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## Femaling Males: Anthropological Analysis of the Transgender Community in Pakistan

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### Abstract

There is a widespread belief in Pakistani society that *hijras* or *khusras*<sup>1</sup> are the people born with ambiguous genitals medically termed as hermaphrodites. Most people think that born as *hijra* refers to an organic condition; but contrary to this myth, in most cases, becoming a *hijra* is one's own conscious attempt driving out of psychological and organic etiology. In this regard, we conducted an interesting anthropological study in Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab. We selected ninety-one different types of transgender for in-depth interviews and case studies from six *deras*<sup>2</sup> from Ghanta Ghur Gol Bagh and its surroundings. We discovered several factors that persuade one to join the *hijra* community; they include a passion, a desire to express their feminine identity more explicitly, poor economic conditions and, above all, to live a carefree life. The *hijras* who are born intersexed have the highest status as this condition is rare in humans. Interestingly, in a sample of 91, only three were real *hijras* or *khawaja sira*, 57 were *zenanas*<sup>3</sup> in the guise of *hijras* and 31 were *nirban*<sup>4</sup>. The study reveals that becoming a *hijra* entails many material and psychological advantages. As a career, it provides them opportunity to earn easy money through *vadhais*<sup>5</sup>, dance performance at disco bands, circus and prostitution. On the other hand it gives them personal autonomy and provides them excuse to win public sympathy. Their traditional role depends upon their individual talent, ability to face hostility and ridicule. In short, Pakistani *hijras* do possess contradicting virtues of masculinity and femininity and Pakistani mainstream culture does have room for them to survive under the shadow of sexual variance.

**Keywords:** *Hijras*, Sexuality, Gender, Culture, Economy

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## Introduction

'Sex' refers to the biological characteristics that define men and women but 'Gender' refers to the socially constructed attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. It is usually presupposed that there are two genders, masculine and feminine, founded on the two biological sexes, male and female. However, for anthropologists apart from these two categories of human beings based on sex and gender another category of transgender exists as a separate gender. Transgender locally known as *hijra* can be defined as the one who can not reproduce due to some biological disorder. Interestingly, the ratio of *hijras* has increased in Pakistan although the birth of a natural *hijra* is a rare happening. According to Jami (2004:5) about 1% of the whole *hijra* community is hermaphrodite or intersexes, remaining are transgender, cross-dressers, homosexuals or bisexuals. They change their gender because they feel that they are different.

In a broader sense, the term *hijra*<sup>6</sup> is used for a man who is perceived by others to be of an intermediate sex and who pursues the culturally prescribed occupation of dancing and taking *vadhai*<sup>7</sup> on marriages and birth of male offspring. *Hijras* form a unique sub-culture within dominant Pakistani culture which is comprised on the usual categories of men and women. The culture of *hijras* is dynamic and requires differentiation of diverse categories that exist in it. To join *hijras* community, some individuals undergo castration and those who undertake this surgery are called *nirban* equivalent to a transsexual. Those individuals who refuse to undergo the emasculation are called *zenana*. The criteria of being a *hijra* and not a *zenana* are castration and membership of a *hijra* group as *vhaila*<sup>8</sup>. *Zenanas* keep their hair short like men and wear wigs when the occasion demands. Many of them are married men with children. On the other hand, *hijras* live as full time females. They grow their hair, nails and pluck eyebrows. In order to look exactly like women, they only wear female clothes while *zenanas* have both male and female wardrobes. *Zenanas* perform at disco bands or traditional gatherings but do not take *vadhai*.

*Hijras* describe themselves as individuals having male bodies, with a female spirit trapped in it.

Two-spirit persons have been defined as embodying the following characteristics: (1) a culturally recognized position as gender transformed and/or as an additional status that includes dressing partially or completely as the other gender; (2) adopting the behaviors and demeanors associated with the other gender or a unique combination of men's and women's behaviors (Ramet, 1996: 27). Their

behavioral characteristics elicit responses from others such as the negative sanction of families and friends along with sexual advances from boys and men. In response to this, such individual enters into an informal interaction with other *hijras* of their area and ultimately they congregate themselves into a community which has their own normative structure. Belittling of *hijras* is common but still there are few people who believe in their sacredness and who fear their wrath.

