

Beyond Gender Binaries: Understanding the Marginalized Eunuch Community in Lahore

Dr Huma Pervaiz

*Assistant Professor,
Institute of History,
GC University Kala Shah Kaku Campus.*

Ali Aman

*Visiting Faculty,
Gift University Gujranwala Campus.*

Abstract:

This article explores the socioeconomic fabric and its influence on the marginality of the Eunuch community of Lahore. Marginalization of Eunuchs is not a new phenomenon; it is as old as the Eunuchs. Eunuchs are marginalized today; however, their history is rich with many references to their existence available as influential beings in the past. Perception of Eunuchs changed over time and re-defined their role in society. In Pakistan, the identity of Eunuchs has been institutionalized and manifested in a particular living style which is neither male nor female. As a result, they have become socially ostracized, and they also have become the most despised group of people that are flung to the outer fringes of society. For their survival, they are forced to retreat into the eunuch community. Just as the whole society is being altered by the forces of globalization, so too, the culture of Eunuch is subjected to erosion by the forces of media and new cultural trends. These forces compel them to look for other means of earning such as begging and prostitution hence they are becoming more and more marginalized.

Keywords: Marginalization, Community, Culture, Begging, Eunuch, Lahore

Introduction:

The Eunuchs, commonly labelled as the ‘others’ in our society inhabit almost all parts of the country, and their quite reasonable population can easily be seen in large cities such as Lahore and Rawalpindi. Lahore is a magnificent epicentre of

rich cultural traditions which is creating space for people of diverse cultures and assimilating them into its very pluralistic social life. It is a multicultural center where the traces of dissimilar identities from many epochs such as Mughals, Sikhs and British are present and the Eunuch culture is one of them, which retains much of its distinctiveness today.

Lahore is the second largest city in Pakistan. Eunuchs have a great attraction for the big cities to avail opportunities leading to a better lifestyle. All of them living in Lahore city are not residents. The living condition of Eunuchs in Lahore is not very enviable but it is comparatively better than other cities in Pakistan. Eunuchs are facing discrimination in different parts of the country, however, for the last few years; some attempts such as the survey of the Eunuchs population and issuance of National Identity cards, are being made to give them rights in the name of transgender rights.¹

Their position in Pakistani society is precarious to the extent that often they are deprived of the status of being a human. The sense of deprivation compels them to retreat into the folds of their community which enables them to pull through with their marginalized status. People stare and jeer at them as they are generally treated as social freaks. They are the people with no land. A Eunuch Laila, during an interview, asked in a visibly pungent tone, "Why do people laugh at us? Why it is shameful to be a Eunuch? God created us with a female soul in a male body."² That is not the only question about Eunuchs worth reflecting. Countless queries can be framed regarding their status in Pakistani society.

Eunuchs of Lahore draw some consolation from their splendid past as they consider themselves the descendant of the *Khawaja Saras* of the Mughal courts.³ Owing to this fact, most Eunuchs prefer the term *Khawaja Sara*. Hijra is also a term that is more frequently used for Eunuchs in the subcontinent. The word '*Hijra*' was used differently at different times. According to anthropologist Kira Hall⁴, its origin was *Khoja* which is a distorted form of *Khawaja*. This word was deployed for court Eunuchs only and used for hermaphrodites, not for artificially (castrated) *Hijras*. In early 1880 the respectable term *Khoja* lost

its popularity among Hindi-speaking people and *Hijra* was used both for castrated as well as natural Eunuchs.⁵

Serena Nanda (an Indian anthropologist) writes that *Hijra* is an Urdu word used for natural as well as for castrated *Hijra* but impotency is central to the definition of *Hijra*.⁶ The term *Hijra* has become quite current now a day. It refers to all kinds of Eunuchs.⁷ *Hijra* is also a peculiar attitude and behaviour when a person tends to behave like a woman, he is derisively called *Hijra* but in a true sense *Hijra* is a combination of masculine and feminine traits, or maybe it is missing /lost of both. In the famous Urdu Encyclopedia *Farhang-e-Asfiya*, it is mentioned that etymologically *Hijra* is derived from the Urdu word '*Sahib-e-Khana*' which is used for those who belong to a family, particularly the impotent one often employed in the home of elites, ministers and sultans.⁸

Most Eunuchs whose references are found in history were castrated. Quite often, they were needed to protect the harems and ladies Eunuchs took charge because they were mostly unable to have relations with women of harems as they had been physically powerful and sexually impotent. The Eunuchs were considered less man and they were unable to procreate offspring that's why they were less harmful to the state because they did not try to get more power for the throne and were less interested in establishing a competitive dynasty. Their only purpose was to gain the loyalties of the king and keep them in power.

The practice of castration was also related to religious ceremonies. The voluntary practice of castration for religious celibacy appeared early in Christian history (prevailed in the 3rd century) and most people were castrated to make them the Eunuchs for the kingdom's sake.⁹ Castration was also done to propitiate the God and Goddesses. A sacrificial rite of castration among human beings somehow reveals the connection between the divine and human.

