The “Dancing Queens”: Negotiating Hijra Pehch?n from India’s Streets onto the Global Stage

By Jeff Roy

As we snaked through a neighborhood on the outskirts of Lucknow, I imagined what our course trajectory would look like on *Google Maps*. Rounding the corner of an impossibly narrow *gali*, our colorful parade of six—three *hijras* (male-to-female transgender), two *kothis* (effeminate male) and myself (appropriately named ‘gay *gora*,’ or gay white man)—attracted the attention of several young roadies. A group of excited children nipped at our heels while two young men swooped in to bear the *dholak* (two-faced membranophone) and harmonium, which had begun to cramp our queerish style.

After a couple minutes of fraternizing with the young men, Saumya-*guru* detached from the group and knocked on the door of the house of a family whose son had recently married. A middle-aged “Auntie” appeared at the door and smiled nervously, but after a brief exchange—inaudible to my ears—it became obvious that we were not welcome. Saumya insisted that the *badhai* was for Auntie’s own good, and with the signature hijra clap (two stiff palms with fingers splayed), barged into the abode’s foyer. The group advanced. Saumya made her way towards an 80-something-year-old grandma sitting on a couch and whispered something into her ear. Making a big show of it in front of Auntie, she blessed Grandma with a light tap on the head. *Saumya got what she wanted*, I thought, as Auntie began to pour a tall glass of chilled water into her cup.

Once our nerves had settled, Saumya’s floral-dressed *chela* (daughter, literally ‘disciple’) stepped in to lead the troupe through three traditional folk and *filmi* songs. The harmonium carried her song melodies, while the *dholak* and “signature claps” from two other *chelas* provided a groovy cross-rhythmic structure to support her dance. The performance was well received by its youthful audience, which by then had multiplied exponentially and amassed outside the foyer threshold. Their young eyes twinkled as the dancer twirled her *Salwar Kameez* to the jangle of her *gungroos* (ankle bells). The performance benefactress, in the corner standing with arms crossed, was less than impressed.

It is here that my recording stops. What I remember is that Auntie’s basket of offerings were too modest for Saumya’s taste. I remember clinging onto my plastic chair handle as Saumya argued her case. The walls began to shake as Auntie retorted in crude Hindi: “You don’t even belong in this neighborhood. You bring your kind somewhere else!” Indeed, I thought. *What would our return time on Google Maps be if we ran? Is there a setting for that?* After a tornado of curses, we left deflated and defeated.

This article is not a Bollywood thriller, although it may engender feelings of vulnerability and fear that characterize the experiences of being hijra in India. Worrying about hurt feelings is not a luxury that most hijras—a casteless and classless queer minority—generally have. For many, *badhais* (ritualistic music and dance) are the only available means of revenue aside from sex work and bar dance. This has been the practical reality for hijras for nearly two centuries. South Asia’s so-called “third gender” have faced legal persecution for the past 153 years. In 1861, the British colonial government criminalized “unnatural sex” via Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)—a law that was recently reinstated after a brief respite between the years 2009 and 2013. Section 325, issued in the same year as 377, outlawed “emasculation” on the grounds that it could cause someone “grievous hurt.” Then, in 1871, the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) was issued, calling for the “registration, surveillance and control of certain tribes and eunuchs.” The act defines these individuals along a number of parameters, including those who:

(A) are reasonably suspected of kidnapping or castrating children, or of committing offenses under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code; (B) appear dressed or ornamented like a woman, in a public street or place, or in any other place, with the intention of being seen; and (C) *dance or play a music, or take part in any public exhibition, in a public street or place or for hire in a private house* (Emphasis, mine). (Collection of Acts Passed by the Governor-General of India in Council of the Year 1871, in Reddy 2005:26-7).

Encoded within these parameters was the (irrational) belief that crime was inborn and/or inherited through clan affiliation. The potential for criminal behavior and its codification were inscribed onto the bodies of the criminal lower castes, thereby providing the justification for the regulation and surveillance of labor that these bodies produced (see Reddy 2005). The parameters outlined in the CTA not only underscore a particular colonial anxiety surrounding the alleged practice of stealing and castrating children, but also that of hijra performativity embodied vis-à-vis the practice of badhais. Since hijra music was something that contradicted or subverted colonial authority over all Indian bodies, its subjugation was necessary to facilitate the continuation of another seven decades of

colonial rule. Sadly, the marginalization of these people and their practices continues today, seven decades after Indian independence.

This chapter attempts to revitalize some of the endangered practices and discourses surrounding hijra performativity through an investigation of the specific ways in which hijra music is being re-contextualized from its liminal spaces in the streets and onto the public stage. While the current reality does not bode well for the continuation of hijra badhais as we once knew them, newly emerging transgender ensembles like Mumbai's "Dancing Queens" are introducing new possibilities for hijra performativity and empowerment. I argue that, established within a reconstituted urban Indian context, new adaptive strategies are predicated on the exchange of devalued ways of encoding hijra difference for updated, modern ones based upon the distinctly LGBTIQ discourse of *pehch?n* (acknowledgement of the self, or 'identity'). The Dancing Queens's staging of pehch?n empowers hijras through a global transgender lexicon while simultaneously renewing particular preexisting performance repertoires of homo-sociality.

Central to the translation of hijra to transgender is India's HIV/AIDS Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) industrial complex, which emerged in the mid-1990s through organizations such as the *Naz* Foundation in Uttar Pradesh and the *Humsafar* Trust in Mumbai. Supported by the global LGBTIQ movements, UN AIDS Development Programmes, among others, these organizations are responsible for outreach programs based on notions of individual empowerment and the proliferation of globally endorsed identity categories. I am referring mainly to the universally accepted constructs of "men who have sex with men" (MSM)—which in India include "male-assigned" hijras and *kotis/kothis* (a social classification used for gay men and/or gender queer individuals who live on the periphery of the hijra community)—and English language markers of gender and sexuality.

LGBTI, and in particular, Q (*queer*) are employed mainly among India's educated, English-speaking middle class both to serve as a catch-all meant to encompass gender and sexual expressions that lie outside of the (Western-derived) heterosexual matrix, as well as to mediate the verbal slippage between local constructs. However, it is the re/appropriation of Hindu-Urdu monikers of queerness that has recently gained steam among Indian-based LGBTIQ organizations as a means of reaching out to the general public. This effort is housed discursively within the notion of *pehch?n* (????? and ?????, pronounced p?t??n), an Urdu word with Persian etymology that signifies "identity," "recognition," or "acknowledgement." The term was appropriated in 2010 by the nationwide India HIV/AIDS Alliance to designate a program exclusively devoted to MSM, transgender and hijra clients. As of 2015, Project Pehch?n operates across 17 states with five sub-recipients (SRs),[1] and at least 200 sub-sub-recipients (SSRs) in both urban and rural areas. In addition to providing sexual, reproductive health, and HIV services to an estimated 4.5 Lakh (450,000) of MSM, transgender and hijra community members, the program also empowers its participants through community-driven advocacy and arts initiatives.[2] It is here that I begin to draw connections between the use of pehch?n as a socio-political designation for empowerment programs, and as locus of knowledge of self, "coming out," and identity (trans)formation. It is specifically through the act of staging pehch?n that the term is awarded its dual significance and discursive weight.



Figure 1: Members of the Dancing Queens at the 2013 Mumbai Queer Azaadi March; photo by the author, February 2, 2013.

