

# Transgender Identity and Emotional Trauma in Manobi Bandopadhyay's *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi*

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**Abstract**—This paper examines the intersection of transgender identity and psychological challenges through the life of Manobi Bandopadhyay, India's first transgender college principal. Bandopadhyay's narrative illustrates the complex challenges faced by transgender individuals within a society characterized by rigid gender norms and pervasive discrimination. The journey of Bandopadhyay's experiences reveals the profound emotional distress associated with gender dysphoria, societal exclusion, and familial estrangement, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of trauma in the context of identity formation. Despite significant legal advancements, including the 2014 Supreme Court ruling that recognized transgender rights, many individuals continue to confront stigma that adversely impacts their mental health and overall well-being. Bandopadhyay's journey of self-acceptance underscores the importance of community support and solidarity, particularly within the hijra community, which offers a sense of belonging and resilience. This study highlights the need for ongoing advocacy and educational initiatives to challenge societal norms and promote acceptance of diverse gender identities. By sharing her experiences, Bandopadhyay not only amplifies marginalized voices but also contributes to a broader discourse on social justice, identity, and emotional well-being in contemporary India. This research article aims to inform policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals about the unique struggles of transgender individuals and the critical importance of creating inclusive environments that foster dignity and recognition for all.

**Index Terms**—transgender identity, emotional trauma, gender dysphoria, social discrimination, hijra community

## I. INTRODUCTION

The journey of Bandopadhyay's life is a profound narrative of courage, resilience, and identity, set against the backdrop of a deeply conservative society. As the first transgender person in India to become a college principal, her journey is not just about personal success but also an emblematic fight for recognition and dignity. Born as a boy but identifying as a woman from a young age, Bandopadhyay faced tremendous emotional and psychological trauma, struggling with gender dysphoria and societal expectations. The life of Bandopadhyay is a battle for acceptance, both within her family and in the broader society, which mirrors the struggles of many transgender individuals worldwide, who endure discrimination, rejection, and emotional pain simply for asserting their true selves. In her memoir, *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi*, she sheds light on the intersection of transgender identity and psychological challenges, illustrating the intense personal and social costs of living authentically in a world that often demands conformity. Her journey of life is not just a story of transitioning from male to female; it is a testament to the human spirit's capacity to overcome adversity, redefine identity, and emerge stronger. The journey of her life serves as an inspiration for countless others, showing that despite the hardships, it is possible to live while staying true to oneself.

Transgender identity is often deeply intertwined with psychological challenges, as individuals who identify as transgender frequently face significant challenges in expressing and affirming their gender identity. The dissonance between one's assigned gender at birth and one's true gender identity, known as gender dysphoria, can lead to intense emotional distress. This internal struggle is often compounded by external factors such as societal exclusion, discrimination, and stigmatization.

Transgender people frequently face rejection from family, friends, and the broader community, which can result in feelings of isolation, depression, and anxiety. Experiences of bullying, harassment, and even violence are common thus, further deepening the psychological challenges. Additionally, the lack of access to gender-affirming healthcare and societal acceptance contributes to the psychological burden. Many transgender individuals report feelings of hopelessness and emotional pain, often tied to the overwhelming pressure to conform to societal norms.

The trauma that accompanies transgender identity is not just the result of social exclusion but also the complex process of self-acceptance. For many, the journey to embracing their true identity is long and fraught with personal suffering, compounded by the fear of rejection or misunderstanding. Despite these challenges, many transgender individuals show remarkable resilience, drawing strength from their experiences to advocate for themselves and others in the LGBTQ+ community. The Intersection of transgender identity and psychological challenges thus highlights the need for greater

societal awareness, acceptance, and support systems to address the unique mental health needs of the transgender population.

#### A. *The Transgender Community in India*

The transgender community in India has a long and complex history, filled with both reverence and deep marginalization. Ancient texts such as the Mahabharata and Kama Sutra acknowledge the presence of transgender individuals, particularly the hijra community, which played respected roles in society, especially during the Mughal era. However, under British colonial rule, the hijra community was criminalized, leading to a spread of stigma that persists to this day.

