



Chief Editor

Dr. A. Singaraj, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Editor

Mrs.M.Josephin Immaculate Ruba

Editorial Advisors

1. Dr.Yi-Lin Yu, Ph. D
Associate Professor,
Department of Advertising & Public Relations,
Fu Jen Catholic University,
Taipei, Taiwan.
2. Dr.G. Badri Narayanan, PhD,
Research Economist,
Center for Global Trade Analysis,
Purdue University,
West Lafayette,
Indiana, USA.
3. Dr. Gajendra Naidu.J., M.Com, LL.M., M.B.A., Ph.D. MHRM
Professor & Head,
Faculty of Finance, Botho University,
Gaborone Campus, Botho Education Park,
Kgale, Gaborone, Botswana.
4. Dr. Ahmed Sebihi
Associate Professor
Islamic Culture and Social Sciences (ICSS),
Department of General Education (DGE),
Gulf Medical University (GMU), UAE.
5. Dr. Pradeep Kumar Choudhury,
Assistant Professor,
Institute for Studies in Industrial Development,
An ICSSR Research Institute,
New Delhi- 110070.India.
6. Dr. Sumita Bharat Goyal
Assistant Professor,
Department of Commerce,
Central University of Rajasthan,
Bandar Sindri, Dist-Ajmer,
Rajasthan, India
7. Dr. C. Muniyandi, M.Sc., M. Phil., Ph. D,
Assistant Professor,
Department of Econometrics,
School of Economics,
Madurai Kamaraj University,
Madurai-625021, Tamil Nadu, India.
8. Dr. B. Ravi Kumar,
Assistant Professor
Department of GBEH,
Sree Vidyanikethan Engineering College,
A.Rangampet, Tirupati,
Andhra Pradesh, India
9. Dr. Gyanendra Awasthi, M.Sc., Ph.D., NET
Associate Professor & HOD
Department of Biochemistry,
Dolphin (PG) Institute of Biomedical & Natural Sciences,
Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India.
10. Dr. D.K. Awasthi, M.SC., Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Chemistry, Sri J.N.P.G. College,
Charbagh, Lucknow,
Uttar Pradesh. India

ISSN (Online) : 2455 - 3662
SJIF Impact Factor :3.395 (Morocco)

EPRA International Journal of
**Multidisciplinary
Research**

Volume: 2 Issue: 6 June 2016



Published By :
EPRA Journals

CC License





INCLUSIVENESS IN (NEW) HUMANITIES–TRANSWOMEN NARRATIVES

Leeny Anna Abraham¹

¹PhD Scholar,
English Department,
Stella Maris College,
Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

ABSTRACT

India being a multicultural country houses people belonging to different ethnicities and languages. The many communities has its own language, rich culture and religion. However democratic India claims to be discriminations based on all these parameters are evidently seen and experienced by many. Discriminations based on culture have resulted to the formations of many sub-cultures. Culture is a system which has in it dominant ideology and class divisions. So if culture is only male and heterosexual then discrimination, humiliation and ostracizing is definitive. The sexual minority group called Transgenders has existed on the fringes of society for decades.

KEYWORDS: *Transgenders, Culture, Humiliation, Ideology, Religion*

DISCUSSION

India being a multicultural country houses people belonging to different ethnicities and languages. The many communities has its own language, rich culture and religion. However democratic India claims to be discriminations based on all these parameters are evidently seen and experienced by many. Discriminations based on culture have resulted to the formations of many sub-cultures. Culture is a system which has in it dominant ideology and class divisions. So if culture is only male and heterosexual then discrimination, humiliation and ostracizing is definitive. The sexual minority group called Transgenders has existed on the fringes of society for decades.

