

## PORTRAYAL OF THE LIVES OF TRANSGENDERS AS IN THE ANCIENT INDIAN LITERATURE AND IN MODERN DAYS: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

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### **Abstract**

**Background:** *The mushrooming of contemporary theories like LGBTQ has evolved a new field called transgender studies, which is based on the binary gender. The two polarities are usually acknowledged by the society and the people who try to change their state from the acknowledged gender identity to an assigned sex identity are looked down upon. Hijras are one of the most contentious but most picturesque social groups in India. The uniqueness of an individual is normally determined by their race, nationality, and gender in the current scenario. These categorizations do not hold good anymore as mixed race and mixed genders have become common. Transgenders are vastly like other people, made of flesh and blood, have similar blood coursing through their veins and had the same feeling and emotions like any other male and female.*

**Aim:** *To make a comparison between the quality of lives of transgenders in the ancient period and in the modern period through literature and to showcase it through case studies. The researchers are trying to locate the problems of transgenders in the modern scenario.*

**Methods:** *Two Indian Epics and four transgender autobiographies were included for the study. The Ramayana and The Mahabharata, the two Indian epics were compared with four modern Indian transgender autobiographies. In this study, the researchers analyzed survival problems of a transgender in the modern scenario. The researchers made case studies to understand their problems better*

**Results:** *The life of transgenders in the ancient period is comparatively better than the transgenders of the modern period. The historical evolution of the transgender community in India explicitly showcased the high positions held by the transgenders as Administrators, Generals, Political Advisors and Guardians of the harems. They were trusted, considered clever and played important roles in empire building. The Vedas recognized the third gender. Sanskrit grammar had third gender. But their position deteriorated from the onset of the colonial rule in the eighteenth century and it was during the colonial rule that the hijras were criminalized and denied civil rights. The case study also highlighted that those who were accepted by their parents led a happy and peaceful life. They were much safe when compared*

to others. Acceptance and awareness are key factors for the upliftment of the lives of transgenders.

**Conclusion:** *There is a glaring discrimination with regard to acceptance and the quality of life between the ancient transgenders and modern age transgenders that needs to be addressed. The modern scenario is much worse. Recognizing their gender and marriage could reflect on their self-esteem. Mental health complications and poor quality of lives are likely to eradicate the discrimination in legal aspects and incorporation of sex education in schools. Inclusion of the third gender into the mainstream society should put them in place so as to gain mass recognition and validation by the public.*

**Key Words:** *Autobiography, Case Study, Culture, Emotional needs, Inclusion, Marginalized.*

## I. OBJECTIVES

1. To find out barriers and needs of transgenders through their autobiography and case studies.
2. To study the lives of transgenders in the ancient period and compare their lives with those presented in the modern literature.

## II. METHODS

### A. Type and design of study

Comparative, Objective study of literary text and Case Study.

### B. Samples for Analysis:

The researchers performed a retrospective study, reviewing the individual characters from the cross dressed community in the Indian epics and analysis of the sufferings of the living cross-dressed soul in four of the 21<sup>st</sup> century autobiographical works were used as a tool to make a comparison between the ancient and the modern literatures. The researchers had also used case study method to know the reality and needs of the transgenders effectively.

### C. Case Study – Study area and Duration:

Salem District, Tamil Nadu, India, during June to August 2019.

## III. About Transgender

A transgender's identity is one of the imperative issues in the contemporary picture. "The term 'Transgender' was coined by Virginia Prince, a pioneer in the crossdresser movement in the United States in 1970... The term transgender referred to those who reject their socially assigned gender and refuse to place themselves in the men and women gender binary" (Beasley, 2012). "Virginia Prince pioneered the terms 'transgenderist' and 'transgenderal' to refer to people who lived full-time in the gender opposite to their biological sex, but did not seek sex/gender reassignment surgery"(Prince 1976). Stephen Whittle in the foreword to *The Transgender Reader* indicates:

trans as a stand- alone term did not come into formal usage until it was coined by a parliamentary discussion group in London in 1998, with the deliberate intention of being as inclusive as possible when negotiating equality legislation. Cultural spaces and

historiographies were constantly reframing the community, the identities, the cultures, and the language. We see new languages being developed constantly; for example ‘per’ as a pronoun was developed by UK community members with non-existent gender identities, and similarly the US term ‘hir’ for those who have both. (Stryker, 2006 p.xi-xii)