For the Eunuchs the ritual of castration has great significance because it changes their entire world and inserted them into the world of the marginalized. Castration is a sign of respectability which is called *Nirban* or *Nirvana* Eunuchs translates the

*Nirvan as rebirth.*¹⁰ It is done through the operation which may cease their life but they do it to achieve a sacred power. *Nirban* holds a superior status among the Eunuchs, and it is not considered a precondition of being a part of the community because many of them are not castrated and they are allowed to live with them. In both cases, the “desire of being women” is very prominent and castration is the only way through which they can get rid of their maleness. Some of them are of the view that after castration we can become *Hijra* in the true sense of the term neither man nor woman, but only *Hijra*. Castration may be the climax of their unsatisfied desire and as admitted by many that we find our true selves after castration, and it is considered as the time of the completion of every *Hijra* who feels unsatisfied and incomplete with the male body and has a “female soul.”¹¹

Historical Gaze on Eunuchs in Medieval India:

The process of marginality regarding Eunuchs was set with the advent of the British Empire in India. Before it, many of them held positions of influence during the Sultanid and Mughal Periods such as riders, administrators, and guards of the royal harems. It was a practice among Muslim rulers of India (Sultans and Mughals) they kept slaves in their harems and most of them were Eunuchs. Senior Eunuchs were known as *Nazirs or Khawaja Sara* and there were many junior Eunuchs under their charge.¹² Muslim rulers initiated the import of castrated Eunuchs from Byzantium, Nubia, Ethiopia, Eastern Europe, and Greece.¹³ Some Eunuchs gained the highest ranks. One of them was Kafor Hazardinari, the army commander of Alauddin Khalji(1296-1316) who was known as Malik Kafur. He was sent four times to conquer Deccan (1306-1312). He defeated Raja of Devar and he also arrested Raja Ram Dev and he made the annexation of Gujrat in 1297.¹⁴

Khusrau Khan, a Eunuch, was the favourite catamite of Mubarak Khalji(1316-1320) who gained popularity during his reign. In 1318, he led an expedition towards the southern part of India to the extent of the power of his ruler. Khawaja Jahan Malik Sarwar, a black Eunuch who was appointed wazir during the reign of Sultan Mahmud(1398-1394), a successor of sultan

Feroz Tugluq, was awarded the title of Malik-us-Sharq and became the governor of Jaunpur in 1394.¹⁵

Some Eunuchs were awarded the title of Itbar Khan (trusted lord), in the region of great Mughals. The famous Eunuch Itbar Khan was the slave of Zahir ud Din Babar in 1525. He also served Akbar's mother and other begums during the second year of Akbar's reign and later Akbar appointed him governor of Delhi in 1558.¹⁶ During the reign of Jahangir (1605-1627) Eunuch Feroz Khan was granted *Mansab* of 1500/600.¹⁷ Aurangzeb had a famous Eunuch Bakhtawar Khan who achieved the highest rank of a great scholar and historian. He wrote the abstracts of *Tarikh-i- Alfi* and *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar*.¹⁸ In the reign of the last Mughal King Bahadur Shah Zafar the Eunuch Mahbub Ali Khan gained fame for being very wise and became a reliable adviser to Queen Zenat Begum.¹⁹

It is mentioned in *Tuzki-i- Jahangri* by Emperor Jahangir (1556-1605) that the custom of castration was common in Bengal, especially in Selhat the people castrated their male children and gave them to the governor in place of revenue that they could not pay. Other provinces began to adopt the same custom to the extent that Emperor Jahangir had to impose strict penalties on people who followed this cruel custom. He also prohibited the trade of young Eunuchs.²⁰ The Eunuch remained a profitable commodity in the slave trade, as their price was three times higher than an ordinary slave that's why Bengal provided Eunuchs for the *ashraf* of Delhi. The rulers of other states also sometimes presented them as a gift to the ruling elite. In the reign of Aurangzeb, the Ethiopian king sent twenty-five slaves, of which "nine or ten of whom were of tender age in a state to be made Eunuch."²¹ Eunuchs were given the names of precarious stones and spices like Almas (diamond), Yaqut (carnelian), Firuzeh (turquoise) by their masters.²²

Slavery and emasculation made them loyal to their rulers however their orphanhood made them cruel in some respect. The Italian Physician Niccolo Manucci narrated an incident during the region of Aurangzeb in the mid-1600s, the incident was about one of the trusted eunuchs Itbar Khan when two people from Bengal claimed to be his parents and later on when

it was proved he betrayed anger against them by saying that 'how have ye the great temerity to come into my presence after you have consumed the price of my body, and having been the cause by emasculating me of depriving me of the greatest pleasures attainable in this world'.²³