Gender reversals, cross-dressing, and gender innovations have been found in all historical epochs. Cross-dressers have included Hatshepsut<sup>9</sup> (an Egyptian ruler of the fifteenth century BCE), Roman Emperor Elagabalus, Rudolf Valentino, J. Edgar Hoover, and British pop star Boy George. The sixteenth-century King of France Henri III habitually wore female attire and even asked of his courtiers that they refer to him as “Her Majesty.” Similarly, in eighteenth-century Russia, Empress Elizabeth regularly wore men’s clothing when riding on her steed, and in 1744 started holding regular “metamorphosis” balls in which all the guests were expected to cross-dress. Elizabeth herself liked to come to these events dressed variously as a Cossack, as a French carpenter, or as a Dutch sailor with the twice-dubious name Mikhailova. In this century, film-maker Ed Wood was a heterosexual transvestite and, according to legend, wore women’s silk underwear beneath his combat fatigues when he landed in the South Pacific during World War II (Quoted in Ramet, 1996: 15-16).

There are different nomenclatures for *hijras*. According to Louise Brown, in the subcontinent they are known as ‘*Khusra*’ means half man, half woman (Brown 2005:12), *Khawaja sira* – imported from foreign lands, emasculated and appointed as guardians of female parts of palaces (*Harems*) during Mughal era in the subcontinent (Latif, 2002:31) etc. There are also some names given to *hijras* according to their type and sexual and physical features e.g. those who are having male sex organs but think they have *ruh* (soul) of *hijras* are called *Aqwa*; those who are like *Aqwa* but living with a *guru*<sup>10</sup> and convinced to be castrated are called *Zankha*; those whose ancestors belonged to the families of *khawaja Siras* like to be called as *khandani hijras* and usually enjoy better status in their own community; those who get themselves castrated either on their own will or by being compelled are named as *narban hijras* (Khattak, 2004:47). The *narban hijras* are highly respected among their community whereas those non-emasculated *hijras* are regarded as fake’ (Shah, 1961: 29). Out of all these nonmenclatures *hijra* is most widely used term and perhaps it is the most derogatory and often used as an abuse for a man who is either impotent or behaves unmanly.

On joining the community, these individuals discard their male identities and names. They adopt female names mostly of film stars. Usually a nick name is added on to the name depicting some idiosyncrasy, such as Pinky Cheese, Saima Choopa etc. Majority of *hijras* change their names on joining the community. Names are sometimes kept even before formal inclusion in the community and a *hijra* who is a casual visitor is addressed by the feminine name by his *hijra* friends. The names are kept in a ceremony and continued for the rest of their lives. The negative sanction of society is so strong that many *hijras* permanently abandon their families and seek membership of the *hijra* community.

The social life of *hijras* can be divided into two major categories: *Hijra's* life in a society and their life within their own community. Although there are rich and poor *hijras*, yet response to them in a society is usually uniform. In past, the Muslim world witnessed *hijras* playing very important roles in society and in the courts of Muslim rulers (Brown 2005:49) and they enjoyed the status of *Deevan* equal to that of a minister (Latif, 2002). But today there is almost no role for them to play in society. Therefore they are left with beggary and selling sex (Rais, 1993) and are ridiculed and disrespected in the society. Thus as a social revenge they are always looking for such children and men whom they could persuade to become members of their community. They use different psychological tactics to make them a part of them (Latif, 2002:36). According to Brown (2005:48), a man who buys sex from the *hijras* usually wants them to behave like women: 'I like them to be like girls'.

