

A Study on Politics in Hijra Community

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ABSTRACT: Hijras are always concerned as a research topic since colonial time in India. In academic study they were considered by the scholars in the ground of other gender or sexuality behavior since last decades. The present study has tried to explore the politics of the Hijra communities (both intra and inter community level) of West Bengal (Eastern India), which actually represent the other Hijra communities of India. For this purpose, Bourdieu's notion of politics and de Certeau's concept of strategy and tactic were used as an analytic theoretical tool to explore the Hijra context. Participants were purposively selected and explored by snowball technique. Data revealed that the political field among the Hijras is structured by the relation of dominant and dominated groups. Possession of capital empowered the dominants to dominate others. The study has also understood the construction of the concept of domination.

INTRODUCTION

The 'neither men nor women' people were always the point of interest for the researchers since colonial periods. People had dealt with the terminology to identify those who possessed feminine attitude and behavior within male body as Eunuch or Hijra. 1871's Government of India defined eunuch as 'all persons of the male sex who admit themselves or on medical inspection clearly appear, to be impotent' (Government of India, 1871). Until 1869, it was impossible to refer Hijras as homosexuals (Herzer, '85). Government of India defined in 1871 that Hijras were (a) 'reasonably suspected of

kidnapping or castrating children, or of committing offenses under section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, or of abetting the commission of any of the said offenses'; (b) 'appear, 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 (c) 'dance or play music, or take part in any public exhibition, in a public street or place or for hire in a private house' (Government of India, 1871). Thus an Act was enacted for the classification of eunuchs into "respectable" and "suspicious" categories. Government of India passed the Criminal Tribes Act 1871 and its second part provided for the registration and control of "eunuchs".

Since late 1840's, the investigators (likes Richmond, 1848; Khan 1870, Faiz Bakhsh 1889 etc.) focused light on Khwajasaras of North India. Hijras

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and Khwajasaras had some similarities; both were internally structured by guru-chela (teacher-disciple) hierarchies and by non-biological kinship relationships. They pointed out Khwajasaras or Hijras had distinct social roles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Faiz Bakhsh, 1889 [c.1818]; Khan, 1870). It is noticed that European interest with 'Third sex', became an especially popular trope in post 1870s ethnography (Bleys, '96). Of course the terminology Third sex for identifying Hijras is an outcome of colonial era. In late 1890s early ethnographers like W. Crooke, H. A. Rose etc highlighted the Hijras of India. Crooke (1896) had published an article entitled "Hijra". He calls them the "class of eunuchs", and said 'Formerly when a deformed boy was born in a family the Hijras of the neighbourhood used to beset the parents and endeavour to obtain possession of him' (Crooke, 1896: 495-497). Rose ('11) also described Hijras as eunuch, and cites in his writing that members of the community undergo castration at initiation, he also explained how the Hijras of the Punjab 'divided the Province into regular beats from which 'birt' or dues are collected'. Academic interest in the Hijra really emerged in the post colonial periods late 1950s and early 1960s with an argument between Carstairs ('56, '57) and Opler ('60) over the nature of the Hijra. Many scholars have showed interest on this group (most notably Lynton and Rajan, '74; Preston, '87; Sharma, '89; Nanda, '90; Morris, '94; Jaffrey, '96; Hall, '97; Cohen, '95; Lal, 2003; Reddy, 2007 etc.). To Money, this was Nanda who had overcome the problem of mistranslation by adopting the Indian term Hijra into English by which they name themselves (Nanda, '90). Nanda described Hijras as neither men nor women, function as an institutionalized third gender role¹. She coined the Hijras are of interest for the researcher not only for institutionalized third gender role², but also for their significance to the study of gender categories and human sexual variation (Nanda, '90). She also mentioned that defining criterion that applies to Hijras must apply to corresponding groups of people in other places and times, in particular the Xaniths of Oman (Wikan, '77), Mahu of Tahiti (Morris, '90), Berdache of the 'Native' North-America (Callender and Kochems, '83; Humphreys, '70; Goode and Troiden, '74; Delph, '78) the transsexuals of occidental

culture. Cohen defined 'Third-gendered' figure of the Hijra as a cultural repository of non-heteronormative sexuality (Cohen, '95, 2005). Hall ('97) has written excellent reviews of the Hijra through their use of language. Historical studies of the Hijra were also documented by the scholars like Lynton and Rajan ('74) Preston ('87) and Jaffrey ('96). In recent years Hijras have captured the Western scholarly imagination as an ideal case in the transitional arena of 'alternative' sexualities (Reddy, 2007).