Lucknow became the center of Muslim culture when the Mughal Empire became to disintegrate in the eighteenth century. In 1765 Nawab Shuja- ud- Daula, son of Nawab Safdar Jang, made the town Faizabad his headquarters where he organized the army and built splendid mosques and parks. Interestingly, a large part of his army was trained by *Khawaja Saras*. Fourteen thousand soldiers who wore the red uniform were in the command of *Khawaja Sara* Basant Ali Khan (year). *Khawaja Sara* Amber Ali Khan was the commander of five hundred cavalries and an infantry battalion. *Khawaja Sara* Mahbub Ali Khan and Latif Ali Khan (any detail) also served in the Nawab, s army with small numbers of troops.²⁴ A most important event that took place in the reign of Nizam (1724-1748) was when an attractive Eunuch 'Rehman' became the bone of contention among Nizam's sons.²⁵

The account of Mrs Meer Hassan Ali,²⁶ on the life of the Syed families of Lucknow in the early nineteenth century, portrays a vivid picture of the culture of the nobles of Lucknow. According to her, a famous Eunuch Al Mause Ali Khan achieved great honour in the house of Oudh. She described the Eunuchs as the guard of royal ladies, especially with reference to Padsha Begum (the widow of Ghazi-ud-din Haidar, king of Oudh). When she came out to visit the *Durgah* of Huzerut Abas Ali Kee, she was accompanied by many Eunuchs. Some of them were distributing money among people and the chief of these eunuchs was dressed "in gold cloth brilliant turban and attired in expensive shalwar."²⁷

Colonialism and Eunuchs Marginality:

The status of Eunuchs spiralled down with the advent of the British occupation of India. The past Muslim rulers of Indian states were generous patrons of Eunuchs but the accession of princely states reduced them to utter destitution so they were left with no other option but to sing and dance at festivities, to

keep their bodies and soul together. During the colonial era, many wrong myths and stereotypes were constructed about the Eunuch's commune. In the early nineteenth century, the British district officers, who were trying to put an end to many immoral aspects of Indian culture recorded some activities of *Hijras* which according to them were a heinous crime.²⁸ British had the view that vulgarity was attached to them especially their techniques of acquiring money. Therefore, they objected to the idea of colonial morality. The colonial administrator tried to degrade the existing traditions and norms to create their superiority to encourage the social distance between colonized and the colonizer. Many traditions which were tolerated and even encouraged in pre-colonial India were discouraged during the colonial era and disrupted many institutions at the beginning of the nineteenth century. British did not support the dancers and entertainers hence eunuchs lost traditional support and patronage when the British policies eroded the native elite and affected the harem life.²⁹ The British felt uneasy about such types of people with ambiguous identities and tried to obliterate their very existence. In this respect, Campuzano argues that development and colonialism suppressed possibilities to identify outside the male and female categories.³⁰

The British imposed many restrictions and introduced laws in which they were considered sodomites and people who were engaged in homosexual offences. The Act which relegates them, is article 377, in which carnal intercourse was criminalized and was considered against the order of nature.³¹ The Eunuchs were suspected that they kidnapped the children and forced them to join their commune. It became a permanent perception about their community and this stereotype about eunuchs created hatred for them. British also introduced the Law in 1897 which was the amendment to the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, "An Act for the registration of the criminal's tribes and Eunuchs".³² The Local administration was instructed to register the names of the eunuchs who were accused of kidnapping and castrating the children. British also objected to the eunuchs' way of accruing money. Lawrence W. Preston, in his account of the role of the British in the repression of *Hijras*

mentioned that the *Hijras* used indecent ways for extortion of money by even showing their genitals.³³ Prior to the British era, the state used to lend them support and they had the right to get food and money from landlords of their area. The British government not only tried to abolish the official support of Eunuchs but also noticed that they induced many immoral aspects to the Indian culture. A series of letters between British district officers during the early nineteenth century noted that,

'Hijras proceed to different villages and demand payments from Ryots, who, forthwith, produce the price, under the dread founded, Apparently of experience, of a refusal to render promote payment, being followed by the whole of the wretches lifting their *soogras* (petticoat) and outraging the feelings of the females of his family, by the most shameless and abominable exposure of the person.'³⁴

Moreover, Eunuchs could not find a niche in the governmental sector as the British shut their doors on them. Some Eunuchs used to dance before the coming of the British, but they had many other avenues open for them as well. Later, the only occupational choice for the Eunuch was to dance and prostitute. Even after the partition of the Indian subcontinent Eunuchs remained engaged in dancing and singing to earn their livelihood both in India and Pakistan. However, in the later few years with the onset of the modern means of celebration, for instance the introduction of television, cinema, cable and internet etc, their profession also fell out of vogue. Besides, family planning may also be quoted as yet another anomaly for them as people have deliberately reduced producing children, an occasion to celebrate, which has adversely affected their means of income. Thus, begging and (for some) sex work remain the only occupational choices.

