



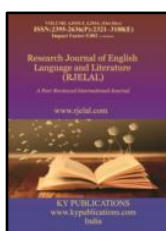
INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

## SOCIO -PSYCHOLOGICAL STRUGGLE OF TRANSGENDER: A CRITICAL COMPARISON OF VIDHYA AND ANARKALI

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### ABSTRACT

Hijras (Eunuch) in India have practically no respectable public identity. They have no acceptance and no protection from prejudice and abuse. The discrimination against them is often translated into violence. The main factor behind the violence is that society is not able to come to terms with the fact that hijras do not conform to the accepted gender divisions. Saravanan Vidhya depicts her own life in the work *I am Vidhya*. Mahesh Dattani gives the hijras of India a voice to articulate their feeling and predicaments in the English theatre through his play *Seven Steps around the Fire*. The case of a hijra is focused in the play that secretly marries the son of a minister and has to bear dire consequence. The role of the police, politicians and the society as a whole is questioned. This paper will deal with the traumatic effect caused by the society towards gender. Gender role is vital in the successful progress of a society. Male and female are the two gender which instantly come to our mind when we talk of gender. The word 'gender identity' too might lead us towards Feminism. Of course, this gender identity is not in terms of feminism but it is about the identity or recognition sought after by the third sex the transgender. The memory of a traumatic experience, which is either caused by natural disaster, social apathy or being betrayed by caregivers or trusted partners, has become a kind of obsession. There are no words to highlight the inner turmoil caused by such traumatic experiences. This paper will deal with the insights shared by Vidya regarding the struggle of the transgender's recognition and inclusion.

Key words: third sex, gender, Hijras, SRS

Transgender are people whose self- identity does not conform unambiguously to conventional nations of male or female gender. These people are called as Thirunar, Thirunangai, for male to female and Thirunambi for female to male. These people are considered as the third gender .The very term transgender refers to a person whose gender identity does not correspond to that person's biological sex assigned at birth. The term transgender is a replacement for the older term transsexual. The term transsexual refers to the biological stature of a person. These people are

named as bisexual, asexual, heterosexual, homosexual, pan gender.

Hijira for translations is a term used in South Asia in particular in India which refers to an individual who is transsexual or transgender. In other areas of India, transgender people are also known as Aravani. Most transgender live at the margins of society with very low status, the very word "Transgender" is sometimes used in a derogatory manner. Violence against Hijras, especially sex workers, is often brutal, occurs in public spaces police station, and their homes and

also face extreme discrimination in health, housing education, employment, immigration, law and unable to place them into male or female gender categories.

In 1965, Psychiatrist John F. Oliver Columbia University wrote a book *Sexual Hygiene and Pathology* in which he used the lexical compound transgender in the *Transexualism*. Transgenderist is the term as used to describe people who wanted to live cross-gender with sex reassignment surgery. In 1976 transgenderist was abbreviated as LG educational materials.

Geoffrey Galt Harpham said "Gender is one's personal experience of one's own gender. This is generally described as one's private sense of being a man or a woman, consisting primarily of the acceptance of membership into category of people male or female. In all societies, however, some individuals do not identify with some of the aspects of gender that are assigned to their biological sex."

#### **Plight of Vidhya and Anarkali**

Even kinds didn't spare. Once they followed me when I was on field duty and sang raucous film song at me. Who taught them to this where did they learn such? domineering behaviour if you see a tirunangai, attack her, insult her, make her cry, chase her away whimpering, screaming that seemed to be the rule, regardless of race religion or creed.

The above statement throws light upon the torture and treatment of transgender. The injustices done to them. Many experience physical and emotional assaults for "coming out", or fear being found out on daily basics. Others may engage in risky behaviours as a way to cope with confusion about their sexual identity. So many of these children and teen ages want to share their feelings but finding a safe and reliable relationship is a great challenge because the very acknowledgment of same sex attractions and desire may put them at further risk.

I was girl; unfortunately, the world saw me as a boy. Inwardly I wanted to be a girl, but I made every effort possible to hide my femininity from the outside world. I led a

false of strenuous attempts to swagger like a man and speak like one;

The trauma of this "double bind" undergoes the need for confidentiality and safety from a trusted helper that is the society. Social exclusion is the major trauma faced by the transgender. They are restricted from citizenship, education, employment and excluded from family and society. They are not given proper protection against violence which is incurred to them.

