After Forgiveness: Making Kin-like-Relationships with *Hijras* of Gujarat in India[1]

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I. Introduction

With the introduction of a 'third gender' category by the Supreme Court of India in 2014, a relatively large number of transgender people[2] have publicly become more visible as an oppressed group and have gained access to reservations that were so far for the Other Backward Class (OBC) [Goel 2016: 536]. This court judgement suggests that in Indian society, gender non-normative people, or the third gender, are vulnerable to oppression by others, therefore, they need governmental support to seek social equality. This category of people, however, excludes rich urban citizens who identify themselves using English terms, such as gay or lesbian [Shah 2014]. Thus, the third gender issue in India has become a field in which multiple factors of class, gender, and economy, intermingle to degenerate the oppressed gender non–normative people.

Essentially, the concept of 'thirdness' itself did not imply subordination or oppression before, in other words, Western scholars originally used the term to investigate individuals in non–Western societies who neither identified themselves as a man nor woman, such as the *hijras* in India, to disclose non-universal gender dichotomy [Herdt 1994]. To put it another way, the number 'third' was introduced in the field of gender study to symbolise the possibility of overturning the mundane predictability of gender. However, the aim has not yet been achieved and the term currently represents subaltern individuals who experience social inequality because they do not fit into the ideal binary gender division.

In this paper, I do not focus on the issue of social inequality. Rather, I trace the setting of the beginning of my

fieldwork at the temple of Bahucharāji, located in Mahesana district, northern part of Gujarat and illustrate how I trespassed into the territory of the *hijras* as a complete stranger, and how I was forgiven by them. Not only that, but I also share how I began to reconsider the meaning of forgiveness and solidarity and kinship terminology.

To elaborate on the meaning of forgiveness, I refer to an interesting comparison between forgiveness and the gift that was made by Paul Ricoeur.

Ricoeur said, the 'etymology and the semantics of numerous languages encourage this comparison: don – pardon, gift – forgiving, dono – perdono (Italian), Geben – Vergeben (German)' (2006: 480). Referring to Marcel Mauss' classic book on the gift, Ricoeur says 'the model of exchange takes for granted the obligation to give, to receive, and to give in return'. Forgiveness, however, is 'no longer an exchange between giving and giving in return, but between giving and simply receiving' (2006: 482), what we call a free gift. Asking 'for forgiveness is indeed also prepared to receive a negative response: no, I cannot, I cannot forgive.' (2006: 484).

When I began the project, I was a complete stranger, visibly different and exotic as compared to others. I was prepared to receive a negative response, 'no, I cannot,' yet finally I was forgiven and was able to develop a solid relationship with these people, the *hijras*. *Hijras* are now popularly known as transgender people both locally and academically.

II. *Hijra* Images and Representation

The images of *hijras* or their representation keeps changing in tune with the times. In the colonial period, *hijras* were represented as sexually abnormal or anomalous beings. For example, documents from the colonial period depict them as hermaphrodites or disgusting objects [Forbes 1834: 359], and impotent men who became eunuchs [Kirparam 1901, 506-7]. In postcolonial contexts, they have been represented as institutionalised homosexuals [Carstairs 1958], a eunuch community [Mukherjee 1980], and transvestite eunuchs [Jani and Rosenberg 1990].

Gender studies literature of the 1990s, however, has praised the deviant aspects of *hijras*, regarding them as the embodiment of non-Western societies 'third sex' or 'third gender'. Serena Nanda, a prominent contributor to scholarly literature on the third gender, published a book, *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India*, in 1990. Her ethnography focused on the lives of *hijras* living as a de-humanized group, an approach that was highly appreciated by academics [e.g., Reddy 2005]. Moreover, Nanda claimed that *hijras* use 'the alternative gender roles' of traditional Indian culture to synthesise a third gender image, and she presented this as a pan-Indian phenomenon. Nanda made this assertion in order to argue the necessity of dis-

carding the Western gender dichotomy in favour of gender diversity. In this context, *hijras* are positioned as the counterparts of Western sexual minorities.

