

Transgender dysphoria in Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's *Red Lipstick***Dr.Ravinder Kumar¹, Ms.Savita Rani²**^{1,2}Guru Kashi University, Talwandi Sabo**Abstract**

The paper gives an account of gender dysphoria, particularly Transgender dysphoria in Laxmi' Narayan Tripathi's *Red Lipstick*. Being a transgender activist, Laxmi stands very boldly for trans people's rights. She also helps them to retain their identity as their true self. Only gender identity concerns the gender dysphoria which refers to experiences of gender identity in which a person's psychological sense of themselves as female for instance does not match or align with their birth sex as male. The reverse may also be experienced that a person's psychological and emotional sense of themselves as male does not match or align with their birth sex as female. Such binary experiences of man/woman does not reside easily rather such experience locates itself in the other in ways are often quite difficult to fully understand or empathize with. This paper observes the gender incongruence in adulthood whether they resolve their dysphoria in accordance with their birth sex which engages in cross-dressing behaviour intermittently. How they struggle themselves between these two different ways of life styles and how they fight between their biological sex and their emotional discomfort is clearly described in Laxmi's *Red Lipstick*.

Keywords: Gender, Sex, identity, dysphoria, emotions**Article History**

The present paper gives an account of gender dysphoria, particularly Transgender dysphoria in Laxmi' Narayan Tripathi's *Red Lipstick*. Before analyzing gender dysphoria, one should clearly be understood the difference between *Sex* and *Gender*. The label, *Sex* refers to the physical, biological and anatomic dimensions of being male or female (Yarhouse 16). These facets include chromosomes, gonads, sexual anatomy and secondary sex characteristics. *Sex* is usually distinguished from *Gender*. The label, *Gender* on the other hand refers to the psychological, social and cultural aspects of being male or female. Person's experiences of him/herself as male or female, including how masculine or feminine a person feels reveal someone's gender identity. Only gender identity concerns the gender dysphoria which refers to experiences of gender identity in which a person's psychological sense of themselves as female for instance does not match or align with their birth sex as male. The reverse may also be experienced that a person's psychological and emotional sense of themselves as male does

not match or align with their birth sex as female. Such binary experiences of man/woman does not reside easily rather such experience locates itself in the other in ways are often quite difficult to fully understand or empathize with. To sum up, “Gender is assigned by the society based on the behavioural pattern of a person but sex is determined by physiology” (Ramanathan 13).

Dysphoria means being uneasy about or generally dissatisfied with something (Yarhouse 19). Thus gender dysphoria refers to the mismatching and discomfort experience of emotional identity with biological sex which perceived incongruity. Specifically, gender dysphoria is the experience of being born male (biological sex) but feeling a psychological and emotional identity as female. Similarly, gender dysphoria is the experience of being born female (biological sex) but feeling a psychological and emotional identity as male. When a person experiences gender incongruence and it is causing them significant distress or impairment, they may meet criteria for the diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria.

The discussion on transgender issues is also based on the gender incongruence in which the person does not experience an aligning of birth sex and psychological sense of gender. Transgender is an umbrella term for the many in which people might experience and present and express (or live out) their gender identities differently from people whose sense of gender identity is congruent with their biological sex. In India the term ‘transgender’ has always implied ‘transcending gender’ and are considered misfits in society. Their birth is justified by saying that is quite right because it is designed by God, because of some last minute mix-up that God did at the time of their birth. There are various names which refer to this umbrella term ‘transgender’ in India which include, Hijras, *Kothis*, *Aravanis*, *Thirunangai*, cross-dressers, hermaphrodites etc. These transgender people have been in Indian civilization for millennia, dating back to the mythological past. Even in Vedic and Puranic literatures, terms like *tritiyaprakriti*, which means third gender, and *napunsaka*, which means people who have lost their procreative power, are referenced (Michelraj 17). The transgender people were respected and well-treated during the Mughal rule in India. But nowadays these transgender people are treated in a very worst and different way in public and they have been addressed by abusive language.

The book, *Red Lipstick - the men in my life* by Laxmi Narayan Tripathi gives an elaborate note on how the society poses the dysphoria on the transgender people. Laxmi

Narayan Tripathi is a celebrity and LGBT icon who is a transgender rights activist, Hindi cinema actor, and Bharatanatyam dancer. She is the first transgender person to represent Asia-Pacific sex workers at the United Nations. She is the founder of the NGO Astitva, which strives to promote and develop sexual minorities. Laxmi was instrumental in the acknowledgement of hijras as India's third gender. *Red Lipstick* is a fascinating tale about Laxmi that unravels her heart to convey the stories of the men in her life—as creators, preservers, lovers, benefactors, and abusers. *Red Lipstick* is a portal into a wild new world: it's racy, unapologetic, dark, and incredibly honest.

Laxmi explains how the transgender people suffer from such discomfort between their emotional experiences and their biological sex from their childhood. Their struggle of revealing themselves to their family at an initial level and to the society at later level highlights transgender dysphoric situation. Such transgender dysphoria is clearly explained in this work by this transgender activist from her own experiences. She postures her identity to the society as 'Laxmi' because it is the 'Laxmi' the word demanded when she went out to make her voice heard, to talk about the rights of transgenders. The creation of this persona has played an incredibly important role in her story, in the journey of her life. She began to enjoy being this Laxmi. She insists that her identity as 'Laxmi' is the *raison d'être* of her existence, as an activist.