Transgender individuals in India, like Bandopadhyay, face significant psychological challenges due to systemic discrimination and societal exclusion. Despite legal advancements, such as the 2014 Supreme Court ruling that recognized transgender people as a third gender, many continue to struggle with rejection from family and community, leading to feelings of isolation and emotional distress. The hijra community, which offers social and spiritual belonging through the Guru-Chela relationship, becomes a place of refuge for those abandoned by their natal families. However, the reality of surviving through begging, rituals, and sex work adds to the psychological burden many faces.

Figures like Bandopadhyay have emerged as symbols of resilience and strength, navigating personal and social challenges to achieve remarkable success. Yet, the psychological challenges experienced by transgender individuals due to societal exclusion, coupled with the hardships of daily life, remain a significant issue. While India has made strides in recognizing transgender rights, the struggle for full acceptance and the healing of deep emotional wounds continues.

#### B. *Cultural Normativity Leading to the Quest for Identity*

Sex reassignment surgery is mentioned in her biography as a way for them to gain power and rights. This subtly conveys the pervasive stereotype that sexuality is an individual's capacity to express themselves, revealing their thoughts of not belonging to either of the two camps. An irrational want to belong was surging in each of their hearts. Regulating the body leads to docility and makes us think of it as a prison for the spirit, as Foucault (1995) explains in *Discipline and Punishment*. The third gender is deprived of benefits and rights due to societal norms and prescriptions. Socially established norms and standards serve as the unconscious force that controls the body, a fact of which society is blissfully unaware. In her biography, Bandopadhyay also discusses the struggles of other transgender people and the toxic masculinity she encountered from males she met on her travels. Jolly and Jagadish's tales are prominent in Bandopadhyay's writings. When asked about her experiences with other trans persons, she delivers an inverse account. "I feel incredibly lucky compared to transgender people like Jagadish" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 75). She adds, "Who knows where I would be today if my family hadn't stood by me no matter my "odddity" and pushed me to do well in school" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 75).

Bandopadhyay subtly implies that many have fallen prey to prostitution and unrequited love, and many more have vanished while attempting to fit into one of these categories, all because they are not entitled to Bandopadhyay's status. However, transgender people living in poverty and trans sex workers in the US, like Bandopadhyay, are not featured in adolescent fiction, which features a wide variety of queer identities (including bisexual and gay characters), and in which we see teens hiding their sexuality and putting on a false front to fit in with society. There may be more transgender people working in the sex industry in the US and India than cisgender people. Transgender persons face high rates of prejudice, poverty, unemployment, and homelessness, according to the NTDS. Many of these people are engaged in the sex trade. Transgender persons already confront a lot of prejudice and marginalization in American culture, and this stigmatization of sex work may make it much worse.

#### C. *Sexuality Debate*

"Sex" and "gender" have transformed, particularly in the context of transgender identities. While traditionally seen as interconnected, sex (biological characteristics) and gender (social roles) are now viewed as distinct, with gender encompassing a spectrum of identities that may not fit neatly into binary categories. Kalra and Bhugra (2013), highlight the identities that are self-defined or externally recognized, challenging the belief that gender is predetermined at birth based solely on biological sex. This notion contrasts with "sexual essentialism" (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013, pp. 244-249), which posits that gender is an unchangeable truth. Instead, "social constructionism" suggests that identity is shaped by cultural and societal influences. Weeks (2023) emphasizes that this perspective rejects the idea of a singular sexual essence, allowing for a richer understanding of diverse identities.

Butler's (1990) theories further explore this by framing gender as performative, arguing that it is constructed through repeated behaviors rather than being inherently tied to biological sex. This perspective allows for a more flexible interpretation of gender, recognizing that it can manifest in various ways based on cultural contexts. Regarding hijra identity, Butler's concepts of "performance" and "corporeal signification" are particularly pertinent. Hijras often undergo practices like nirvana (emasulation) and engage in various body modifications to express femininity. These actions help construct their identities, transcending traditional binary frameworks.

Anthropologists like Cornwall and Lindisfarne assert that masculinity and femininity are socially constructed, and not strictly linked to biological sex. This understanding challenges the essentialist male-female dichotomy, suggesting that gender expressions are fluid and culturally specific. Such insights are crucial for comprehending the psychological

challenges faced by transgender individuals, including figures like Bandopadhyay, as they navigate the complexities of identity in a society that often imposes rigid norms.

