

Issues of Transgender in Tiruchirappalli – A Study

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Abstract

Transgender is a term used to describe people who may act, feel, think or look different from the gender that they were born with. The word transgender used to include many groups of people who share one important “trait” but may not be the same in other ways. Transgender people have a gender identity different from their birth sex or express their gender in way that contrivance. The transgender community, generally known as “Hijras” in our country, is a section of Indian citizens who are treated by Society as unnatural and generally as objects of ridicule and even fear on account of superstition. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and ought to be entitled to enjoyment of human rights without discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Everyone is entitled to equality before the law and equal protection of the law without any such discrimination. Transgender are also part of society and have equal rights as are available to other persons. Many literary evidences are there to prove the existence of transgender in India. In order to study the issues of transgender in Tiruchirappalli district a study was undertaken among 30 transgender. The main objectives of the study are

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of the transgender
2. To study the problems of the transgender
3. To explore some suggestions for their problems

The study was conducted among 30 transgender respondents from the 162 respondents. Since their accommodation places are at different places, random sampling technique is used to choose the 30 sample respondents. Interview schedule is used to collect data from them because of the illiterate nature of the respondents. On the basis of the data collected, transgender in Tiruchirappalli are facing a lot of problems and attitudinal change on the part of the society is needed. Governmental efforts combined with societal changes and the attitude change among the family members of the transgender can only bring them solutions. That is the only way for their empowerment.

Key words: Gender, Transgender, Hijras.

Introduction

Transgender is a word that has come into widespread use only in the past couple of decades, its meanings are still under construction. The nature has given the third gender to the world. Transgender is an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression or behaviour does not confirm to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth. Transgender is a term used to describe people who may act, feel, think or look different from the gender that they were born with. The word transgender used to include many groups of people who share one important “trait” but may not be the same in other ways. Transgender people have a gender identity different from their birth sex or express their gender in way that contrivance.

The term transgender has been derived from the Latin word ‘trans’ and the English word ‘gender’. No particular form of sexual orientation is meant through the term transgender. The way they behave and act differs from the ‘normative’ gender role of men and women. Transgender is a general term applied to a variety of individuals, behaviours and groups involving tendencies to vary from culturally conventional roles. Transgender is a state of one’s gender identity (self-identification as women, men, neither or both) not matching one’s assigned sex. A transgender individual may have characteristics that are normally associated with a particular gender, identify elsewhere on the traditional gender continuum, or exist outside of it is “other”, “agender”, “genderqueer” or “third gender”.

Types of transgenering

There are different narrower categories of trans-gendering. The types of transgender behaviour are,

1. Transsexuals – Individuals who decide to undergo either partial or complete sex re-assignment surgery
2. Transgenderists – Individuals who live fulltime as the gender opposite their biological sex but have no desire to undergo sex re-assignment surgery.
3. Gender Queers – It is a more recent term that is used by people who engage in a variety of gender variant behaviour but do not agree with the term transgender.
4. Androgynes – Individuals who combine elements of masculinity and feminity.

5. Cross-Dressers – Individuals who occasionally dress as the opposite sex, though they show no desire to change their sex or to adopt cross-gendered behaviour for extended periods of time.
6. Drag performers – Individuals either female bodied or male bodied or those in transition; they perform on stage the gender opposite the sex they were born.

Indian scenario

Asian countries have centuries-old histories of subsistence of gender-variant males-who presently would have been regarded as 'Transgender'. India is no exception. In Hinduism these people are treated equal to God. This marginalized population is also classified as "Third Gender". This section of population consists of people that were consigned as male at birth but have stoutly feminine gender expression and identity. In the Indian culture, the most prevalent transgender are hijras. Hijras are physiologically male but they adopt feminine gender identity, and roles. Hijras have a long attached recorded history of almost 4000 years within India.

A group of people "who were not men and not women" did not know what to do and remained with him. Rama rewarded the hijras for their loyalty by giving them the power to bless auspicious occasions such as marriage and Child birth through customary singing and dancing. During the Mughal empire in the 16th and 17th centuries, castrated hijras - or eunuchs – were respected and considered close confidants of emperors, often being employed as royal servants and bodyguards. But despite acceptance centuries ago, hijras today live on the fringes of Indian society and face discrimination in jobs and services such as health and education.

According to 2011 census in India 4, 87,803 transgender are found in India. In India, people with a wide range of transgender- related identities, culture, or experiences exist- including Hijras, Aravanis, Jothis, Jogtas, Jogappas, and Shiv-Shakits. Often these people have been part of the broader culture and treated with great respect, at least in the past, although some are still accorded particular respect even in the present.

Transgender in Tamil Nadu

Mentions of Transgenders started from the, Tamil Literature Tholkappium, continued in Silappathikaram. In Silappathikaram several mentions were seen about Transgender and their activities.