In 2014, hijras were newly entitled to use a non-normative gender category with the introduction of the 'third gender' category by the Supreme Court of India. From that time onwards, a relatively large number of transgender people have publicly made themselves more visible as an oppressed group, and their existence has garnered academic attention worldwide in the context of politics and gender (see Saria 2019; Loh 2018; Dutoya 2017; Shah 2014).

The label of '*hijra,*' however, does not refer to a single uniform group across the entire country. Rather, each region uses different indigenous terms to refer to people otherwise generally understood as *hijras*. Furthermore, I would say, the third gender or transgender category does not exist as a consistent social niche among the people of Gujarat.

In the Gujarat region in the north of India, the word *fātadā* is generally used, but because it has discriminatory overtones, the term *vyándhala* is preferred in media discourse such as newspaper articles. In addition, *hijra* membership is indicated using different names in the southern and northern areas of Gujarat. Those active in the south are called *hījadā* because they belong to the *hījadā* society, while the term *pāvaiyā* is used in the north. This paper deals with data about the *pāvaiyā* society.

The primary activity of *hijras* in Gujarat is begging. Though differences and variations can be seen in the duration and location of begging in urban and rural areas. In highly populated urban areas, their daily activities involve searching for families going through major life events, such as welcoming a baby, accepting a bride, or moving into a new house. When they come to know of such occasions, they affix a seal on the entryway of the home, and bring several fellow *hijras* back to the house several days later to perform songs and dances, and in return receive cash and grains from the family. In rural areas in the north, *hijra* groups travel through the villages once a year at harvest time and collect a part of the year's crop from each farming family. At other times of the year, they join fellow *hijras* working in cities or proceed to temples of goddess Bahucharā to give grace as devotees to pilgrims there and to entertain people conduction rituals that mark major life events.

Before talking about my own story and my way of looking at the coeval solidarity with *hijras* around the temple, I will illustrate how they make a living in the society in Gujarat and form their own community, through close attention to local history and narratives.

III. Close Attention to Local History and Narratives

III-1. Local myths and *hijras*

In the 14th century a lady named Bahucharā was travelling with her sisters and brothers, and they stopped for the night at an area known as Chunvāla. 'Chunvāla' is derived from the term *chunval*, which implies chunvalis which means forty four in Gujarati, and indicates that there are forty four villages in that area. At night, while they were sleeping in their cars, they were attacked by a burglar, named Mepobaraiyo. Thereupon, Bahucharā sacrificed her life to teach the burglar a lesson. Furthermore, her sisters cursed him, and he became a *hijra*.

The *hijra*, asked for forgiveness, by saying that 'This is not my fault, but my duty. I live off what I make by plundering, but I've never attacked people who belong to the Brahuman and Chāran caste. I did not know that you belong to Chāran caste. It was just bad luck'. At that time, the people of Chāran caste were known as bards who composed and recited epic or heroic poems. Therefore, they were highly respected as children of Goddesses by rulers of Gujarat. Hence, out of respect, even burglars did not attack them.

Upon this request for forgiveness, Bahucharā gave her a word by saying, 'I cannot break the curse on you, but you would be able to come to my place after your death if you set up a temple to praise me. Now, I let you go. I gave my word' [Gadhavī 1935: 16-23]. This story is from a book, titled '*Chārana Devi Shri Bahucharāji*' or '*Chārana* Goddess *Bahucharā*', written by Gadhavī Samarthadan from Chārana, in 1935. It tells us the reason why the temple of Bahucharā was built at Chunvāla and why do *hijras* gather there[3].

In the 18th century, Maharaja Manajrao of the princely state of Gāekwād built a huge stone carved temple for the Goddess Bahucharā when his carbuncles were cured with her grace. That magnificent architecture existed until a few years ago when the state government

Bahucharā Mural

Bahucharā temple built by Gāekwād

replaced it with white, clean, and commonplace buildings.