A Victorian Age Indian Penal Code, Section 377, was drafted by Lord Macaulay and was enacted in 1860 during British Colonial rule. It reads:

“377. Unnatural Offences - whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Explanation - Penetration is sufficient to constitution the carnal intercourse necessary to the offence described in the Section.” (Bose.B 255)

The book, *The Right that dares to speak its Name* which is published by Alternative Law Forum states that the Law makes it a crime to engage in carnal intercourse against the order of nature. Section 377 has the right to criminalize anybody who indulges in sexual acts other than Penile-vaginal intercourse. So the pleasure of sex and right to sexual activity which is a private matter is controlled and manipulated by the government of a country, thus marginalizing and criminalizing an entire group of people.

The umbrella term ‘Queer’ encompasses of many sexual minorities like the Lesbian, Gay and MSM (Men who have Sex with Men), Bisexual and Transgenders. As part of Section 377, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual minority groups are always spoken about as the existence of this IPC makes their life more horrendous. The ‘T’ of the LGBT occupies the dark areas as there is a tendency of excluding them even from the Queer groups. The very existence of the IPC, Section 377 is to enforce morality or the institutions called family and marriage will not exist. The question around sexuality and Section 377 brings us to the institution of the family, which according to

Nivedita Menon is at the core of the present extremely inequitable social order. “A Delhi high court judgment in 1984 ruled that the fundamental rights to equality and freedom have no place in the family. The family in India is indeed premised on extreme inequality. The rights to freedom and equality would certainly destroy the family as we know it. Section 377 is about the painful creation of Mr and Mrs. Normal---it is one of the nails holding in place the elaborate fiction that ‘normality’ springs from nature.” (Bose.B 341). And this could shake the foundation of a society and its beliefs.

This sub-cultural group has the potential to challenge the age old hierarchy by asserting that being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender are valid identity matrices as are heterosexual feminine and masculine. But Transgenders face discrimination, harassment and exploitation as they are not able to ‘fit’ into the defined binary of male and female, masculine and feminine.

Transgender voices have now come out from the closet. They have lived in the dark shadows of society and have formed a community, culture and belief system of their own. Because of their daring instinct to break societal ‘norms’ of not being ‘normal’ and to remain ‘deviant’ is being normal to them, they are gazed at with more fear. To the heteronormative society they are people who are ‘abnormal’, not trust worthy and they are not meant to be in the mainstream society. They are also considered child-lifters and extortionists because they possess the power to bless and to curse.

Living Smile Vidya, Revathi, Jerrena and Laxmi in their life writings speak about how they were compelled by their families to remain males. They were battered, verbally abused and humiliated by their loved ones and society at large as deviance would bring shame to the family. Education institutions are not any better; rather, they become the space for sexual abuse and bullying. The self-realization that they are different in their sexuality and orientation bring fear and loneliness. The difficulties in finding others of their kind, the journey they undertake looking for their kind, Nirvana (Castration) are actually displacements they undergo from their origins. Life is not made easy for them even by the various power structures like Law, Religion, Caste and Creed. The only two occupations allotted to this community are begging alms and sex work. Education too is not of any use to them. Living Smile Vidya was a BA student when she left home. When she met her Nani in the Pune transgender community, Vidya was asked not to walk around with a ‘swollen head’ because she was educated. In her autobiography, Vidya throws light on how difficult it was for her to establish her Identity as a transwoman. The freedom and independence that a

‘normal’ person in a heteronormative world enjoyed was not available to the transgender community. Education is difficult and so was employment. Sexual reassignment surgery was not permitted in India initially. The surgery was performed by a doctor in the undergrounds of a dingy hospital with no medical aid. Tamil Nadu Government initiated Sexual Reassignment Surgery in government hospitals in Chennai in the year 2009. So for Vidya and Revathi getting medical certificates for their Sex change was extremely difficult.