This article foregrounds the social organization and personal narratives of Mumbai's Dancing Queens against the backdrop of a staged concert which was held in December 2012 during Mumbai's 2012-13 Pride festivities called "Rhythm of India." A performance group comprised mostly of hijras yet operated by members affiliated with the Humsafar Trust and under the LGBTIQ banner, the Dancing Queens provides opportunities for individuals to express pehch?n while also functioning as a vehicle through which to disseminate "pehch?n" in the socio-politicized sense of the term. Ultimately, this article illustrates how—through the staging of new and old repertoires, choreography, (gender) theatricality, and the discursive employment of "pehch?n"—the group liberates the hijra body from the post-colonial socio-political "closet," challenging "closed" modes of hijra identity with the embrace of a respectable middle class, secular, and transgender/queer frontier.

Accordingly, I trace the emergence of pehch?n through the analysis of the relationship between vocal and dance parts, conventions of performance and staging, the status of performers within and outside of the performance context, and my placement in all of this. In elucidating the voice as a metaphorical locus of hijra subjectivity, I combine observations derived from my own experiences working with and video documenting the Dancing Queens for over four and a half years during periods between 2010-15. Film links are embedded in the text to provide an interactive component to reading; otherwise they can be viewed in their entirety using the following link: http://www.ethnomusicologyofthecloset.com/dq [1] (password: DQ4321). My use of film in this case seeks to illustrate an "emic" perspective of the ways music and dance phrase movements of self (re)presentation, to disrupt the established "ethnographic imagination" by raising further questions about the nature of ethnographic "authenticity," and to allow project participants to "speak out" for themselves. If queer is [truly] "connected to emotions as much as it is a body of theory" (Rooke 2010:26), then it becomes necessary for us to experience it using our own senses and interpretive mechanisms. Moreover, as documentarian Werner Herzog explains, "sometimes images themselves develop their own life, their own mysterious stardom."[3]

The *Izzat* of *Badhais*

An (ethno)historical investigation of these discursive transformations requires that we first examine what came before. Pehch?n can be seen as an extension, in some respects, of *izzat*. A Farsi word originally denoting notions of "honor," izzat was appropriated and applied by anthropologist Gayatri Reddy (2005) as a means of interpreting aspects of the organizational structures and identity formations of hijras in Hyderabad. Izzat is seen as currency (social capital) through which hijras and kothis craft their identities and negotiate their relative status (Reddy 2005:40). In this case, izzat influences the ways in which badhai hijras define themselves in relation to other hijras—those, for instance, who engage in commercial sex work or bar dance. According to Reddy, "badhai hijras, or ritual practitioners, consider themselves (and are generally considered by most hijra sex workers as well) to be the more respected hijras—those with izzat" (ibid.). The implication here is that izzat applies to abstinence and spirituality, and that those who are abstinent and spiritual (or at least perceived to be) possess more izzat. Nevertheless, Reddy's appropriation of izzat is more expansive than the erotic. Whereas the Mediterranean notion of "honor" takes on a communal as well as "libidinous" dimension, Reddy argues that hijras' use of izzat has a moral valence that "derives strength precisely from its diffusion beyond the axis of sex/gender to encompass a range of other hierarchical domains, including kinship, religion, and class" (Reddy 2005:43). Therefore, rather than restricting its meaning to "honor," Reddy translates the term izzat to "respect."

In accordance with Reddy's use of the term, izzat can therefore be seen as something that provides structure to the central organizational and pedagogical system that lies at the center of hijra badhai's social and economic vitality. I would suggest that izzat may have bearings on badhais in at least six ways: (1) spiritual meanings and associations encoded within the badhai ritual (religion); (2) relationships held between members of the badhai troupe (kinship); (3) learning within the *guru-chela* (mother-daughter, literally 'teacher-disciple') relationship (kinship); (4) rapport held between members of the badhai troupe and the general public (kinship/class); (5) the badhais troupe's overall social stature and whether or not it reflects that of the surrounding community (class); and the (6) overall quality and reception of the badhai performance. As I explain further, the relative degrees of izzat also accordingly carry financial implications, depending on the affluence of the particular neighborhood or jurisdiction government by the badhai troupe. In other words, the more izzat, the more money received.

Izzat and Religion, Kinship, Class

The centuries-old and (relatively) lucrative practice of badhai is conventionally known to serve as performative blessings of fertility and financial prosperity for willing patrons at weddings, births (of male children), or store openings. Badhai songs are also frequently performed at initiation ceremonies, religious pilgrimages, and other interregional hijra gatherings. In these cases, the music calls to and/or conveys spiritual significance on behalf of the Mother Goddess—who takes the form of *Bahuchara Mata* or *Bedraj Mata*—while also serving the functional purpose of providing social cohesion. While devotion to the goddess reflects a Hindu-based belief system, the central organizational and pedagogical system surrounding badhais is Muslim-derived. For many hijra communities, adherence to Islamic values are performed through various customs including praying, saying *namaz,* participating in the pilgrimage to Mecca (the *Hajj*), the celebration of *Muharram*, circumcision rites, and burial practices, and other customary rules of practice (Reddy 2005:102). The larger social organizational structure—the *ghar?n?*—also stems from Islamic elements.

The term *ghar?n?,* literally "of the house," is an Urdu term employed in Hindustani (North Indian) music nomenclatures referring to a "family tradition" or "stylistic school and/or members of that school" (Neuman 1990:272).[4] The basis of the Hindustani *ghar?n?* is the *ust?d-shagird silsila,* or *guru-?i?ya parampar?* (the Muslim and Hindu equivalents to the teacher-student relationship, respectively). In this apprenticeship system, aural learning consists not only of "an elaborate ritual of instruction" known as *tal?m*—an Urdu term roughly translated as "instruction" (Neuman 2004:102)—but also of aural osmosis. Students are expected to spend time with their teachers in contexts outside the immediate purview of the music lesson in order to passively absorb aspects of a professional musician's life. The "lesson," therefore, not only structures music learning but implicitly "of being a musician" (Neuman 1990:58). In many cases, students work around the house or run errands, receiving lessons in return, or to access other aspects of his professional life. This type of "service" inherently linked to the learning process, has conventionally been associated with a "feudal" (pre-modern) system of learning wherein the teacher is "the owner of the 'land,' or the holder of information, and the student is the laborer that cultivates it" (Qureshi 2002:92). Whether "feudal" or not, "service" can be seen as a form of social capital—an izzat—employed by students and their teachers within the ghar?n? structure.

Like Hindustani ghar?n?s, hijra ghar?n?s possess specific repertoires of beliefs, customs, and pedagogical practices based on the *guru-chela* relationship. The display of izzat is demonstrated in a variety of "services" and strengthens the bond between mother and daughter. Accordingly, izzat often determines a *chela's* social status among her hijra sisters and the larger inter-ghar?n? community. While Hindustani music ghar?n?s are conventionally founded upon pedigree (consisting usually of men with ties to a common ancestor), hijra ghar?n?s are comprised of gender non-conforming individuals from a diverse range of religious, caste, class, ethnic, language, gender and sexual backgrounds. "Membership" is determined less by one's (previous) identity background and more upon one's willingness to acquiesce to the primacy of the guru-chela and to assume an identity based on new parameters of identity. In this case, therefore, the demonstration of izzat becomes even more paramount to a chela's "membership" and social status within the ghar?n? (see Video 1 for an aural explanation of ghar?n?s and badhais from Abheena, a hijra guru).

