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Abstract

This article aims to shed light on the discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization experienced by intersex individuals in heteronormative Pakistani society. Intersex individuals face social ostracization in Pakistan. The primary goal of this study is to examine how Bhanggi, the protagonist of Faiqa Mansab's novel This House of Clay and Water (2017), suffers psychologically, physically, and mentally due to the unacceptance of his gender and the strict gender constraints of South Asia, specifically Pakistan. The in-depth analysis of Bhanggi's character helps in understanding the day-to-day struggles and significant obstacles encountered by intersex individuals, especially due to their gender identity. Using the conceptual framework of Sigmund Freud's personality theory, the study also contends that Bhanggi is victimized and condemned throughout his life because of his gender identification and societal prejudice.

Keywords: Gender binaries, Intersex, Marginalization, Pakistan, Stigmatization.

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Cite Us



Title

**The Plight of Intersex Individuals:
Examination of Marginalization in Pakistan
through Faiqa Mansab's This House of Clay
and Water**

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Abstract

This article aims to shed light on the discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization experienced by intersex individuals in heteronormative Pakistani society. Intersex individuals face social ostracization in Pakistan. The primary goal of this study is to examine how Bhanggi, the protagonist of Faiqa Mansab's novel This House of Clay and Water (2017), suffers psychologically, physically, and mentally due to the unacceptance of his gender and the strict gender constraints of South Asia, specifically Pakistan. The in-depth analysis of Bhanggi's character helps in understanding the day-to-day struggles and significant obstacles encountered by intersex individuals, especially due to their gender identity. Using the conceptual framework of Sigmund Freud's personality theory, the study also contends that Bhanggi is victimized and condemned throughout his life because of his gender identification and societal prejudice.

Keywords:

[Gender binaries.](#)
[Intersex.](#)
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[Stigmatization](#)

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Introduction

Intersex refers the individuals having variations in sex characteristics including chromosomes, and gonads that don't allow them to be identified as male/female dichotomy. Because they fail to meet the socially

constructed binaries in Pakistan, they endure marginalization and are in a continuous battle to stay alive. However, Dr. Fausto-Sterling, an expert sexologist and Brown University professor of gender studies, in an article proved that the notion of male and female dichotomy is not supported by scientific



evidence, the existence of intersex individuals is enough to challenge this binary notion of gender, and that the science of sexuality is colored by societal misconceived assumptions (Fausto-Sterling, [2018](#)).

This work focuses on the glitches that intersex individuals face both within and outside their intersex community. It highlights how they are exploited, subjected to suffering, and marginalized under the guise of social norms, taboos, and religious pretexts. The examination of factors such as gender identity and heteronormativity uncovers the root causes behind the stigmatization, discrimination, and victimization of intersex individuals in contemporary Pakistani society, as depicted in "This House of Clay and Water".

Faiqa Mansab's novel stands as an emblematic representation of marginalized voices within the Pakistani community. As a novelist whose roots stem from Pakistan, she possesses an incisive understanding of its culture along with its socio-political complexities. Through her thought-provoking writing style crafted with precision, Mansab explores overlooked realms such as those concerning intersex individuals in Pakistan by unveiling their path towards acceptance and weaving through notions that have threatened to keep them excluded from society for decades. Mansab explores the often overlooked realities of the South Asian, especially Pakistani intersex community through her narrative, giving an emotional depiction of their battle for inclusion, acceptance, and self-discovery.

Bhanggi, the intersex character of Mansab's novel is victimized and abused by his society without fear since gendered violence against intersex people is not recognized as abuse or violence. Bhanggi has major identity issues as a result of being shunned and ignored by both family and society and according to Sigmund Freud, our actions are often driven by unconscious desires of which we remain unaware, leading to driven or self-defeating behavior. We tend to deceive ourselves about the true reasons behind our actions, which limits our freedom of choice. By gaining awareness of our unconscious wishes and the defense mechanisms we employ, we expand the realm of choices available to us. Consequently, as we

diminish the influence of unconscious factors, we gain greater agency over our lives. Freud introduced the three components of the human psyche: the id, ego, and superego in his essay *The Ego and The Id* (1923), which interact to shape an individual's personality and behavior. The id represents our primitive and instinctual drives, seeking immediate gratification without consideration of social norms or consequences. The ego, on the other hand, acts as the rational and conscious part of the mind, mediating between the desires of the id and the moral standards of the superego. The superego embodies societal norms and values, internalizing moral principles and striving for socially acceptable behavior, these factors shape one's personality.

Historical Context of Intersex Marginalization

Intersex individuals were subjected to stigmatization, discrimination, mockery, and torture in the past and even nowadays it is a normal practice, in an ancient Jewish oral law known as Tosefta, people with genital abnormality were sometimes treated as females and were prohibited from getting to priest' position and they even had no part in inheritance. Some of them were treated as male and they were supposed to get married to a woman and should be clothed in male attires (Hermer, [2002](#)).