Eunuchs of Lahore and their Cultural Patterns

Eunuchs live in the narrow confines of their community and have their sub-culture with specific norms including their language, rituals of castration, traditional occupations, meticulous style of clapping, *Guru Chella* relation, singing and dancing. Their culture provides them with a space for their existence with the specific traditional role but outside this role,

they are not considered part of society. *Hijra* as a cultural entity is considered someone who violates the accepted social and cultural norms. The very essence of the Eunuchs community is their economic system which binds them to society, which fetches no income other than *badhai* or alms and begging. It is the system that not only makes them different in identity within the prevalent social structure but it also provides them with space though at the margin, through which they are (with their different identity) assimilated with the prevalent social norms. Any individual who joins the *Hijra* community subsequently becomes part of its peculiar culture and Eunuchs derived their identity of being neither from that culture. Traditional eunuchs are very strict in following these customs because they consider themselves very essential for their survival and they can also get support from each other through their sub-culture. Every Eunuch must follow these norms and rituals in their letter and spirit; otherwise, they are excommunicated from the commune. During an interview, a eunuch Chandi laid more stress on the importance of their culture and said “We, the ignorant people, are part of the culture of Pakistan. No one can deny the fact unless our culture is alive. We, the *Hijra* commune, shall live because our culture has been integrated into this region for centuries.”³⁵ It is very difficult to trace the origin of their culture which is, no doubt, the fusion of the two cultural identities of India such as Hindus and Muslims. In Hindu culture, there is relatively more acceptance for such types of people as compared to other religions. Traditional Hinduism recognized them as powerful creatures that accord acceptance to human beings and considered the third creature with a particular cultural identity. Eunuchs’ culture has a lot of similarities with the Hindus (eunuchs) and they are tangibly influenced by the Hindus.³⁶ Hinduism has been considered as demographically and culturally dominating religion of India. Many rituals, which the Eunuchs of Pakistan and even Lahore follow, are Hindu in their essences and derived from Indian society (Dancing on the auspicious occasion, blessing the people, power of fertility and castration rituals).³⁷

The most interesting thing about the culture of Eunuchs is their language, which is used within the community and is different

from the language of the society. It is called '*Chandarna*'.³⁸ It consists of Persian, Sanskrit and Punjabi words, which have specific connotations. It does not mean that the *Hijra* community is incognizant of the language used in society. They use *Chandara* to keep their secrets from others. One Guru told that "It is very important for every *Hijra* to learn the language of the commune because, on many occasions, it becomes an obligation on the part of every *Hijra* to talk separately and keep the audience and the customer nescient about their communication."³⁹ The other thing which makes their language incomprehensible is that they want to hide their intention. To ensure that the real meanings are accessible only to themselves, therefore, they utter the typical words so cleverly. Some words which are used by the *Hijras* include; *Murat* which means *Khusra/Hijra*. *Belli Murat*(it is used for ugly Eunuch), *Girya* (this is spoken for the lover/husband of Eunuch), *Guru* (mother or teacher of a *Hijra* they often used the word *Maa* for her), *Chella* (student of a *Guru*), *Chamak* (to dance) and *Roti* (this word is used to have sexual relation).⁴⁰ They use a particular kind of vocabulary to communicate about physical relationships such as *Tarahna* or *Rara kar na* (to attract towards sex) *Shampoo karwa* (to do the sexual act).⁴¹

The language of *Hijra* is a major tool to keep them silent in society because it is even strange for many people that the *Hijras* have their language. They own their language and customs because they are socially marginalized in society, they, therefore, do not consider it an obligation to follow the accepted norms and customs in society.⁴² The *Hijra* dialect is very outlandish which makes them different from other people and recognizes them by their effeminate gestures. Through his language and customs, the *Hijra* rebels against cultural ideologies of gendered language, assuming a linguistic position that is neither fully feminine nor fully masculine."⁴³

Hijras are not only notorious for their vulgar language they are also known for their unspoken gestures. *Hijras* are very expressive through the movement of their eyes and their way of talking is always very communicative in the sense of expressing through signs. They have the ability and technique to tell each other through their motions. In addition to that, their

language is so much symbolic.⁴⁴ However to earn their livelihood and for their survival, they divide the entire city into different regions that are associated with the names of their respective *Gurus*⁴⁵ within the commune. Eunuchs are part of the people residing in Lahore. There are some areas which are well known for the Eunuchs population such as *Heera Mandi*, Samnabad, Mozang, Shah Noor Studio, and Shahdara. Shahdara is well known for the numerous population of the Eunuchs it is called “*Chakla of Eunuchs*”.⁴⁶ Ichra was also well known for the Eunuch population but not today, it was called Dubai of Eunuchs. Besides this, the whole city is divided among them where they have their *deras* or houses. The area that is considered highly important for the Eunuchs is *Heera-Mandi*. That is also known as *Shahi Mohallah* (the place for the guest of the royal family) and *Chowk Chakla*. In the reign of Ranjeet Singh, the *Heera Mandi* of Lahore occupied the fourth position after Kolkata, Banglore, and Mumbai.⁴⁷ Many Eunuchs can be seen in the *Heera-Mandi* even today. Louis Brown mentions that ten per cent of dancing girls are *Khusras* in *Heera Mandi*.⁴⁸

Hijras began to populate *Heera Mandi*, a notorious place for sex business when women prostitutes migrated to posh localities of the city. It happened because it had become unfashioned to visit the *Heera Mandi* which was losing attraction some thirty years ago. Many rich prostitutes migrated to posh areas such as Allama Iqbal Town, Samnabad, Multan Road, Model Town, Garden Town, Gulper, Faisal Town and Defence. Sixty per cent of prostitutes moved to the posh areas and their vacant houses were occupied by the eunuchs in the early 1990s.⁴⁹ Prostitution was also affected by the strict policy of Islamization of Zia-ul- Haq who did not stop the business of prostitutes but strictly restricted them to stopping business before midnight. The Eunuchs started living in *Heera Mandi* under the supervision of their *Gurus*. Some famous *Gurus* of Lahore are also living in *Heera Mandi*. It is believed that Eunuchs living in *Heera Mandi* is mostly from *kanjur*⁵⁰ families who are experts in dancing and singing. The residential areas of Eunuchs are known by the name of the *Gurus*. Those who have become too old and experienced are known as *Daad*

Guru. They have the begging rights and no Eunuchs from other areas can come there to ask *badhai* or alms. The Eunuchs have an organized supporting network. They have their specific areas to do their sex business and ask for alms. Some parks and *mizarats* are also visited for business. In most cases, Eunuchs are found at places where female prostitutes also work for example Moon Market, Liberty Market, Jinnah Garden and many more.

The Eunuch community in Lahore is an integrated whole but every Eunuch has his own set of problems that provokes him to enter the world of the marginalized. Joining the community makes some of them satisfied but some of them remain dissatisfied. Some of them claimed that they have a craze for dance and want to adopt dancing as a profession and join *the Hijra* community to improve their dancing skills. A Eunuch Komal said, "Dance is my passion since I was a child. I danced in female clothes at family functions, and everyone praised me. When I grew up people made fun of my passion and I was even called a *kanjur* and *khusra*. I still remember these words and remarks. This passion is deep-rooted in my soul. I dance at the shrines of the Sufis. Dancing is the expression of one's inner self. I find it difficult to quit dancing. I was unable to leave this even when my family beat me several times. Finally, I joined this community where I am respected and teach my *chellas* how to dance."⁵¹ Eunuch's inclination to behave like a woman is a commonly observed reason in the case of Eunuchs joining the commune. They are possessed with the idea that they have a male body, but their soul is female, they do not feel comfortable in the male body that's why get castrated and get rid of maleness.

New Trend in the Living Patterns of the Eunuchs of Lahore:

In Lahore, the Eunuchs have been living within the narrow confines of their community and have their subculture with specific norms and rituals. Eunuchs are condemned to live with us as 'the other' with their peculiar norms and rituals. Society provides them with space through which their traditional pattern role within society is justified and allows them to be a

part of society. Their socio-economic position provides them with a space for their existence with the specific traditional role,⁵² but outside this role, they are not considered as part of society.

A slight change in traditions of Eunuchs commune particularly in Lahore city transpired with the waning years that not only distinguishes them from the prevalent tradition but also pushes them into social evils such as begging and prostitution. Many Eunuchs also believe that their traditional living style has changed over the years. Almost 73.4% of Eunuchs admit this fact however, 26.5% think differently.⁵³ But the question is how did this traditional pattern of life change? Ibbetson's account of *Hijras* in the nineteenth century also reveals the activities of the *zananas*

... They learn to dance and sing and pass days in indolence. They can be recognized by their *matak chal* (behaving like women). Each of them has husbands..... *Zananas* is a recognized class: they hire *khotas* or upper storeys of the shop like prostitutes.....all members of *zananas mandli* are impotent men given to sodomy, though some of them are married and have children...They have deprived the prostitutes of their means of livelihood...⁵⁴

In the Lahore city, *zananas*⁵⁵ are emerging within the commune at such an increasing pace that it becomes a source of disrepute. Consequently, some new customs are being introduced that are not cherished by the commune. The Phenomenon of *zananas* has emerged as a big source of embarrassment and stigma for the commune. *Zananas* have introduced such baneful practices which normally do not correspond with the traditions and customs of Eunuchs. *Zananas* involvement in male prostitution and begging has proven to be a slur for the Eunuchs' community at large. The *zananas* are the people, who were once part of the commune. Now most of them have started their own *Deras*. They hire the rooms/ houses which are called *deras* of *Chaways*.⁵⁶ This,

however, does not mean that Eunuchs are keeping themselves away from such practices as begging and prostitution. One may argue that *Zananas* have taken the lead and (other) Eunuchs have followed them. A eunuch Kiran Shahzadi a resident of Lahore is of the view regarding the changes in the Eunuch commune that their society, no doubt, for the last few years has been undergoing a new turn and it is due to the role of media that not only has unhinged their economic structure but also encouraged them to look for alternative sources of income. We are left with no other option except begging and prostitution to sustain ourselves because the people's interest in Eunuch for entertainment is deflated by the alternative entertainment on TV and cable networks. Another development that has taken place during the last few years is that the upper middle class prefers girls instead of Eunuchs for sex and entertainment which renders us destitute.⁵⁷