#### *D. Medico-Psychological Construction of Heterosexuality*

A branch of medicine and psychology in nineteenth-century Europe, sexology contributed to our understanding of sexual and gender variety while also establishing the groundwork for our contemporary binary system. According to the dominant medico-psychological narrative, which is referred to as “the major ‘cultural lens’ through which sexuality is now understood”, persons with aberrant sexual orientations are either physically or mentally diseased. Krafft-Ebing (2011), a Sexologist who was instrumental in bringing the concept of “contrary inverted sexual feeling” (Krafft-Ebing, 2011) into the academic sphere. Rathethanom uses the term “criminal”, and sexologists like Havelock Ellis (2018) use the term “congenital invert” to describe homosexuals. As a dominating discourse of human sexual and gendered identities, heterosexuality has evolved in response to these historical and cultural influences. During this time in history, heterosexuality and the gender binary had a stranglehold on global history, solidifying their positions as the norm. Despite the abundance of evidence to the contrary, the straight way of thinking maintains that heterosexuality is inherent to all cultures and species. There had been no indication of sexuality being labeled as normal or deviant before this occurrence. We should instead ask, following Foucault’s lead, “why sex was associated with sin for such a long time” (Foucault, 1995). Since procreative sex was valued and non-procreative sex was condemned as a sin due to the waste of vital energy, this is a reasonable question to raise.

According to Katz (2007), sexologist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895) said that “heterosexuality and normal sexuality” refer to the inborn sexual satisfaction experienced by the vast majority of people. This shift away from the previous qualitative, procreative criteria and towards statistics as the basis of normalcy is unprecedented. Skidmore’s (2024), *The History of Sexuality and LGBTQ+ History*, the law of marriage and the order of desires are two major Western systems that Foucault identifies as controlling sex. A sophisticated and important theory of sex is offered to us, one that travels from the early sexologists’ conceptions of heterosexuality to Freud’s psychoanalytic views of sexuality. By using male sexuality as a guiding principle, Freud maintained his bias while examining the stages of sexual drive development. When it comes to ideas about sexuality and sex, his psychoanalytic views and theories have a lasting influence. His interpretation of the “pleasure principle” has long put the procreation ethic on the back burner. When it comes to Sigmund Freud, “sex from productive duty to act of pleasurable consumption” (Freud, 2000), is transformed from a utilitarian need to an object of pure pleasure. He experiences profound emotional distress due to the needless suppression of desire. In his perceptive critique of Freud’s Oedipus complex theory, Jonathan Katz demonstrates how the complex both generates and depends on heterosexuality.

Katz (2007) states that the Heterosexual Mystique, the notion of an essential, eternal, normal heterosexuality, was widely accepted as the dominant sexual orthodoxy in the early twentieth century, thanks to the work of Freud and other medical men. This idea had been floundering around since the nineteenth century. The word “heterosexual” went from being used only in medical contexts to being used widely in American mainstream media, where it went from being seen as aberrant to being accepted as the norm. Fee’s astute analysis of Freud’s theories on childhood sexuality sheds light on the stifling effect of homogenizing sexual orientation options. The author observes that it is puzzling how these diverse and undifferentiated wants are tightly directed into adult procreative heterosexuality since Freud’s claim that all infants are polymorphously wicked is deemed credible. His notion of identity does not accommodate many identities, and the prevailing cultural heterosexual matrix limits the freedom of polymorphous perversities. Michel Foucault makes a valid point when he says that the binary opposition between homosexuality and heterosexuality, which was established by mental health professionals in the late Victorian era, became institutionalized through cultural practices and techniques that normalized sexuality regulation. Cultural practices and tactics “The persistent surveillance of individuals’ minds and bodies reinforces the perception of their beliefs and behaviors as innate aspects of their identity” (Foucault, 1977). Our culture is still influenced by the medico-psychological perspective of the eighteenth century on transsexualism. To ensure they are mentally healthy to have an SRS, transgender people go through extensive medical therapy with a multidisciplinary team of doctors and psychologists. One way to evaluate a transsexual’s gender and sexuality is by looking at how genuine they are. Depression and discontent are common post-operative symptoms for transgender people, and if the surgery doesn’t achieve perfection according to the current standard of authenticity, this mental state might lead to suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Despite The journey of Bandopadhyay ‘s deep desire for a sex change procedure, she finds herself consumed by negative thoughts. When her body shows no signs of femininity for an extended period, her mental state does not change, even after the reassignment operation. Since no one would ever approve of her choice, she suffers through this very discouraging state all by herself. “I chose to keep things to myself and reveal all only when it was done, ‘she recalls’ because my family was dead against it and I didn’t want to be burdened down by negative comments from my parents and sisters” (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 34).