In ancient Rome, intersex were considered a sign of corruption and to please their gods, they killed intersex infants (Hone & McElduff, [n.d.](#)). In Asia, the words used for intersex are *hijra*, eunuch, and many more. They used to hold a special place in the Mughal dynasty and were considered holy beings and some of them were appointed as advisors to kings, queens, and royalty. After the rule of British colonizers, intersex was outlawed, and experienced violence and prejudice due to their gender. Violence against them is quite prevalent in Pakistan, even in the present. Nowadays intersexuality has been accepted in different societies but acceptance fluctuates from society to society.

In the West, intersexuality has been pathologized by promoting corrective surgeries (Karkazis, [2008](#)). These non-consensual surgeries are done only to make them fit into the socially constructed binaries. Not only in the medical field but also in society

intersex individuals are considered sub-humans. Throughout their lives, they have to endure pain, trauma, inequality, violence, gendered victimization, and much more. As mentioned above intersex individuals have been stigmatized by society, stigma is a conjunction of labeling and stereotyping differences in human beings, making them the other, separating and discriminating against them.

Voices: Tales of Abuse, Injustice and Discrimination

Discrimination based on gender identity can be observed around the globe, just like in some other countries, one of the most neglected and abused communities in Pakistan is the intersex community, which suffers from prejudicial behaviors that force them to beg, dance at parties, and to do commercial sex work and drugs supply to earn their bread and butter. Pakistani society is deeply rooted in societal constraints, culture, and norms, in play a vital role in shaping the behaviors of this community. Historically, intersex had respectable positions in the Mughal dynasty, they used to perform at childbirths and weddings, believed to possess the power to bless and curse. However, post-colonialism changed the paradigm of societies and made them marginalized the community, often reducing them to begging and doing sex work.

In Pakistani society, a lack of awareness related to intersex takes part in perpetuating myths and misconceptions about it. This results in their parents abandoning them at the time of birth in order to escape all the disrespect and shame that comes from society, not just their parents but the society also does the same with them. In Pakistani society Intersex community is more susceptible to harassment, assault, bullying, and insults in both their communities and society, they might endure slurs and derogatory comments, which put them in emotional and mental distress and is detrimental to their self-esteem. In addition to limiting their accessibility to opportunities and resources, the social stigma is also there to sideline them. Because they fail to meet the socially constructed binaries in Pakistan, they endure

marginalization and are in a continuous battle to stay alive. However gender activism has started getting a peak, and they still have to come across this victimization and injustice. Despite the recognition of the rights of the intersex community by the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2009, providing them with their own gender identification, societal acceptance, and by extension, intersex individuals remains limited. They continue to face significant discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization in various aspects of life, from education and employment to healthcare. No matter what activism you practice, either political, feminist, or intersex, it always comes with a price. If you speak against the views of people in power, they do everything to suppress your voice.

In 2016 a video of intersex, Julie Khan circulated on the social media sites of Pakistan. In that video, Jajja Butt, an influential personality of Pakistan was seen harassing Julie. An interview has told that the same gang had kidnapped and gang-raped her before in Faisalabad, and she went to Sialkot to escape from them but all of that was in vain. This incident turned Julie's life upside down, she became an intersex activist and started advocating for the rights of her community. In 2018 Julie was told that she couldn't enter the hotel until or unless she chose from one of the gender dichotomies. She paid no heed to it and declined it. Due to her advocacy of rights a lot of powerful people and some people from her community are also against her (Eman, [2020](#)).

Julie is not the only one, Dolphin Ayan's latest case also exemplifies how intersex individuals in Pakistan are teased and ridiculed. Dolphin Ayan was also confronted with the stigma of being intersex. Ayan, a Civil Engineering graduate from Cyprus who just finished an apprenticeship was the topper in his college. Although his intellectual prowess, Ayan was never able to obtain a respectable place in society. Ayan deems herself a shemale and was regularly called derogatory names in college for being effeminate. After being completely devastated, she has now laid aside all of her educational achievements and embraced the arena of professional dancing, just like the other intersex individuals in Pakistan. Because of Pakistani society's hostility towards intersex people,

capable individuals such as Ayan have chosen to pursue this profession. Ayan emphasized the victimization of intersex individuals by society in an interview:

I see people but not humanity. I despise the term, *Hijra*. If people stop calling me that, I'll quit this and go back to college. Nobody could ever rid oneself of the stigma. Pakistani society's hazardous masculinity has pushed her to become who she is now. Speaking of the truth in a nation like Pakistan tends to come at a cost, whether or not you're a feminist battling for equal rights, a writer voicing ideas, or a trans-activist fighting for her people; they're going to do everything they can to keep you silent if what you say opposes the views of those in authority (as cited in Khan, 2020).