According to Morris ('94:16) Hijra becomes "a drag queen" who [is] a hero[ine] in a global sexual resistance. As with any other community in India they are crosscut by a range of other axes that shape their identities (Reddy, 2005, 2007). Cohen defined 'Third-gendered' figure of the Hijra as a cultural repository of non-heteronormative sexuality (Cohen, '95, 2005). He commented on castration as castration of desire (Cohen, '95). He stated about jankhas and zenanas (similar to Kothis³) as 'men who sometimes dress like women and dance like hijras but do not select castration' (Cohen, '95:276). Hall (2005) posits Kothi as a reference point for other sexualities and not as a distinct identity to claim a space within the sexuality continuum, as they (Hall and O'Donovan, '96) switch between the use of feminine and masculine gender symbols. Hall ('97) has also written excellent reviews of the Hijra though their use of language. Historical studies of the Hijra were also documented by the scholars like Lynton and Rajan ('74) Preston ('87) and Jaffrey ('96).

In contrast to the somewhat similar positions of Cohen, Hall, Naqvi and Mujtaba etc., Reddy's ethnographic fieldwork in Hyderabad found that Hijras fall under the umbrella term Kothis referring to a multitude of identities within the spectrum of male sexuality. She has clearly defined Hijra as an ideal case in the transitional arena of 'alternative' sexualities (Reddy, 2007). Hijras and Kothis are coherent identities crafted by diverse ethical practices which do not construct them merely as sexual identities but as identities articulated by and through a multiplicity of morally evaluated differences (Reddy, 2005). There appeared to be constant movement and flux between the various Kothi 'identities' which Reddy found in fieldwork at Hyderabad, i.e 'Kada-chatla kothi', 'Hijra', 'Jogin', 'Zanana' and 'Siva-sati'⁴. These

categories highlight the complicated nature of each of these subject positions. No easy correlations exist between ideals, embodied desire/praxis and sexual identity. The fluidity is possible because each subject position is variously determined according to lived experience and interpretation of desire, pleasure and morality. Dey *et al.* (2010) showed Hijra as a separate sub-cultural entity. Though Hijras are the intentional transformation of Kothis- the male having feminine attitude, prefer to sex with straight masculine men who always play the role of inserter in penetrative sexual act and they are within the MSM network. Through an initiation process many of the Kothis join a Hijra Khol (group/community) for societal acceptance and for money.

On 15 April 2014, the Supreme Court of India described Hijra as a 'third gender' and said Hijras and Transgenders will be allowed admission in educational institutions and given employment on the basis that they belonged to the third gender category. Court said absence of law recognizing Hijras as third gender could not be continued as a ground to discriminate them in availing equal opportunities in education and employment. The third gender people will be considered as Other Backward Class in India. Hijras as third gender would now have reservations for employment and education as one of the groups classified as OBCs (*Times of India, Kolkata*, 15 April, 2014).

Context of the Study

The present study is an extension of earlier works on Hijras. It has focused on the practice of power relation between the members which is the pedestal of the construction of a political field. The importance of the present study is that it has tried to understand the politics practice within the Hijra community.

This paper has discussed a critical interpretation of Bourdieu's structural constructivist political notion on Hijra context. This theory provides new tools for the study of domination. Bourdieu analyzed politics as one of the areas of social activity like economy, religion or education (Bourdieu, '67). He showed politics as a field that has structural traits like any other fields. To him, 'the analysis of the field of politics – understood here in the narrow sense of 'politics', i.e. the sphere of political parties, electoral

politics and institutionalized political power – is closely related to the theme of language and symbolic power' (Bourdieu, '91:25-26).

Hijra as an organizational institution has its own hierarchical structure, rules⁵, social practices and forms of capitals. Power relation is maintained by the members. The rules are validated by the historical transcendental (structured habitus) of political ideas, beliefs and practices (Bourdieu, 1984). To Bourdieu, 'practices are not always objectively correct, however, and it is exactly the (critical) task of sociology to reveal the contradictions between the subjective meanings (which usually are those professed by the 'official' society) and the implicit objective meanings that structure the life style of different social groups and explain their inherent 'logic'' (Sulkunen, '82). In a political context (field) one can hold his position and can sustain his endeavor by the possession of capital. Bourdieu's capital can present itself in three major fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications and knowledge; and as social capital, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, under certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility. These three forms of capital can be inter-exchanged and can increase any forms of capital. Among the Hijras possession of cultural capital by means of education is not essential either to sustain in this community or to hold a position in a structure. Embedded knowledge gained through experience and connections (social capital) with other famous Hijra groups are important for one's popularity in Hijra world. Economic possession decides which group of Hijra has higher status, which depends on i) the total spread of areas from where money is to be collected, ii) location of that area, implying whether it is in the heart of the city or in sub-urban or peripheral region and iii) the savings of a group that is descended to Nayak or Mahanayak (top most position in the hierarchy) from the ancestral Hijra Gurus (head/boss). On the other hand, a fourth form of capital i.e. symbolic capital designates the effects of any form

of capital when people do not perceive them as such. The underlying principles of symbolic capital is that individuals derive their existence by living through other's points of view, they become entrapped in a web of total dependence on how others perceive them and how others define who they 'really' are (Bourdieu, 2000:166). Bourdieu defined, 'Symbolic capital is a credit; it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition' (Bourdieu,'89). The possession of symbolic capital is a product of domination. According to Swartz, Bourdieu believed this form of capital 'legitimizes domination through social ranking or distinction, allowing symbolic systems to 'fulfill a political function' (Swartz,'97:83). Bourdieu showed symbolic order excludes the possibility of an equitable return which is structured (habitus). This structure is accompanied by the construction of a kind of common historical transcendental, i.e. common symbolic frames of thought, understanding and/or a certain kind of reason, which after a long process of incorporation becomes immanent to all its 'subjects' (Kalpagam, 2006). The dominant have more possession of capital than the dominated (Bourdieu,'84). Individual's political demeanor and strategies help to hold the position in political field. The money power (economic capital) or education (cultural capital) is not necessary for entering in Hijra political context. The members of this field gain cultural status through exhibiting symbolic capital such as strong presence of womanliness, attractiveness and the absences of male genitalia (through surgery). Bourdieu was inspired by Weber ('22) to construe the sociology of domination. He also took Marx's view of struggle for the analysis of political activity. He believes presence of social categories (classes) creates the basis of political struggle between dominant and dominated (Bourdieu,'84). In his theory, symbolic violence is the basic instrument by which domination takes place. He emphasizes on the symbolic aspects of domination and the symbolic violence exercised by the culture. Symbolic violence is transmitted in language at the time of interaction and in social practices. The power of political agent in a political field depends on his capacity to speak profanities (those outside to it) and on his volume of capital. To Bourdieu, 'It is the structure of the political field, that is the objective

relation to the occupants of other positions and the relation to the competing stances they offer which, just as much as any direct relation to those they represent, determines the stances they take i.e. the supply of political products' (Bourdieu,'91:246).

Again Bourdieu showed practices generated by dispositions that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends. They are mostly non-reflective, but can also surface to awareness. Thus, agents are sometimes able to account for their practices. This way habitus shapes the way social actor (person) is likely to act and think in different social contexts. In this fashion structure is 'embodied', working 'in' and 'through' people's dispositions and activities, rather than 'on' them (Reay,'98). So it is fact that '...individuals make choices ... they do not choose the principle of these choices' (Bourdieu,'90:8). Within this position, a politically dominated agent may dominate the customary dominants in certain cases. So this way individual constructs the reality and embodied structure.

In the structure of field space, the elements (agents) relate to each other through the network of relationships. Relationships are not only linguistic or symbolic but also social, involving power relations (Bourdieu,'84). In this context understanding the practice of control and resistance within the community is crucial to realize the power maneuver. For this reason Michel de Certeau's concept of strategy and tactic is imperative. He believed strategy is the way that operating the society from a particular place of power by creating non flexible rules. It is used by any social body that has an established distinguished place in the society from which it operates and control. It functions for keeping resources and collect more resources for that the social body can maintain and carry on. On the other hand tactic is used by social agent/s or individual/s that creates resistance and opposition in fixed hegemonic rules of the social bodies. It helps to create their own voice or strength and struggle against power mechanism to survive in the combat (de Certeau,'84). There lies the similarity with Bourdieu's notion that a (political) field is a space (that is structured) of positions, a force field that imposes its specific determinations upon all those who enter it and an arena

of struggle through which agents and institutions seek to preserve or overturn the existing distribution of capital: it is a battlefield (continuous struggle between the members) wherein the bases of identity and hierarchy are endlessly disputed over for keeping existence (Bourdieu, '91).

METHODOLOGY

The study is the result of three years' (2010-2013) ethnographic research on Hijra communities. The adopted ethnographic method has taken both as a process (method or fieldwork⁶) and a product (outcomes of the processes or writings) (Barnard and Spencer, 2002) in this research. To understand context, complexity, and politics of social processes ethnography was used as a process, in a truly qualitative sense (Warren, 2004). It has been used for exploring the details of experience, evaluating the relevance, observing patterns, considering phenomena through the cultural perspective, "Thick description" (Morse and Richards, 2002) and classifications, parameters, etc observations. These qualitative data which are the researcher's "own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (Geertz, '73:9), derive from the triangulation by means of in-depth interviews of individuals and groups, focus group discussions and observation as a 'friend' in their everyday lives. These qualitative elements provide holistic framework for understanding meanings and actions and to provide opportunity for narratives grounded in their experiences. Bourdieu's notion on politics and de Certeau's concept of tactic and strategy have used to interpret the ethnographic finding in this current study. Snowball technique helped reaching the expanding network of Hijra participants. The data were collected from the district of Kolkata and Howrah of West Bengal, India. Total eighty five respondents were agreed to open up. Prior to collection of data, the nature of the study was explained to the participants. Ethically the privacy and confidentiality were given priority while collecting and interpreting the data. Interpretative analysis was adopted to analyze the data.

In qualitative methods, to establish credibility means to elaborate the sections of actual interactions with the participants at different phrases of

communication. Lincoln and Guba ('85) argued that for establishing trustworthiness of a research ensuring credibility is required. Van Maanen ('83) advocates the exploitation of opportunities to check out bits of information across informants. Individual viewpoints and experiences which explored by using triangulation were verified against others. That ultimately provided a rich image of the behavior of the members and their practices have constructed based on the contributions of an array of participants (Shenton, 2004). Even more, almost 60% of the participants have been included as regular friends of the first author. "Prolonged engagement" between the researcher and the participants to understand a (sub) culture establishes a relationship of trust between the parties (Erlandson *et al.*, '93; Lincoln and Guba, '85).