In the 21st Century, more than 10 *hijras* lived self-sufficiently and got along well with their neighbours at the town, called Bahucharāji. Every morning, they would meet inside the temple yard and wait for pilgrims. Pilgrims had to walk through a specific circuit in the temple to reach the goddess's room and receive her blessings (*āshīrvāda*) through eye contact. After leaving the goddess, the pilgrims would have to wind around the compound, eventually encountering the *hijras* sitting cross-legged on the ground. Some pilgrims were wary of the *hijras*, but most of them willingly approached them to receive their blessings (and, by proxy, the goddess's grace) through physical contact, leaving a small monetary token as a gift in their hands[4].

Usually, *hijras* are regarded as deviants living on the periphery of the society according to mainstream family and gender norms. Particularly in urban areas, *hijras* are infamous for loitering in the streets and occasionally flinging dirt at passers-by, while at the Bahucharā temple, these people are treated differently.

III-2. The rite of tonsure

The temple of Bahucharā is known as the place where the ritual of boy's tonsure is done. It is said that boys are not allowed to cut their hair from birth until the ritual is performed. There is a divergence of opinion about the reason for this ritual. According to the locals in the temple city, the rite of tonsure is a part of a vow made to the Goddess Bahucharā. As boys are Bahucharā's heaven — sent ones, boys' guardians are obliged to leave bits of hairs as a token of boys to the Goddess in order to make the boys their own kin. According to others, a baby's hair contains the negativity from previous lives, therefore, it is completely shaved off, and they are cleaned and purified with the grace of the goddess. The presence of *hijras* during this ritual is an important part of the ceremony. Boys are supposed to be held and blessed by hijras to take away all the negativity.

People often say this ritual does not have to be performed for girls because they do not look nice with shaved heads. However, there is a local phrase about a daughter, '*parka ghar ni vasti*,' which means a person who belongs to another house or kin. According to this, daughters are supposed to marry into another family, therefore, it is not necessary for them to go through the rite to become a member of the kin that they are born in.

At the temple, the *hijras* have a marked presence as compared to others. Younger *hijras* usually wear bright and vibrant coloured saris. Elders wear simple ones with expensive gold

jewellery. Moreover, they often clap their hands so that their presence is noticeable which gives the pilgrims a chance to receive '*dan*' (a gift given under surveillance of Goddess) from them. Their striking looks and gestures have a significance so that they are recognised by pilgrims as sacred beings closely associated with the Goddess.

Hijras, who come to the temple of Bahucharā, see themselves as renouncers. They believe that to devote themselves to the Goddess, they have completely renounced their worldly positions. Moreover, they perform all their tasks collectively and anonymously as devotees of the Goddess.

Right at the start of their association, they make an indomitable decision to disclaim any responsibilities towards their own family members, such as perpetuating their patrilineal lines through marriage, and they break the relationship with their innate kin members.

Not only that, they also leave their hometown in order to live with a person who acts as a guardian for them. It is the guardian (*guru*) who gives them *ghāghara*, which are skirts that are wrapped around *saris*, to let them into the hijra community. That guardian (*guru*) and disciple (*chero*) relationship is equivalent to that of a father and son, implying that, when the guardian dies, the disciple has the right to succeed and inherit the guru's property and has to perform a proper funeral for the guardian. According to the rules of the *hijra* community, this relationship is the core for the configuration of hierarchy. The details of the hierarchal configuration are explained later.

Furthermore, newcomers are required to perform the ceremony of body modification, or castration under the tutelage of a guardian *hijra*. During this ritual, they mutilate their genital parts, the penis and testicles, which adds to their conviction that they are no longer worldly beings. Also, by doing so, they renounce their previous positions in their natal family, caste, and the society as a whole. After this ceremony they have to be given a proper position in their community.