Mansab And Intersex Representation

Bhanggi, one of the central characters of Faiqa Mansab's novel "This House of Clay and Water", personifies the plight of the intersex community of Pakistan. Bhanggi's journey echoes the struggles of many intersex individuals in a society that adheres rigidly to conventional gender norms.

The intricacy of the portrayal of Bhanggi's resistance and resilience against society can also be seen clearly in the novel. Mansab's writing not just focuses on the hardships and dehumanization of intersex individuals, there is a streak of events that completely defy the conventions of society and its preconceived notions. Bhanggi's quest for self-acceptance and validation becomes a powerful symbol of resilience and the yearning for societal recognition, challenging readers to question their own biases and preconceptions. This House of Clay and Water illuminates the urgency of dismantling gender norms and societal prejudices, urging us to embrace diversity and celebrate the richness of human identity (Hassnain et al., 2023).

Societal conformity obscures the diversity of the human race, the culture of Pakistan is heteronormative that is characterized by sexual union between two opposite genders. This overshadows the existence of other sexual orientations and identities. This invalidation of their existence leaves no room for

biological variations. The ones who don't fit the confines of norms are subjected to stigmatization and ostracization, these strict parameters have forced many people with intersexuality to adopt the roles validated by society or to hide their identities. Bhanggi's character is a microcosm of it in the novel This House of Clay and Water, being an intersex Bhanggi is forced to wear women's clothes, just like Julie Khan he was forced to clear his sexual orientation but the only difference is that he did not get a chance to choose it as in the novel he says "I was taught that I was more women than a man. I was made to wear girls' clothes. I was instructed to use female pronouns" (Mansab, 2017). When he tries to bring out what he feels is his real self, he along with his whole community pays a huge price for it. He says "By the time I began to notice the changes in my body, and found out all the ways I could never be a woman, I began, to my horror and shame to crave for them" (Mansab, 2017), to satisfy this he visited a prostitute, Sheila, from his building, when the people from his neighborhood found out about it, he was thrown out. Before this Bhanggi decided to go to Heera Mandi (Red light area), "the thought going to Heera Mandi would help" (Mansab, 2017), but he got mocked by the prostitutes and pimps over there. Bhanggi exclaimed: "All the prostitutes gathered around me, joking and laughing, and they laughed even more when I began to cry" (Mansab, 2017).

In Heera Mandi, the head of the brothel told him "Your desires are that of a man but your body, tsk, never will be" (Mansab, 2017). This statement clearly shows the suppression of the desires of intersex by society, Just like Bhanggi many other intersex go through the same where they ought to be someone which they are not by use of violence or humiliation. They are not even allowed to choose their own identity and sexual orientation as Bhanggi says "The choice I had made was not mine to make. A choice I had no right to make because I was a hijra" (Mansab, 2017). By imposing certain personalities on them, the very right of agency, which means an individual's capacity to make choices on their own and to act on them has been taken away from them. Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly 1948, Article 3 states that

everybody is entitled to make their own decision and they are free to pursue their goals and to take action for their well-being (UDHR).

Mansab has skillfully depicted the life of Bhanggi as an intersex infant to a grown-up man during the course of "This House of Clay and Water". Through this writing Mansab is questioning the rigid societal structures, apart from this the very persona of intersex is blurring the male and female traditional boundaries. Bhanggi was abandoned by his parents and left at the mercy of an intersex community head called Guru, he endured the pain of separation from his mother, hate from society, and bullying. During infancy when the child needs his/her mother the most, these children get separated or abandoned by their family which is the peak of cruelty, most of the time parents do this under the sheer pressure of society just to keep the honor of their family intact. In some cases, to confirm their physicality and to fit the set standards after childbirth parents opt for corrective surgery which is also known as 'normalizing surgeries' without the consent of the child, this type of surgical procedure is inhumane and is against human rights. The word normalizing is itself problematic, the name of this procedure gives the notion of intersex as an abnormal being or maybe subhuman. Many NGOs are working to prohibit this brutal act but this procedure is common all around the world.

Mansab in *This House of Clay and Water*, has illustrated a society that is on the brink of deterioration, her story of love forbidden by society blurs out all binaries. The love affair of Bhanggi, an intersex woman named Nida tends to break all the barriers of societal norms. Through Nida's character, the acceptance of diversity is shown. In this society one's anatomy is more important and it defines a person's worth, this preconceived idea is being inculcated in our minds through myths and stories, and even our drama industry is also shaping the minds of the masses and in most of the dramas the portrayal of intersex individual is conventional and dehumanizing.

The way that stereotypical gender identities are portrayed in the media is of utmost importance since

it shapes the audience's attitudes and actions. The media has the power to describe gender conventions, stereotypes, and views in every society. Our beliefs about gender relations are shaped by the media.