Transgenders are described in many terms in India. “They are ali, aravani, chhakka, hijra, jogappa, khusra, khasuaa, kinnar, kojja, maada, mukhannathun, napunsak, nau number, pavaiyaa, Thirunangai etc, depending upon the region”(Saxena, 2011 p.6). Some terms were explained with reference, Ali was a term that is used to represent a male who behaves like a woman and lacked in virility. Aravani was a term used to represent a woman wrapped in a male body. The term Hijra means (Tripathi, 2015 p.171):

.... a term of abuse. Its variants in colloquial language include expressions like number six, number nine, and chakka. The word ‘hijra’ derive from the Urdu word ‘hijra’. A hijra is a person who has walked out of his tribe or community. Thus, a hijra is one who has left main stream society, comprising men and women, and joined a community of hijras. But the hijra community isn’t a monolith. Its history and culture varies from state to state.

The denotation of gender and sex have commonly been baffled and misrepresented. Sex was assigned at birth and it refers to the physical characteristics such as chromosomes, hormone dominance, and internal and external structure. Gender referred to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, actions, and characteristics that society considers suitable for men or womens:

Many of the nineteen lakh eunuchs in India have a rudimentary or a fully grown penis with/without testicles since birth. This penis serves the purpose for urination but not for sexual activities. The baby is brought up like a normal boy. As he grows up, he starts feeling like a girl. This feeling becomes dominant by the age of 6-8 years”. (Saxena, 2011 p.157)

#### **IV. Representation Of Transgenders In *The Ramayana***

In the ancient period, transgenders were highly respected and held high positions. The presence of transgenders in India is witnessed in the Indian epics *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. As per modern research, *The Ramayana* would have possibly happened before 10000 to 12000 years and *The Mahabharata* somewhere between 1100 to 800 BC. In *The Ramayana*, King Dasharath banished Lord Rama from the kingdom Ayodhya for fourteen years in order to keep his vow he promised his queen Kaikeyi. A huge crowd (his devotees and all residents) chose to go after him to showcase their loyalty. Many longed to accompany him during his exile.

When Rama reached the border of the kingdom, he worried about the welfare of his followers and told them not to mourn. “Ayodhya ke Sabhi nar nari, apne gharon ko laut jaye (all men and women of Ayodhya may return to their homes)” (Saxena, 2011 p.11) the crowd accepted the request of Rama. They came back to Ayodhya. While everyone returned, the transgenders waited there, as Rama had unintentionally asked men and women to get back and transgenders were neither men nor women. After fourteen years of exile, when Ram returns to his empire after the war, he was amazed to find that all crossdressers stay put in the place where he had left them. They waited there for a period of fourteen years, homeless, bearing the heat, cold, rain, thunder and lightning, waiting for Lord Rama’s return from exile.

Extremely touched by their loyalty, Rama blessed them with a boon: “The Hijras would be able to give blessings to people during auspicious and inaugural occasions, such as childbirth and marriage. This ceremony is also known as Badhai, in which hijras dance, sing and give blessings”( Bhattacharya, 2016).

#### A. In *The Mahabharata*

Arjuna takes the name of Brihannala at the end of the exile period. He transforms his identity as Thirunangai to avoid being caught by the Kauravas and others. He would dance during marriage ceremonies and perform rites during childbirths. In fact, the present-day transgenders carry out the activity which was performed by Arjuna in *The Mahabharata*.

In the kurukshetra War, Bhishma was the Chief Commander of the Kauravas. The Pandavas would be able to win the war only the mighty warrior was defeated. “Yet not enough to let us win,’ reminded Krishna. He must die, if dharma has to be established But Bhishma had been given a boon by his father that he could choose the time of his death. No one could therefore kill him. If we cannot kill him, we must at least immobilize him”(Pattanaik, 2009).