Hierarchical social structures are not new with us. However, this hierarchical social organization is very much visible among *hijras* as observed by many researchers. In a descending order the concepts of *Chowdher*, *Maha Guru*<sup>11</sup>, *Dada Guru*, *Guru* and *Chela*<sup>12</sup> exist and are strictly practiced by the *hijras*. As they are trained in obedience to the communities rule (Brown, 2005:51), usually no *chela* dares to disobey her *Guru* but if she does so, she is charged fine (Latif, 2002:42) or given corporal punishment by the *Guru*. One of the most serious and cruel punishments that the *hijras* can inflict upon one of their own is to cut her hair. (Brown 2005:50). This hierarchical structure becomes stronger when the *hijras* develop kin relations among them. The blood relations that the *hijras* love to construct among themselves increase the intensity of the structure based on respect and regard (Brown, 2005:82). However, although on the surface the *hijras* feel very much affection for each other yet there is great competition among them. Keeping in mind the demand of their clients, who want to see them as girls, 'they are obsessed with who is the most beautiful and the most feminine.' (Brown 56:2005) For this they even wear what Louis Brown (2005) names as 'padded bras' in order

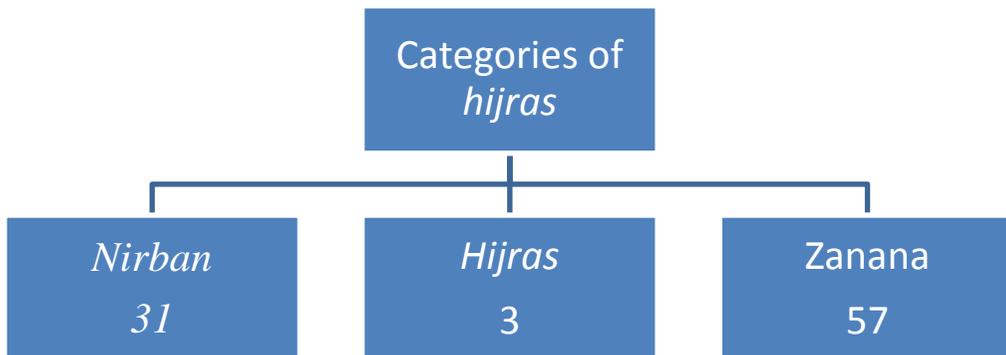
to exaggerate their femininity based on breasts. They also dress up like women, apply lipstick, *Kajal*<sup>3</sup>, use perfumes, cook and eat good meals. Most of the things they do are usually the roles that are assigned to the women.

Many researchers have attempted to explore the economic life of the *hijras* and their notorious means of earning livelihood. Most of the jobs they do are tabooed in our society. It is not uncommon to find *hijras* in red light areas for the purpose of commercial sex. The *gurus* lead a life that is economically more stable because their *chelas* work for them. This *Guru-Chela* relationship is a lifelong bond of reciprocity in which the *Guru* is obligated to help the *chela* and the *chela* is obligated to be loyal and obedient to the *guru* (Nanda, 1991).

The lives of *hijras* have traditionally been ignored due to their perceived low social standing as well as their lack of organisation. It is imperative that we try to find out factors which can explain how social response towards *hijras* is linked to their unique gender identity and due to what reasons they remain in the bottom of the social hierarchy? The present study is an attempt to understand *hijras* as a community in the broader context of Pakistani society and culture. It explains how their marginalisation is due to an intersection of economic position, sexuality, and gender identity. The main focus of this study was to explore the dynamics of the culture of transgender community settled in the Gol Bagh of Dera Ghazi Khan. Their unique transgender identity, dance, songs and ceremonial display on weddings, birthdays are considered major source of their popularity. Apart from this, they are also engaged in other activities such as prostitution and drug selling. In short, this study explores all these dimensions which make them integrated and indispensable part of our culture. The rationale for choosing this topic was primarily due to the existing lack of information on these communities. This study not just intended to exoticise lives of *hijras* but most importantly to fill up the wide information gap on the existing situation of *hijras* with the purpose to earn recognition for such sexual minorities.