Living Smile Vidya in her autobiography *I Am Vidya* represents all the traumatic incidents which a transgender faces in "his/her" life. It is narrative about a woman trapped within a man's body; this is a story of extraordinary courage and perseverance. Through this book she says the entire existence of a person who undergoes physical and mental transformation. This story describes the long traumatic journey "of declaration of claiming of an identity". It identifies the agony faced by the soul which is trapped in a body to which it does not identify or belong.

Vidya's work clearly explains about the struggles a tirunangai faces in her life. She starts to narrate the incidents of her life from her phase of her transition "niruvana" that is becoming a proper transgender. This starts with "niruvana" that makes it clear that she was longing to get rid of her male body.

"Thank you for removing my maleness from my body; thank you for making my body a female body. My life is fulfilled. If I die now, I will lose nothing; i can sleep in peace." The beginning of her narration makes it clear that she has undergone a terrific trauma in order to make people understand that she is a woman. The title of all the 15 chapters (Appa, A farewell, Accept me, Chatla, I want to live with pride) by itself explains the trauma she underwent throughout her life. The perils which they face in life would be reduced to half if they are recognized and bonded by their loved ones. Family is the place which pushes them on the streets. It is like a chain link. The family members abandon them because of fear and shames, and are not ready to face society in which they live.

"Appa look me as a woman. Accept me as a girl, Appa".The longing to be a part of the family is

evident through her screams which come out of her mind because of her pain and anxiety. Family bonding is what transgender long for. "Break apart, separate these are hard words" especially when they are isolated from their dear ones. Trauma which they undergo during SRS (sex reassignment surgery), which is legalized in many countries but out of sight in our country, is many fold.

Vidya shares the way she underwent this surgery. It was a battle between life and death. There were no safety measures or precautionary steps to help those who were suffering. The post-surgery trauma is boundless. The castration is conducted by injecting local anaesthesia where no follow up occurs. "I was not even given a proper bed – just a steel cot with a newspaper spread on it. The surgeon gave no guarantee, no counselling. They castrate you while you are watching, suture in the next few minutes, clean you with cotton and pack you off to recover "Next" they call out the operation is no different from a produce performed at the butcher's shop". Her sprite to change her body was her only motivation which made her to bear the pain. Even the surgery is not conducted in a dignified manner. The doctors treat this surgery as a very trivial issue.

Then we see *Seven Steps Around The Fire*, the play present the real plight of eunuchs in the society. In the play, Subbu Sharma the son of a minister is married secretly to Kamala, a eunuch. When his father came to know about his relation, this he burnt Kamala to death and Anarkali, a eunuch is arrested for her death. But the one thing which connects all the things is a photograph of Kamala and Subbu with marriage garlands. To get this photograph, Mr. Sharma sends Salim his bodyguard to Champa and Anarkali to threaten them. The sets to that photograph after the death of Subbu on his wedding day. He has to play such a great price for that photograph. Champa and Anarkali, both of them know the murder of Kamala but they are scared to tell Uma because they knew their voices are voiceless.

Education was a big boon to Vidya as her father was very keen in education of his son Saravanan. Vidya was also interested in pursuing her studies, but this did not last long. She who was

undergoing a kind of transition within herself and it was at this time her interest in studies solely started to erode. "My innermost thoughts and nature filled with anxiety and fears, I was finding it increasingly difficult to focus on my studies". Unable to bear the pressure given by her father, she rebelled. It was this moment she gained courage and yelled.

She was more towards Literature and theatre and professional studies. May be she choose theatre so that she can enjoy her drag queen attitude. She pursued her Masters in Linguistics and was very eager to purse her Ph. D. In fact she resorted to studies after her traumatic experience in Pune, because of begging, when arrangements were made for the higher studies by her guru Mu. Ra, she refused to accept it and asked for favour to join the theatre. The thought that there would be no one to support her financial needs made her to give up her idea to pursue her higher studies. She was able to forecast the troubles she would face in her ordeal to win her aim. From this we can see that Vidya was very perfect and wanted to make a mark for herself. Transgender should be given education.