#### B. Shikhandi: Transgender

Shikhandi is another transgender portrayed in *The Mahabharata*. Bhishma won three maids in swayamvara on behalf of his step-brother. Amba was one among them. She was in love with Shalya. When Bhishma came to know about her love he sent her to Shalya but he refused her and advised her to marry Bhishma instead. Bhishma had taken a promise of celibacy years ago and he refused to marry her. This deeply affronted her and vowed to be the reason for Bhishma’s death. She was again born as Parashurama, the sixth avatar of God Vishnu and fought with Bhishma but failed in the mission. Amba undertook twelve long years of severe penance. Lord Shiva appeared in front of her and granted the boon that she asked for.

Amba was born as Shikhandini in her next birth. She was an exceptional warrior but her femininity was a burden to her. To conquer the talented Bhishma, Shikhandini transformed her femininity with and became a Eunuch. During the Kurukshetra war, she met Lord Bhishma and upon identifying Shikhandini, Bhishma straight away accepted death at her hands.

Devdutt Pattanaik, an Indian mythologist detailed, ‘*Shikhandi: And Other Tales They Don't Tell You*’:

Hindu mythology makes constant references to queerness, the idea that questions notions of maleness and femaleness. There are stories of men who become women, and women who become men, of men who create children without women, and women who create children without men, and of creatures who are neither this, nor that, but a little bit of both, like the makara (a combination of fish and elephant) or the yali (a combination of lion and elephant). There are also many words in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Tamil such as published, napumsaka, mukhabhaga, mukhabhaga, sanda, panda, pandaka, pedi that suggest a long familiarity with queer thought and behavior. It is common to either deny the existence of such fluidity in our stories, or simply locate them in the realm of the supernatural or point to law books that, besides endorsing patriarchy and casteism, also frown upon queer behavior. Yet the stories are repeatedly told and shown. Gentle attempts, perhaps, of wise sages to open up stubborn finite minds and lead them towards infinity. (Pattanaik, 2014 p.12)

### C. Lord Krishna's Sex Reversal

A human sacrifice had to be made to goddess Kali during the ensuing war between the Pandavas and Kauravas. Aravan, Arjuna's son came forward to sacrifice his life for the sake of their kingdom. But he desired to marry before his death. So, Lord Krishna turned himself into a woman and married Aravan to offer him the bliss of married life. His wish was fulfilled and Aravan gave up his life. It is said that Lord Krishna continues to be his wife and mourn the death of his husband.

In the ancient days, transgenders were considered superior and people respected them. Even Gods took the avathar of transgender to sustain dharma.

### V. In Modern Scenario

In the modern scenario, the case is different. Indians are known for their acceptance, tolerance and respect for others. But in the case of transgenders, they are not even as living beings. In India, male kids with even little femininity are looked down upon by even their parents. These kids were threatened, scolded and even beat up by their parents, siblings and relatives. Parents give various reasons for rejection but once rejected, life becomes miserable for these transgender kids. They earn their livelihood by prostitution, begging and by performing in traditional rituals like marriage and during the birth of a baby. Local people participate in the ceremony, which is an established part of the Indian culture. Except for the traditional happenings, they are mostly ill-treated, sneered with disgust and disrespect. Transgenders are normally not accepted by their own family and the society, which eventually forces them to form groups of their own. The society often abuses these third genders in public places.

In order to establish the conditions of the transgenders in current scenario, four transgender autobiographies are taken for the study. They are *I am Vidya* by Living Smile Vidya (2007), *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* by Revathi (2010), *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* by Laxminarayan Tripathi (2015), and *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi* by Manabi Bandyopadhyay (2017).

"Autobiography is a biography written by the subject about himself or herself" (Abrams, 2012 p.30). "Hence apart from being collective as well as personal narratives, autobiographies also offer its creator a chance to have made sense of their lives and experiences as they have answered the question, who am I?, as observed by Diane Bjorklund, who researched on the genre of autobiography in America" (Bjorklund, 1998 p.89).

## VI. Key Issues And Analysis

### A. Threats in Daily Life

Vidya was once begging in the trains. She was physically harassed "One of them held my arms and intertwined them between the stairs of the ladder to the upper berth. Another one pulled my hair. A third thug whipped me with the buckled end of his belt, hitting my face" (Vidya, 2007 p.102) but she never lost courage, "It hurt like hell, but I didn't weep. I shouted angrily at them"(Vidya 2007 p.102). This technique of shouting or loud clapping is an escape mechanism used by the transgenders during distress. This signal would alert the

nearby transgenders who would come running to rescue their community. “Once a military man and his friend came into the compartment. Both were massively built. Even though we did not approach them for alms, the army man tried to drive us out. ‘Get lost,’ he kept saying” (Vidya, 2007 p.103). The duty of the army and the police is to safeguard the public but most of the times their apathy towards transgenders is threatening.