Several studies found that transgender people felt regret, dissatisfaction, and disappointment during the follow-up period following gender reassignment surgery. This was due to a variety of factors, including subpar medical care, an undeveloped physical appearance, a lack of family support, negative neighborhood attitudes, and so on. One research found that SRS did not help Tony overcome her gender dysphoria, but rather diminished her sexual satisfaction and outlet, which she regretted. Arguably, SRS was a mistake for her. Hird (2002), adds his two cents to a sociological analysis of transsexualism by writing, “Those supporting somatic arguments cite long-term evidence suggesting that transsexual

women and men are not mentally ill. That, in tandem with homosexuality, much of the distress, anger and depression evidenced in transsexual people is a result of societal discrimination and not the transsexual condition itself" (Hird, 2002, pp. 577-595). When characterizing a person, gender, sex, and sexual orientation are crucial. Gender and sexual identity construction is a culturally and historically nuanced process that presents itself uniquely in every community. Repercussions, both positive and negative, and even violent, are met with social identity statements that go against these cultural and historical norms.

Bandopadhyay, a member of a lower-middle-class family in India in the mid-1960s, experiences homophobia, transphobia, and sexism in every aspect of Indian society and culture, from her home with her joined family to her school, college, and university, where she earns a degree, her residence where she rents out her space, and the college where she teaches. When she began to steal her sisters' clothing, "the whole locality started shunning" them because their "behavior was bringing shame to the family" at home. "They would squeeze me, yank my hair, box my ears, and punch my face at the slightest provocation" when the schoolboys learned that "I (Manobi Bandopadhyay) was not a female, but an incredibly fragile and physically weak lad. "To be yet another place where I would have to fight for my identity and respect..." (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 29). She wrote of her experience at university, which she had first envisioned as a haven to "find freedom after fourteen years of regimented school life. "A large crowd had converged around me. There were applauding hands, whistles, and catcalls as soon as people noticed me, but there were also insults. As she puts it, "My colleagues still treated me like a subhuman, like I had no right to sit with them in the same staff room and enjoy the same facilities as they did as college professors" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 29). This prejudiced treatment persisted even at the institution where she worked as an Assistant Professor. Neither the teachers' union meetings nor the social events were open to me. Biography snippets show how heteronormative society beliefs affect non-normative people's gender and sexuality. Nonheteronormative persons in India are pushed out of social places due to the antagonistic attitude towards them. British colonial authorities in India legislated the criminalization of hijras as "a danger of moral, sexual and physical contagion to both Indian men and public space..." in the Criminal Tribes Act (1871), thus initiating the process of their eradication. Colonial public spaces were traditionally seen as having a male character, distinct from the more feminine private sphere, due to its open layout and lack of barriers. Displaying themselves in public as "habitual sodomites" clothed in women's clothing eroded the traditionally masculine nature of that area and the social and physical barriers that separated the sexes.

According to transgender ethnographer Gayatri (2010), hijras from pre-British India were socially integrated and held prominent roles in society until their marginalization began. People in India's sexual subculture still feel the severe aftereffects of the British-enacted Criminal Tribes Act.