### **Research Methodology:**

The present research was conducted in Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, Pakistan. The six *deras*<sup>14</sup> were selected from Ghanta Ghar Gol Bagh and its surroundings where *hijras* concentrate and each *dera* comprised 12 to 20 members of *hijras*. The total population of the *Ghanta Ghar Gol Bagh* is 6033 approximately and total households are 1248 according to the census report of 1998<sup>15</sup>. The study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods.



Quantitative research employs objective measurement and statistical analysis of numeric data for the formulation and explanation of research question. It compulsorily requires controlled setting and variables, whereas qualitative research focuses on understanding social phenomenon from the perspective of the human participating in the study (Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002:22).

Informal and detailed interviews of *hijras* and key informants were conducted during the six months period from July-December 2008. In total, 91 *hijras* were interviewed and in addition to this qualitative information, quantitative data was gathered through socio-economic survey to know their socio-demographic profiles, family history, economic status, caste, alcohol/drug use and sexual activity (*For detailed composition of sample see Table 1 below*).

**Table 1:**

Number of *hijras* in different Deras

S/No.	Names of <i>Deras</i>	No. of <i>Hijras</i>
1	<i>Sadiq's Daira</i>	12
2	<i>Pinky' Daira</i>	16
3	<i>Syall's Daira</i>	15
4	<i>Bijli's Daira</i>	18
5	<i>Sana Daira</i>	13
6	<i>Sana Daira</i>	17
<b>Total</b>		<b>91</b>

## Findings and Discussion

Field findings reveal that *hijras* prefer to live in the form of groups and each group consists of ten to twenty five members. There is one head of every group. The residential place of group is called *dera*. The head of the *dera* is called *guru* who acts like a mother. *Hijras* like to live in crowded areas and mostly seen at red light areas, shrines of *Peer*<sup>16</sup> and at circus and exhibitions. *Hijras* reinforce their cultural identity by performing different rituals and ceremonies. Most interesting aspect of their life is the establishment of a fictive kinship which connects them with each other and also with the *hijras* of other *deras*. The most significant relationship in the *hijra* community is that of the *guru* and *chaila*. When an individual decides to formally join the *hijra* community, he becomes the *chaila* of *guru* first. This *guru-chaila* relationship is a lifelong bond of reciprocity in which the *guru* is obligated to help the *chaila* and the *chaila* is obligated to be loyal and obedient to the *guru*. This tradition is known as *Rasm-e-Shagirdi*. The first ceremony towards *chaila* making is called “*Kapra Dalna*”. In which *hijras* are called on a small scale, usually those who are present in the city and with whom the host is on cordial terms. The *guru* fixes one end of the *dupata*<sup>17</sup> he is wearing on the head of the *chaila* and says three times that you are my *chaila*. After this, the *dupata* is given to *chaila*. The second part is the “*Chattai Baithna*”<sup>18</sup> in which a *chattai* or mat is laid where the *guru* and new *chaila* sits. New *chaila* puts 2100 rupees on the palm of his hand and requests the *guru* to accept him as *chaila*. During this ceremony *Maha Guru* or new *guru* briefs him regulations to be the part of *hijra* group. If *chaila* accepts all these rules then *guru* takes the 2100 Rs. from the palm of new *chaila* and kisses on his forehead. The third and final step of *Rasm-e-Shagirdi* is “*Naak aur Kan Chaidna*”<sup>19</sup>. During this process only senior members of *hijras* are permitted. A needle and thread is used for the piercing of nose and ears. This needle and thread is the private possession of *guru* which was used on that time when this *guru* had become a *chaila*. *Guru* pierces the nose and ear and then *chaila* bows down and touches the *guru*'s feet. This ceremony is followed by a big feast organized by the *chaila* (see Table 2).

