and education of boys whose parents cannot be found

The Magistrate may direct that any such boy shall be returned to his parents or guardians, if they can be discovered. If they cannot be discovered, the Magistrate may make such arrangements as lie thinks necessary for the maintenance and education of such boy, and may direct that the whole or any part of a fine inflicted under section twenty-seven may be employed in defraying the cost of such arrangements.

The Local Government may direct out of what local or municipal fund so much of the cost of such arrangements as is not met by the fine imposed, shall be defrayed.

Section 29. Disabilities of registered eunuchs

No eunuch so registered shall be capable

(*a*) of being or acting as guardian to any minor,

(*b*) of making a gift,

(*c*) of making a will, or

(*d*) of adopting a son.

Section 30. Power to require information as to registered eunuch's properly

Any officer authorized by the Local Government in this behalf may, from time to time, require any eunuch so registered to furnish information as to all property, whether movable or immovable, of or to which he is possessed or entitled, or which is held in trust for him.

Penalty for refusing such information. Any such eunuch intentionally omitting to furnish such information, or furnishing, as true, information on the subject which he knows, or has reason to believe, to be false, shall be deemed to have committed an offence under section one hundred and seventy-six or one hundred and seventy-seven of the Indian Penal Code, as the case may be.

Section 31. Rules for making and keeping up registers of eunuchs

The Local Government may, with the previous sanction of the Governor General in Council, make rules for the making and keeping up and charge of registers made under this Part of the Act.

Hossain, 2017