From sangam period, in most of the sangam literatures, evidences are seen about the life and activities of Transgender. In Agananuru, SeevagaChinthamani, Manimegalai and in Thirukkural mentions about Transgenders are seen as "pedi". In Thirukkural 614, 727 kural

mentioned about the Transgenders. Neelakesi which is the Literature of Jains mentioned about Transgenders, and their works in the kingship and society.

Tamil poet Bharathiyar also mentioned about Transgenders in his songs. In his songs that create the feeling of patriotism, a lot of mentions are there about transgenders. In Tamil Nadu there is a separate temple for transgender population namely KoothandavarKovil and every year festival was celebrated there. Transgender from all over Tamil Nadu come there to worship their deity. Tamil Nadu has an estimated population of more than 30,000 transgender people.

Problems of Transgender

Transgender people in India face a variety of issues. So far, these communities perceive that they have been excluded from effectively participating in social and cultural life, economy and politics and decision-making processes. A primary reason (and consequence) of the exclusion is perceived to be the lack of (or ambiguity in) recognition of the gender status of hijras and other transgender people. It is a key barrier that often prevents them in exercising their civil rights in their desired gender. So far, there is no single comprehensive source on the basis of which an evidence-based advocacy action plan can be prepared by transgender activists or possible legal solutions can be arrived at by policymakers. Reports of harassment, violence, denial of services, and unfair treatment against transgender persons in the areas of employment, housing and public accommodation have been discussed in local media, from time to time.

The problems, faced by transgender are discrimination, lack of educational facilities, unemployment, lack of shelter, lack of medical facilities like HIV care and hygiene, depression, hormone pill abuse, tobacco and alcohol abuse and problems relating to marriage, property, electoral rights, adoption. They have been excluded from effectively participating in social and cultural life, economy and politics. They are also deprived of legal provisions. Transgender, though human beings are not recognized as persons, violation of human rights as they are deprived of their fundamental rights as well as also other civil rights. The lack of recognition isolates transgender, especially eunuchs, in the matter of civil rights. The Constitution of India prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Since gender is taken to mean only male and female, the eunuchs and transgender cannot effectively exercise or avail the benefits of constitutional rights and avail of facilities and benefits available to the male and female genders. Transgender have very limited employment opportunities. Transgender have no access to bathrooms/toilets and public spaces. The lack of access to bathrooms and public spaces access is illustrative of discrimination faced by transgender in

availing each facilities and amenities. They face similar problems in prisons, hospitals and schools.

Health and Social Care:

Trans people can experience long delays in access to gender reassignment treatment through the NHS, leading some to pay for expensive care in the private sector.

Housing:

Trans people may be particularly at risk of housing crisis and homelessness arising from transphobic reaction and harassment by family, neighbours and members of their local community.

Media, Leisure and Sport:

Trans people are often portrayed as isolated individuals in the media, with a focus solely on gender reassignment surgery rather than as whole individuals with lives.

Community and citizenship:

Little attention has been paid to the development of community capacity or the community engagement of trans people.

Families and Relationships:

Some trans people may experience a lack of family and social support as a result of transphobic reactions to their gender identity.

Ministry of Law and Ministry of Social Justice and State Governments need to recognize the deprivation suffered by transgender people and work on much needed reform.

In India Tamil Nadu state was the first state to introduce a transgender (Hijra/Aravani) welfare policy. According to the transgender welfare policy transgender people can access free sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) in the Government Hospital (only for transfeminine people); free housing program; various citizenship documents; admission in government colleges with full scholarship for higher studies alternative sources of livelihood through formation of self-help groups (for savings) and initiating income – generation programmes (IGP). Tamil Nadu was also the first state to form a Transgender Welfare Board with representatives from the Transgender community.

The present study is conducted in Trichirappalli District. The total number of transgenders in India 4,87,803. In Tamil Nadu the estimated number of transgender is 30,000. Trichirappalli Transgender Welfare Board has estimated number. of transgenders in Trichirappalli as 162.

The study is conducted among 30 transgender respondents from the 162 respondents. Random sampling technique used to choose the 30 sample respondents. Since all are not

highly educated interview schedule technique is used to collect data from them. The main objectives of this study are

- (i) To study the socio-economic conditions of the transgenders
- (ii) To study the problems of the transgenders
- (iii) To explore some suggestions for their problems

The collected data are analysed and conclusions are arrived from the analysed data.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Age wise distribution of the respondents reveal that among the 30 respondents, 17 respondents belong to the age group of above 30 and 13 of them belonged to the age group of between 15-30.

Educational profile of the respondents prove that how much the society acts as an obstacle for their education only 9 of them came up to Higher secondary and 11 of them are below secondary level education and 10 of them are illiterate.