The second famous ceremony among the *hijras* is making *Dance Ka Guru*. After joining *hijra* community it becomes essential for *chaila* to learn dancing. Every group of *hijras* has two or three dancers and one incharge dancer who teaches dance with the consent of *guru*. Upon the completion of dance training, *chaila* is brought before *guru* for trial. If *guru* approves his dance, then dance incharge arranges a function where all the dancers from each group are invited to take the trial of new *chaila* dancer. Before the trial, one dancer from each *dera* gives his

dance performance. Then *chaila* dancer performs and if his performance is appreciated by other dancers then he touches the feet of his incharge dancer and makes a new dance pose, which is suggested by his dance incharge and this dance incharge now becomes the dance *guru*. At the end *chaila* bows down and then touches the feet of his dance *guru*. At night, hemp (*Chango*) is grinded for the intoxication. They all take the grinded hemp and have lot of fun. In this function all the dancers wear female dresses.

**Table 2:**

The *Dera*-wise categories of *Hijras* in *D.G. Khan*

S/No	<i>Dera</i> of <i>Hijra</i>	<i>Maha Guru</i>	<i>Guru</i>	<i>Chaila</i>
1	<i>Sidique Dera</i>	1	1	13
2	<i>Sial Dera</i>	1	1	14
3	<i>Bijli Dera</i>	0	1	13
4	<i>Sana Dera</i>	0	1	16
5	<i>Lado gujar Dera</i>	1	1	12
6	<i>Pinky Dera</i>	0	1	14
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>82</b>

Although *hijras* cannot procreate, they still have a strong desire for motherhood. When a *chaila* of *guru* makes his *chaila*, then his *guru* becomes *Maha Guru*. Sometimes *Maha Guru* considers himself as grand mother. At this occasion another ceremony takes place in which *Maha Guru* is shaped like nine-month pregnant lady. A labour room is created at the *dera* where one *hijra* is appointed for providing assistance in deliverly. Actually it is a symbolic birth ceremony in which delivery takes place. Two *hijras* bring the pregnant *Maha guru* in the labour room and the *chaila* who is going for the re-birth is already present in the labour room. *Maha Guru* acts as she is having labour contractions. After half hour assistant *hijra* comes out and announces the birth of a baby. Then all the *hijras* start dancing. Soon after this, milk bottle is placed on the chest of the mother from which the daughter drinks milk, thus symbolizing the mother-child bond. Other *hijras* present at the occasion demand *vadahi*, which the mother initially refuses to give. The money is finally given and the *hijras* depart. The daughter usually addresses the mother as “Mama” or a similar word. The two daughters of one mother become sisters although they may never enter into this relationship

themselves. There is no limitation of number for the creation of these ties. While commenting on this relationship one mother *hijras* said, “*We are also females. We also have a desire to be the mother. If nature deprived us, we are not worried. We become mothers through our own rituals. We have no complaint or accusation with God. We also love our daughters in the same way as the natural mother*”.<sup>20</sup>

*Behn*<sup>21</sup> *Baithna* or becoming sisters is another bond which can be created between two *hijras* who may be from same group or may belong to different groups. If they are from different groups then one *guru* takes the desiring *chaila* to the *dera* of other *guru*. If they belong to the same group then *guru* himself takes the decision and arranges a function. All the expenses of this ceremony are afforded by the *chailas* who demand for it. In this function all the *dera* members are invited. Different rituals are performed. At first, those *Chailas* who are going to be the *Behn* take one sip each from the same glass of milk. The remaining milk is shared with the guests. Then both *chailas* exchange their *dopatas* and other gifts. Finally they hug each other and dance together. They become frequent visitors of each other’s *deras* and initiate a system of gift exchange. The creation of such relationship serves to avoid any misunderstanding stemming from extensive interaction between the concerned individuals and their *gurus*. The *guru* may regard this interaction as an indication of the *chaila*’s plan to join another *dera* as a *chaila*.