Badhai troupes, a product of the larger social organization of the ghar?n?, reflect, perform, and produce theses value systems. Since badhais are generally regarded as possessing greater izzat relative to other hijra socio-economic practices, participation within badhais depends largely on the performance of izzat *within* the ghar?n?. The performance of izzat within the badhai troupe itself is reflected in the hierarchy of performers and division of badhai earnings, although this is more so the case with Muslim-affiliated hijra ghar?n?s than Hindu ones. While conducting fieldwork in Kanpur, I helped a Muslim hijra guru named Zehra divide the earnings her badhai

troupe received that day. The divisions were made largely along hierarchical lines—the lead singer received double the amount of earnings from her badhai counterparts. This is not always the case, however. I have observed other *gurus* divide earnings amongst their chelas and non-hijra instrumentalists equally.

Izzat is also performed through emphasis on instrumental/vocal parts within the badhai. In a performance ensemble ranging from two to six individuals, the centerpiece of badhai music and worship is the *dholak*—the instrument with the most izzat. Dholaks are traditionally accompanied by the harmonium, a lead singer and small group of supporting singers. If dholak and harmonium players (usually male) are hired from outside to perform badhais, the roles these players assume in the larger organizational structure of the badhai troupe become secondary to the lead singer, a hijra chela (who receives the largest share of earnings, aside from the guru herself). In general, the lead singer constitutes one who is skilled in vocal performance, knows the songs by memory, and holds a high position on the social hierarchy relative to the supporting singers. Her musical ability is measured according to a number of factors including, but not necessarily limited to the maintenance of proper intonation, projection of voice using a high-nasal tonal quality, command of rhythm, command of the signature clap, and command of song lyrics and overall repertoire. Because of her musical prowess, she possesses more izzat.

Izzat is also constituted within the musical/lyrical content of badhai songs. When badhai hijras sing, they call on *Bahuchara Mata* to listen to their words. At least in theory, the performance of izzat through these songs elicits the goddess's presence. Forming a prayer in the rhythmic structure of a *tihai* (three groups), the lyrics in the following excerpt of the badhai song "Asha Natoru" ('Don't Break My Hopes') performatively invokes the roles hijras play as spiritual intermediaries between the Mother Goddess her patrons:

Mileko bakko mai re,	I'm yearning to meet you,
Jisi ki lodh lagavi re,	That is all I want,
Gale mein aaj samao re	Through my throat (voice) you sing

The literal translation of the final line of the stanza, "Through my throat you sing," calls the Goddess to inhabit the body of the singing hijras. Incidentally, the entire song invokes some level of izzat in the form of blessings, pleas, illustrations of *puja* (prayer), family, personal suffering, and hope. These values are constituted vividly in the song's *gat* (chorus):

Meike bhavan bade dur,	*The Goddess's house is very far,*
Meya more assa natoru	*Don't break my hopes*

In other words, by traveling "very far," hijras demonstrate a type of "service" which grants them social capital for them to call upon the Goddess to hear their song (see Video 2 for a rendition of the song).

This type of reverence is also reflected in the dance repertoire, which is modest and conservative. Izzat in dancing is achieved by those possessing a strong knowledge of the song and dance repertoire, the ability to *abhinay* (expressive gestures in the body's upper-half), and even a physical attractiveness and/or gender "passability." Although dancing is usually shared by several chelas, it is customary for the guru to take part in some of the dancing if she is present. The social and spiritual significance of the guru—her supreme izzat—makes her involvement in the performance especially auspicious.

From Izzat to Pehch?n

The izzat gained through the performance of badhais has been on the decline for decades, as urban displacement of lower-class areas by a largely secular or moderate middle class are continuing to force hijra ghar?n?s to change their strategies of revenue. This is placing pressure on the ghar?n? system, and consequently the pedagogical strategies of the gurus and chelas within, to change. While sex work and bar dance have for some time served as substitutes for badhais in some ghar?n?s, many within the hijra community are either leaving the ghar?n? system in search of other forms of employment, and/or working to change it from the inside-out. Many hijras regularly voice their concerns about the "unchecked" power of the guru over her chelas. While at the 2013 *Koovagam mela,* an interregional transgender religious festival in Tamil Nadu attended by tens of thousands of individuals, I met a Christian *thirunangai* (transgender) named Catherine, who like her Muslim sisters, were celebrating alongside her largely Hindu family. "We want a society of cooperation and respect," she said to me. "For this, we

need to abolish *jam?t*" (meaning the ghar?n? system). In her view, it is the lack of izzat (respect) embedded within the enforced practices of sex work and, to a certain extent, badhais, that is responsible for perpetuating the "exploitation" of chelas by their gurus.

This transgender migration from the ghar?n? can be attributed to the rise in regular employment opportunities and education provided by and housed within India's HIV/AIDS NGO industrial complex. In a video-recorded interview, Abheena Aher, the Dancing Queens founder, thanked HIV/AIDS NGOs for "providing sources of empowerment" for transgenders (see Video 3 for the excerpt):

Slowly because of this NGO sector, CBO sector, a lot of hijras are starting to come out […] and that is slowly opening up that entire closed community that we had. Slowly people are starting to come out. They are seeking their own jobs. They're balancing […] both acts together. I am doing a full-time job in Delhi, at the same time I'm also linked with my ghar?n?. (Interview, March 2, 2013)

While the extent to which the rise of the HIV/AIDS NGO sector is changing the "traditional" *ghar?n?* system still remains to be seen, Abheena is articulating that a gradual shift is taking place within the *hijra* community. This shift is predicated on the exchange of a lexicon of exclusivity, liminality, and overall "closed-ness," with codes and signifying systems of inclusivity, self-assuredness, and openness. Accordingly, I would add that central to this discursive shift is the translation of izzat—a form of "respect" nonetheless associated with the maintenance of closed systems—with pehch?n—a form of self-recognition and empowerment associated with being "out."

The rest of this chapter concerns the ways in which pehch?n manifests performatively through the Dancing Queens, Mumbai's premiere professional transgender dance contingent. A formal organization housed literally within the boundaries of the Mumbai-based HIV/AIDS NGO Humsafar Trust, its diverse membership skirts the boundaries between "traditional" hijra ghar?n? and modern transgender lifestyle, and in some cases subvert the ghar?n? system entirely. In doing so, the Dancing Queens reflect, perform, and produce pehch?n through formal initiatives of equal opportunity and inclusivity (through the hosting of auditions), the fostering of talent (rehearsals and performance), and individual empowerment (advocacy). (See Video 4 for an aural description of the Dancing Queens.)

The Group

The Dancing Queens consists of a wavering number of nearly 20 individuals. They comprise a mix of transgender individuals (including hijras), gay men (including kothis and *panthis,* "straight"-acting men), transmen, lesbians, and even *jogtas* (male-to-female transgender individuals from the Maharashtra/Karnataka border), many of whom serve as auxiliary members for their cultural shows. During their off-season, Abheena takes part in the group's administrative affairs, especially those that do not require her physical presence. (Now based in Delhi, managing the *Dancing Queens* from close up has become impossible). Urmi serves as the producer/co-director of the group, taking part in the group's managerial functions including the choreographing of dance pieces and the managing rehearsals and auditions. The group is also assisted by Sachin, a kothi representative from the Humsafar Trust.



Figure 2: Members of the Dancing Queens at their auditions; photo by the author, October 5, 2012.

Over the eight years of its development, the Dancing Queens’s membership affiliation underwent a discursive transformation reflecting a larger emphasis towards gender and sexual inclusivity. These are illustrated in the following descriptions, which were published in 2009 and 2011 (respectively) on “Mumbai Pride’s official weblog”: “Dancing Queens is coming together of 20 male dancers who impersonate as women and perform dance numbers of all time famous Diva’s of Hindi Cinema” and “‘Dancing Queens’ is a performance by drag queens of *Aamchi* Mumbai” (translated from Marathi as ‘Our Mumbai’).[5] In 2015, an updated description of the group was published in a local journal advertisement of their pride performance:

Dancing Queens is a Mumbai-based LGBTQ dance troupe. Every year as a part of the Mumbai Pride Festival, Dancing Queen brings the spirit of Dance and Joy to the queer community. Under the Dancing Queens banner, members of the LGBTQ community bring their talent to the forefront in the form of different dance forms under different themes.[6]

The differences between these two statements, highlighted by a terminological shift from “female impersonators” and “drag queens” (published in 2009 and 2011, respectively) to “LGBTQ dance troupe” (published in 2015), illustrate the group’s interest in gender and sexual inclusivity. In addition to reflecting gender and sexual inclusivity, these changes are also perhaps representative of a larger shift in discourse within Mumbai’s—and other Indian—pride organizational committees from using terms normally associated with early (1990s) queer theory and early feminism, to global contemporary lexicons. (See Video 5 for an aural explanation of the Dancing Queens membership.)

In another video I produced in 2012 through Fulbright-mtvU, Abheena explains how inclusivity is part of the group’s mission:

I think Dancing Queens is all about bringing the bridges together between homosexual, heterosexual, asexual, ‘b-sexual,’ whatever sexual community that you find it across. Here, we just tell people that is, ‘Forget about your sexuality, forget about gender, just come and see this different world that you have not seen yet. And see that these people are also extremely normal and don’t judge them anymore. Just let them have the same space that you have in life. And that is what Dancing Queens is all about. (Interview, October 2, 2012)

In this case, pehch?n is expressed through notions of self-awareness (by ‘forgetting about gender’), feelings of normalcy surrounding issues of sexuality, and camaraderie (as opposed to traditional kinship associated with the hijra ghar?n?).

Membership and the Audition Process

Notions of camaraderie are constituted through an unconventional approach to the guru-chela relationship. At the heart of the group is the relationship between Abheena and Urmi. The two met over ten years ago when Urmi joined the Humsafar Trust as an outreach worker. Abheena, who was serving as the organizations chair of outreach and development, immediately took Urmi under her wing because she "looked too thin to be out there in the field." The way their relationship blossomed thereafter is best expressed in an interview with Abheena and Urmi, her eldest daughter (See Video 6 for excerpt):

It's more than just a guru-chela relationship. I don't think it has much to do with that, because I never treat her as my disciple. I never treat her as my *chela* because I treat her equally. And she also makes sure that she respects all the freedom and all the kinds of opportunities that I provide her. […] Sometimes I'm her friend. Sometimes I'm her lover. Sometimes I'm her husband. I don't know what exactly. That's the kind of relationship that we have together and that makes us bonded to each other and keep both of us grounded. (Interview, March 20, 2013)

The pedagogy of equality that Abheena applies to her guru-ship is also reflected in the Dancing Queens organization. As a chair/mother of a formally recognized performance organization, Abheena appropriates and subverts the power dynamic implicit within the traditional hijra guru-chela relationship by cultivating legitimate opportunities for members to join. Through a formal audition process, Abheena is able to cultivate an initiative based on equal opportunity, inclusivity, and a fostering of talent. Notions of camaraderie are constituted by the group through the staging (and meta-staging) of auditions, where prospective dancing queens dance in front of judges for the chance to become Abheena's "daughters."

The Dancing Queens holds auditions on a yearly basis, although this is no science. I was able to record an audition in October 2012, which was held in anticipation of two performances scheduled to take place in conjunction with 2013 Queer Azaadi March. A description of their audition announcement was published on a website hosted by the group Gaysi: The Gay *Desi* (a colloquialism for 'Indian'), a Mumbai-based queer online publication that also hosts yearly open-mic events in coordination with the Queer Azaadi organizational committee. An excerpt from the announcement makes explicit appeals to individuals (homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, transgender, queer, or otherwise) who "believe in the spirit of the Dancing Queens" and who have the "commitment and talent" to be part of their "family."[7]

The audition was attended by an audience of about 20 individuals associated with the NGO, and judged by five experts on music, dance, and all things LGBTIQ, were called in to take part in the judging process. Among the judges included Mangala Aher (a trained *Bharatanatyam* dancer who also happens to be Abheena's biological mother), Suhail Abbasi (founding member of the Humsafar Trust), Pallav Patankar (Director of HIV Programs at the Humsafar Trust), a director of Marathi film who will appear unnamed, and Laxmi Narayan Tripathi (transgender activist and Bharatanatyam dancer). The judges evaluated contestants according to a number of variables including: (1) "basic dancing ability, facial expressions and awareness of the stage"; (2) "presenting face and energy while dancing"; (3) openness and outness as an LGBT person; (4) ability to volunteer in administrative affairs if needed; (5) awareness and understanding of the Dancing Queens mission; and (6) overall commitment to dance as an art form.[8] The judges' emphasis on "openness and outness as an LGBT person" as well as "awareness and dedication to the Dancing Queens mission" articulates the importance of pehch?n not only in theory, but also as a practical standard used to evaluate talent potential and membership affiliation. This contradicts with conventional ghar?n? systems, which determine membership on an individual, relational level. As opposed to izzat, which grows gradually through the production of various forms of "service" to the family, pehch?n is a moral standard that gurus—and a chosen body of judges—employ as a principle for membership.[9]

Rehearsals and Concerts

In addition to being reflected through an audition process, pehch?n is performed in rehearsals and concerts. The planning of rehearsals and concerts follows a progressive sequence as follows:

Stage 1: Brainstorming about the concept (Abheena, Urmi and Madhuri)

Stage 2: Conceptualization of songs and plan of execution

(Abheena, Urmi, and Madhuri)

Stage 3: Finalizing the “look” of the dancers and dancing sequence (Abheena)

Stage 4: Selection of dancers (Abheena Urmi, and Madhuri)

Stage 5: Editing of songs (Rohit and Urmi)

Stage 6: Rehearsals and choreography (Abheena, Urmi, Madhuri, and Naren)

Stage 7: Final directions and stage set-up (Abheena)

Stage 8: Final rehearsals and dress rehearsals (everyone)

Stage 9: Show (everyone)

Stage 10: Party and evaluation of the show for improvement (everyone)[10]

Rehearsals are generally held two to three months before a concert is scheduled and taking place inside the Humsafar Trust drop-in space, and are scheduled at fixed intervals of time—usually two to three hours—since time blocks are coordinated with other support group sessions and rehearsals for other performance groups. Following a typical general progression, rehearsals are more sparsely spaced in the leading three months before the performance, and become more frequent in number during the “dress rehearsal” period leading into the performance.

When Abheena is out of town, Urmi manages the rehearsal logistics and the teaching of chosen choreography. Dancers treat her as students treat their instructors, and Urmi handles the responsibility professionally. Although a number of dancers may in fact be Urmi’s daughters (even her husband has participated in the past), she approaches her responsibility with an air towards egalitarianism. As a group with a social message, upsetting the ideology of egalitarianism would be to upset the disciplinary grounds upon which the LGBTIQ ideals are founded.