Through The Lens of Media

Infanticide or the rejection of intersex infants is a serious social issue in Pakistan. Through the 2011 Urdu film *Bol*, this topic was examined for the first time in Pakistani cinema. The writer/director of the movie, Shoaib Mansoor, expresses his opinion as follows: "Having been so fortunate in life, I always think of things for which I ought to be thankful. It appears like the list never stops, but it inevitably ends with one thing ... that I was born a MAN. In a country like Pakistan, where obscurantism has deep roots, nothing in the world terrifies me more than the idea of being born a woman or a hermaphrodite" (Anjum et al., 2019). The movie discusses the status and place of intersex people in Pakistani society. *Bol* carefully sets down a plot relating to sexuality and sexual identity. It emphasizes the issue by defining the patriarchy, feudalism, religious beliefs, and nation, broadly. As the title suggests, it is forbidden for minorities, and subalterns to speak for themselves.

In the movie, Hakeem Sahib has an intersex son named Saifi after having seven daughters. Hakeem Sahib is aware of the injustices, prejudice, and disgrace that this kid would experience in Pakistani society. Saifi is eventually confined within the four walls of his home. He is not allowed to step out of his room. Both parents informed everyone that Saifi was possessed by a supernatural being. Instead of embracing him as a person, the plot of the movie clearly shows the amount of disgrace and fear the parents felt at the birth of him. This movie not only shapes the minds of people against this community but also no voice is given to Saifi, his story is narrated by a girl named Zainab. Amidst all the floundering and injustice he wanted to start a new life with a man he felt attracted to but in this society, this is considered taboo just like Bhanggi, Saifi was forced to embrace the feminine side and got ridiculed because of this.

Saifi becomes a victim of sexual abuse and his father, in fear of him joining prostitution strangled him to death. This movie indeed shows the dehumanization and struggles of intersex individuals but it only shows the dark side of it instead of teaching the audience to welcome diversity. It leaves negative imprints on the mind of the viewer and leaves them with only one message, if an intersex individual is born in your house you will be strangled by society and it would bring shame to you. Unlike this narrative, Mansab's *This House of Clay and Water* (2017) depicts a formidable, problematic, and marginalized state of the intersex community in this rigid society, she is not only showing the negative side of society but also urging readers to accept the difference and to challenge the patriarchal society's norms. Most of the media forums illustrate these characters as beggars or criminals or most of the time they are the heads of brothels.

Sympathy with intersex who are being played by the hands of the bourgeoisie or broadly speaking the whole society in pulsating throughout the course of the novel. The character of Bhanggi is moving to and fro like a pendulum between two binaries of maleness/femaleness, love/hatred, and survival/death, and so on. In order to survive he ought to suppress his attraction and desires. He either suffers the pain of social stratification or tries to find himself in the complex social and gender hierarchy that is created by the dominating elites. The main characters in the selected work, Nida and Bhanggi, go beyond the bounds of what is considered socially and conventionally acceptable in their quest for true devotion and acceptance. The author looks into the challenges and hardships of intersex people in a society where a person's role and significance are determined by their gender or physical characteristics. By depicting the marginal and vulnerable position of the intersex community in society, the writer takes a brave stance that calls into question the heterosexual ideals of modern Pakistani culture. During the course of the novel traditional gender difference is being questioned through Bhanggi's life story by the author. Our world lives on the strict rules of binary opposites there is no place in between them, and the difference has no place in a society like ours (Pakistani).

Bhanggi possesses a body that doesn't conform to the male or female gender, the boundaries between these genders are blurred. The society we live in believes in heteronormativity and he has no place in it because of his gender identity. The pain and loss he endured in his life made him stoic, and conflicting ideas and inhumane behaviors of others made him repress his personality, as in the novel Bhanggi instead of fulfilling his desire he became a qalandar (saint).

Intersex individuals are always pushed to the margins. Their desires, goals, and dreams are of absolutely no value to others. Therefore, individuals who don't fit into the established social positions are forced to create a world of their own, more of a minority within a minority. They indulge themselves in some practical, material activity to draw attention to themselves. As a result, Bhanggi in *This House of Clay and Water*, adopts the position of a Qalandar in Daata Darbaar in order to fight his inner demons and then to get acceptance from the members of the community in which he lives. "Helping others used to make me feel more than what I was. I am nothing but a symbol for them" (Mansab, 2017). For many people who have been shunned by society, like Bhanggi, Daata Darbaar offers shelter and hope. Bhanggi has tried to retreat internally from the borderland of the gender conflict. When he adopts the role of Nida's lover, he satisfies his yearning as a half-man. Bhanggi travels to many parts of the world because of his duality of being both a man and a woman or being neither a man nor a woman. In the end, he looks for happiness in unexpected places, just as he develops a romantic relationship with Nida, which is taboo in society because Bhanggi is intersex. A closer look at the selected book reveals that Bhanggi struggles with identity and there is a question on it is seen throughout the narrative. There are two conflicting voices throughout the novel. "You talked of the dignity of the human spirit to a Hijra. After a lifetime of pain and shame, even now an outcast, I haven't learned the lesson the world is so sincerely trying to teach me" (Mansab, 2017). Such arguments are not the result of his dissatisfaction with his identity. Perhaps it is a result of his queerness not being accepted by society. One of the people from his community named Gulabo says that Hijra was made