Being transgender activist she justifies the significance of their existence through the illustration from the epic, *The Ramayana*. At the time of his banishment from the kingdom for 14 years, he turns around to his followers and asks all the men and women to return to their city. When Rama returned after his exile, he discovered that some people were still waiting at the same site on the outskirts of Ayodhya where he had bid them farewell all those years earlier. This incident involving hijras exemplifies how they were formerly seen as a blessing and a very committed people. Because of their dedication, Lord Rama gave them the authority to bestow blessings on people on auspicious occasions. "These were the hijras, my brethren, those who did not return to their homes, since Rama had exhorted only the men and women to do so, and they were neither," Laxmi proudly repeats the aforementioned occurrence via her retelling (06).

She also highlights how the history speaks of hijras. They were placed in eminent positions as political advisors to kings, administrators, generals and guardians of harems. The merging of

subsumption (man within a woman or woman within a man) results in shiva-shakthi, the Ardhanareshwara. She mentions the ceremonies she went through as a chela in the transgender society. "I was handed two green saris, known as 'jogjanam' saris, which represent the inculcation of a new way of life and are capped with the community dupatta" (09). Laxmi's sentences above show the standing of transgender people in the past, as well as the ceremonies they had to follow in their own society to start a new life. The greatest emblems of femininity are displayed in this initiation ritual.

Their boasting is congested when they experienced transgender dysphoria at the time of society's reaction and its negligence towards their unusual behaviour. This paper further gives an account of How Laxmi feels and experiences such transgender dysphoria in her life at an initial level is clearly explained and how she may be ready to help the other people who are in their hesitance of facing society with their true identity. Laxmi experiences the psychological stress when her father is facing the society with utmost courage. The world would taunt him so much about my sexuality, but he would simply ignore it. He simply remarks for the question

"Don't you feel humiliated since you're a Brahmin and your eldest son is a hijra?" No intelligent man or woman walks into their children's or grandchildren's rooms to check what they're up to, right? Laxmi Narayan has the freedom to do anything he wants. My child is not intellectually challenged, my child is not crippled, my child is unique, his sexuality is unique, and it doesn't concern me... My child has always been and will continue to be my child. (19)

She even gets a moral support from her father and she herself feels complete femininity when she makes Lord *Mahadev* as her husband during *Mahashivratri* by wearing *Mangalsutra* in front of him. She experiences a divine protection at the age of ten after this incident.

Later in School she does not know what to do with this sort of life and feelings. Everyday she would grapple with questions like, 'Will everyone disown me? , Will I have to become a sex worker? Is my fate sealed? (46) all the above asked unanswered questions at an early age of Laxmi clearly portrays her transgender dysphoria. The following words of Laxmi "Patriarchy does not leave you even when you are gay, does it?"(165) proves her sexual abusiveness at the age of six-year-old boy who was weak, ill and feminine in manner by her

twenty-one years old cousin in her hometown in Gorakhpur. She can never ever forget that sexual abusiveness of her cousin and his friends and their threatening words too. This bitter experience of Laxmi picturises the transgender dysphoria even within a family.

Later she gets an advice from Goda, a transgender when she conveys her desire to become a hijra that ‘You’re so very young, just a child.’(86). She further protects Laxmi from the confusions and ostracism which she had faced during her school days. Finally she cautions Laxmi by saying that, “choosing this life path is a very difficult decision and one should only make this decision if there is absolutely no other choice available”(86). A child from an orthodox Brahmin family to become a hijra is unimaginable and very painful to any parent. So she does not convey her feelings to them directly instead they come to know that from the news channel when she spoke on behalf of hijras as a hijra herself. So many people in her family talk against her decision to join the hijra clan but the people who had abused and slept with her keep their mouths shut. Being an activist, when she realized that what she encountered as a child because of her femininity was the worst wrong a human being could do to another human being. Later she said that, “I was exploited as a child because of my femininity, I decided to use exactly that- my femininity- to wreak revenge”(168).

Laxmi helps so many people who struggle a lot only because of this transgender dysphoria to expose themselves and reveal their true self or true identity to the society for the sake of their family and its status. For instance, she is like a real sister of Prince Manvendra Singh Gohil of Rajpipla in Gujarat is the first member of Indian royalty to come out as openly gay. He suffers from the transgender dysphoria when the psychiatrists counselled his parents about his sexual orientations and his secret pressurised feelings. He was shunned by his family when he make a declaration of his true self by saying that, “ I knew they would never accept me for who I truly am, but I also knew that I could no longer live a lie” (71). He openly reveals his relationship with Laxmi by saying:

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

This brings the close associations between royalty and hijras.

Ganesh came into hijra community as well and became Gauri by undergoing for gender aligning surgery. She does not hide her true self as Gauri in the name of Ganesh to the society. Gauri was simply asked by her father to leave home one day for her cross-dressing and her life has been one of the monumental struggle after that surgery. Only the Biological family of Laxmi supports her and accepts her as what she is. The company of Gauri made the life very worthwhile for Laxmi too. Then Laxmi helps Pawan when he is struggling with several issues and conflicted in his sexuality. He grows up in a very conservative environment in his home town, Amravati, but attracted to men and feeling helpless. At an initial stage Laxmi is wondering on seeing his balanced way of life style between his biological family and his adopted family (Hijrotic). This behaviour of Pawan is not accepted and appreciated by other fellows in hijra community. 'They taunt him about how he can never be a true hijra because he doesn't always don saris, and he doesn't know how to clap properly like a hijra' (80). Later he initiated into the hijra community and asked Laxmi to name him from that occasion he is addressed as Pavithra.

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