IDENTITY POLITICS IN THE HIJRA WORLD

This study has found that presently there are three kinds of Hijra communities on the basis of their earning pattern. They are Badhaiwali, Chhallawali and Khajrawali. The former one is recognized at the crown level than other two categories on the basis of historical acceptance in the society. Bourdieu pointed out that one social collectivity separated from another is a fundamental form of political conflict and the boundaries of this social collectivity could be understood in terms of social practice (Weininger, 2005). Several Chhallawalis believe that "they (Badhaiwalis) are 'uchu-jater' (imperial) Hijra". The Badhaiwalis earn money by performing dance and singing traditional Hijra coarse songs (which are full of reproductive hints, blessings for the new born, teasing the grandmother and also kidding with family members) at the place of newly born baby. Sometimes they also perform in wedding occasions for blessing newly married couple with the songs which are full of sexual messages. These Hijras claim themselves to be original and royal due to the possession of traditional knowledge (cultural capital). Few Nayaks (holders of top position in a group) shared that they exist for the curse of mythical character 'Mayaji' (the avatar of Hindu goddess Kali) and they are the followers of goddess 'Bahuchera Mata' or 'Murgawali Mai' (impersonation of Hindu goddess Durga). According to Badhaiwali Hijras (of both the regions), the Chhallawalis (Chhalla means begging) are recently

emerged, have no long-established history and are seen in train, traffic signal of the roads and parks for collection of money. They are not actual Hijras, they did not follow the dominant codings (strategy) of the traditional Hijra gharanas (clans) and have no custom to worship 'Dhol' (drum) and accumulate money from the households by performing dance. Even they do not have any knowledge of Hijra traditional songs or rituals. This group of Hijras imitates and adopts the way of life of Badhaiwali Hijras. Their use of tactics of ambiguity and strategies of identity used to negotiate with traditional Hijras for sharing of Hijra space. They contain their own Guru (boss) having an Elaka (area), and always wear Santra (Indian saree) like Badhaiwalis. For maintaining their high status and prestige Badhaiwalis avoid Chhallawalis and used to keep their resources intact. Here possessions of cultural capital interchange with symbolic capital and construct the class (status) and gain prestige. In resistance Chhallawalis admitted that though the Badhaiwalis used to show big attitudes and disdain them for their profession, some of them (Badhaiwalis) also seek out money at the traffic signals or parks particularly at the time of any societal celebrations like Durga Puja/ Shiv ratri/ Holi/ Dewali/ Eid and other. They also pointed out it is traditional. Even the defense Chhallawalis demand that they were bifurcated from Badhaiwalis due to diminish condition of 'Hissa' (sharing) areas and also claim that they are too original as the mythical character 'Taramoniji' (disciple of Mayaji) begs. They raised question that how Badhaiwalis contempt them when they also practiced Chhalla? It is noticed Chhallawalis used to avoid calling themselves with this terminology; rather they identified themselves only as Hijra or rarely as Mangnewali and that is what de Certeau calls 'tactics' of making do, the "innumerable practices through which users re-appropriate the space organized by techniques of socio-cultural production" (de Certeau, '84, xiv). Again there is also a hierarchy between the Chhallawalis. For example, the Lal-battiwalis (collect money at traffic signal) claim superiority than Train-walis (collect money in train).

Another group of Hijra who earn money by acting as sex workers is Khajrawali (Khajra means sex work), visible at railway stations or at road side bus stops or even in some parks. They have no place in

Hijra world. But these Khajrawalis claim themselves to be Hijra and maximum cases they have their Guru. To them, common people only understand the terminology Hijra when they see feminine men. In the view of other two groups like Badhaiwali and Chhallawali, these Khajrawalis have lowered their status before the mass. It is because most number of Khajrawalis does not cut off their genitals. Owing to their sex trade profession people get a wrong impression that Hijras are male by birth. So the Badhaiwali and Chhallawalis' call them as 'fake'. Several Hijras shared incidences of commotion with Khajrawalis in open road to prohibit them from undertaking such profession.

Badhaiwali Hijra

The present study has only dealt with the Badhaiwali Hijra groups for research convenience. Within the group there is also presence of dominant class and dominated class. Bourdieu opined that the dominated class has to participate in the process of domination that is exerted on them; otherwise it would not be legitimate. Reproduction of domination takes place with the consent of those dominated (Bourdieu, '84). To him, symbolic violence is the basic mechanism by which domination is unconsciously reproduced by the dominated (Kauppi, 2003). The members of the community do not call themselves as Hijra inside the community; to them it is a professional designation. The insiders designate each other with the terminology 'Akhua' and 'Chhibri'. The Akhuas are the non-castrated members of the group and if they cut off their genitals they are known as Chhibris and become true Hijras. According to the Akhuas, they are not warmly accepted in Hijra community as they do not operate their male genitalia to become a real Hijra. In this case the castrated genital is one's symbolic capital. This creates distinctive hyper-feminine characteristic that assure the pureness of a Hijra and this type of strong presentation of womanliness is, of course, an acquired or learned competency (Skeggs, '97). So, here cultural capital changes into symbolic power. Possession of symbolic capital influences the Chhibris to dominate the Akhuas by means of symbolic violence. Bourdieu showed practices in different domains and habitus cohere symbolically to form a whole (life style) and these

practices serve to construct social collectivities or status groups by establishing boundaries between the individuals occupying different locations in the class structure. These boundaries function by exercising symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1984). The Akhuas are treated as slender by the Chhibris and this practice internalized (socialization) into a general disposition to act ('habitus'). Strategically they have no right to take the 'gaddi' (top position) after the death of Nayak/Guru. They have no right even to interfere in serious community matters. For instance, if any 'Charai' (squabble) occurs between two Hijra groups, the present Akhuas among the groups cannot obstruct or speak anything. If they try to interfere, either the Gurus (boss) or the Chhibris of the group threaten them not to speak in the dispute and insult them for the fear of 'Kachchi-Pakki' (abuse) by the opponent. It is because, in any disputes the opponent groups used to put off their sarees and used to show their castrated genitals to ensure the purity of the group. That's why castration is very important in this community to gain status as well as power. Again, at the time of any argument with a client regarding payment, the Chhibris intentionally remove their clothes to show their 'different' genitals in front of the client and ensure that they are the real 'Brehannala' or 'Kinnar' (Hijra by birth/ Hermaphrodites) who may bring destruction by curse. Ultimately the client is compelled to pay them money for the fear of sin and to stop their nuisance. This type of annoyance cannot possibly be performed by an Akhua out of the panic of sex identification. For that reason to resist the situation 2 to 3 Chhibris are always present in a group at the time of wandering in localities for earning money. Some Akhuas' shared that to handle that type of situation they used a tactic 'pick-a-boo' means they hide their genitalia between two thighs very consciously which is very risky too. Nevertheless Chhibris assess symbolic capital in terms of capability to handle social hazards and prestige. Chhibris always underestimate the Akhuas as they have not upgraded their status from Kothi life to Hijra. Even some time they tease them in presence of clients by saying that 'he is not a real Hijra, he has penis'. Though the clients are mostly unaware of the fact and do not take it seriously. For this type of insult and harassment, Akhuas go for operation ultimately to accumulate

political capital ['a particular kind of symbolic capital' (Bourdieu, 2000: 64-65) that agent accumulate to fight in a political field] for raising their status. According to the Chhibris, they have scarified their lives by means of castration to become a real Hijra and they can never go back to their past life if they wish to, but the Akhuas can return to their old life as they do not sacrifice their genitals. They can return to their family easily, they can live their life according to their choice. That's the reason the Chhibris justify themselves as higher class of Hijras for being 'Nirban' (asexual). It is further reported that sometimes the Guru also intentionally ridicules or insults his Chela (disciple) if he does not want to do the operation. On the other hand, some of the Hijra groups described that it is also obvious that in a group, there should be at least one Akhua as he is the only person who gets the right to worship their 'Dhol' (dram) as well as their goddess Bahuchera Mata or Murgawali Mai (as the goddess mounted on 'Murga' or Hen) and in few cases to thrash the Dhol (drum). Several Akhuas opined that beating Dhol is not so easy and carrying this weighty Dhol all the times while traveling is also very tough. Thus Chhibris tactically give up the responsibility of Dhol to relegate the Akhuas in some groups. Again this is the stake of the Akhuas that their one day absence can stop a group's earnings for the day. This stake also helps them to struggle in the field. On the other hand Akhuas assert that they are the original form of Hijra as the mythical personalities 'Mayaji' and 'Taramoniji' possessed male genitals and this is the only reason they have the right to ritually adore 'Mayaji' by worshiping 'Dhol' at the night of goddess Kali puja. So the concept of dominant and dominated is a construct that is changing according to context. This way the tension between Chhibris and Akhuas constructs political state within a Hijra group.

Structural Hierarchies and the Politics

Field is a space of relations rather than that of structures that Bourdieu believe. These relationships exist apart from an individual consciousness or will. The Hijra community is totally based on the relations between Guru (boss) and Chelas (disciple). A Guru may have maximum five Chelas in her life. Each Chela can also adopt her own Chelas and so on. The members are tied up with kinship terminologies. This

way they form a descent unit in their culture. The head is designated as Nayak or sometimes as Mahanayak. Nayak or Mahanayak is the person who has "Daira" (office) from where the one or more Hijra groupings take Dhol/ Dhols (dram) at every morning to wander for earning. Nayak is addressed as Nun Guru or Nani (great grandmother) by his Puntichelas (great grand disciples), as Dad Guru or Dadi (grandmother) by the Natichelas (grand disciples) and as Guru Ma (mother) by the immediate Chelas. The Chelas of a Guru are sisters of each other and called Guru Bon or Gotiya (sister). The Chela of a Guru addressed the sister of his Guru as Masi (maternal aunt).