IV. Gift - Giving and Forgiveness, and Solidarity with Strangers

IV-1. Encounter with *hijras* and forgiveness

In 2002, I went to Bahucharā temple for the first time with a local friend. The *hijras* saw me as one of the pilgrims. I tried to come close to them by asking some personal questions, such as their names, and personal histories, but they treated me as a trespasser. They told me to 'go away'. I realised that while they willingly met pilgrims at the temple, they refused to have any personal contact with them.

As I did not want them to get annoyed, I decided not to try getting any closer. Instead, I tried to make my presence felt and waited for a chance to talk to them. I decided to rent a room nearby, and I went to the temple every morning. As the days went by, they began to notice my presence as I, being a Japanese, was visibly different from other pilgrims and that aroused their curiosity. They began asking the reason why I was there, where was I from, and whether I was married or not. At that time, I was not married. They seemed to find a connection with me as I came across as a solitary single person, away from my natal family and hometown, like a renouncer.

As they got used to me, they allowed me to stay in their circle, and shared their food with me at lunch and teatime. Yet, soon they realised that my presence was a nuisance. At the temple, other pilgrims were curious to know about the new face, and asked them why a foreigner was spending time with them. It was not easy to keep the pilgrims away from the *hijras*. I became concerned about myself and my ambiguous position. Then, the *hijras* found a solution. In order to address the questions, a member of the circle was nominated as my guardian and was given the title of mother. Irrespective of my will, I was made a daughter of a member. Automatically, I was given the position of a sister for my guardian's disciple, and that disciple, named Shilpa, got the position of my brother. As a rule, disciples are given new female names by guardians, like Shilpa[5].

Among the community, kinship terms are commonly used to relate with strangers. Interestingly, close bonds with obligations are indicated by using male kin terms, such as a brother and an uncle. On the other hand, female kin terms, like sister and mother, are used for distant positions just like a patriarchal society. Based on this, it was obvious that I was placed on the periphery of their circle with the title of a sister and a daughter.

Whenever I visited the temple, I spent time at my guardian's house and sometimes stayed there for a couple of months. When I would leave, as a ritual, I would receive some token gifts from my guardian. With time, these gifts became costly, such as items made of silver and gold. The amount of money given to me as a gift also increased from 100 rupees to 1,000 rupees. I did not ponder about the meaning of receiving these gifts till I reached a threshold in my own life, in short, at the stage when I got married, was pregnant, and delivered a baby.

I could not fly to India for more than a year because of these life events. Prior to that, I had never failed to make a trip at least once a year. Five months after my delivery, I got a chance to visit the *hijras*, alone in March 2014.

While talking about my new family members in Japan to my guardian and her followers

and neighbours, my guardian brought up the Gujarati custom of '*jiyānu*'. This is a gift-giving practice.

According to the local custom of Gujarat, a woman who gets married has to come to her natal place for her first delivery. After the delivery, her parents send her back to the family she is married into. The practice of handing over a daughter into the conjugal family for the first time is called '*kanniya dan*', which literally means bride giving. The second time of handing over a daughter is called '*jiyānu*'. The gift sent by the natal family with their daughter is also called as '*jiyānu*'.

I must confess that so far I had not given any serious thought to my relationship with my guardian until I received the *jiyānu* from her. The gift was given in the presence of witnesses, and with this the relationship was made public without any words. At this point I realised that this transformed the quasi mother-daughter relationship into something solid and stable. In other words, *jiyānu* was a material and symbolic form of affirmation of the unbreakable bond between us.

Looking back at the change in my position from a trespasser to a quasi mother -daughter relation, then a firm relationship, I wonder why they forgave my presence and my exotic existence in their circle. Not only that, but why did they feed me, give me a place to stay, and teach me the rules of their life whenever I was there. After careful consideration, I came up with two reasons: firstly, as I mentioned earlier, *hijras* were able to find a common ground with a solitary single person, away from the natal family and hometown, like a renouncer. They must have sensed that we were similar in some way even though we were not the same. Secondly, they were all trespassers at one time and were forgiven by some senior members of the community. Also, they were fed, housed, and taught by the senior at a time when they were strangers. Therefore, they were willing to forgive others and build a solid and intimate relationship with them even if they were offensive in the beginning.