## II. UNVEILING TRAUMA AND SUFFERINGS IN THE LIFE OF TRANSGENDER IN *A GIFT OF GODDESS LAKSHMI*

According to the first transgender college principal, Bandopadhyay has trained to repress her feelings of pain and fury since she believes no one values her achievements because people see her as sexless, which is her sole identity. Civilization can't advance or flourish effectively without gender equality. The conventional wisdom is that there are only two possible genders: male and female. Society expects each gender to act by its given role and to put individuals who act in opposition to their gender at a disadvantage. As a result, those who identify as transgender or with a third gender are perpetually social outcasts. Trauma, both internal and external, may manifest at many stages of life for transgender people due to their marginalization, and marginalization isolation. The present article examines Manobi Bandyopadhyay's (the first transgender principal in India) biography, *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi*, and the horrific events she endured from childhood till the present day. Coming to terms with her gender identity and proclaiming her transition as a "metamorphosis", Bandopadhyay—who was born as Somnath—has also endured significant psychological hardship. She reflects on how her fascination with and affection for her older sisters' patterned dresses sparked a metamorphosis in her personality. She started imitating her sisters' outfits and using her mother's cosmetics, such as eyeliner and lipstick, since she wanted to be just like them. She would spend hours staring at herself in the mirror and exploring the home. She claims that she can apply makeup better than females, but her mother and sisters try to advise her after they laugh at her for dressing up like a girl, thinking it's a stupid thing to do. Manobi Bandopadhyay carried on as if nothing had happened, and she seemed pleased that anybody may have thought she was a female. Bandopadhyay was ordered to sit next to the girls, who she secretly liked, on her first day of school when she was about six years old because the guys in her class called her a female and assumed she was a girl dressed like a boy. But when they found out she was a guy, they started making fun of her for acting like a frail and helpless child. In addition, they would squeeze her, pull her hair, box her ears, and hit her in the face. Their enjoyment of tormenting her, which left a lasting impression on her psyche, is something she vividly recalls. The realization that most people around her did not accept her hit her at this time. Bandopadhyay started to loathe her genitalia over time. "I kept these occurrences from her just as I kept quiet about my growing disgust for my privates... The male organ was not anything I disliked. Some parts I didn't like for, but overall I enjoyed it" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 8).

Physical seduction occurred when Bandopadhyay was in fifth grade while her cousin, who was twenty-one years old, was there. Bandopadhyay screamed in agony, but he muffled her cries. Over time, this became a habit that she cherished behind her back, and it began to bring out her inner woman. Manobi Bandopadhyay started dressing like her sisters at home when she was in eighth grade, which shocked everyone. The journey of Manobi Bandopadhyay's mother tried and

failed to convince her that her actions were bringing dishonor to the family. Manobi Bandopadhyay told her mother the truth about herself as a woman, and her mother listened in horror. "My mother, who was always there for me and my confidante, would futilely attempt to convey the message that my actions were bringing disgrace upon our family. Mom, I'm a lady. ...Are you not convinced about that? Am I that bad at dressing for a night out? Please, Ma, let me be a girl. She would listen to me in horror whenever I told her that. The agony she must have felt is palpable, even though she never told me. The criticism, prejudice, and estrangement had a profound effect on Manobi Bandopadhyay and her parents" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 10).

They, too, had endured profound anguish due to Bandopadhyay's actions, and their neighbors had been critical and accusatory nonstop. For example, when Bandopadhyay acted like a female, everyone started blaming her mother for failing to bring her up by the imagined social standards; as a result, her mother felt guilty about having a "hijra" child. Everyone had begun to hold her responsible for her freedom since she could not control her. The woman's internal struggles and the guilt she felt for bearing a hijra went unnoticed by everyone around her. That is exactly what people around her began referring to. Everyone in the neighborhood and her family, even her father, because of her depressing habits, which she was said to have brought on by her actions. As a consequence, her father vented his anger at her behavior by accusing her mother and two older sisters of not monitoring her closely enough. "Nobody was immune, not even my dad. Due to my erratic conduct, the whole neighborhood began to reject us. In your own eyes, how can you watch while your kid becomes a hijra? the same thing he had to hear every single day. The look of hopelessness on his face was palpable. It was all my fault that we were a downtrodden bunch. When people would criticize her parents for not being strict enough to "bring her back" or because they were too soft on her unusual behavior, my father would take it out on my mother and two older sisters" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 10).