Concert spaces are generally chosen according to their availability, proximity to the Humsafar Trust, and whether or not the managers of the space are receptive to the goals of the group and the larger aims of the Queer Azaadi movement. In Mumbai—and other Indian cities—it is common for LGBQ and in particular transgender-sponsored events to be denied access to performance, club and bar venues, because of concerns about their sexual proclivity and/or association with the hijra community. Therefore, as a gender and sexually-inclusive performance group, the Dancing Queens must navigate societal stigmas associated with both homosexuality and transgenderism. In addition to these larger social concerns, a concert space is also chosen based on the availability of an elevated stage, reasonably large audience space, and dressing room. More often than not, the Dancing Queens dressing room is fortified by a volunteer “bouncer”—Sachin, or an employee or volunteer from the Humsafar Trust—who prevents unknown admirers of the group from entering without permission. The dressing room provides a liminal “holding cell” for items and performers intended for staging, while also preventing the unwanted gaze—benign or otherwise—from intruding in on relatively private, intimate affairs of inter-performer social bonding (see Figures 3 and 4).



Figure 3: Urmi applying her make-up backstage at the 2012 “Rhythm of India” performance by the Dancing Queens; photo by the author, October 2, 2012.



Figure 4: Photo of the author backstage at the 2012 “Rhythm of India” performance by the Dancing Queens; photo credit Ryan Ballard, October 2, 2012.

Music and Dance Content

Songs and dance numbers are chosen by Abheena and Urmi along a number of attributes. These may include their relevance towards the larger mission to educate and empower, what is "in vogue" at the moment, what may seem visually attractive, and what advances the Dancing Queens's aims of inclusivity. Music consists of a wide range of material, ranging from Bollywood numbers to Marathi, Punjabi, and even Kannada folk song. Styles of dance range from sanitized versions of *Lavani*—a Maharashtran folk dance that has a tradition of cross-dressing—to heteronormative forms like *Garba*—a Gujarati dance literally meaning "womb" performed during Navratri celebrations. Out of the five performances I have seen, however, visible markers of the *dholak,* harmonium, or dance associated with badhais*,* are not included.

More often than not, song items are chosen *after* a concert theme has been identified. The theme for an eight-year anniversary performance in January 2015 was entitled "The Journey of Dancing Queens," and featured a reflexive look at the group's "humble beginning as Lavani performers" and its eight-year transition into an eclectic LGBTIQ dance contingent. An excerpt from the description of the performance reads:

This year's theme is "The Journey of Dancing Queens". The members of the troupe will take us back to time to their humble beginning as lavani performers and gradually growing into a dance troupe performing Bollywood hits in varied dance forms in a time span of 8 years. At this years dance show we will get to see dance forms like Lavani, Bollywood, Classical, *Mujra*, Ballet, Salsa, *Bhangra* and many more. This is an event you surely do not want to miss![11]

Other performance themes reflect an equal interest in genre diversity. The title for the December 2012 performance was "Rhythm of India," and featured an eclectic array music and dance including (in order) *Mujra* (North Indian courtesan dance)*, Dandiya* and *Garba* (both Gujarati folk dances)*,* modern *Bhangra* (Punjabi folk dance)*,* Lavani*,* Belly Dance, *Jogappa/Jogta* (male-to-female transgenders of the temple) folk dance from Karnataka, and classic and contemporary Bollywood.

Performance Structure

Concerts are advertised and open to the public. They are ticketed in the range of around 100-500 INR (Indian *Rupees*), or depending on the circumstances, whatever the attendee is able to give. "Photo chelas" like myself may be admitted for free, although they usually donate to the cause. Concerts are hosted by one or two MCs holding microphones, and generally begin with a prayer followed by a short speech. At the December 2012 concert, Abheena and Sumit, a young *paanthi* associated with the Dancing Queens*,* began the evening with a short prayer to Ganesh. This was followed by a four-minute speech highlighting the Dancing Queens's mission statement, a description of previous performances, a *sher* (short poem), and an appeal to the audience. The performances that followed conformed more or less to the chosen genres, and ranged from two to three songs per genre. Table 2 in the Appendix contains a transcription of the event to accompany the summary.

The first number consisted of a set of three songs interwoven into one *Mujra* (a courtly dance genre from North India conventionally performed by women and/or kothis). The dance featured two alternating leads (Urmi and Madhuri), alternating groups of back-up dancers in elaborate North Indian dress, and a musical tapestry consisting of the Bollywood songs "*Sun Lo Tum Chilman Uthegi Nahin*" ('The Flame Will Not Rise') from the film *Kisna: The Warrior Poet* (2005)*,* "*Kaise Mukhde se Nazre Hataun*" ('I Can't Take My Eyes Off of Your Face') from the film *English Babu Desi Mem* (*English Sir, Indian Madam*, 1996)*,* and *"Tohfa Kabool*" ('I Accept Your Gifts, but…') from the film *Ghungroo* (1983).[12] Urmi and Madhuri's gestures sensually exhibited *abhinay,* following the choreography of the original numbers. The dancing contained some elements of eroticism, but none that transgressed the heteronormative boundaries already established in the Bollywood versions. In these cases, Urmi and Madhuri were not "impersonating" female dance or dancers queerly or satirically (like a burlesque), but performing the queer on a constative transgender platform.

Although Mujra itself can be considered distinctly *queer* repertoire (kothis regularly perform this genre of dance especially in Uttar Pradesh and other areas in North India) the lead dancers identify as transgender and/or transsexual. In both cases, therefore, it would be inaccurate to say that these transgender women were cross-dressing, dragging, and/or "female impersonating"—all essentialist terms based on the primacy of heteronormative notions of the gender binary. Judith Butler came across this very "theoretical conundrum" in the documentary film *Paris Is Burning,* which featured a transsexual performer character alongside "female impersonators." In her resulting essay entitled "Gender is Burning" (1993), Butler posited that transsexuals

exceeded the framework of gender performativity—and therefore queerness—because of their "desire" to be non-performative. Accordingly, Madhuri and Urmi are performing gender by *constituting* on the surface that which is already there inside of them—the (constative) identity of trans-womanhood. For the two dancers, it is the "bodies that matter" in their gender narratives, not their *subversion* of them. I would extend this postulation further, however, to suggest that the staging of their "gender non-performative" performance in an LGBTIQ context constitutes pehch?n not only through the constitution of their identities, but also through the performative subversion of the queer. In other words, as non-performative transgender dancers in a gender performative context, Urmi, Madhuri, and the Dancing Queens are *queering* the queer, and in doing so, validating their transgender identities (see Video 7).

Transgender pehch?n is also constituted on the hand through the group's appropriation of heteronormative dance. The *Mujra* was followed by folk dances traditionally associated with (heterosexual) marriage: *Garba* (a word derived from the Sanskritic word for 'womb' for a Gujarati folk dance performed during the festival of the Goddess *Navratri*), *Dandiya* (a Gujarati folk dance performed after *Garba* during *Navratri*), and *Bhangra* (a Punjabi folk dance associated with the harvest). The inclusion of a diverse range of performative modes and traditionally heterosexual folk genres in particular utilize the strategy of appropriating and disrupting established codes of heteronormativity. The postmodernist interest in reworking performance material already available—something which has been achieved in countless other queer performances from Pratibha Parmar's film *Khush* to the entirety of Madonna's persona—provides the Dancing Queens an opportunity to critique notions of transphobia, homophobia, racism, and sexism. In these heterosexual contexts, therefore, it is through the appropriation of heteronormative codes and signifying systems that provides the Dancing Queens leverage for the constitution of transgender *pehch?n* in front of an LGBTIQ audience. As opposed to the *Mujra* and *Lavani,* in these cases, transgender performers are not subverting the queer, but positioning themselves alongside.