Revathi narrates that during the day she was afraid of policemen and during the night of rowdies. Revathi was a sex worker forced by circumstance as she had to help her age old parents. Most of the transgenders are forced to be sex workers because of their circumstances. Initially, the police and rowdies were not aware of her gender. They assumed her to be a woman. But in a short span of time, her physiological dilemma was revealed and they started to abuse her. During the day, policeman snatched her money in the name of penalty (bribe) and in the night, rowdies came to her hut, checked her purse and took away all the money. If, her purse was empty it meant they would rape her and beat her badly. “How many times they’ve caught me thus, beaten me in full view of the road, snatched money from me as a bribe and sent me off” (Revathi, 2010 p.202). According to Revathi, policemen never consider transgenders as living beings.

Once a policeman booked Revathi in a nuisance case (prostitution) and put her in jail. She held her hands together and begged each and every policeman to let her go. But they were not ready to send her out instead they used her as a trap to arrest more people. After eleven o’clock (night time) two-star policeman came into the station. She pleaded him to free her. “He then asked me to take my clothes off –right there, while the prisoner was watching” (Revathi 2010 p.206). The primary duties of the policemen is to safeguard the public but they were acting worse than a ruffian. He then started to abuse her:

I pleaded with him and wept, but he forcibly stripped me. When I was standing naked, he stuck his lathi where I’d had my operation and demanded that I stand with my legs apart, like a woman would. He repeatedly struck at the part with his lathi and said, ‘so can it go in there? Or is it a field one can’t enter? How do you have sex then?’ (Revathi, 2010 p.206).

An inhuman behavior was meted out to her and she was treated like a dog by the law guardians. A human being ought to respect another human being. The bible says “Love one another. As I had loved you” (John 13:34). As a guardian of the public, the policeman should have safe-guarded Revathi inside the police station but the very same police station where people run to seek safety and justice turns a nightmarish place for Revathi. She is sexually exploited by the very men who were supposed to safe-guard her. “The policeman then shouted at the prisoner. ‘Dai! Have you seen enough? Want to see more?’” (Revathi, 2010 p.206). Even a terrorist may show some mercy before slaughtering a person but these policemen tormented her like a devil. He inspected her breasts and asked her how it came? She felt heart –broken and could not speak a word. He demanded an explanation about her breast. This incident was the most horrible she had ever experienced in her life. She rates the rowdies better than the policeman. They raped her harshly without her consent but never tortured her like what she was undergoing then. Her reply to that was (Revathi 2010 p.206) “I took hormone tablets to grow them”.

After a while, he ordered her to bend and show her back. Still, she was naked and showing her boobs for his inspection. She turned back and bend - “When I did, he thrust his lathi in there and asked, ‘So you get it there?’. I straightened up, yelling with the pain of it”

(Revathi, 2010 p.207). This was the protection and safety that a transgender was receiving at the police stations in India. When the policemen fail to protect a human then where would a common man go for protection? This incident is a clear evidence of the protectors exploiting the weaker sex. Revathi was a sex toy in the hands of policemen for the whole night. When she was produced in court (Revathi, 2010 p.256) “they told me that I must not speak of how I was beaten and humiliated” Revathi had to concur with the policemen in order to escape from that hell and survive. Then, she paid a penalty and left the court.

The case of Laxmi was quite different “I was first sexually exploited when I was seven” (Tripathi, 2015 p.5). She was molested by her cousin at the age of seven. After a few days, he again molested her with his friends. Once the world identifies someone as a trans-kid, they start to exploit them to their whims and fancies. Laxmi’s life was a perfect example of these kinds of exploitations. One day, her friend went for sex work. She never came back again. Laxmi filed a complaint at the local police station. “The Police now came after us. They looked at us with suspicion and bias, subjecting us to questions and cross questions. I urged the police not to think of us as hijras, but as human beings” (Tripathi, 2015 p.54). Police consider transgenders as inanimate things “She! Of course it will talk to you. We will beat it up if it doesn’t talk (Dattani P.7).