Regardless, her academic prowess kept whispers to a minimum because her parents were so proud of her academic achievements. They were aware that this was not an acceptable excuse, but they were at a loss as to how to handle the problem. Bandopadhyay never let her raging sexuality or inner trauma influence her intellect because she saw that education and becoming a top student "was the only way by which I could win this unequal fight" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 11). That is why she never stopped striving to get the highest possible score on all of her exams. Bandopadhyay's life became a success as India's first transgender principal and is attributable entirely to her arduous efforts in this area. Whenever their combined family got married, Bandopadhyay would fantasize about being the bride. At the ceremony, she sought to get the attention of the groom's friends, but they ignored her since they felt she was strange. In rehearsal for the cultural show, her sisters' dance teacher praised her for dancing exquisitely as a girl. Manobi Bandopadhyay had been cast as the farmer's wife due to her exceptional dancing skills, but she "desired to tell them that I was not trying to be a girl, I was one! She was so convincing as the farmer's wife that even her father gave his approval after seeing the act" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 14). As a result, she suffered through the agonizing anguish of always being called a guy instead of a girl and yearned to scream out her identity. Attempts by Bandopadhyay to make sense of her sexuality had always been fraught with internal strife and anguish. "My life seemed like a never-ending labyrinth; I kept coming to the same curve, and I was bewildered. So who was I? Is it just me, or was I confusing my physical form with something else entirely? How did I come to be this way? Was this the price I was paying for some karma I had committed in the past? How do I get out of this jam? The majority of her acquaintances assumed she was gay and labeled her a "girlish boy" getting ready to become a 'hijra'" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 31).

Bandopadhyay's attraction towards males led her to believe she was a female and not a gay. "However, I was turned away from the heterosexual world! My status was mocked and used for its benefit" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 32). At the time, she found the term "transgender" to be peculiar; moreover, she had no idea if the word was in dictionaries or whether anybody, she knew identified with the third gender. Manobi Bandopadhyay learned she was one of the camels and that she was in for a lifetime of hardship when she and her brother used to playfully ask each other if they were male, female, or camels when they were kids. As she started dressing in her sister's pajamas and petticoats for skirts, the scorn she was getting at home and from the neighbors persisted. She fearlessly pursued her individuality with this approach, yet all that got her were insults. The hypocrisy in her environment was hurtful; people would call her a hijra whenever they could, mock her for who she was, and then try to woo her when she was alone. For instance, while her father was inebriated, her elder cousin mocked him for wanting a hijra as an heir and even signaled for her to meet him so he could sexually exploit her when he was sober. Over time, she became a sex object for many in the neighborhood who wanted to play with her, some brave enough to physically explore her, while others gratified their urges by making fun of her as she went by, suggesting sexual guidance to help her overcome her "awkwardness" when she was alone. Even at the Bengali literary college where she was accepted, she had to struggle for recognition and dignity; as she briefly described in her writing, the pupils stared at her in disbelief since she was dressed as a woman. Manobi Bandopadhyay dealt with the shock and insecurity that this caused strongly and confidently, even though she had no qualms about coming out as gay. "On my first day at college, I sent shockwaves across the whole campus. As this attractive young guy, dressed in a long kurta and salwar, approached the Bengali department, the students did nothing but stare in astonishment. He walked and carried himself like a lady. I certainly shattered expectations. A hijra had allegedly entered the university while pretending to be a student, and word got out. A large crowd had converged around me. As soon as they laid eyes on me, some began clapping their hands in joy, while others whistled and catcalled, and soon insults were flying about. The fact that her father continued to deny her sexuality, even after learning the whole tale at college..." (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 40).

That was brought home to her by his accusations that she was a womanizer who sought the attention of the females. "I was a woman trapped inside a man's body, not knowing the term 'transgender', "she replied fiercely when asked by her classmates if she was a transvestite or cross-dresser" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 41).