Another relationship famous among *hijras* is *Girya-Moorat* relationship. Having a husband or *girya* is the preferred alternative for those *hijras* who wish to have sexual relations. Most of them have affectionate, as well as sexually satisfying and economically reciprocal relationships with these men, with whom they live, sometimes alone, or sometimes with several other *hijras*. *Hijras* having husbands do not break their ties with their community. In *hijra* culture, this tradition of marriage is called “*Sagiah*<sup>22</sup>” in which *hijras* marry a normal male who plays the role of a husband and caretaker. This ceremony takes place at midnight. The most loveable man for a *hijra* is called “*Girya*” with whom *hijra* spends the whole day and night. *Hijra* serves his husband as wife. Through a formal wedding ceremony, *hijras* offer their lover legal right of prostitution. Many people usually visit the *dera* of *hijras* for the fulfillment of their sexual urge. In many cases they become lovers of one of the *hijra* from the *dera*. *Guru* demands money according to the financial conditions of *girya* to contract a marriage with the *hijra* he is in love with. Upon receipt of payment *guru* arranges a function which is celebrated in three stages including *Mehndi*, *Rukhsti* and *Valima* (see Table 3).

**Table 3:***Giryas and Moorat in different Deras*

S/No	Name of <i>Dera</i>	<i>Girya</i>	<i>Moorat</i>
1	<i>Sidique Dera</i>	13	11
2	<i>Sial Dera</i>	09	08
3	<i>Bijli Dera</i>	09	12
4	<i>Lado gujar Dera</i>	16	13
5	<i>Sana Dera</i>	13	10
6	<i>Pinki Dera</i>	11	11
	<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>65</b>

**Becoming *Nirban* (Castration):**

*Nirban*<sup>23</sup> is the word used in a private language of *Hijras*. *Nirban* is a boy who goes under a secret castration ceremony that transforms him into *hijra*. In the past being *nirvan* was a requirement for every non-hermaphrodite *hijra* to be able to work as servant and guard in the Muslim *Harems*<sup>24</sup>. Till today, such *hijras* are given a lot of respect in *hijra* community. This operation is usually done by the *Nai* in presence of *Guru*. The fellow *hijras* help during the process. While doing this, face of the *hijra* is turned towards east. Sometimes causality may occur. But it mostly happened in past. Nowadays this surgery is done by professional doctors. Castration is a dangerous process. Normally a *hijra* is asked ten times before he decides to become a *nirban*. If he agrees then he is kept alone for ten days and on 11<sup>th</sup> day he is brought to a specific place and given a bath with cold water. *Hijras* hold him firmly and make him *nirban*. They dance and beat the drums so loudly that the voice of the boy cannot come out of the room. One of the *nirban* commented, “*It is the sign of devotion with our God that we try to live even when our soul is against our body. We give the sacrifice of our body part which is against our soul. We remove this organ because we can live without it but can not without our soul. After removing this organ, we become nirban and our soul gets peace and rest.*” There was only one *hijra* who was repentant and admitted that becoming *nirban* was his unforgiveable mistake which he committed upon the insistence of *guru* (see Table 4 below).

**Table 4:**No of castrated *Hijras* in different *Deras*

S/No.	Name of Dera	Castrated
1	<i>Sidique Dera</i>	06
2	<i>Sial Dera</i>	04
3	<i>Lado Dera</i>	08
4	<i>Bijli Dera</i>	03
5	<i>Sana Dera</i>	04
6	<i>Pinky Dera</i>	06
	<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

**Economic Resources**

Discrimination on the basis of class and gender not only limits the choice of profession and the possibility of economic advancement but also impedes access to education and information about lifestyle choices of *hijras*. Following are the few most important sources of income.

- a) *Vadhai*
- b) Prostitution
- c) Performance at “*Maot Da Kouana and Maot Da Gola*”
- d) Participation in Disco bands at different occasions
- e) *Dheengunr* (Begging)
- f) *Chango* and *Burma* selling

**a) *Vadhai***

*Vadhai* is the obligatory payment of traditional gifts in cash and kind *hijras* receive for dance and music performances on celebrations like the birth of male off spring, “*Aqiqas*”<sup>25</sup> and weddings. There are different kinds of *vadhai* performance. The traditional payment in kind includes a cup of sugar, five cups of flour as well as an outfit or “*Jorra*”. They do not demand cooked food. *hijras* do not refuse *Vadhai*, although the amount given is low. But now-a-days, *hijras* demand payment in cash instead of kind.

