

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES OF TRANSGENDERS

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INTRODUCTION

Gender is a human social system of differentiation by sex for roles, behaviours, characteristics, appearances and identities (e.g., man or woman), which maps cultural meanings and norms about both sex and gender onto human bodies. Everyone has an internal sense of their "gender", and this sense is called "gender identity" (Stone, 2004). Gender is a distinct category that describes particular human characteristics (Suguna, 2015).

TRANSGENDER

Transgender is the state of one's gender identity or gender expression not matching one's assigned sex (Raju & Beena, 2015). It is sometimes more specifically defined as individual, whose gender identity does not match with the sex assigned at birth. India has a history of people with a wide range of transgender related identities, culture and experiences. People with such identities includes Shiv-Shakthis, Hijras, Aravanis and kothis. Many health experts believe that being transgender is not the result of any one single thing. They believe it is the result of a complex mixture of biology, psychology and environmental factors and it is not same for all transgender people. According to Anti-Defamation League (2014) there are some common social changes many transgender people go through that include one or more of the following:

- i. Changes in clothing and grooming
- ii. Adopting a new name

- iii. Using hormone therapy treatment and/ or medical procedure that modify their body to conform to their gender identity

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF TRANSGENDER IN INDIA

Transgender is also a part of the society. They have equal right to everything in the world that is available to all other persons (Leelavathy, 2014). In India, there are approximately one million Transgender people and they are looked down upon and they are removed from society. The vast majority lived in slums with limited job opportunities. Their basic survival, sources of income and everything are removed and they are forced to a pathetic life. Generally most of the Transgender are engaged in sex work and begging. Transgender in Mumbai plays a main role in all the rituals from birth till death, because the people in Mumbai deem it a boon to be blessed by the Transgender and they readily pay whatever the Transgender demands. Apart from this there are many other sources for the Transgender to earn a living. They usually begin shops and do some menial household works (Suguna, 2015). In Tamil Nadu, there are approximately 60,000 Transgender people and their socio economic and political status is very poor and deplorable. Most of the Transgenders live as a group with a strong bonding. . When the Transgenders are identified in a family, they would be forced to leave their home where they are unwelcoming by the society. They are also not able to get any conventional jobs because of the reason that they are transgender.

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People generally do not prefer to have Transgender persons as tenants and so rental accommodation is hard to get. Transgender persons also complain about facing ridicule and insult in public places (Suguna, 2015).

Tamilnadu was the first state in India to introduce a transgender welfare policy. According to the transgender welfare policy transgenders can access free Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) in the Government Hospital (only for Male To Female); free housing programme; 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 (Raju & Beena, 2015).

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FACED BY TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

Transgender people, as members of social minority group are suffering from various forms of socio economic injustice (Subhrajit, 2014). There are a number of social and economical issues that are common to transgender people everywhere in the world. Variety of problems include verbal and physical abuse, isolation and rejection and denial of family property. Society often stigmatizes and discriminate transgender based on their sexuality or gender identity. Subhrajit (2014) highlighted some major issues faced by transgender people across the world.

i. Marginalization and social exclusion

People who are marginalized have relatively little control over their lives and the resources available to them. Their opportunities to make social contributions may be limited and they may develop low self confidence and self esteem and may become isolated. This marginalization often excludes transgender people from many support structures, often including their own families, leaving them with little access to services like medical care, justice, legal services and education. Marginalization of transgender people often starts with the family into which they were born. They are excluded from full

social lives at individual, interpersonal and societal levels.

ii. Problems of homelessness

The myriad problems of transgender people who are homeless include lack of housing and other services that meet their specific needs. Homeless transgender youth are without economic support and they often engage in drug use and risky sexual behaviours which leads to developing of mental health disorders.

iii. Harassment of transgender students in schools

All over the country lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students get harassed everyday in school. Being a teenager for transgender is tough without fearing harassment in a place where they are supposed to feel safe. According to Kost (2010), studies done by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network report that nearly 9 out of 10 transgender students face harassment.

iv. Poor economic condition and discrimination in the work place

Discrimination of transgender persons in the workplace is a significant factor in the differences in the socio economic status for transgender persons. Transgender people confront racism and poverty related issues on a daily basis. They suffer from socio economic inequalities due to the pervasive discrimination in the work place.

v. Barriers to care

The transgender people face obstacles, barriers and challenges that frequently make it difficult for them to find and receive competent and affirming health care.

vi. Challenges of transgender elders

Transgender people face a number of problems in their later stages. They often do not access adequate healthcare, affordable housing or other social services. These issues are often compounded by racism and other kinds of discrimination which demand the attention of policy makers, service providers and activists working for

the elderly. A number of problems faced by transgender elders also stem from the fact that they often do not have any family support system.

vii. **Victims of hate, crimes and violence**

Transgender people are perceived to be targeted as victims of hate, crimes and violence. Transgender people experience stigma and discrimination across their life spans, and are targets of sexual and physical assault, harassment and hate crimes. These experiences of violence and discrimination differ depending on a number of factors including race, gender, income, and immigration status and language barriers. Transgender immigrants are more likely to face violence based on race, ethnicity, sexual identity or gender identity.

viii. **Legal injustice**

Transgender communities have an important stake in legal injustice issues. Specific groups within the transgender community are disproportionately affected by violence and discrimination, sometimes at the hands of law enforcement officials.

MAJOR CONCERNS AND SUGGESTIONS

In the light of above mentioned issues, the following suggestions were made for the better existence of transgender people

- Need for identification and unification of transgenders and their sympathizers for a collective democratic fight against injustice.
- Call for a change in the mindset of the people.
- Immediate changes in the curriculum at the school level to create awareness among the children and the youth
- Establishment of Government sponsored counseling centers at the Gram Panchayat, Block and District levels throughout the country for transgender children and adults to deal with their physiological and psychological problems.
- Provision of education, skill development, employment opportunities, nutrition and health

facilities in order to ensure secured and dignified life to transgender people.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that transgender individuals who basically have different sexual orientation, face discrimination and exclusion from the society, thus quite often meet with obstacles to satisfy their needs. This exclusion could vary from the simplest personal relations to the most general social ignorance, exclusion, working simultaneously together and can even violate the rights of life. Today transgender organizers are increasingly drawing connections between the movement for transgender rights and the movement for social and economic justice, by saying that people have multiple layered identities and are the members of more than one community at the same time, simultaneously experiencing oppression and privilege. Hence our society should accept "Transgender Identity" which would help them to lead a safe living in this world.

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