In *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi* by Manabi Bandyopadhyay, she expresses the humiliation borne in her teens. During her primary school days, boys used to tease her as a girl and dragged her into the girls’ bench. In her teens, she fell in love with a boy named Shyam. After a few weeks, they shared their bed often. Once Shyam got bored with their sexual life, he started to ignore her and took advantage of her as a transgender. “I would cry and beg but he would just laugh at me and encouraged his friends to tease me about my sexuality. One day, they ganged up and started hurling abuses at me”(Bandyopadhyay, 2017 p.30).

## **B. Reality from the day-to-day life**

In Vellore district (Tamil Nadu, India) Manimekali, a forty year old transgender had won a panchayat election in Kanyambadi village. She was ready to serve the people of her village with the government schemes. But the councilor and MLA’s were not ready to listen to Manimekali. “She is being deliberately ignored in the development of her village as she is a transgender woman”(Pheba Mathew, 2016). Government had announced many Welfare schemes for the development of the people living Below Poverty line people but the local politicians did not want to implement it through a transwoman. Their ignorance not only affected the transwoman but also the innocent villagers. When she asked for the sanction of the welfare schemes her village was entitled to, the higher authorities deliberately ignored her requests. “She hasn’t been able to do much for the people as neither the main Councilor nor the MLA conducts any meetings with her to learn about the condition of the village. She claimed that she has sent hundreds of lists about the requirements of her ward but received no response from her superiors”(Pheba Mathew, 2016). As a result of this, she had spent her own money for the welfare of the villagers. “I provide Rs 2,000 for marriages of girls and when someone dies. I also give Rs 1,000 for the birth of girl child in the village,”(Pheba Mathew, 2016). She also created job opportunities for her people and helped the needy. Even though she was rejected by the higher authorities due to her gender, she served the society as

a good citizen. People in the higher positions should treat and respect equally. They should pay attention to the needy and must lend a helping hand to lead a decent life.

### C. Job still a Dream

In the current scenario (in India) a decent job is a dream even for a well-educated person. In the case of uneducated hijras, getting a job was a day dream. If they wish to earn money for their living, they have to get a job. For a hijra, finding a job was not an easy task. They have no other option but to beg. Begging was not enough to provide them a single square meal a day which forced them to take up prostitution as a second job. But sometimes they were forced to do sex work by their own community people, relatives and friends. Doing sex work was not an easy job:

To earn that, I suffered at the hands of all sort of men. I did not mind climbing the steps of the police station several times. I got beaten, tortured. I earned even when I had to sell my body, become a prostitute! I earned by dancing in all sorts of places till my feet bled...I actually danced up and down streets to earn money. I went out every day to earn, and was never sure when I left my house in the morning if I would come back in one piece.... And for all pains, I got called a prostitute, whore, number nine, hijra, pottai.... (Revathi, 2010 p.252-3)

Transsexual people are not disabled people. The government should provide them education and employment opportunities instead of allowing them to continue begging and do prostitution. This was strongly stressed by Vidya in her autobiography *I am Vidya*. Government could employ transgenders as sweepers in government hospitals and office. Transgenders could be included in Swachh Bharat scheme. Transgenders are ready to serve for the country the welfare of the country but the government should consider their inclusion in every department.

### D. Realistic

Although well-educated, transgenders face rebuttal from their own kith and kin and the society as well. Shanavi Ponnusamy was an engineering graduate, an actress and model. She was the first graduate from her family and also “has experience in customer support for a national airline”(Geetika Mantri, 2018). She applied for the post of cabin crew in Air India Flights in 2016. “I met all the eligibility criteria under the ‘female’ category – body measurements, BMI, height etc. That did not stop Air India from rejecting me four times, with no explanation whatsoever” (Geetika Mantri, 2018). The major reason for her rejection was “It would come to light later that none of Shanavi’s qualifications mattered, because she is a trans woman”(Geetika Mantri, 2018). Shanavi met a few senior officers in Air India to know about her job status. She also explained them that this job was only for her survival and not for an elite life. “In September 2017, she finally received a response saying that Air India has no policy in place to hire a trans woman. That’s when Shanavi decided to move the Supreme Court”(Geetika Mantri, 2018). She filed a case in Supreme Court on gender discrimination and also the violation of basic rights under Article 32 of the Indian constitution. The Supreme Court gave a period of four week times to Air India to rewrite their job recruiting policy but they were not ready to make any changes, instead they kept adjourning the case. At one point Shanavi lost all her hope and wrote a letter, “a letter addressed to President Ram Nath Kovind has now sought for mercy killing”(News X, , 2018)