The *hijras* maintain informal relations with women and children of their “*Mohallas*” who are the source of information regarding any celebration that has taken place. *Hijras* visit the family and fix the day and time at which they need to perform. Many families give *hijras* money and do not encourage them to give a performance. The *hijra* collect *vadhai* from specific places which come under the jurisdiction of his *Guru* and every household of the *hijras* has its own legal document in which the areas from which they are entitled to take *vadhai* are clearly listed. The allocation is not made by the government but is decided amongst the *hijras* themselves. The *hijras* who have villages in their jurisdiction are considerably affluent because rural population uphold traditions and fear their curse.

Refusal to pay *vadhai*, results in verbal abuse on behalf of the *hijras*. In some cases, *hijras* curse the family with misfortunes like the death of a baby or infertility. The territory of *vadhai* may be sold by one party to another in case it is too large for a particular *Guru* and his *Chaila*'s to manage. Field findings reveal that 30 *hijras* used to collect *vidhai* as major source of their income.

#### **b) Prostitution**

Prostitution is the major source of their earning. They use the terms “*Segha*” “*Dhurya*” or “*Lungi Bechna*<sup>26</sup>” for sexual activity. *Hijras* are relatively cheaper than female prostitutes. The clients of the *hijras* include unmarried youth, married middle-aged men, migrants and laborers without family, police men and addicted persons. They also give the legal rights for the prostitution to some people by saying them their *giryas*. *Girya* do not allow their passive *hijra* partners to have sexual relations with any one else (see Table 5).

Due to the extreme intolerance they face in their society, *hijras* often use social spaces where they meet sexual partners, lovers and even clients. Prostitution is more common among young *hijras*. Apparently they go to exhibitions to perform dance at magic shows but their latent purpose is to hunt for potential clients among crowd present over there. They take 50 to 200 rupees for providing anal sex but good looking *hijras* enjoy higher rates ranging from 300 to 500 rupees. One *hijra* on average can have sex with 10-15 clients in a day. None of them was in favor of using precautionary measures during sex. They are driven to making furtive sexual contacts and having sex at their *deras* and this makes them subject to constant surveillance by the police. To take bribe from *hijras*, police often raid their *deras* on the allegation that they are running a brothel. Police pose a constant threat to *hijras* and they cannot survive unless they remain cooperative with the police.

**Table 5:***Giryas and Moorat in different Deras*

S/No.	Name of <i>Dera</i>	<i>Girya</i>	<i>Moorat</i>
1	<i>Sidique Dera</i>	13	11
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4	<i>Lado gujar Dera</i>	16	13
5	<i>Sana Dera</i>	13	10
6	<i>Pinki Dera</i>	11	11
	<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>65</b>

**c) Performance at “*Maot Ka Koowaa*” (Death Well) and *Moat Ka Gola (Death Ball)***

In this occupation they participate occasionally. Circular shaped rooms are erected with planks of wood at fairs is called *Maot ka Koowan*. In *Moat Ka Gola* one big cage is erected in a boundary. The audience purchases the tickets to watch the motorcycle and automobile performances. There is also a stage outside this setup. When show ends, *hijras* come on the stage and dance. During these variety shows mostly people become their fan and give them money and also invite them to perform at their private family functions. In total there were fifty six *hijras* who were engaged in this activity. Good looks are a pre-requisite to be successful in this profession. In present sample, 56 *hijras* out of 91 earned money from this activity.

**d) Participation in Disco bands at different occasions**

Performance in disco bands is rated as the most prestigious of all *hijra* occupation, as it demands a certain standard of good looks and talent for dance. The band includes *mirasi* and *hijras*. There is also a singer *hijra*. The *hijras* perform dance and demand for *vai*<sup>27</sup>. The advance payment is taken near about Rs. 1000 to 3000 while remaining is received in the form of *vail*. There is also one *hijra*, who collects the *vail*.