As Paul Ricoeur said, the *hijras* could have told me, 'no, I cannot, I cannot forgive', in other words, it was not an obligation for them to forgive any trespassers. In fact, I have seen several strangers at the temple who were refused and driven away by *hijras*. I believe that for a person to get accepted in their circle, the person needs to have an attitude to receive even a negative response as it is and the ability to share their learnings and earnings with others in future. According to the convention of the community, oldcomers are always givers, and they recruit strangers to perpetuate their own community.

In fact, the *hijra* community is made up of strangers. For perpetuating and configuring

their own community, they need to have certain rules. In the following sections, I will illustrate how the *hijra* community is configured based on the existing idioms of hierarchal relationships of the society in Gujarat.

IV-2. Hierarchy, solidarity, and kinship

Strictly speaking, *hijras* do not create fictional relationships, in fact they introduce hierarchical idioms of kins' relationships into their community. By allocating familiar Gujarati kin terms to address strangers, they create a framework of relationships with them. For example, the relationship between guardian (*guru*) and disciple (*chera*) is equivalent to that of '*bāp*' (a father) and '*dīkaro*' (a son), though they never address each other as father and son. The guardian who gives a newcomer her name is referred to as a '*guru*' (a master or teacher), who feeds, clothes, houses, and teaches her the rules of *hijra* life. The role of the '*chelo*' (a disciple or follower) is to follow the *guru's* orders and to take care of the *guru*. There is another kind of *guru*, who is addressed as '*kākā* (a father's brother, or uncle) *guru*'. The disciple must treat '*kākā guru*' in the same manner as one's *guru* and disobeying them is strictly prohibited.

In most cases, the guardian and disciple relationships are polygamous. More specifically, one guardian usually has more than one disciple. An ideal disciple is regarded as a '*patnī*' (a wife) who devotes herself to the *guru*, who is the equivalent of a '*pati*' (a husband). This core relationship of their community also implies sexual intimacy between the elders and the younger members. Those who are under the same *guru* are on equal footing and are called '*guru bhāi*' (a brother) and they often conduct their daily activities together if they are not on bad terms.

A *guru's guru* is called '*dādi*' (a paternal grandmother), not '*dādā*' (a paternal grandfather). In that relation, '*dādi*' a senior *hijra* would consider the younger one to be a '*poutra*' (a son's male child, or grandchild), moreover, '*dādī*' is not necessarily strict with her '*poutra*'.

Moreover, younger *hijras* are allowed to have an affectionate relationship with one senior member who is outside their paternal line, called as '*mammi*' (a mother) after the castration ritual. The mother and daughter relationship has to be affirmed through a ritual where in a community gathering a mother makes a golden gift, called '*mameru*', for her daughter. *Mameru* generally refers to a gift given to a woman by her '*māmā*' (a maternal uncle) when she is married. In the case of *hijras*, '*mameru*' is for affirming a relationship under the witness of the community between those who live away from the beginning, yet who have to cooperate with each other at the turning point of a daughter's guru's death. Without a mother and daughter

relationship, the core relationship between a guardian and disciple, or a husband and wife, would not be completed either.

As mentioned above, with the exception of calling a *guru's guru* as '*dādī*' (a paternal grandmother) and one senior as '*mammi*' (a mother), all other connections surrounding the guardian and disciple relationship are paternal. In the following section, I will take the example of Shilpa's case to show in detail how the *hijra* community is made up hierarchically with existing idioms of kinship terminology of Gujarat[6].

IV-3. Making a hierarchical community

Shilpa, who had been living near the temple for over ten years, wore *ghāgharo*[7] when she was a teenager. When she was a child, Shilpa lost her parents, and was raised by two older sisters. Shilpa also had three older brothers, and she on speaking terms with only the oldest one. She worked in restaurants and other places before becoming a *hijra*. As she lived alone, she did not have any close relatives who would have objected to her becoming a *hijra*. Her sisters were already married and had moved to another village. The urban town where she first wore a *ghāgharo* and started *hijra* activities was close to the village where her two sisters were. She was known by the name Tini here, but she was unable to adapt to life with her fellow *hijras*, and she moved between various places in Gujarat. Shilpa later came to live with another *hijra* named Sunita, who had a house near the goddess temple. While there, Sunita gave her the name Shilpa, and she underwent the castration ritual involving the removal of the penis and scrotum, hence stepping outside the boundary of the ordinary world.

When Shilpa joined Sunita's household, Sunita already had several *chelas* (disciples). Therefore, Shilpa could not make a *guru-chelo* relationship with Sunita at that time. Instead, she became a *chelo* of one of Sunita's senior *chela*, named Meena. It was a sort of disappointment for her because she adored Sunita, who had treated her with kindness before and after her castration ritual. Against her will, Shilpa started calling Sunita as '*dādī*' (a grandmother), and showed her affection towards Sunita without hesitation. Their affectionate relationship created some trouble within the household.

Shilpa did not get along well with Meena, her own *guru* because of her own attitude. As Shilpa was not a dutiful *chelo* for Meena, Meena grew weary of Shilpa. One day, Meena and Shilpa had a physical fight, after which Meena left the house and became a member of another household. Sunita did not try to stop Meena from leaving. With this, Shilpa finally got the position of Sunita's *chelo* or '*patnī*' (a wife).

With this it is evident that while it is possible to change one's *guru* within the community, it does not happen often. Negotiating such a transfer costs money especially if the person being transferred is a senior *hijra* like Meena. The household accepting the senior has to pay. Sunita could have created trouble by rejecting the request from Meena's new guru, but she did not do that. The transfer negotiations were successful, and Meena became affiliated with another house. The amount paid depends on the career of the person being transferred, and those involved with Shilpa gossiped that a rather large sum was necessary for Meena's transfer as she had had a career as a *hijra* for over ten years.

Shilpa had her status raised from *poutra* (a grandchild) and assumed the status of Sunita's *chelo* by driving out her hindrance, her former *guru* Meena, from the house. According to the reconfiguration, the senior members who had been her *kākā gurus* (uncle guardians) now became her *guru bhāis*, or disciples who follow the same guardian. Although there was no change in the fact that she was still the lowest ranked among Sunita's disciples, Shilpa was extremely happy about the fact that there was no one between her and Sunita. Shilpa often caressed Sunita with no inhibitions and shared a bed with her every night. Intimate relationships between *gurus* and *chelos* such as the one between Shilpa and Sunita are by no means exceptional. It is often stated by members of the community that the relationship between *guru* and *chelo* is similar to the relationship between *pati* (a husband) and *patnī* (a wife), and they can carry out sexual acts in spite of the absence of a penis.

After more than ten years of living in Sunita's house, Shilpa had two *chelos* of her own. Of those, one *chelo*, named Kokila, adored Shilpa, and their relationship extended to involving caressing each other's castrated bodies. Not only that, but Kokila also became jealous of Shilpa and Sunita's relationship. Eventually, she had no choice but to leave the house after problems arose. She returned after some time and became Shilpa's *chelo* once again. However, rather than having an intimate relationship with Shilpa again, she built an affectionate relationship with her own *guru bhāi*.

Use of the labels, *pati* (a husband) and *patnī* (a wife) to describe *hijra* guardian-disciple relationships not only is a metaphor for the intimate relationship between two people, but it also expresses the duties and roles that can arise between two members. This role also determines what happens after the *guru* passes away. When one's *guru* dies, her *chelos* must play the role of *patnī* who have lost their *pati* during the funeral. By way of comparison, married women who have lost their husband are supposed to wear red or green, or other colourful saris at the husbands' funeral[8] in front of visitors who express their condolences. The coloured saris