by Allah to be an unhappy and unlovable creature. A profound sense of dissatisfaction overtakes him as a result of his failure to bring his inner and outer senses of identity into harmony. "I am destined to die a little every day. Every time I realize I cannot love or be loved; I die a little. Every time jeering children throw stones at me when women want benediction but repulsed by the very touch they think will bring it, I die a little" (Mansab, 2017). The above statement clearly shows how their place is being defined by society or man-made rules and they have no other option left than accepting their fates. There is no center or point of reference from which one can judge other people, for example, there is no way to judge if something is good or bad, for some people certain things are bad while that's not the case with others, all these judgments are subjective or manmade, it's the society that makes reality.

Bhanggi is unsure of his identity because of this division of genders by society. He is expelled from his building after getting caught in Sheila's home at night. "Since I was a Hijra, I had no prerogative to create a choice. I was allowed to live—that was the debt my kind paid every day of our lives" (Mansab, 2017). He ultimately realizes that despite his desire to transform into a man, he will never be able to do so because of society's expectations and ideals. He starts to wonder about his sense of self and life. He is devastated that he could never fit in with normal society. As the days pass, questions about his identity and place in life begin to haunt Bhanggi. The profound sadness envelops him as he realizes that he can never fully blend into the so-called normal society. A poignant encounter with a eunuch further amplifies the internal struggle he tells him "You want a woman but your body would never be that of a man" (Mansab, 2017).

Despite society's constant torment, Bhanggi decides to live his life as he pleases. He escapes the limitations imposed on him by Pakistani society's heteronormative norms. He becomes friends with Nida, a *begum* (rich lady) who embraces him for who he is. In spite of the fact that Bhanggi is a marginalized figure in a marginalized community, he becomes attached to Nida and impatiently awaits her arrival to

him. Nida is compelled to consider the gender of Bhanggi because of the intense pressure of the heterosexual norm. "Every time I saw him, I marveled at how, unlike a hijra he looked. Yet, I knew that he was...the poor boy...not even a boy, a Hijra (Mansab, 2017)". Bhanggi, a male stuck in a female body, embraces his male nature and seeks to understand who he truly is. "He hadn't disguised himself with make-up. If he'd dressed like a woman, like other Hijras, he'd probably look like a young girl. Instead, he wore the green robes of qalandars and discussed love and perfection with me" (Mansab, 2017). Bhanggi learns that the Hijras are a select few individuals bestowed with the capacity for both blessing and cursing. The irony is that they are not allowed to have normal lives. God is everything to Bhanggi. He approaches Allah even though he is being persecuted and labeled as an outcast by everyone around him, displaying his unshakable will to endure despite all circumstances. "He is my only comfort when the night is darkest and my only listener, my constant companion" (Mansab, 2017).

In order to find peace, he tries to pray in the mosque, but a *maulvi* viciously kicks him out. The *maulvi* believes that intersex people are dirty, and diseased and are prohibited inside mosques. You filth of the earth. You rascal...get out now, you son of Iblis...you wicked being with a wicked body. This Hijra is polluting the mosque" (Mansab, 2017). Here, the *maulvi's* actions can possibly be taken as a sign of the gender-normative heterosexuality that Pakistani society enforces as a social norm. Bhanggi is viewed as sinister or disgusting. Although a group of young boys tried to oppose the *maulvi* in order to ensure Bhanggi's entry into the mosque, the *maulvi* is stuck in the defined gender structure upheld in Pakistani custom and society he also says "That's a holy spot, your dog. You're not even a dog, since a dog also has a gender. See at yourself, the face of a woman and the torso of man ... what's down there, you Hijray?" (Mansab, 2017). By being subjected to the *maulvi's* prejudice and discrimination, Bhanggi is further stigmatized and distant from society and is compelled to join the outcast group. *Maulvi* is considered the most regarded cleric, he is the one who leads people

in prayer. He is so certain of his superior standing in God's eyes simply because he is a complete, and in authority man. He declares that Bhanggi will never cross the Siraat Bridge because of who he is. God or Islam never teaches that anyone can be rewarded or forgiven based on their gender identity, but men continue to exploit religion for their own good which spreads misunderstanding of the faith and social inequity.