Eunuchs are associated with the profession of dancing, singing and sex business but the specialty that made the eunuchs of Lahore different from the other eunuchs of the country is that many of them have alone adopted other means of earning than sex. A few Eunuchs claimed that they have *paan* shops. During an interview, Eunuch said that she has a *paan* shop in Anarkali. She further told that she is a dancer and does not want to beg. 'Some people do not like to visit the shop due to my ambiguous identity'. This irrational behaviour condemns her to be confined within the community and it also denies respectability which is the right of every citizen. Such extreme actions force us to adopt unfair means for our survival. Some eunuchs are beauticians/ makeup artists. Some, however, insist that they are born naturally, and they cannot work at other places except dancing and singing because they have been doing this for centuries. It was considered a code that *Hijras* cannot work at the houses of others.⁵⁸

Eunuchs and Gays in Lahore

The most growing and well-recognized class in the city of Lahore is no other than the 'MSM' (man having sex with a man) which consists of the smaller categories of gays, eunuchs and also the people who have a marginal interest in men. It

looks very complicated to differentiate between gays and Eunuchs. Most people do not make a distinction between eunuchs and gays. The international and local organizations⁵⁹ put them in the category of MSM. The city of Lahore is a place where people belonging to this category are in abundance. It was estimated in 2002 that thirty-eight thousand MSM are living in Lahore city including four per cent of *Hijras*.⁶⁰ The very basis of their behaviour is local with a slight difference from the culture of the eunuchs. Although they have improvised many of their traits still it is more indigenous in their very nature. In some cases, gays and homosexuals joined this community for their sexual satisfaction. Because of the existence of these people, social responses become more negative about *Hijras* commune and extremely vulnerable to exploitation.

Eunuchs are marginalized but some attempts are also going to be made to elevate their status in society as the government is initiating a few attempts to give them legal and civil rights. Eunuchs are quite optimistic that they will gain a measure of respectability after a long Journey of miseries and deprivation.

Conclusion:

This article sheds light on the socioeconomic factors influencing the marginalization of the Eunuch community in Lahore. Despite a rich historical presence, Eunuchs have faced persistent marginalization throughout the years. The perception of Eunuchs has evolved, resulting in their institutionalized identity as individuals who do not conform to traditional gender norms. Consequently, they have become social outcasts, pushed to the fringes of society. The forces of globalization, media, and evolving cultural trends further exacerbate their marginalization, leading many Eunuchs to resort to begging and prostitution for survival. The study highlights the urgent need for societal recognition, acceptance, and support for the Eunuch community, challenging the stigma and discrimination they face.

References

- ¹ Reported, Eunuchs Enjoy Equals Rights in Pakistan, Rules Supreme Court, Daily Dawn, 25/9/2012.
- ² An interview with a eunuch named Laila on 3rd February 2021 at Ghory Shah Lahore.
- ³ *Khawaja* is a Persian word, and it was prestigious term which was used for the eunuchs in the Sub- Continent. See Saiyed Shahabu-din- Dasnudi, Fahmida Begum, *Jamiya Urdu Lughat* (Jhelum: Book Corner), p.433.
- ⁴ She is Associate Professor of linguistics and anthropology at university of Colorado. Most of her works focus on language in India and United States with special reference to Gender and Sexuality.
- ⁵ Kira Hall, "Go Suck your Husband's Sugar Cane: Hijra and the Use of Sexual Insult" <http://www.colorad.edu/linguistic/faculty/kira-hall/articles/Hall.P.436>.
- ⁶ Serena Nanda, *Neither Man nor Woman, Hijras of India* (Belmont: Wads Worth,1999), p.13
- ⁷ Eunuchs can be divided into three categories according to their existing classes. The most important category of the eunuchs consists of those who are born with sexual deformity, and they are unable to procreate. Such eunuchs have further two categories male and female impotent. Another category comprises of those who are castrated thus of their sexual organ is rendered ineffective. Another type is of transvestites mostly they are male and have children. They dress like woman and exhibit feminine tendencies. Most of them are bisexual and obsessed with thought that they are born with wrong body being feminine by gender but male by sex. This information is collected through the survey of selected population of eunuchs living in different areas of Lahore.
- ⁸ Syed Ahmad Delhivi, *Farang-e-Asfiya*, voll.ii (Lahore: Maktab-e-Hassan, 1908), p.207
- ⁹ Uta Ranke Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven: Women, Sexuality and Catholic Church* (UK: Doubleday, 1990), 4. See also Sandra, "The Eunuch," retrieved from <http://www.thetree@gendertree.com>.