In a later scene, pehch?n is staged in an explicitly politicized tone. Approximately 30 minutes into the performance, immediately following the Bhangra performances, Abheena and Sumit immediately interject with (loosely) rehearsed playful banter that also happens to be informative. Appearing as though he were disappointed with something, Sumit enters the stage shouting, "This won't work. This won't work!" Abheena responds: "Why wouldn't this work?" Sumit then goes on to explain how the audience saw performances from north India and Gujarat, but still have not seen Lavani, a folk genre from Maharashtra. Then, Abheena explains to Sumit that she happens to be wearing a Lavani outfit, and Sumit calms down. This transitions into an anecdote about Abheena's coming out story and specifically, how her mother accepted her identity as a transgender woman after years of denial, which then leads into a statement about the "Dancing Queens initiative" (see Video 8):

One of the initiatives of Dancing Queens is that the LGBT community, sexual minorities, we want that their parents accept them. There are many LGBT people who have suicidal tendencies because their parents don't accept them. Do you know that it took ten years for my mother to accept me for who I am? (See time marker 29:46 in Appendix).

After this rather explicit display of "pehch?n," the performance resumes with Lavani dance and a special performance from Abheena's mother, Mangala Aher. Here, pehch?n and "pehch?n" are constituted simultaneously by Abheena's dancing biological mother.

The second half of the performance progresses into slightly more provocative music and dance forms. Following the Lavani performances by Abheena and other hijras (which constitute pehch?n in similar ways to the Mujra), a relatively sexually provocative Belly Dance is performed, followed by a traditional Jogappa/Jogta folk dance from Karnataka called *Karaga* (which from a queer perspective is even more conservative than *Garba*), and then a series of old and new Bollywood numbers. The event eventually concludes with a disco song from the 2012 hit movie *Student of the Year.* Ultimately, while the inclusion of (homo)sexually-charged music and dance suggests a reversion to disempowering music and dance forms, their staging within a largely queer space and its presence alongside heteronormative folk genres represents a larger (queer) strategy of appropriating mainstream notions of unacceptability. The staging of traditionally illicit forms alongside heteronormative folk genres therefore appears not so much to shock (for the sake of shocking), but to "stage alongside" (for the sake of education) while also serving the group's larger initiative of inclusion.

Preliminary Conclusions

The transgender identity of the Dancing Queens is evident in the group's various performative manifestations of pehch?n. I have constructed a table (see Table 1) to further illustrate the ways the group translates hijra

badhai—wherein the organizational emphasis izzat is performed—to staged forms of transgender performance—wherein pehch?n is constituted. While differences between the performance forms may be as stark as those between hijra and kothi performance (see Morcom 2013), this list contains some notable distinctions. Among them include the use of political rhetoric as a means of making visible the traditionally invisible, performing for non-profit fundraising as opposed to personal gain, assuming managerial and pedagogical structure that are distinct from one another and separate from traditional family-based structure, the emphasis on musical talent, the emphasis of transgender over hijra, and the spirit of inclusiveness and eclecticism.

Table 1

	Hijra Badhai	The Dancing Queens
Organizational Emphasis	*Izzat*	*Pehch?n*
Performance Context	Private houses, streets	Public Stage
Performance Length	15-30 minutes	1-2 hours
Performers	4-5	3-10
Repertoire	Regional badhai folk, filmi songs	Wide-ranging, except badha
Content/Meaning	Highly religious, auspicious (implicit)	Political, LGBTQ equality (exp
Instrumentation	Acoustic, *dholak,* harmonium	Recorded
Presence of Sexuality	Not explicitly sexual	Sanitized codes of sexualit
Pedagogy	Mother/daughter relationship	Teacher/student relationship, reh
Social Context	*Ghar?n?,* familial way of life	"Modern *Ghar?n?*" and/or a formal extrac
Social Organization	Hierarchic structure with explicit rules and systems of rewards/punishments	Managerial structure, "democr
Membership	Case-by-case basis	Auditioned, formal process
Function	Primary source of income	Fundraising initiative
Income	Rs. 500 - 10,000 / performance	Rs. 10,000 - 50,000 / performa
Class	Classless/Very Low	Middle Class
Demographics	*Hijras* and some *kothis* of heterogenous caste/religious backgrounds	Mostly *hijras, kothis, panthis,* other tra heterogenous caste/religious backgrounds
Religion	A mix of Hindu and Muslim customs	Secular / Hindu ideology
Participation in Mainstream Society	Renouncers, social outsiders	Mainstreamers, social outsid
Visibility	Visible but secretive	Visible and transparent

These differences make it possible to distill the ways izzat translates into pehch?n, which are constituted in the

following list:

- Whereas izzat denotes "honor" or "respect," pehch?n denotes "identity," "recognition," or "acknowledgement."

- Whereas izzat connotes respect for others, pehch?n connotes respect for the self.

- Whereas izzat manifests through belonging, pehch?n is constituted through difference.

- Whereas izzat is socially granted (through 'service'), pehch?n is individually fostered.

- Whereas izzat is something gradually gained (or lost), pehch?n is something one has or does not have.

- Whereas izzat is based on exclusive membership, pehch?n is based on inclusivity.

- Whereas izzat is subjectively perceived, pehch?n is objectively judged.

- Whereas izzat is a social currency that governs the relatively closed occupational system based on (semi-)hereditary membership, pehch?n is applied within an open occupational system based on the individual.

- Whereas izzat is the socio-cultural capital that may determine one's social rank within ghar?n? hierarchy, pehch?n is a tool employed by all hijras regardless of social stature.

- Whereas izzat "empowers" a hijra community through notions of spiritual reverence and superstition, pehch?n empowers the individual.

- Whereas izzat is something rarely discussed yet implied within the social organization of badhais, pehch?n is explicit part of their socio-political agenda and discursive power of LGBTIQ identity politics.

- Whereas the socio-linguistic roots of izzat is derived from notions of sexual abstinence and/or denial, pehch?n is derived from the embrace of open discourse surrounding sex and gender identity.

- Whereas izzat is reflected, performed and produced through badhais, pehch?n is reflected, performed and produced through staged, eclectic performance forms.

Applying an (Ethno)historical Model to Hijra Music and Dance Practice

How are we to understand both the performance and discursive practices of the Dancing Queens in relation to what is already "known," or at least written, about "dancing queens" in India?

The practice of men playing women's roles in theater—a distinctly "queer" approach to transgender—is nothing new to South Asia. Patanjali's grammatical text, the *Mahabhasya* (150 BCE), describes male actors who play females as *bhrukumsa,* one who "flutters his brows." And the *Natyashastra* (2-4th century CE), South Asia's ancient music and dance treatise containing forms of Hindustani and Karnatak music, mentions *rupanusarini,* the " imitation" of men and women taken roles in the opposite gender (Hansen 2002:163). The most popular transgender performance forms in Bombay before the British takeover in 1818 were *Tamasha*—a Persian word signifying "entertainment" or "show"—which incorporated earlier styles such as *Gondhal*, *Ovada*, and *Turra-Kalagi*, as well as Lavani; *Nachya Poryas*—dancing boys—were also popular, and courtesans are said to have learned their melodies and dance movements from them (ibid.:166). During Indian nationalism, as new forms of gender representation began to emerge under the rise of respectable Indian woman, drag performers were gradually displaced from the stage. Today, gender non-conforming practices surface subtly in mainstream film and drama, and through illegal, or recently legalized, illicit forms like bar dance and badhai.