Bhanggi's life is an explicit example of how people treat the intersex community, they use the preconceived notions of these people and treat them in the worst way possible. Our society has made myths about them, one of the most commonly heard is, that intersex individuals or hijras kidnap infants and young children and sell them away or they are mostly under procession of Jinn or devil, "A maulvi once told me I was possessed by jinn." (Mansab, 2017) This very notion has been sitting in children's minds for so long and due to this, they are afraid of these people, instead of teaching our children to respect the difference we are making them detest intersex individuals. There is another incident Mansab mentioned in the selected text, Nida's mother-in-law commanded her not to look at hijra when their car stopped at a signal according to her looking at them can affect Nida's baby and her baby could also be born deformed. Throughout their lives, they come across this kind of prejudice against them and this brings shame and suffering with it. When Bhanggi goes outside, people insult him and call him "a stain on humanity", they humiliate him for inhabiting something he has no control over, also, and young boys chase him and even throw stones at him out of curiosity.

These are only a few of the cruel things that Bhanggi has to deal with since he disobeys society's strict gender conventions, which causes him to lose himself in self-loathing. In order to escape from it, he decided to devote his life to Sufism, put on a green robe, and sat down beneath a banyan tree at Daata Darbar, Lahore. He dressed himself like a religious man in an attempt to avoid being abused, although having no knowledge or competence in the subject, just because he was aware that religion is mainly about outward look than essence. Even though he was a pacifist who stayed to himself, someone managed to

manipulate him, leave him bloodied and injured, and make fun of him for being a social outcast. Bhanggi says "But even here, at the shrine, men with sunken cheeks and matted hair find me, ji" (Mansab, 2017). Realizing that not even religion can protect him from assault.

Bhanggi longs to rebuild his gender identity by seeking out places where he might not be judged based solely on his physical appearance, but even inside Hera Mandi, the prostitutes make fun of him, turn down his requests for money, and kick him out. He states several times in his first-person narrative, that his physique is a curse. Yet in reality, his actual curse is the gender identity linked to it. The name "hijra" alone evokes negative connotations in people's thoughts, and the dominant narratives around intersex individuals—such as those that characterize them as cursed, unholy, untouchables, nonhuman, na pak (filthy), sinful, etc.—direct society's actions. If intersex people are considered gender fluid, then, under a traditional patriarchal system, they have less authority, rights, and privileges than even women. Their only options in life are prostitution, begging, and demeaning dancing. This is one of the key causes of Bhanggi's desire to leave his identity, even if it means dying a very brutal death.

Bhanggi carries an identity that is obscured by people's negative perceptions of him. The encounter between Bhanggi and the BBC reporter who has come to interview him sheds insight into how this marginalized group of society has been victimized and degraded. This interaction lays bare the humiliation and victimization endured by this neglected segment of society. The episode serves as a stark reminder of the devaluation and degradation faced by those existing on the fringes. Heteronormative Pakistani society, as depicted by the BBC reporter, exhibits disdain towards intersex individuals. The questioning about Bhanggi's name and presence in Daata Darbar exposes the cruelty of a brutal society that dehumanizes and mistreats intersex individuals. Bhanggi's responses reflect his deep identity crisis and the lack of a stable home, symbolizing the struggle of countless individuals grappling with their selfhood and societal rejection. Bhanggi's responses to questions concerning his name and the circumstances of his residence in Daata Darbar expose the brutality

of society and its terrible treatment of intersex people. "They call me Bhanggi. I've forgotten what my name was...I live here because it gives me peace. I don't tell her it's because I have nowhere else to go" (Mansab, 2017). Bhanggi's identity crisis and destitution are depicted in the verses above. As her translator had explained to her what the significance of Bhanggi's name was, the reporter Helen accused Bhanggi of being "an addict of marijuana" (2017) during their conversation. Helen's inquiry on castration was the icing on the cake. "Where you castrated? I shake my head, dropping my eyes. I cannot look at her. I feel suddenly ashamed again" (Mansab, 2017).

Despite being born intersex, Mansab's imaginative touch makes Bhanggi a very believable character. Bhanggi is left by his family because of Pakistani society's horrifying heterosexual norm, which forbids acceptance of gender-nonconforming people. As Bhanggi says, "They didn't need me. They did not want the embarrassment which comes with me, a Hijra" (Mansab, 2017). He is fostered by the Hijra community's guru, named Gulabo, yet he also trades Bhanggi for small favors and concessions at the early age of eight to local police officers and shopkeepers. "I wasn't more than a commodity, an item to be bartered with few comforts: It's the only livelihood to which I have a right" (Mansab, 2017). This vividly represents the hierarchy within their community, in the text, Mansab illustrates how doubly marginalized intersex is, they are subordinates to a head or guru who exploits them physically and mentally and there are also classes among them, the pretty ones get to eat better and the other ones as to beg for their survival. It's not just the society but their own people who are making each other's life difficult.