“And I am not in the condition to pay for my daily food expenses so it is absolutely not possible to manage the Supreme Court case by paying advocates, the registrar and court etc.”(Priya Menon, 2018). Though the Supreme Court considered transgenders as a third gender still a respectable job for them is a distant dream.

### E. Treatment in Hospitals

Vidya through her autobiography presented the distinction between the sex reassignment operation carried in other countries that were legally acknowledged and the illegal Nirvana operation carried out in India. They did not have proper government approval and specialised doctors. The doctors do not possess complete knowledge about the incorporation of facial feminisation, speech therapy, breast augmentation and insertion of a plastic vagina. HIV test alone was conducted prior to the operation without any proper procedure. The operation was carried out without anaesthesia and more castration of the body organ takes place. “Many female names were scrawled on the wall, some in ink, other in charcoal... our predecessors in the room had scribbled their names on the wall, presumably because they feared they could die on the operation table”(Vidya, 2007 p.102). Vidya being educated also underwent the operation illegally only to fulfil her desire and lead her life as a woman.

Revathi’s *nirvaanam* operation was the most agonizing part of her life. The doctor performed the operation in a most unsanitary condition and the pain she underwent was beyond description, “I lay writhing in pain for nearly two hours and then felt a huge pressure on my chest... bile rushed up to my throat... at that time it seemed as if I would surely die”(Revathi, 2010 p.75). She felt refutation in the eyes of people around and question it pointedly: “Men and even women stared at us and laughed, and heckled us. I realized what a burden a hijra’s daily life is. Do people harass those who are men and women when they go out with their families? Why a crippled person, a blind person-even they attract pity and people help them... but we- we are not considered human” (Revathi, 2010 p.83).

The government must come forward and introduce a separate ward to treat the transgenders. Specialised doctors should be appointed in the wards. Transgenders are facing severe bias in acquiring housing, employment, education, law, health, immigration, and no bureaucracy has been able to place the transgenders either in the male or female gender categories. But fortunately, on July 2017, The Indian Standing Committee's submitted its report on The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016, “Parliament’s standing committee on social justice and empowerment has recommended that a transgender person should have the option to choose either ‘man, woman or transgender’... Earlier, it was recommended in the bill that a transgender should be declared as third gender” (Bhardwaj, 2017).

### VII. Case Study

For this case study, the researcher has chosen three transgenders in Salem district, Tamil Nadu, India. All the three fall under different categories.

1. Lalitha - Rejected by the family and the society.
2. Nisha - Initially rejected and accepted later by the family.

3. Sathya - Accepted by the family from day one.

1. Lalitha is a forty year old transgender living in a remote village called Ellaiyur in Salem district. She has an elder brother, a younger brother and a sister. Her sister passed away at the age of twelve. When Lalitha was twelve years old, she felt some changes in her body. She started to behave like a female. Her parents warned and forced her to behave like a boy. Even they beat her without any reason. Her brothers considered her as a shame. They took her to temple and hospital but it did not help. At the age of sixteen, they threw her out from the house. At first, she had no place to go. She stayed in the platforms of Omalur (a Taluk in Salem district) bus stand. She hardly found jobs. Her gender was a barrier in securing a job. She used to beg at the shops and from the passengers in the bus stand. By begging, she earned some money for her livelihood but the rowdies and local goons snatched even that little penny from her. Most of the days she used to sleep without food.

Loneliness affected her mentally. Even now she is afraid to speak to anyone. After a long struggle, the government granted her a small house. But, she is still unable to buy even a mat for herself to sleep. She was beaten by other transgenders when she tried to beg in their areas. In every district, transgenders are allotted a particular area for themselves. Each TG must beg at the allotted areas, if they cross their limits and beg in other areas, they are sure to invite the wrath of other transgenders. Lalitha being mentally unstable unintentionally crossed her allotted area few times and that ended in big fights.