Bandyopadhyay's parents felt comfortable sending her to Jadavpur University for her master's degree since the faculty there included Saroj Bandyopadhyay and Satyajith Chaudhari, two of the top Bengali literary professors of their day. However, the false sense of security was quickly dispelled, and she once again found herself the target of bullying in the early going, even from her fellow students, who saw her as an easy target. All of these things helped her to empathize with her parents and to comprehend the struggles they had due her. People in the area were rather curious about her when she started teaching Bengali at Patulia Boys' School and felt her transsexual identity and feminine demeanor. Additionally, in the beginning, people would congregate outside the school to see her, finding it amusing that someone they adored and referred to as a hijra could hold the position of teacher in a well-respected institution. As a teacher, she encountered several guys who came to her to reveal their secret transgender identity, which they had buried for fear of social stigma. This highlights the common experience of many individuals who suffer from trauma and identity crisis and who hide their transgender identity at school decries the situation as "Even though I was still considered a "man" by most people, my feminine characteristics were obvious to others around me, even though I was far from coming out as gay. I was shocked to hear from several guys who had been trying to conceal their transgender status from their families and friends that they had now come to terms with it. The word love was used to justify the physical and emotional abuse she endured several times" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 67).

Even when they verbally attacked her for her actions, the majority of the individuals she encountered in the community and at college were just interested in using her to fulfill their desires. Even when she expressed interest in sex change surgery, a few people still desired her as a spouse or companion, but they abandoned her because of societal stigma. Bandyopadhyay was devastated on several occasions by this, but it hit her worst when the teacher she was seeing at Patulia Boys' School, with whom she had an intense romantic connection, abandoned her after seeking a psychiatrist's advice on how to go forward with their lives. This caused her immense anguish, and she thought that "life seemed to have ended all over again" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 70). Bandyopadhyay's parents, relatives, and neighbors, who accompanied her on the journey, were the targets of abuse at every turn. Her father had to endure terrible insults on many occasions since he accompanied a hijra. For example, her father accompanied her on her first day as a lecturer at Vivekananda Satavarshiki College in Jhargram to ease her transition from home to a new, distant place, but the experience was traumatic for them both. In a rural location, Bandyopadhyay was unique, and the community was amazed and in awe of her. However, when in the city, she was able to focus only on her own business, surrounded by people she knew. The usual civility on campus was violated when several students began yelling out, "'Arre dekho, dekho!' How about we have a look at it? Let me show you! Might this be a lady or a man? The taunting sounded like the lashes of a whip to my ears" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 91), and she could hear people making fun of her the whole way to college, from the second she and her father got off the bus. Her father abandoned her to her destiny when she felt compelled to flee from college as a result of the joyous laughter emanating from every corner as students and professors peeked in. My father quickly became the punchline of their jokes. "Why is this elderly gentleman accompanying you?" I thought you were a student. ...Excuse me. ...young lady. A woman in the teaching profession snorted. My dad was taken aback. He tried to avoid me as much as possible since he was used to receiving insults every time we went out. He had consented to attend only because this location was far and far from his house. However, this was not what he had anticipated! The most significant thing for Bandyopadhyay was "to undergo a sex change operation and that the biggest aim of my life was to establish my sexual identity" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 56).

She had to overcome profound pain to accept and embrace her sexuality. Experiencing intense internal trauma is a period that every transgender person goes through. "I had periods of self-doubt and questioning my life's direction. My thoughts would spin out of control and the internal anguish would rip me to shreds at such moments. Are they hallucinations or the real deal? Am I a lady in a man's body? What gives? Everyone treats me like a guy who isn't worth a damn. ...I wanted to rip out of the man's body into which I had been thrust, and go away" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 109).

Subsequently, when residing in Jhargram at the 'Kalpataru Bhavan' rental property, she endured harassment from one of her fellow renters. His brother-in-law and he plotted against her after she managed to evade him. They approached her in the name of love, but when he tried to evict her from the bhavan, it did not work. This made him angry, so he obtained her parents' residential number and began calling them late at night to harass them. "Is your youngest kid a boy or a girl? he enquired ... From time to time, my mum had no choice but to listen to his harsh speech over the phone" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 167). Fearing the tormentor would go into a diatribe, she chose to remain silent. Bandyopadhyay did her utmost to keep my dad away from these calls in case he became sick. The anguish my parents endured is something I can well comprehend. According to Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey, Bandyopadhyay was involved in several legal battles. The renter and his brother-in-law accused her of sexual harassment, trying to portray her as a sex maniac. In response, Manobi Bandyopadhyay lodged a counterclaim against them. Bandyopadhyay is eternally thankful to the journalists who covered her life in detail, putting her struggle for equality, justice, and the right to live to the forefront of public discourse. There were many newspaper articles on her. However, her parents were more impacted by all that occurred to her than she was. Her family was filled with terror; they thought the tenants and society would murder her or push her to suicide. People started