**e) *Dheengunr* (Begging)**

Those *hijras* who are aged and have no financial assets usually beg. *Hijras* who cannot earn are not allowed to stay at *dera*. The age groups of begging *hijras* were 50 to 60. They usually beg at night on traffic signals and in the streets and

markets. Their maximum earning is 70 to 200. They also go door to door for begging. There is no restriction for a *hijra* to beg at any specific places. During research, there were just two *hijras* who were drawing their income from begging.

#### f) *Chango* and *Chars* (Drugs) selling

*Hijras* mostly use opium, wine and tobacco. They also use valium and ativon tablets for good sleep. On average one *hijra* smokes 10 to 12 cigarettes daily. They also use *Chango* (hemp) and *Chars* (*Hash*). They usually grind the *Chango* at the time of sunset when they all get together. The ingredients of *Chango* are small quantity of hemp flower, poppy seed and sugar. *Chango* is considered cheap narcotics and 67 *hijras* in the sample were found addictive and 8 of them were engaged in drug selling. These narcotics were available on payment from *siddique* and *siyal dera*.

The process of distributing income is called *nijra*. Before *nijra* some money is taken out to meet the daily expenditures. The entire amount is handed over to the *guru* who is responsible to distribute this equally among all *hijras*. *Guru* also keeps his own share. But the income coming from prostitution is the personal possession of *chailas* and he is not obligated to share it with *guru* or any other fellow. *Hijras* have their own expenditure pattern according to their income.

### Conclusion

Transgender culture is unique because of its own local identities, customs and rituals. They are neither male nor female and have their own separate identity. They do acknowledge that they have female spirits and so their behavior is more towards showing feminine virtues. Yet they are socially perceived as barren females and impotent males which make them vulnerable. They have confusing gender and roles associated with them. Their female role requires them to look like women but their public behaviour, addiction, abusive language and sexual connotations and above all their inability to reproduce does not allow them to fit in the framework of ideal *paksitani* women in their prestigious roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. Transgender community does exist as a sub group with its sexual diversity confronting poles of masculinity and femininity.

Interestingly, the ratio of *hijras* has increased in Pakistan although the birth of a natural *hijra* is a rare happening estimated about only 1% of the whole *hijra* community. Thus it can be concluded from the research findings that male-to-

female gender crossing is more psychological than natural as it urges normal men who mostly belong to lower strata's to adopt the deviant role of *hijra* as a profession to avail economic and social liberty which is difficult to attain otherwise.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Local terms used for hermaphrodites

<sup>2</sup> A place where *hijras* live

<sup>3</sup> The one who behaves and dresses up like females

<sup>4</sup> Castrated person

<sup>5</sup> A type of traditional earning among *hijras*

<sup>6</sup> '*hijra*' in Arabic means holy, and may have been derived from the Urdu word 'ezra' that means a wanderer or a nomad

<sup>7</sup> A type of traditional earning among *hijras*

<sup>8</sup> Junior or pupil of *hijras*

<sup>9</sup> Fifth pharaoh of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty of the Ancient Egypt

<sup>10</sup> Head of the *dera* (Settlement of *hijras*)

<sup>11</sup> Grand head of *hijras*

<sup>12</sup> Junior or pupil of *hijras*.

<sup>13</sup> Black eye liner

<sup>14</sup> Traditional housing for *hijras*

<sup>15</sup> Source: Tehsil Record from Patwari

<sup>16</sup> Saint

<sup>17</sup> Shawl

<sup>18</sup> sitting on a mat

<sup>19</sup> Piercing of nose and ears

<sup>20</sup> Narrated by Mother *hijra* during personal interview

<sup>21</sup> Sister

<sup>22</sup> First intercourse

<sup>23</sup> Persian word Meaning 'sacrificing man'

<sup>24</sup> Wives of King (specifically in Arabic culture it refers to wives of a Shekh)

<sup>25</sup> A ritual among Muslims at the occasion of new born baby

<sup>26</sup> To provide sex

<sup>27</sup> Enumeration given to performer at different occasions

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