- ¹⁰ It is the ritual of castration, which is called *Nirban* or Nirvana in eunuch's language; it is process of the rebirth of an individual as *Hijra*. See Zahid Akas, *Heera Mandi* (Lahore: Book Home, 2005), p.44.
- ¹¹ An interview with the eunuchs Akhtar (Baby), Romi, Madhiya, Nadia and Rukshana at Lahore.
- ¹² Niccolo Manuchi, *Mogul India, 1653-1708* (London: John Murrey, 1907), vol.ii.p.350.
- ¹³ Piotr O Scholz, *Eunuchs and Castrati: A Cultural History*, Journal of History, Volume 14, no 2 June, pp.246-247 retrieved 17/3/2008 from <http://www.muse.jha.edu/journal-history>.
- ¹⁴ Sayed Ahmed Delhvi, *Farhangy Asfiya* (Lahore, Maktaba-e-Hassan, 1908) vol;ii p.208.
- ¹⁵ Yahiya, *Tarikhkh-i- Mubarak Shahi*, 156 Gillmans and Eunuchs retrieved from <http://www.voice> of dharma.org/books.com.
- ¹⁶ Abul Fazal, *Ain-Akbari*, Trans.H.Blochman(Qusain Publisher: Lahore, 1975), p.442.
- ¹⁷ *Tuzk-i-Jahangri*, Trans by Ijaz-ul-Haq (Qadusi: Majlasiya-i-Tarikiya Adab, Lahore) ,voll.ii,p.107.
- ¹⁸ Gillmans and Eunuchs retrieved from <http://www.voice> of dharma.org/books.com.
- ¹⁹ William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal* (London: Blooms Bury, 2006), p.xvii
- ²⁰ *Tuzuki-i-Jahangri*, p.264.
- ²¹ Francois Bernier, *Travel in the Mogul Empire (AD 1656-1668)*, trans.Archibald Constable(Delhi: Low Price Publication), p.135.
- ²² M.Husain, *The Rehla of IBn Battuta* (Baroda, 1953), p.235.
- ²³ Niccolo Manucci, *Mogul India 1653-1708*, trans,Willim Irvin,voll.ii,pp,78-79.
- ²⁴ Abdul, Haleem Sharar, Lucknow *the last Phase of Oriental Culture*, Trans.ed,by E.S Havcourt and Fakhir Hussain(United States West View Press), p.31-32
- ²⁵ Sudhakar Krishnamart "Alternative Destination", retrieved from <http://www.wordpress.com>.
- ²⁶ She was the wife of Mir Hassan Ali, the London gentle man, who was the noble in the court of king Ghazi-i-uddin-Haider, she spent 11 years in Lucknow where she wrote book about the customs and culture of the Nauwabs families.

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- ²⁷ Abdul, Haleem Sharar, Lucknow *the last Phase of Oriental Culture*, Trans.ed,by E.S Havcourt and Fakhir Hussain(United States West View Press),p.248-250.
- ²⁸ Seerana Nanda, *Neither Man Nor Women: The Hijra of India*, p. 49.
- ²⁹ Louis Brown, *Dancing Girls of Lahore* (New York: Happer Collins, 2005), p.35.
- ³⁰ Susie Jolly, Why the Development industry should get over its obsession with bad and start to think about pleasure (working paper) (UK, Institute of Development,2007), p.14
- ³¹ This act was drafted by the Thomas Babbington Macaulay (who was the president of the Indian Law commission in 1835) with the aim of rationalize the splintered system of India. He made many drafts to criminalize the sodomy as heinous crime. Under the section of 337: It is stated 'who ever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which shall not be less than two years more than ten years and shall be liable to fine..Alok Gupta," Section 377 and the Dignity of the Indian Homosexuals" retrieved from <http://www.geocities.com/huscology/homosexuality>.
- ³² Jessica Hinchy, *Governing Gender and Sexuality in Colonial India: The Hijras c 1850-1900*, 2019, Cambridge University press. Pp, 9-19.
- ³³ Laurence W Preston, *A Right to Exist: Eunuchs and State in the Nineteenth Century*, Modern Asian studies,21(2), p.378.
- ³⁴ Seerena Nanda, *Neither Man nor Women: The Hijras of India*, p.49.
- ³⁵ An interview with a eunuch named Chanda on 19th October 2021 GulBahar Colony, Lahore.
- ³⁶Eunuchs' culture has a lot of similarities with the Hindus (eunuchs) and they are tangibly influenced by the Hindus. From the cultural perspective, anthropologists and sociologists have provided details of the many components of culture and aspects of social structure of the non-Hindu communities that have either been borrowed from the Hindus or are residues from their pre-conversion. T.N, Madan, *Religions of India, Plurality and Pluralism*, taken from *Religious Pluralism in south Asia and Europe*, edited by Jamal Malik, (Helnutreiseld: Oxford university Press,2005),p.42.
- ³⁷ Special power of procreate/fertility are attached with third sex in Hinduism through myths. This power is blessed because of

