This article provides a comprehensive overview of the historical, social, and political experiences of the 'Hijras' in India. Often called "transgender" by outsiders, most Hijras consider themselves neither male nor female, not transitioning, and are legally recognized as a distinct "third gender." The Hijra identity is constructed by many axes rooted in historical significance and the complex interplay of gender, sexuality, religion, tradition, and kinship. To that effect, the pluralities of values and practices of the Hijras abrogate Western conceptualizations of the "heterosexual matrix" (normative ideas about sex, gender, and sexuality). Further, the formal and informal institutional structures within which they are embedded supersede the often unilinear understandings of transgender identities and experiences in western contexts.