making their lives hellishly difficult and humiliating once they found out she had sex reassignment surgery, sometimes known as a sex change. As a result of what had happened to me, my parents were already shocked. Strangers would often ring the bell late at night before vanishing, only to frighten them; they would also get angry letters and threatening calls. Even though Bandopadhyay 's parents were there for her, she nonetheless went through a lot of stress because of society's callousness. They, too, endured much anguish and suffering since they never approved of her decision but never turned her away or failed to provide the support she needed. Bandopadhyay brought up her mother's death in March 2011 when discussing the anguish and despair her mother experienced throughout her gender transition. She recalls it as "It breaks my heart to think of all the pain my mom went through just to make sure her youngest kid was safe. From the time I was her son until I became her daughter, she loved me with all her heart. She lacked the bravery to confront the world and champion my cause, but I could feel her gentle presence by my side, supporting my decision without judgment and bearing the brunt of its consequences in silence" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 179).

Bandopadhyay and her family suffered from severe trauma and despair as a result of society's marginalization and cruelty. Realizing she was a "female" had a profound effect on her and her family, and she battled hard even at that young age to maintain her identity. Society often humiliated her and her family and subjected them to physical and emotional exploitation. When Bandopadhyay was alone, others in her area and at her university wanted to take advantage of her, and they verbally and physically assaulted her for her habits. Bandopadhyay persisted, fought for her right to exist, and battled for the acknowledgment of her individuality even at that early stage. Bandopadhyay became the first transgender principal of India at a prestigious university, where she served as an inspiration to other transgender people, and she ascended the ranks like a phoenix.

### III. CONCLUSION

The journey of Manobi Bandopadhyay is a powerful narrative that encapsulates the intricate relationship between transgender identity and psychological challenges. As India's first transgender college principal, Manobi Bandopadhyay embodies resilience and courage in the face of societal challenges. Manobi Bandopadhyay's life story reflects the broader experiences of many transgender individuals navigating a world of marginalization and discrimination.

Transgender identity is complex, and shaped by a myriad of cultural, social, and personal factors. Bandopadhyay's experiences highlight how traditional notions of gender—often confined to binary definitions—fail to capture the diversity of human identity. The rigid societal expectations surrounding gender roles can lead to significant emotional distress for those who do not conform. For Bandopadhyay, the process of coming to terms with her identity involved confronting deep-seated societal prejudices and familial rejection, which added layers of trauma to her journey.

The psychological challenges faced by transgender individuals arise from a combination of internal and external factors. Gender dysphoria—the discomfort experienced when one's gender identity does not align with their assigned sex at birth—can lead to feelings of isolation, depression, and anxiety. Bandopadhyay's story illustrates this struggle vividly, as she recounts her journey from a life of despair to one of empowerment and advocacy. Manobi Bandopadhyay's journey to embracing her true self was not without pain; she had to navigate relationships that were often strained or severed due to her gender identity.

Moreover, societal stigma associated with being transgender can lead to various forms of discrimination, including exclusion from educational and professional settings, as well as violence and harassment. Despite legal advancements in India—such as the 2014 Supreme Court ruling recognizing transgender rights—prejudice remains deeply ingrained in many facets of society. Bandopadhyay's work as an educator and advocate aims to challenge these norms, pushing for greater acceptance and understanding of transgender individuals.

Bandopadhyay's journey also highlights the importance of community and solidarity within the transgender population. Bandopadhyay emphasizes the significance of finding a support system, whether through chosen families or advocacy networks, as a means to cope with psychological challenges. The hijra community, to which many transgender individuals belong, serves as a vital space for support, identity, and resilience.

Ultimately, Bandopadhyay's story is a testament to the strength of the human spirit. It underscores the ongoing fight for recognition, dignity, and emotional well-being for transgender individuals in India and beyond. By sharing her experiences, Bandopadhyay not only elevates the voices of the marginalized but also fosters a greater understanding of the complexities of gender identity and the emotional struggles that accompany it.

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