have to be gifted by their brothers who live in their natal home. The former kin members of a married woman have an important role to play at the time of her husband's funeral, in addition to the deceased persons family members. In the same way, when performing funeral rites for a deceased *guru* in *hijra* communities, another, distinct connection with '*mammi*' (a mother) becomes necessary in addition to disciples of the deceased, and members closely connected to the deceased through paternal familial titles. For this reason, after finding a '*pati*' of their own, people in the *hijra* community must then find a '*mammi*' (a mother), and make a relationship of '*bahen*' (a sister) and a '*bhāi*' (a brother) with a mother's disciple. Therefore, outside the paternal links, every *hijra* has to take on the role of '*dīkarī*' (a daughter) and '*bahen*' (a sister) just after one's own settlement of marital status with the senior.

Shilpa also has people that she calls '*mammi*' (a mother) and '*bhāi*' (a brother). They live and work in a city approximately 200 km to the south, and Shilpa has no interaction with them on a daily basis. They belong to their own society where they have familial relationships and commitments towards each other. As such, when Shilpa holds a funeral for her own *guru*, her *mammi* and *bhāi* will also attend, as will the members of their own respective organisations. In principle, when a *hijra* dies, several hundred people, who usually live and work in different cities, get together in one place. During such gatherings, an imagined community of people who usually see themselves as having a single anonymous face as '*hijras*' will be embodied as their totality, or their co-existence as a whole.

Shilpa's *chelo* also has to decide who would they address as *mammi* (a mother), before Shilpa passes away. When that person and the *chelo* establish their relationship as *mammi* and *dīkarī* (a daughter), a ceremony would be held in which the *dīkarī* would drink buffalo milk that has been poured onto the *mammi's* breast, and a gift called '*mameru*'[9] would be given from the *mammi's* side of the family. Then, the *bhāi* (a brother) and *bahen* (a sister) relationships will be established between Shilpa's *chelo* and the *mammi's chelo*. As is custom, a decorative string is then worn on the arm of the *bhāi* on the Hindu festival of *rakshabandhan*.

Thus, in the *hijra* community of Gujarat, after finding *pati* (a husband), the newcomer chooses *mammi* (a mother). Around the axis of these core relationships, the newcomer automatically gets connected with other members who they have never met before. Moreover, at the time of the death of members, these invisible networks linked with several titles of kin terms are actualised, as Jean-Luc Nancy says that 'Community is revealed in the death of others' (1991: 15).

Even when a single *hijra* dies without *chelo* (a disciple) or *patnī* (a wife) of her own, her

death acts as a summon for all relevant members. For example, Mansi, who lived near the goddess temple and whose own *guru* had already passed away, died alone a few years ago. At her death, a senior member whose *guru* had already passed, became Mansi's *chelo* and put on a red coloured sari just like a widow so as to hold the funeral rites for her. After the funeral, Mansi's new *chelo* assumed ownership of her house and all her possessions.

V. Conclusion

Nowadays, hundreds of *hijras* live all over the state of Gujarat, and one of their lineages known as '*pāvaiya*' can be traced back to the one who was cursed and forgiven, not only that, but they are also given a privileged place at the temple by the local Goddess Bahucharā. Those who gather at the temple of Bahucharā belong to *pāvaiya* of the northern part of Gujarat. Therefore, all fieldwork data in this paper is about the *pāvaiya* society which might not be true to other *hijras* living in other regions.

As devotees of the Goddess, *hijras* of the *pāvaiya* society expect admiration and avoid being associated with groups that are despised, such as the beggars. Within the contexts of Indian politics, *hijras* in general are regarded as vulnerable. However, those belonging to the *pāvaiya* society are believed to pass on the grace of Bahucharā to the general public so as to counter the worldly vulnerabilities. Under the support of the Goddess, *hijras* at the temple appear privileged and acceptable in the eyes of pilgrims even though their privilege might be contingent.