Distribution of capital determines the objective class structure. The Mahanayak/ Nayak is the person who possesses all the four forms of capital. He is the owner of an occupational land area, he is full of Hijra traditional knowledge, he has the connection with different Mahanayak/ Nayak of the Hijra groups regionally and/ or nationally who as well wishers help him in difficulties and he is holding a position. The Mahanayak/ Nayak get greater share of money. As he is the owner of lands, he gets half (50%) of the total collection. Besides money, Nayak possesses the only right on the other endowments (like saree, jewelry, dress materials, woolen garments/ shawl etc.). He may offer any one or more items of these gifts within his Chelas according to his wish. Again in some places of West Bengal the earned money is divided in such a way that after Nayak's share (that not depends on fixed percentage, rather on his will), the rest portion of the accumulated money used to divide equally among the Chelas, Natichelas and/ or Puntichelas. In every case a fresher usually gets less share of the money. A minimum token money is offered to the newcomer until he learns all the strategies of the earning tricks and then the rest of the collection is divided among the all members. The Nayak has the power to dominate all Chelas and grand Chelas. If anybody ignores his command he possesses the right to punish him. If a Nayak complete Hajj (Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca), he becomes Haji and accrues extra power and authority even to regulate other Hijra factional groups of a region. Nevertheless no Nayak of other areas will accept his Chela if that Chela wishes to join a different group after "Thuke aasa" (paying fine) to his Guru to leave the group. It is for the fear of breakdown of

relation or wrath of revenge. The Nayaks always maintain the connection with other Hijra groups regionally or nationally. In any difficulty they come to help each other.

Bourdieu shows each field has its own set of positions and practices as well as its struggles for position as people mobilize their capital to stake within a particular social domain. Generally Nayak decides who will be the next Nayak of that group after his death considering the ruling "power", honesty and/ or seniority of the Chela. Always there is a tension between the immediate Chelas of a Nayak to take the position by impressing the Nayak. There is also Doxa (set of beliefs) in Hijra groups. Doxa creates the notion of rules accepted by a majority, which posits the emergence of a field of opinion where different legitimate answers can be given to an explicit question about the established order (Bourdieu, 2000). After entering the group the Hijras generate the beliefs during their socialization and obtain these as "taken for granted" to the reality that goes unanimously unquestioned because it lies beyond any notion of enquiry (Bourdieu, 2000). When somebody takes discipleship of a Guru, he start to believe that Guru is his parent cum husband (smear vermilion and pierce for nose ring by the name of Guru) cum one and only person over him. From then his main responsibility is to look after his Guru, abide by his words and earn for group. He has to follow the decorum of the Hijra culture. If any member cannot maintain this decorum then he will be compensated by immediate Guru or in complicated issues by the Nayak. There are many restrictions within the community such as there should be no sexual life, have no rights to share or use up communal property outside the community in any case, have no privilege to gossip with any one on road side particularly with men folk or opponents etc. If any community insider identifies that a Hijra is gossiping with outsider friends on road and if he complains to his (who was gossiping) Guru, then that Hijra will be penalized by his Guru. The penalty or fine is known as "Don"/ "Dand". Even if her Guru or somebody senior (within group) scolds him, he cannot retaliate. Even if they beat him with stick or shoes, he should bend down his head without any reaction. He will be penalized if he speaks with seniors in loud voice. He will also be penalized if by chance his feet

touches the Guru or his portion of saree touches his Guru because touching of saree means she will be a disciple (touching of saree on the forehead of would be Chela is a ritual of taking discipleship from a Guru). The disciple will always sit on the floor, if their Guru seats on either chair or bed. Even Grand Chelas or Great Grand Chelas have no right to take meal seating with Nayak. If a Guru calls his Chela for any reason, then he should be at her beck and call irrespective of time. He may order to cook meal, massage his body, wash clothes, clean the spit bowl, sweep the floor and clean the house. He may also call to make arrangements if any Guru from other area is likely to visit his place. According to some Guru, this is the traditional practice and every Chela would compel to go through this ("what I've faced you have to face"). Some Nayaks make their Chelas to stay at night in their houses. If there is no arrangement for taking rest at night, then they have to lie on floor by spreading mats or in a cot outside the house. Generally they are given permission to go to their houses on Sundays. Sometimes she may be called on Sunday also. If somebody tries to avoid Nayak's call by showing some unavoidable reason, he will be scolded bitterly next day by the Guru.

From the point of view of Chelas, they are bound by the Guru's order. They never move out without permission of their Gurus and if they do for urgency, they did it very secretly. For disregard of rules, they could be penalized with rupees 10000 to rupees 100000 or 200000 by the Guru. This kind of behavior is generally shown by all Gurus to her Chelas. The Nayak can enjoy free life fully. They may take part in recreational activities with their Hijra friends (who are in the same level of hierarchy) of different group or with Gotiyas (sister). Nobody can prevent them from doing anything as they are the masters and have power as well as authority.