The term "Dancing Queens" is a vestige of Mumbai's long held tradition of bar dance. A simple Google search of "Mumbai's Dancing Queens" will yield a series of article results related to the subject. For instance, an *Afternoon Despatch & Courier* article entitled "Mumbai's Dancing Queens" published on July 17, 2013—around the time the Supreme Court lifted the ban on Mumbai's dance bars—contains a description of bar dancing life (without

mentioning our Dancing Queens). A *Daily Mail* article entitled "Dancing Queens Makes a Comeback" published on July 16, 2013, contains a journalistic ethnography of bar dancers (still with no reference to our group).[13]

Through the appropriation of the term "dancing queens," the group positions themselves *against* and/or subverts illicit forms of drag performance, and in doing so, leverages their dance as a counter narrative to the degeneration of the queer and hijra community. The group even functions as a sort of rehab for "fallen hijras" through pehch?n. In her budding days as a dancer, Abheena recognized the visceral appeal of music and dance in "overcoming the initial jitters people feel on the mention of sexuality" and founded the Dancing Queens to provide a professional outlet for musically inclined transgender women.[14] In one of the first interviews I conducted with her, Abheena explained that although she bar-danced in the "drag style" for some time, "I was at a stage where I needed a different kind of audience; I needed an audience that would appreciate me for who I am":

I started to realize the kind of guys I would attract, but I was not comfortable with it. The reason why I did it is to have that kind of thrill. It's a different kind of feeling. After a while I realized that it as not worth it, because once you remove that makeup, you get a different kind of reaction. All the attraction is gone. [Bar dancing] was a humiliation for the real talent that I have. Ultimately talent is something which will only cherish if people appreciate it. If I don't get my appreciation, I won't get satisfied. (Interview September 9, 2010)

Abheena translates her personal experience to her Dancing Queens daughters. Just as bar dance failed to "click" with her, Abheena recognizes that its form impedes efforts to cultivate pehch?n.

Through the staging of queer repertoire within an LGBTIQ context, the Dancing Queens moves away from the socially transgressive mode of badhai performance, sex work, bar dance (and other forms of "service" associated with disempowering displays of servitude to the guru) towards a middle class, secular, and politically-charged frontier. In doing so, the group subverts hijra customs through a reconstitution of the guru-chela relationship. But, while the Dancing Queens is *queering* (subverting) the hijra through various means, as non-performative transgenders in a gender performative context, they are also *transgendering* the queer. That is, they are bringing their hijra (and kothi) daughters and sisters into the queer domain.

Ultimately, transgender pehch?n is achieved through the group's appropriation of both hetero- and *homo*-normative codes and signifying systems. This provides the Dancing Queens leverage for the empowerment of their dancers as well as a vast array of repertoires that make it possible to attract large, diverse audiences in order to disseminate their messages. If making explicit the implicit, staging the liminal, or of "outing" the once "closeted" is reified in the Dancing Queens performance, then as their audience, we are not only enjoying a carefully choreographed show, but also witnessing the emergence of a new hijra out of the historical closet and onto the global stage. She is a finely dressed hijra, a proper hijra, a respectable hijra, and one that identifies her pehch?n in modern terms.

Appendix

Table 2 - Transcription of "Rhythm of India"

Time Code	Details	Song Titles	English Translation and media links
0:00	Song	*Tera Pyaar Pyaar Pyaar*	"Your love"
0:15	Prayer	*Vakratunda Mahakaya Suryakoti Smaaprabha*	Traditional prayer to Ganesh commonly performed to start all kinds of cer http://greenmesg.org/mantras_slokas/sri_ganesha-vakratunda_mahakay
0:42	Dialogue		Welcome everyone to the 7th year celebrations. Please clap. Do you kno meaning of Dancing Queens? Our aim to create awareness about sexual Sometimes talking about these issues of homosexuality, transgender cau palatable to the public. And so our aim is to talk about these issues throu

Table 2 - Transcription of "Rhythm of India"

			of dance, so people can come and interact with us, and work towards nor issues. Every year has a theme. What's the theme this year. In the past we've do Dixit, 70s, tribute to the 60's heroines. What do you hear in your heart? … has rhythm. We have so many dances in India, so many rhythms and so celebrating Rhythms of India. - Our first introduction - *Is Ada se Baath Ki* *Ki Dil Chura Gaye* *Hum Toh Samjhe The Boot* *App toh dhadkan suna gaye* "You spoke with such an elegance That you Stole my Heart I took you for a silent-one And you spoke with your heartbeat instead" (*audience claps*) So Let's start with our favorite, *Mujra*. (*audience claps*)
4:35	Song	*Sun Lo Tum*	"The Flame Will Not Rise": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tH7QQAduxh8 [3]
8:30	Song	*Kainse Mukhde Se Nazre Hataun*	"I Can't Take My Eyes Off Your Face": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htf6V2df9xQ [4]
11:50	Song	*Tohfa Kabul Hain Humein*	"I Accept Your Gifts But…": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIO8Lv-64g4 [5]
16:04	Dialogue		Excellent performance. People are busy, they've been practising for weel

Table 2 - Transcription of "Rhythm of India"

			credible.
16:37	Dialogue		Now we move from *Mujra*, the choice of the *Nawab*'s (royal land owners) Now we move west to Mumbai which has *Dandiya* and *Garba*.
17:21	Song	(unclear)	
17:45	Song	*Dholida Dhol*	"The *Dhol*," a *Gujarati* Folk Song: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTo4Cvaes60 [6]
19:13	Song	*Odhoni Odhu Ude Jayee*	"My Scarf Flies in the Air," a *Gujarathi* Folk Song: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ih5iipp-JcA [7]
20:00	Song	(repeated)	
23:07	Dialogue		Please clap! Some jokes about *Sardarje* and now going back to the north to *Punjab*'s
24:10	Song	*Ek Omkar*	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ik_Onkar [8]: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxob7YNUM14 [9]
24:50	Song	*Bari Barsi Khatan*	Traditional Punjabi Wedding Song
26:15	Song	*Hulle Hula Re Hulle*	Traditional Punjabi Wedding Song
27:31	Song	*Bhootni Ke*	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKbmf9RHDtY
29:46	Dialogue		Sumit: Abinaji, this won't work. Abina: What wouldn't work? Sumit: No no no this absolutely wouldn't work. Abina: But why? I've shown you such beautiful dances, so many whistles claps, so what wouldn't work? Sumit: Many whistles, good. Claps, good. We've seen dances, very good like to ask you now. So we saw the Mujra? Abina: Yes, we saw the Mujra. Say Salam Alaikam! Sumit: Adaab adaab adaab... Abina: Yes, did you like her, the one who performed Mujra? Sumit: Yeah yeah, what excellent Mujra that was. Wasn't it guys? Abina: Focus focus Sumit, we are conducting a show over here.