Into The Intersex Mind

Bhanggi's persona in *This House of Clay and Water* shows the impact of the marginalization on the intersex persona's actions, subject to the specific obstacles they confront as an intersex person living in a heteronormative community. In the case of Bhanggi, the superego part of the psyche is controlling his actions. He has suffered marginalization, discrimination, and social prejudice

as a result of his marginalized status, which can have a significant impact on the formation of his superego. The superego is heavily influenced by parental supervision, cultural standards, and societal beliefs during childhood. Internalizing cultural norms and values, on the other hand, might be a hard and stormy process for someone like Bhanggi, whose identity falls outside the traditional binary gender framework. A weaker or conflicted superego may come from a lack of sufficient representation and comprehension of intersex individuals in society. As a result, Bhanggi's superego may differ from traditional ethical norms or social standards. Because of his marginalized identity and exposure to a morally ambiguous environment, he tries to question, challenge, or reject certain cultural standards.

As a result, his activities may occasionally defy conventional expectations and ethical standards. Bhanggi, for example, may prioritize his own survival and urgent desires over rigorous moral considerations. This could show as morally dubious or unscrupulous behavior in the eyes of others. However, it is critical to note that Bhanggi's actions are not always motivated by a lack of morality, but rather by the difficulties he encounters in a culture that does not completely recognize or respect his existence.

Mental pain and emotional upheaval may result from the constant struggle between his marginalized status and expectations from society. Bhanggi may feel guilty or anxious about the discrepancy between his aspirations and the norms of the society they have absorbed, resulting in inner conflicts that complicate the psychological panorama even further.

Bhanggi feels frustrated and constrained due to this. Since day one, he has endured hatred and mockery simply for being who he is. "My body is not mine", according to Bhanggi; it is a communal lustful instrument that seeks expression in back alleys. It possesses a shameful emotion that no one has ever observed, similar to those voids that are owned by no one. He is compelled to identify with women and to dress like them. Bhanggi's fascination with women and his sense of detachment from his own community and fellow Hijras further exacerbate his inner conflict.

This emotional turmoil becomes the greatest agony of his existence, an unyielding pain that colors his daily life. He thinks of himself as a demi-creature, someone who is halfway between two worlds. The patriarchal society legalizes the heterosexual norm by classifying intersex people as unnatural, abnormal, and different. Intersex people are much like other people; human beings with interests and aspirations in life. They also want to live together as a family, but they are unable to do so because society never supports them. In Pakistani society, where an intersex person is not even regarded as a normal human being because acknowledgment of intersex people always comes from society.

Due to the fact that Bhanggi is viewed as an outcast and a misfit because of his gender identification, people are unable to understand his feelings, emotions, and affection for Nida. Gendered violence frequently targets people who defy social conventions, and Bhanggi is no exception. "Bhanggi had been killed to avoid embarrassment, not because he was considered a threat. He had been killed to keep Saqib away from the idea of him, the anomaly, the disease, the abnormality". In addition to that, the authorities refused to give Bhanggi's body to the intersex community after he was ruthlessly murdered. In the end, he struggled with his identity throughout his entire life and died without receiving a proper funeral.

Fundamental Rights

As mentioned earlier Bhanggi was deprived of fundamental human rights and had no access to the essentials of life. The earlier chapters of the book clearly show how Bhanggi had no money to buy food and when he tried to earn it nobody was willing to give him any job. In this society giving labor to any intersex is considered unfortunate, they are forced to do whatever they can to earn money, and they are pushed to the periphery. Bhanggi is beaten up by the clerk or by other people and raped by men and no one actually defended him. Instead of protecting him, the Law enforcement institution actually helped his murderers, this is not only a violation of law but also a violation of human rights. Socio-economic status

plays an important role in our society and it is the dominant class who has shaped gender taxonomy and everyone is following it with a blind eye.

Not just that, the intersex community faces several obstacles in their quest for access to healthcare, from medical professionals' ignorance of intersex concerns to their refusal to treat them because of discrimination. The intersex community in a nation like Pakistan is more likely to face exclusion, which puts them at risk for inadequate access to mental health care, HIV prevention and treatment, and intersex-specific care. According to a Malaysian survey, a scarcity of job options and workplace discrimination led to intersex people turning to the sex industry. Little is currently known about the major health problems intersex people face in Pakistan or the obstacles they face in getting access to medical care. This lack of medical facilities most of the time costs their lives when Bhanggi was 4 years old, a man raped him and he was half dead when the Kabbadiya found him and "bandaged and stitched him up himself" (Mansab, 2017) and according to Bhanggi the "Doctors don't take kindly to such cases. In any case, there are long lines at emergency wards, and who would give precedence to a hijra?" (Mansab, 2017). This clearly shows the condition of health care, discrimination against intersex, and violation of human rights as well. Everybody should be getting proper medical treatment and should at least be treated as a human being.