In a few groups, Guru or Nayak do more torture on newcomers. Sometimes the Guru orders her Chela to bring vegetables from market, but expenses should be borne by him solely. Even if Guru asks Chelas to bring costly cigarette, then they should buy it with their own pennies. This is the tradition of the Hijra khols/ gharanas (organizations) that who is in upper strata of hierarchy will exploit those in the lower rank. This tradition is maintained for generations.

According to some Hijras, previously it was a rule that Hijra should stay with their Gurus at his place (Hijra Khol/ Dera). Even today there are a few Hijra Gharanas (groups) in India where Guru does not allow his Chelas to stay with their families. As the number of Hijras is increasing day by day and there is shortage of space in Guru's house/khol, the rule has been structuring gradually and the Chelas are allowed to stay with their families. Mainly it is the younger ones who are found to stay with parents. Otherwise, in maximum cases it is observed that the Hijras always stay separately from their families.

Again it is necessary to mention that it is also observed in Hijra community that certain structured rules gets modified for the sake of convenience or necessity. For example, several Chelas of different groups shared that their Guru/ Nun Guru never interferes if they send their own money outside the community to biological parents. Even these Gurus also do that or did it in past. Only that, few Chelas admitted that their Guru/ Nan Guru allow them to have sexual life with a single steady partner for fulfilling the urge. So every field has its own rules which are nothing but a construction.

ISSUES OF CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE HIJRA FACTIONS

The Hijra as a community consisted of many factions in every districts of West Bengal. The factions are referred to by the name of the heads (Nayak) or areas (probably addressed in colonial time) and act as self-sufficient economic units. Each faction has its own locales. These factions struggle to control resources (money, properties and area of land), legitimize themselves and to increase social capital. The conflict arises between the factions for increasing and holding the capitals after the death of Nan Guru by means of achieving that position or sometimes for the distribution of his properties. Already mentioned in above that sometimes the Nayak in his lifetime decides on who will be the next Nayak of the 'Gaddi' (kingdom). Otherwise after his death, the immediate Chelas used to fight for taking the position. Sometimes they fight on the basis of experience (knowledge) or sometimes seniority (according to age). In some cases it is also reported that Chelas refuse to accept the previously selected Nayak, the one nominated by the

deceased Nayak. In these cases, the Guru-less Chelas call on the Nayaks of the other regions and fix a Chatai (judicature). Their consent ('Borayer Birit' or 'Panchaiti fyasla') means a lot to them. They decide who will be the next Nayak of that faction. If the situation remains undecided in a complicated condition, the guests Nayaks divide the areas and property of the deceased Guru among his two or three immediate Chelas. There is no document of separation of areas among the Hijra groups, and everything is done verbally. Though according to few Nayaks there were proper credentials regarding the land authority, and to them probably the land rights were given by the Zamindars to the ancient Nayaks⁷. However, at the time of division of 'Badhai-elaka' (occupational areas), if any elder disciple gets greater percentage of 'Hissa-elaka' (area) in comparison to younger ones, then the younger one has no right to protest or claim for her equal share as the elder one is his sister ('Barogotiya' / 'Bari-bahen') in relation. Even the guests will criticize if he raises voice and such act can make his group an outcast. As a result, they may not be invited to any occasions like 'Challisma' (mourning ritual after 40 days of a Guru's death) or 'Roti Chatai' (a condolence occasion for the deceased Nayaks of different regions of India where representatives of all Gharanas of India participate). But after the death of the elder sister the chelas of younger one can claim their rights from the cousin sisters. At that time if they refuse to return that then conflict arises between these two groups. It creates opponents known as 'Chhal-Pani bandh ghar' (means no sharing of water and food).

In West Bengal, there is four main factions of the Hijras in Kolkata i.e. Shambazari (Shambazar to Damdam etc.), Kolabagan (Barabazar to Boubazar to Dharmatala etc.), Raygachhi (Saltlake to Kestopur to Teghoriya etc.) and Ballygunge (Ballygunge to Sonarpur etc.) and also four factions of Howrah i.e. Bankra (Bankra to Domjur to Shampur etc.), Pilkhana (Salkiya to Shibpur etc.), Rishra-Konnagar (Konnagar to Hoogly etc.) and Haldighati (Halদিয়া and surroundings). These main factions may or may not have several splinter groups and dispersed 'Dehat elaka' (village areas). The Kolkata Hijras used to call the Hijras of Howrah as Gumghariya. The Shyambazari and Gumghoriya do not talk to each other; they do not even share drinking water or even

did not visit each other's houses since long time. Furthermore they did not interact with each other during 'Roti Chatai' occasion. According to some Hijras, the conflict between Shyambazari and Gumghoriya is for the right of occupational ownership of a particular area ('hissa-mangtai-elaka') which took place a few generations ago (according to Bela Hijra more than eight generation ago). No one can say at present for which area the conflict had arisen between them. Again few said in past the Gumghoriya gharana members kidnapped the beautiful Kothis/ Akhuas from Kolkata then castrated them forcefully and compelled them to take Hijra profession to serve the Guru as maid. Thus, these two gharanas had been engaged in fight. For this clash, if any member of a particular Gharana had talked to a member of the other group, then that person would be punished ('don') by his Guru or the head of this group after the matter was disclosed. The punishments were like shaving of hair, financial punishments and sometime rustication from the group. But the recent investigation explored that after the complete of Hajj of the Bankra area's Nayak, the Chhal-Pani became open up between Shambazari and Howrah gharanas.