ritual of emasculation. The ritual of emasculation connected the *Hijras* with ambiguous deity of mother goddess Bahuchara Mata. The *Hijras* gain the power of fertility from Mata but after emasculation. For details see Shikha, Trivedi, "Ma Bahuchara 'Goddess of Eunuchs'" retrieved from <http://www.archive.org>. Dance is also a favorable profession for eunuchs because they trace the origin of dancing institution from Ramayana (epic poem). According to Ramayana, the legend Ram was exiled for fourteen years from Adhoya with his wife Sita, the whole city followed him, but he said 'men and women please wipe your tears and go off. But the eunuchs who were not considered men and women did not follow the instructions and stayed put. When the Ram came back after defeating Ravenna (his enemy), he found them there waiting for him. He blessed them with power that made them good enough to bestow blessings on people at auspicious occasions. Gayatri Reddy, *With Respect to Sex, Negotiating Hijra Identity in South Asia* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), p.19.

³⁸ Typical language of the Eunuchs is called Chandarana and some eunuchs called it Persian/Pharsi. The word Chandarana is not from Persian language according to Sanskrit dictionary chandarana is derived from chandrana which mean *injan banna, bt talna, ,barhny sa rokna*. In Urdu chandarana is derived from Chandra which mean *injan bana, .Urdu Lughat ,Tarikhi Asalon Pa, Voll.7th, (Tarikiya Urdu Board Karachi,1986),P.604-6*

³⁹ An interview with a Eunuch named Saleem in Lahore on 2nd January 2008.

⁴⁰ This information is collected through interviews with various eunuchs from different areas of Lahore.

⁴¹ A eunuch named Romi from Heera Mandi talked about these words which have an erotic meaning in their origin sense.

⁴² An interview with a Eunuch named Rukhsana in Lahore in 2021.

⁴³ Kira, Hall, *Go Suck your Husband's Sugar Cane*, retrieved from www.colorado.edu/linguistice/faculty/kira-hall/articles/Hall. p.438.

⁴⁴ The eunuchs used many signs with each other and sometimes with whom, which may become their client and can understand their meaning. While shaking hands with someone, when a eunuch rubbed with her thumbs its mean that eunuch is in the mood to do sex without of any charge. However, with the moment elbow they try to know the intention of their client. This

information is collected through an interview with a eunuch named Majeed on 9th January 2018 at Mozang, Lahore.

⁴⁵ The older one is known as Guru which means teacher or mother. Every Guru holds its own area where his Chelas has the right of begging and demand for alms.

⁴⁶ An interview with the eunuch named Mahwish on 27th September 2021 Rang Mahal Lahore.

⁴⁷ Zahid Akas, *Heera Mandi* (Lahore: Book home Publishers, 2005), P.48.

⁴⁸ Louis Brown, *The Dancing Girls of the Lahore* (Harper Collins: New York), p.50.

⁴⁹ Ibid 42.

⁵⁰ A person who is from prostitutes or entertainers' family.

⁵¹ An Interview with a castrated eunuch named Guru Chanda on 6th November 2021 in Lahore (city cinema Heera Mandi).

⁵² Dancing and singing at auspicious occasion are considered traditional role of *Hijras* in sub- continent.

⁵³ These facts are collected through the survey of selected population of the eunuchs of Lahore.

⁵⁴ Sir Denzil Ibbetson, Mr. E.D. Maclagan, *A glossary of the Tribes and castes of Punjab and North-west Frontier Province*, vol. ii, Civil Military Gazette Press, Lahore, p.332.

⁵⁵ *Zananas* is term which is deployed for Cross-dresser, who is bisexual mostly have their families and children. He is not castrated or impotent but a feminish man who assumes feminine tendencies. Most of them are part of Eunuch's community but are not considered real *Hijras*.

⁵⁶ An interview with a eunuch named Neeli on 1st January 2021 *Heera Mandi* Lahore. She said that *zananas* are called *chaway* in the typical language of eunuchs and their houses are called *Deras of chaways*.

⁵⁷ An interview with a eunuch named Kiran Shahzadi 11th June 2021 Urdu Bazar Lahore.

⁵⁸ Reported "Khusry Apna Case Adalat aur Police ka pas Nahi la jaty' Jung Friday Magazine 9th August 2018.

⁵⁹ Such as World Bank, UNAIDS, Pakistan National Aids Programm, Contech Organization and Sathi Foundation.

⁶⁰ "Pakistan Marginalized Male Sex Workers," United Nation Report/Human Rights Society on Labour & Environment from [http:// www.aegis.com](http://www.aegis.com).