All the life writings of transwomen narrate how caste and class have played an important role in their lives. They are already considered a minority group who inhabit the margins of society. When caste and class confluence they come minority among minorities. Living Smile Vidya is a dalit, she talks about the caste influence seen among the transgender community where there are a ‘Savarna’(upper caste) group who think that LGBT rights are their rights alone. Laxminarayana Tripathi belongs to the upper Brahmin caste by birth. She had the benefits of education and employment much more easily when compared to the others. Also Laxmi’s family was willing to accept her sexuality as he was their only son. Laxmi refused to go under the knife for nirvana as she enjoyed the virility and power of being a man and preferred the comfort of her home and family which she could not sacrifice.

Transgenders have existed as a sub-culture and they display a resistance to the dominant culture and an alternative vision of society itself. The life writings of all these transwomen are voices coming from beyond the margin and they have portrayed the humiliation they face because they are not able to perform the roles culturally assigned to the sex they were born with. They resist in an attempt to live a life of dignity and a life defined by them.

As Revathi states,” My account turned out to be more than a record of interview sessions- they expanded to include my experience of living with the aravanis, eating with them, sharing their troubles, listening to them, and heeding their feelings and thoughts. A few of them wondered what use a book of this kind would be.” (Revathi 294)

Inclusiveness has to happen starting from education. Sensitization and awareness has to be created about gender and sexual orientations starting from schools. The Indian Constitution recognizes the right to live with dignity as well as the right to privacy.. Section 377 of the IPC denies a person dignity and criminalizes his or her identity at its core solely based on his or her sexual preference. What an individual does behind closed doors with his or her partner with consent should not be of any interest to the government. And it is intruding ones privacy.

Transgenders through their life writings are looking for equality. They want what the 'normal' society gets from its socio-political and economic space. They want the privileges which the country and the state can provide for their security, for e.g., education, employment etc. The Tamilnadu government was the first state to provide transgenders with an Identity card. It was also the first state to approve SRS in government hospitals. But there are still transgenders who suffer because they cannot get an admission in engineering colleges in the state. There are UPSC aspirants who lose out opportunities because of their gender nonconformity. Revathi in her book talks about Famila who was her chela. Femila committed suicide. A lot of transgenders look for suicide as the last resort as they have no hope in life. Broken relationships, being cheated, and resisting a power centered system which will provide them with nothing, most of these people end their life miserably.

Sex work often remains the only means apart from begging as a means of income. Sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and other diseases are an ordeal among this community. Being abandoned because of sickness and old age is common. Mental depression and pressure to perform lead them to drugs and liquor consumption. Inclusion of the life writings of transgenders into the syllabi of humanities departments would help understanding the struggles of the community. As being 'abnormal' and 'deviant' is an issue, they fall prey to the law keeper- police and goondas and even 'normal' heteronormative society who are transphobic. They are harassed and abused by police and goondas like. The transgender community is always considered criminals by society. They are policed culturally and for their gender.

These life writings have promoted these writers as activists, and their writings have managed to penetrate and manifest their presence among their readers. The platform for more discussions and encouragement for more writers has to be promoted through inclusion. For this opportunities must be offered to them by the majority. This opportunity must come from a socio-political and economic society which must own an open mind and acceptance towards sexually 'deviant' people.

SOURCE BOOKS

1. Revathi. A. *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*. New Delhi: Penguin Books (P) Ltd., 2010. Print
2. Vidya, L.S. *I am Vidya : A Transgender's Journey*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications (P) Ltd., 2007. Print
3. Jereena. "Oru Malayali Hijadayude Athamakatha" ["The Life Story of a Malayali Hijra"]. Kottayam: Litmus DC Books (P) Ltd., 2006. Print
4. Laxmi.T. *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press., 2015. Print
5. Bose, B. and Bhattacharyya, S. *The Phobic and The Erotic: The Politics of Sexualities in Contemporary India*. Calcutta: Seagull Books. 2007. Print.
6. Narrain. A and Eldridge.M. Edited. *The Right that Dares to Speak its Name, Naz Foundation vs. Union of India and Others, Decriminalising Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in India*. Bangalore: National Printing Press., 2009. Print