In order to break stereotypes and to give intersex people their proper place in society, the Pakistan Senate has amended the transgender act 2018 in 2022 and made it inclusive, it seeks to safeguard the gender autonomy of intersex people living in Pakistan by giving them the freedom to self-identify. The bill also protects intersex persons from discriminatory attitudes by making these criminal offenses. It reaffirms nearly all of the fundamental rights contained in the Pakistani Constitution and also covers more specialized topics including abandonment, harassment, and inheritance rights. The bill states: "A person recognized as transgender under sub-section (I) shall have a right to get himself or herself registered as per "self-perceived gender" identity with all government departments including, but not limited to, the National Database

and Registration Authority” (Tribune, [2022](#)). As a result of this act, intersex people have access to the rights to occupation, inheritance, education, and health. Aside from that, the Act mandates that the government construct exclusive jails, detention facilities, schools, medical facilities, and institutions for vocational training for intersex people. For intersex, all of these changes are crucial. According to these regulations, NADRA and the passport office must create special desks for intersex people.

When this act was declared by the senate, people did everything to cancel it out, there was a long debate on whether this bill was right or wrong, and many Islamic scholars went against this by declaring it anti-Islam. There is a striking discrepancy between the alleged claims and the actual bill. The truth is people of this society are not willing to accept the rights of intersex people which again shows a lack of acceptance of this community in our society. However, some religious organizations think that this Act is an attempt to legalize homosexuality in the nation. Mushtaq Ahmad Khan, a senator for Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JI), has even challenged the Act before the Federal Shariat Court. Despite criticism of the 2018 Act from religious groups who saw it as an attempt to defend or promote homosexuality, intersex people assert that the Act does not address any type of sex transition or legalize unnatural sex.

The Act's phrasing has, however, alarmed the religious community, particularly the sentence that reads, an intersex person shall have a right to be recognized as per his or her self-perceived gender identity. Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar of the ruling party PML-N has endorsed the intersex rights act, saying that intersex people should be given their legal, rights under the law. Tarar argues that because intersex people are also citizens, the state must make sure they may use their fundamental rights. However, the stance PMLN is disconnected from its conservative voter base, which leads opponents to believe that the entire project is an attempt to placate strong Western NGOs. However, Tarar has stated that in order to win support from a wide range of people, he is prepared to accept the changes made to the Act by its opponents (Khan, [2022](#)).

The bill's strong resistance and the dissemination of unreliable information only serve to underline the fact that laws and regulations alone cannot fix the problem. The first and most crucial step here should be to educate the populace about the problems in order to prevent them from being easily persuaded by using religious justifications that might not have much to do with the situation. Second, the Act is rendered useless because there is no consequence for breaking it, so there is no real incentive for individuals to follow it. Furthermore, there is no specialized infrastructure in place to enforce the Act, particularly in the area of education. While the law makes it simple for intersex people to enroll in school, it offers no protection against the hostile treatment they can encounter there owing to societal stigmas. Many pressing challenges that the intersex community faces, like hate crimes and poor healthcare, are not addressed by the Act.

Conclusion

Throughout their life, intersex individuals grapple with their identities, which often leads them to mental distress, isolation, anxiety, and marginalization by society. The study discerns that victimization, discrimination, and marginalization plague the intersex community, stemming from prevailing power structures that rigidly adhere to heteronormative standards. Tragically, they are subjected to inhumane treatment solely based on their gender within the confines of orthodox Pakistani society. Society chooses to ignore them, looking down upon them as outcasts, even depriving them of their fundamental human dignity. With no opportunity to prove their worth and to contribute positively to society, they are trapped in a cycle of suffering and begin to fear the outer world. Further delving into the sufferings of intersex individuals within the context of the novel and real-life experiences in Pakistan, the study concludes that inequality plagues every facet of their lives. Many intersex individuals endure destitution, abuse, unemployment, homelessness, and even engage in criminal activities just to survive amidst the harshness of society's unfair treatment and injustice.

Regrettably, a lack of adequate legal protection leaves them vulnerable, forcing some to resort to drug trafficking and sex work for survival. Amidst these trials, they grapple with loneliness and a profound identity crisis, further adding to their torment.

In the world of “This House of Clay and Water”, the character Bhanggi emerges as a gentle, kind, and humble soul whose life ultimately succumbs to the unyielding injustice of a society fixated on rigid norms. His poignant journey serves as an emblematic portrayal of the struggles faced by countless real-life

intersex individuals in Pakistan. To dismantle the chains of suffering and promote positive change, the study urges society to acknowledge the performative nature of gender and recognize the violence endured by intersex individuals. By fostering empathy, acceptance, and understanding, we can collectively work towards creating an inclusive and compassionate society that embraces diversity in all its forms. Only by challenging the established norms and advocating for equal rights can we break free from the cycle of suffering and forge a path toward a more equitable and harmonious world for everyone.

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