Among the 30 respondents majority of them (26 respondents) belonged to Hindu religion, 2 of them are Christians and 2 of them belonged to Islamic religion.

Occupational status of the respondents

S.No	Occupation	No. Of Respondents
1	Self employed	8
2	Unemployed	17
3	Unskilled	5
4	Government	0

No respondent is employed in government organisations. This itself shows their backwardness. 8 of them are involved in self-employment, 17 of them were unemployed, they earn their money through begging, they have added that they do not find employment opportunity and no employer is ready to provide job to them and 5 of them are employed in unorganised sector as unskilled workers.

Period of Identification

S.No	The Period of Identification	No. Of Respondents
1	Childhood	7
2	Adolescence	23

Majority of the respondents (23) of them noticed the changes in the Adolescent Period. Only 7 of them came to know about their changes in their childhood itself.

Feeling of the respondents after knowing the change

S.No	Type of feeling	No. Of Respondents
1	sad	8
2	fate	11
3	suicide	11

Among the 30 respondents interviewed, eight of them said that they have become more worried after knowing the change. 11 respondents said that, they have even went to the extent of committing suicide and 11 of them said that, they consider it as their fate.

The Reaction of the family member after knowing the change

S.No	Reaction	No. Of Respondents
1	Hesitation	8
2	Hate	10
3	Sent out	11
4	Included in the family	1

10 out of 30 respondents said that, their family members hated them and do not mingle with them. 8 of the respondents said that the family members hesitate to talk with them and not ready to identify them as their family member. These reactions later made them to come out of their family. It is very sad to note that eleven respondents said that after knowing the change, the family members immediately sent them out of the family without any support. This is the pathetic condition of the transgender.

Among the 30 respondents 25 of them said that they have no Property Rights. Their family member's abruptly sent them out without giving any financial assistance. 5 of them agreed that they have financial help from their family member in time of their need, but as such they don't have any property Rights or allocations from their family property. Since, there is no legal provision regarding this, they are discriminated even worse.

Regarding the nature of feelings among their friends, 13 of them said that they were not bothered so much, but they started to avoid them. 17 of the respondents are of the view that their friends hated them and suddenly broke their friendly relationship.

Regarding the reaction of the Society 23 of them said that they are discriminated by the society. 7 of them said that they have faced small differential treatments and not faced any discrimination.

Type of reaction of the society

S.No	Type of reaction	No. Of Respondents
1	Criticism	5
2	Gossip	12
3	Ridiculed	13

Regarding the nature of reaction of the society towards the transgender, 5 of them said that they were often criticised and never allowed to do anything independently. 12 of them said that, the society gossip at them and 13 of them said that they were often ridiculed by the society. In public places they were become an object of laughter and they were very much hesitant to go to public places because of this type of activity of the society. They have added that in public places like temples, cinema theatres, buses and hotels they were not allowed to sit near other ordinary individuals. They often have a doubt usage of toilets that which toilet they have to use. They have also faced some sarcastic moments due to this. There is no separate place for them so during natural emergencies they use only open spaces rather than public toilets.

Regarding the treatment of Transgender in hospitals they are not treated equally. Especially in the government hospitals, they were illreated, sometimes they were scolded by the nurses, which affect them lot. But in the case of private hospitals, there is no such differences regarding the treatment. All of them are the opinion that they face discrimination in this regard.

Type of efforts of the government needed for equal treatment

S.No	Type of Action	No. Of Respondents
1	Awareness	16
2	Punishment	14

Among the 20 respondents 16 of them said that complete awareness is needed for the society, in order to change the condition of ill treatment. 14 of them said that to stop the ill treatment against transgenders, severe punishments should be given to the offenders. Legal provisions should be made to avoid this type of ill treatments.

Since voting rights are given to them they were allowed to get Voter Identity cards. 17 of them got their identity cards and 13 of them still not applied for identity cards.

Conclusion

The above analysis of the data collected reveal the downtrodden condition of transgender in Tiruchirappalli shows that transgenders are physically, sexually and verbally abused, harassed by family members, society and government official and have little access to health care services, denied of job opportunities and face gross violation of human rights.

The educational profile of the respondents is not a supporting one. Nobody crossed the higher secondary course. This reveals the problems faced by them in getting their education. The respondents said that they have completed their course with greater difficulty only.

To conclude, Transgenders in Trichirappalli are facing a lot of problems, they are discriminated and ill-treated by the society and family. In spite of the efforts of the government regarding equal treatment in all aspects, they face a lot of problems. Even today they are the object of gossip and ridicule of the society; they are not treated as a human being. They are rejected by family members, relatives and neighbours, criticised at school, not provided with jobs in spite of having required abilities and qualifications and those who get jobs are physically, verbally and sexually abused, humiliated and discriminated while accessing health care services. They are also excluded from economic and legal participation in the country.

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