She was taken care by a senior Nani who often reminded her that linguistics or theatre experience would not help to eke out a living and insisted that she goes out to beg. The trauma, which all the tirunangai face, when they are asked to beg, cannot be expressed "shame, fear, ego, my education, memories of awards and rewards and God knows what else made me pull back every time I tried to put my hand out for alms"

Transgender always live in a community which is not caste biased. They always welcome people with an open heart. In the initial stages it would be difficult for the new tirunangai to accommodate with the rest of the people. The senior tirunangai would always have a upper hand on the new entrants. This process signifies the completion of niruvana, the moment of announcing ones the works live in the transgender finding.

Transgender: This is the state of one's gender identity not matching one's assigned sex. It is independent of sexual Orientation; transgender may identify themselves as homosexual heterosexual, bisexual, polysexual, or asexual; some may

consider conformist sexual orientation labels insufficient or inapplicable to them  
(Mahesh Dattani Collected Plays)

Transgender women require understanding and support of the government, health care professionals, general public as well as their family members. We need to understand and accept that humans are diverse. People have the right to be what they wanted to be, and for transgender people the same holds true. The words of Hartley Coleridge from his poem No Life Vain would make one realize the importance of life and its existence in this universe.

Every life on this universe is created with a purpose just as every drop of rain comes with the purpose – to fall on its blade of grass, let us understand that all are God's creation. Likewise, transgenders also has some purpose for living but, Hijras (eunuchs) in India have practically no respectable public identity. They have no acceptance and no protection from prejudice and abuse. The discrimination against them is often translated into violence. The main factor behind the violence is that society is not able to come to terms with the fact of Hijras do not conform to the accepted gender divisions. Male and female these are the only sexual categories which have secured society's approval Individuals who do not fit into these two classes, have to bear social ostracism, isolation and contempt. Politically, legally and socially the community of Hijras is marginalized and victimized. The visible clutches of social forces do not permit the Hijras to carve their own design beyond the patterns recommended and accepted by society.

#### **Problems faced by transgender:**

Most importantly getting educated itself is a huge task for them. They are mentally disturbed or psychologically cornered by their own family, relatives, neighbours and also by the so called society. The lack of insurance coverage for Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS). Hormone replacement therapy, counselling, and other medical needs often limit a person's ability to obtain medical intervention necessary for positive mental health. This frequently results in depression, hopelessness,

and other mental health concerns that could be avoided with appropriate medical treatment.

Rejection from families and friend leaves transgender youth homeless and they are more likely to engage in prostitution, unsafe sexual practise, and substance abuse. Transgender population as a similar rate of mental health concerns as the general population, identification transgender does not imply mental illness. Many transgender people have no incidence of mental health issues. Our concern is for those who are identified as transgender and do have mental concerns. People are being reluctant to identify themselves as transgender because of fear of discrimination.

The centre of transgender equality says that more than once in four adults have lost at least one job because of bias and more than three fourth have experienced discrimination. Employment discrimination has implications for health care because it can mean a lack of insurance the centre said and even those who have health insurance often must face exclusions on gender reassignment procedures.

Other difficulties relate to legal or other public acknowledgement of transgender identity. For example, there is the issue of pronoun usage: the transgender equality centre advises journalist to use the pronoun that the person prefers. If SRS is properly conducted with government approval and support, the burden of the transgender would subside by all means. Records will have a clear entry of their new gender and name which in turn will enable them to relax in good jobs.

In Chapter XVI, section no: 377, of IPC (Indian Penal Code) that treats transgender as disease afflicted sex workers alone. This must be removed and sex reassignment surgery must be allowed for those tested medically and psychologically and certified transgender. Reservation could be considered too. The government takes steps, society will follow suit. Once they gain approval their families will also accept them.

The paper has attempted to illuminate the life of transgender and how they treated in society perspective. Mahesh Dattani wrote his play which

deals with (Hijras). They are of importance towards modern literature. Mahesh Dattani began his career as a copywriter in an advertising firm. After many years Mahesh Dattani is the most significant Indian English playwright of our country with the theme of social exclusion and basis caste of gender studies. And Living Smile Vidya was a first transwomen who legally fought to change her name and gender from Tamil Nadu Government.

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