Sometimes, the Chelas of a particular Guru of an area steal the customers of the locality of another Guru and collect money in 'Badhai' (dance program) secretly. If the holders of that area catch them, they are beaten up or physically harassed (for instance they cut off their hair or eye brows) and financially penalized. Sometimes when they cannot catch them, they ask the clients to provide description of those stealer Hijras. Then complaint goes to their Guru if they have been identified. That time chaos occurs between these two groups and is known as 'Charai' / 'Charaiya'. Sometimes the situation gets worse and they murder the Hijras to show off the power of a group. Few Hijras shared that the Chelas of some rude and rough Hijra groups keep revolver with them and sometime shoots the stealers. Hijras from Taltola, Bankra and Sonarpur are popular for this kind of rude activity. That's why the Hijras of different areas of Kolkata and Howrah cajole them or sometimes try to avoid them.

CONCLUSION

The constructed identities or categories of Hijras continuously struggle to accumulate more capital to

dominate the other and to acquire 'distinct' positions in the Hijra world. This way the Hijra occupation performs as a political field that has sudden strategies. The theoretical explanations have succeeded in the amplification of political context of the Hijras. These help to understand the social process in which the social constructs of domination and the power relation between the categories or classes are embedded. Moreover it could have been better if in addition articulate postcoloniality, feminism and poststructuralism in the form of queer theory as analytical framework in this present study. For giving the voice to the marginalized gendered identities, much compromising with the heteronormative order in a patriarchal post-colonial society the study could have gone through postcolonial and feminist discourse to be more productive. Amid this field of power the shifts of performative identities and fluidity (e.g., shift from Akhua to Chhibri) could be better explained if we could enmesh queer theory with the two above theories at the very outset of this research. Thus this study confirms the possibility of further theorization and empirical exploration in macro and micro levels for future research on the Hijras.

NOTES

1. Their ambiguous sexual nature accounts for their traditional occupation, that of performing after the birth of a child, at wedding and at temple festivals. (Nanda, 1990).
2. The dominant cultural role of the Hijras is that of ritual performers (Nanda, 1990).
3. Naz Foundation International consider Kothi as a sexual minority, a community historically rooted in Indian cultural traditions, as well as a self-identifying label, more a sexual signifier than a gender in the broader framework of Kothi-Panthi dynamics.
4. Various Kothi 'identities' what Reddy found in Hydrabad are as follows-
(a) Kada-chatla kothi- They live 'gupt/ secret' life, not having had the desire to wear sarees or have the operation (genital); (b) Hijra- claim them as Muslim, believe in 'katna' or castration, the castrated are called 'cibri' and non-castrated called 'akkuva', (c) Jogin - claim them as Hindus, don't believe in 'katna' and don't take 'halal' meat; (d) Zenana - claim them as Hindus Hindus but take 'halal' meat; (e) Siva sati- same as jogin.
5. There are many restrictions within the Hijra community such as there will be no sexual life, do not gossip with any one on road particularly with men folk and have to walk off with own pride always. If Guru or someone elder (within group) scolds a Chela, then he cannot retaliate. Even if they

beat him with stick or shoes, he should bend down his head without any reaction. He will be punished if he speaks with seniors with his loud voice. He will also be punished if his portion of saree touches his Guru or touched by his leg, because touching of saree means he will become disciple of that Chela. If Guru calls him for any reason, then he should have to attend his call at any time either in night or day in order to nurture him. Guru may order to cook, massage body, wash clothes, clean the spit bowl, and sweep the floor and to clean the entire house if any Guru from other area would come. Sometime he may be called up his Chelas on Sunday or holiday. If any member does not maintain this decorum then he will be compensated.

6. Fieldwork method include selection and sampling, participant observation, interviewing, autobiographical interviewing, questionnaires, projective techniques, participant's classification, outcropping, existing documented information, proxemics and kinesics, folktales and notes. (Fetterman, '98; Morse and Richards, 2002).
7. For example a Nayak admitted that before independence of India the whole areas of Kolkata and Howrah were the property of one Nayak Late Gangaram. He had the permission papers of land authority which was given by the Zamindar of that time. His descendants got separated time to time for taking ownership and ruling the area. They also had land documents. But at present hardly any Nayaks have these ancient documents with them due to carelessness of the predecessor Nayaks or many destroyed evidences. The Nayaks who have the documents, never disclose it.

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