Lalitha's continuous pain and sufferings forced her to commit suicide. She tried to hang herself but her neighbour saved her. She attempted suicide in many ways but it all ended in vain. People used her as a sexual object for pleasure. Many men used to rape her. She begged them at least to use condom but they never listened to her. Lalitha's only wish is to be accepted by the society and to be loved. As a result of her loneliness, now she was mentally depressed. She does not have any physical or mental strength to adopt a child but she loves to be with children. Even today, her brothers are not ready to accept her in their homes and do not allow her to speak with their children. Loneliness and rejection deeply affected her in every aspect of life. In government hospitals, she has to wait for long hours to get treatments and she also wished to have a separate ward for the transgender patients. Through in dire need of psychological counselling, she still has to beg for her daily food and survival. The rejection from her family at the initial stage is the root cause for all her sufferings even now.

2. Nisha is a thirty five year old transgender living in Athamapettai village, Salem district. She is the only child of her parents. At the age of thirteen, she too felt some changes in her body. Even before knowing the term transgender, her friends in school used to make fun of her by calling her 'onbathu', 'pottai', 'Ali', 'yushu' etc. She lost her concentration in studies due to the external factors like teasing, bullying and rejection by the society. During the school days, her aim was to become a doctor. But the continuous rejection and bullying made her quit school. Her parents forced her to behave like a boy. At the age of sixteen, her parents chased out of her family. She hardly found a house for rent. She listed the major reasons for the refusal of the house owners to give houses to the transgender community. The reasons are that transgender people used to go for alms in the local areas and few of them even force common people to give money. Sometimes men do follow them to their houses. Drunken fellows used to visit and shout at them in front of their house. These things annoyed

the house owners and thus, they were denied houses. She used to sleep on the benches of the temple. Most of the time she felt herself cursed and useless. She cried a lot without any reason. After a month, she found some transgender friends and stayed with them. She begged for alms in shops and buses along with her other TG friends. After a year she underwent SRS, Sexual Reassignment Surgery.

After the SRS, her parents slowly accepted her. After three years of struggle, she became a transwoman and is now staying with her parents. But she is still unable to find any job. Her financial situations forced her to seek alms at the roads, shops and in buses. People used to make fun of her walk, voice, dressing and costume. Rowdies used to snatch money from her. Even they chased her for sex but fortunately, she escaped from them each time. Drunken people used to show bad gestures and compelled her for sex. She psychologically suffered a lot. Due to her gender issue, she had to take it lying down.

Nisha requests the government that SRS should be done in government hospitals and awareness must be created among the transgender about HIV. Her only happiness is the acceptance by her parents. She feels safe only in the portals of her home. She wants to marry a man and adopt a child in order to lead a normal life like any other. Acceptance from her parents made her feel secure, protected and free from her and worries.

3. Saranya is a forty two year old transgender from SBI colony, Salem. She has five elder brothers and a sister. She is the last child of her parents. At the age of thirteen, she felt some changes in her behaviour. Her friends in school used to tease her for her different behaviour. Initially, she was not aware of the term 'transgender' and got puzzled by her condition. In the meantime, her parents advised her to behave normally. They even forced her to behave like a boy. In school, students and teachers teased and bullied her for her abnormal behaviour.

After her high school, she stopped her studies due to her financial issues. She respected her feelings and left home to become a transwoman. Immediately, Saranya's parents requested her to return home and they also accepted her as she was. After a few years, she undergoes SRS and becomes a complete transwomen. She is happy to have the support of her parents. Saranya's father helped her to complete the beautician course and now she is working as a beautician in a parlor. Even now many men invite her for sex but she strongly denies and rejects them. She is earning for her livinghood in a decent way. During her school days, she wanted to become an advocate but now she is happy and contented with her job. She has also availed the pension scheme initiated by the Indian government. She has got married and is currently staying with her family. Thus, her parents' acceptance made life happy and peaceful for her.

By studying the lives of these transgenders, the researcher has come to the following conclusions:

1. Those who are accepted by their parents lead a happy and peaceful life. They are much safe when compared to others.
2. Parents' rejection at the initial stage forced the transgenders to leave the school and to beg in the streets.
3. Parents' complete rejection forced them to attempt suicide. They also underwent a lot of financial issues.
4. Financial issues may force them to become sex workers.