Table 2 - Transcription of "Rhythm of India"

			Sumit: Yes yes, focus focus. So we did the garba afterwards? Come look here! So we did Bhangra there as well? Abina: Yes. Sumit: Ok so where are we now? Abina: Mumbai. Sumit: So we are in Mumbai and why have you not shown me any Lavan Abina: gasps Sumit: See see, how beautiful is the saree, what delicateness! Abina: Thank you! Sumit: so should we have the Lavani or not?! (audience cheers) Abina: Ok ok, but I'd like to say something first. One of the initiatives of D is that the LGBT community, sexual minorities, we want that their parents There are many LGBT people who have suicidal tendencies because the accept them. Do you know that it took ten years for my mother to accept am? Sumit: Guys, this is a very big thing that it took ten years, to understand h have any suggestion for how to proceed? Abina: Yes, I do have some advice, a suggestion. I talked to my mother a that we always think about what brings about change in a society. So pec once an Indira Gandhi is born, Jhanci's Ki Rani is born, that will change t thought, if we want to instill change, why not start at home. Sumit: Yes, that is very correct. Abina: So Sumit, do you know that there is a surprise item in this perform Sumit: Oh yeah? Yes, we like surprises don't we? Abina: Guys, do you like surprises? Ok, so keep watching! Sumit: Please clap, DQ presents Rhythms of India.
	Song	*Mala Zao Dya na Ghari*	"Let Me Go Home, It's Midnight": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVRzHpDwSP4 [10]
37:09	Song	*Disla Ga Bai Disla*	"I Saw Him, I Saw Him": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICiUi_LKkoM [11]
40:00	Song	*Kakhet Kalsa Gavala Valsa*	"The Pot of Water is in Your Arms, But the Village is Searching for it," a *M* *Lavani* song

Table 2 - Transcription of "Rhythm of India"

43:18	Dialogue		Coming up is belly dance!
43:51	Song	*Maiya Maiya*	"O Mother, O Mother": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0V_4q7v0HY [12]
45:40	Song	*Aga Bai Halla Machaye*	"Oh Dear, There is Cacophony in My Heart": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQIn_3NYa1Q [13]
46:30	Song	Instrumental	
48:03	Dialogue		(*audience claps*) Have you guys had some food? Then scream louder! Now we are presenting something different, about the performer, she is a fasten your seat belts. We are moving towards the South now. But first a *Sher* - You are that kind of a bird… ...birds take flight and that sky is all that they know... But you guys are those birds For whom even the sky seems not enough! (unclear) The next dance is from Karnataka.
50:30	Song	*Mundi, Mundi Viyagane*	Folk Music from Tamil Nadu http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4ZttHrEnso [14]
53:45	Dialogue		second part of the <tamil dance>
54:54	Song	(unclear)	Instrumental Folk Music
57:15	Dialogue		And now some Bollywood numbers
57:45	Song	*Aa Re Pritam Pyare*	"Come Here, Oh My Dear": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwOFjXP3BqY [15]

Table 2 - Transcription of "Rhythm of India"			
1:00:00	Song	(repeated)	
1:00:35	Song	*Aa Ante Amalapuram*	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htnO7XWage0 [16]
1:01:55	Song	*Naka Muka*	
1:04:05	Song	*Mere Photo Ko Seene*	"Glue My Photograph to Your Heart": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Y5SDlsUALs [17]
1:05:55	Dialogue	(unclear)	
1:07:50	Song	*Party Abhi Baki Hai*	"The Party's Not Over Yet": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb9FUnmoGEY [18]
1:09:50	Song	Disco Song from *Student of the Year*	"Crazy for Disco": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcL6ZErM49Q [19]

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Notes

[1] These include the *Humsafar* Trust, Solidarity and Action against the HIV Infection in India (SAATHII), the South India AIDS Action Programme (SIAAP), Sangama, and Alliance India Andhra Pradesh (AIAP).

[2] See the SAATHII organizational website for a description of the program: http://www.saathii.org/projects/pehchan [20]

[3] *Grizzly Man,* directed by Werner Herzog, at time marker 40:00.

[4] I have observed the word *ghar?n?* employed in relationship to hijras in all of the research sites visited including urban Mumbai, Lucknow, Chennai and surrounding secondary sites in Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh), Surat (Gujarat), Kalyan (Maharashtra), and Koovagam (Tamil Nadu). The term is also documented in Gayatri Reddy's 2005 landmark ethnography *With Respect to Sex.*

[5] See the following pages for a description: https://queerazaadi.wordpress.com/2009/07/29/fund-raising-event-dancing-queens-on-saturday-1-august-2009/ [21], https://queerazaadi.wordpress.com/2011/01/26/28th-january-2011-performance-by-dancing-queen/ [22], and https://queerazaadi.wordpress.com/2011/01/24/26th-january-2011-ek-madhavbaug-dancing-queens/ [23]

[6] See the following page for a description: http://www.justdial.com/events/Mumbai/Dancing-Queens-Presents-The-Journey-of-Dancing-Queens-Woh-7-Saal/EV625423 [24]

[7] See the following page for the excerpt: http://gaysifamily.com/2012/10/03/dancing-queen-auditions-mumbai/ [25]

[8] These parameters are based on the audition sheets held at the time, and later revised in an email from Abheena Aher which was received on February 27, 2015.

[9] The film can be viewed in its entirety on the Fulbright-mtvU website: http://fulbright.mtvu.com/jroy/2012/11/06/welcome-to-mumbai/ [26]

[10] These parameters are based from an email from Abheena Aher which was received on February 27, 2015.

[11] See the following pages for the description: http://www.justdial.com/events/Mumbai/Dancing-Queens-Presents-The-Journey-of-Dancing-Queens-Woh-7-Saal/EV625423 [24]; http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-mumbai-pride-festival-is-here-celebrate-with-pride-2055839 [27]

[12] The original Bollywood numbers in their respective order can be viewed through the following links: (1) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tH7QQAduxh8 [3]; (2) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htf6V2df9xQ [4]; (3) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIO8Lv-64g4 [5]

[13] See the articles on the following links: http://www.afternoondc.in/city-news/mumbais-dancing-queens/article_86491 [28]; http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2366212/Dancing-queens-make-comeback-Supreme-Court-gives-green-light-Mumbais-dance-bars.html [29]

[14] See original quote in this article: http://www.dnaindia.com/lifestyle/report-dancing-queens-go-from-fringe-to-centre-stage-1364682 [30]

Source URL: https://ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/journal/volume/20/piece/872

Links:
[1] http://www.ethnomusicologyofthecloset.com/dq
[2] http://greenmesg.org/mantras_slokas/sri_ganesha-vakratunda_mahakaya.php
[3] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tH7QQAduxh8
[4] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htf6V2df9xQ
[5] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIO8Lv-64g4
[6] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTo4Cvaes60
[7] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ih5iipp-JcA
[8] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ik_Onkar
[9] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxob7YNUM14
[10] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVRzHpDwSP4
[11] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lCiUi_LKkoM
[12] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0V_4q7v0HY
[13] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQIn_3NYa1Q
[14] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4ZttHrEnso
[15] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwOFjXP3BqY
[16] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htnO7XWage0
[17] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Y5SDlsUALs
[18] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb9FUnmoGEY
[19] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcL6ZErM49Q
[20] http://www.saathii.org/projects/pehchan
[21] http://queerazaadi.wordpress.com/2009/07/29/fund-raising-event-dancing-queens-on-saturday-1-august-2009/
[22] https://queerazaadi.wordpress.com/2011/01/26/28th-january-2011-performance-by-dancing-queen/
[23] https://queerazaadi.wordpress.com/2011/01/24/26th-january-2011-ek-madhavbaug-dancing-queens/
[24] http://www.justdial.com/events/Mumbai/Dancing-Queens-Presents-The-Journey-of-Dancing-Queens-Woh-7-Saal/EV625423
[25] http://gaysifamily.com/2012/10/03/dancing-queen-auditions-mumbai/
[26] http://fulbright.mtvu.com/jroy/2012/11/06/welcome-to-mumbai/
[27] http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-mumbai-pride-festival-is-here-celebrate-with-pride-2055839
[28] http://www.afternoondc.in/city-news/mumbais-dancing-queens/article_86491
[29] http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2366212/Dancing-queens-make-comeback-Supreme-Court-gives-green-light-Mumbais-dance-bars.html

[30] http://www.dnaindia.com/lifestyle/report-dancing-queens-go-from-fringe-to-centre-stage-1364682