Although they are anonymous renouncers in the face of pilgrims at the temple, each member has their own name and particular position within the community. In their solidarity, they seem to mimic the patriarchal society of Gujarat that they have renounced. Technically, however, they do not follow the original mainstream pattern, but pick out several idioms from the kinship terminology to remake their own core relationships with unknown people. Kinship becomes a key language for them to assimilate strangers into their own community. Not only that, but these relationships clearly define the hierarchical relation between them. Therefore, newly associated people can take on their obligations with no confusion.

As a stranger, or an outsider, I initially believed that the *hijra*'s community had a fictitious kinship. However, now I consider the significance of allocating kinship terms differently, standing at the periphery of a mother-daughter line. Not only that, but, I identify myself as a (permanent) newcomer of the *hijra* community, taking my experiences and gifts seriously. I, myself, cannot contribute to the perpetuation of their community, yet I believe I can make a

certain contribution from the periphery in terms of spreading the word about people who have renounced a normative gendered society and their strategy to survive with strangers through the practice of giving and forgiving with no returns, which would subvert several arguments regarding the 'third gender' or the 'third sex' in the non-Western societies.

Notes

（1） This paper is a revised version of two presentations given at the 2016 Inter – Congress of International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) in Dubrovnik, Croatia, and at the 2019 Inter – Congress of IUAES in Poznan, Poland.

（2） According to an article in 'The Times of India' (30 May, 2014), the census data indicated that 490,000 people identified themselves as the third gender (https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/First-count-of-third-gender-in-census-4-9-lakh/articleshow/35741613.cms, accessed on 15 September 2019).

（3） I came across this old book during my research at the library of Shri HK Arts College, Ahmedabad.

（4） This gift -giving at the temple, under surveillance of the Goddess, is known as '*dan*', or '*pun – dan*' in everyday conversation, and it is believed to lead to the accumulation of good deeds and happier lives in future incarnations.

（5） As in the case of Shilpa, hijras use feminine name. To keep the consistency between names and pronouns, I use female pronouns in this paper. Including the case of Shilpa, I use pseudonyms in this paper.

（6） See also Appendix for kinship terminology of Gujarat.

（7） Wearing a *ghāgharo* is an indication of joining the *hijra* community.

（8） Widows are restricted to wearing white or blue for all their lives once the funeral is over; therefore, they put on red or green saris at their husbands' funeral before moving to the stage of being widows.

（9） As I have mentioned above, *Mameru* generally refers to a gift given to a woman by her '*māmā*' (maternal uncle) when she marries.

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Appendix <Kinship terms used in the Northern part of Gujarat, India>

Generation	Kinship terms	Relation to the Ego	
1) Grandparental Generation	*Dādā / Dādī*	Grandfather/ Grandmother (Paternal side)	(address)
	Nāna / Nānī	Grandfather/ Grandmother (Maternal side)	
2) Parental Generation	*Bāp / Mammi, Bā*	Father/ Mother	(address)
	Kākā / Kākī	Father's brother/ his wife	(address)
	Fua / Fai, Foi	Father's sister's husband/ Father's sister	(address)
	Māmā / Māmī	Mother's brother/ Mother's brother's wife	(address)
	Māsā / Māshī	Mother's sister's husband/ Mother's sister	(address)
	Sasaro / Sāsu	Father in law/ Mother in law	
3) Ego's Generation	*Bhāi / Bahen*	Brother/ Sister	(address)
	Banevī	Sister's husband	
	Bhābhī	Brother's wife	(address)
	Vahu, Patnī	Wife	
	Var, Pati, Dhani	Husband	
	Sālo / Sālī	Wife's brother/ Wife's sister	
	Jeth / Jethānī	Husband's elder brother/ his wife	
	Diyar / Derānī	Husband's younger brother/ his wife	
4) Filial Generation	*Dīkaro / Dīkarī*	Son/ Daughter	
	Bhatrījo / Bhatrījī	Brother's son/ Brother's daughter	
	Bhāniyo / Bhānī	Sister's son/ Sister's daughter	
	Jamāi	Son in law	
	Putravadhu	Daughter in law	
	Poutra / Poutri	Son's son/ Son's daughter	
	Dohitara	Daughter's son	