5. Parents' complete rejection would affect them psychologically and in the case of Lalitha she is mentally unstable now. She has also attempted suicide many times. Nisha used to sleep at the roadsides and it was not safe for her.

Parent's acceptance is the ultimate. It will surely promote the transgender community to lead a respectable life and it will also help them to lead a reputed life.

### **VIII. Limitations**

This uniquely large study provided new information about the lifestyle and living of the transgenders in India during the ancient period and in modern times. Even though the governments and NGO's are helping the transgenders, they are some limitations in the schemes. First, the government should rethink about the awareness programmes and answer the question does it reach all the citizens of the country? During the budget, government should sanction a decent separate budget for transgenders. The government has in fact framed a number of good policies for the TG people but when it comes to implementation, the officers have failed to execute it properly.

### **IX. Discrimination of Basic Rights**

Discrimination is the foremost barrier for transgenders. They were denied rights, education, justice, employment, housing etc.

According to the Indian Constitution Fundamental Rights:

Article 14 says all were equal before the law and the government should not deny any rights to the citizens of India.

Article 15 says the government has no power to discriminate on the grounds of caste, race, sex or place of birth to the citizens of India.

Article 16 says equality in the matter of government employment.

Article 21 says the right to live his/her own life according to their wish with their property.

Article 21A says every citizen of India has the right to get free education.

But in the case of transgenders the mentioned articles were just a piece of written papers. The government should take care of their rights in every aspect.

### **X. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Bertie Alex:

I just don't want my gender hurt me anymore. I just want to be happy with who I am. I don't even care if I born as a most ugly, poorest, and fattest guy in the world; it would still be better than this. I just want everyone to be happy; love yourself and don't take gender identity for granted. If you know you are female and have a female body, good for you. There are many people like me out there; we don't see ourselves like we are (Alex Bertie, 2012).

Choosing the suitable gender is the fundamental right of every person. Transgenders might have earned an awful name in the Indian society, and it is the society that is the very reason for it. Everyone is ready to worship God and have belief in the Indian epics but they were not ready to accept the same when it comes to reality, thus suppressing the transgenders and forcing them into the line of marginality. Akka (sister), amma (mother) are the two words

that transgenders expect from the society. They are longing for their recognition as a woman. Their clothes and make up may look awkward but they expect only a single word from the common people called 'amma'. Their behaviour seems to be very rude and aggressive sometimes. But it is a purely self-defense act to safe guard themselves from abusers. Most of the times they do not want to be a third gender but just a daughter, sister and mother.

By doing a few things people can include them as a part of the society.

1. People should educate themselves about crossdressers issues through books, conferences, awareness programmes and videos from YouTube.
2. People should be conscious regarding people with gender-nonconforming looks or manners.
3. Government should organise awareness programmes frequently about gender-nonconforming kids to the teachers and helpers in school.
4. Government should improve transgenders health issues in MBBS syllabus.
5. Special wards should be allotted for Transgenders.
6. Ministers should establish a direct contact with the Transgender Welfare Board.
7. Public and private television channels should broadcast awareness advertisement about transgender kids. It will provide awareness among the parents and young kids.
8. Sex education should be incorporated at School and College level.
9. Government should create a transgender friendly environment work place.
10. Court has to frame additional law for violence against the transgender people.
11. Discrimination in legal aspects.
12. Government have to issue a special order for separate toilet in educational institutions, government offices, bus stand, railway stations, Malls, Theatre and other public gathering places.

These were all the necessary steps that should be implemented in our society to protect the rights of the transgender people. It would gain some respect to transgenders.

## **XI. Discussion**

For further research – liveliness in awareness programmes. Special awareness programmes about the threat for gender non conformity kids. Teach them how to stop violence against gender non conformity children, teach them how to face bullying and other violence outside the home at neighbours house, at schools, on the playground, and support them accordingly.

## **Acknowledgement**

We wish to submit an original research article entitled “[Portrayal of the lives of Transgenders as in the ancient Indian Literature and in Modern days: A Comparative Case study.]” for consideration by the Rupkatha Journal for the upcoming issue. We confirm that this work is original and has not been published elsewhere, nor is it currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

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