

Friday Seminar

Fall
2022

Wounded Kinship: Social stratification within hijras,
a 'third' gender community in north India

Date : 14 October 2022
Time : 1:00 - 2:30 pm (GMT+8)
Speaker : Ina Goel

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/98784209867>

Meeting ID:

987 8420 9867

Passcode:

951231



winner of AAA 2020 photo competition

Selfie Faith by Ina Goel

Statuesque goddess overlooking ubiquitous selfies with the "demigoddess" Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, high priestess of a convent of hijras (a third gender community), with admirers at India's 2019 Kumbh Mela, world's largest pilgrimage festival.

Distinct from transgender and intersex populations, hijras, a "third" gender community, occupy a unique and contradictory place in India. Hindu mythology deifies them, and British colonists demonised them. Caught between precarious webs of cultural stereotyping, historical enslavement, colonial criminalisation, and postcolonial projects of biopolitical ordering, the hijras typically live by seeking voluntary donations in exchange for their blessings, performing at weddings, begging, and engaging in sex work. Existing within hierarchical kinship networks, governed by internal councils requiring patronage of senior gurus, hijras undergo mandatory apprenticeship to a commune life through a discipleship-lineage system. My talk examines the hijra identity as a wounded identity by researching hijra kinship in New Delhi and its border states in north India. In understanding the category of hijra as a kinship system, I argue that despite its gender non-conformity, the hijras have an economically exploitative slavery-like system that reinscribes the hierarchies of patriarchy and caste.

Ina Goel works with hijras, a "third" gender community in India, and is the founder of **The Hijra Project**. She has a B.A. in journalism and an M.A. in social work from the University of Delhi in India. She completed her M.Phil. in social medicine and community health from Jawaharlal Nehru University. Ina has worked with All India Radio and Al Jazeera English. She was a recipient of a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) scholarship at the department of epidemiology and international public health at Bielefeld University and an INLAKS scholar at the department of gender and sexuality studies at University College London. Ina has also worked with FHI 360 (a nonprofit human development organization), UNICEF, the National AIDS Control Organization in India, the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, and the humanitarian organization Plan International. She is currently a Hong Kong Ph.D. Fellowship Scheme awardee based in the anthropology department at The Chinese University of Hong Kong and a UNFPA Laadli Media Fellow.



ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME!