

SOCIALLY EXCLUDED TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

*This article deals with a very sensitive gender issue prevailing in the society which is related to the transgender people and their societal acceptance in the patriarchal society. Very often these gender variants people are sufferer of social exclusion and compel to live the life of isolation. The aim of this article is to elucidate the facts about the transgender people and the treatment they have been getting from the society since immemorial times. A bird's eye view on the significant terms related to this article. **Transgender** is the state of one's gender identity not matching one's assigned sex. **Social Exclusion** is the process in which individuals or entire communities of people are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities and resources (e.g. housing, employment, healthcare, civic engagement, democratic participation and due process) that are normally available to members of society and which are key to social integration. **Patriarchy** is a social system in which males are the primary authority figures central to social organization; occupy roles of political leadership, moral authority and control of property, and where fathers hold authority over women and children. It implies the institutions of male rule and privilege, and entails female subordination. **Son preference** upholds the essential value of having a son in a family. The article concludes with the positive thought process that one must have to go through once, whether is it government or society.*

Key words: TG (Transgender), MTF (Male to Female), FTM (Female to Male)

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1. Conceptual Framework

A) Gender & Sexuality

Gender is a multifaceted construct, a complex phenomenon viewed differently in different societies. In India, "male" and "female" are seen as natural categories in complimentary opposition. The model of this opposition is biological, but includes criteria ascribed to gender; males and females are born with different sexual natures and take different and complimentary roles in marriage, sexual relations and reproduction. It is a term that is often used to refer to ways that people act, interact, or feel about themselves, which are associated with boys/men and girls/women. On the other hand, Sex refers to biological status as male or female. It includes physical attributes such as sex chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, internal reproductive structures, and external genitalia. Each sex has its essential, innate nature, consisting of physical and moral qualities, although these are alterable².

B) Gender Identity and Gender Expression:

“Gender identity” refers to a person’s internal, deeply felt sense of being either man or woman, or something other or in between. Because gender identity is internal and personally defined, it is not visible to others. In contrast, a person’s “gender expression” is external and socially perceived. Gender expression refers to all of the external characteristics and behaviours that are socially defined as either masculine or feminine, such as dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions.¹⁰ On the basis of above said characteristics, we can categorize TGs in four major segments, which are as follows :-

C) Classification of LGBT:

<u>LESBIAN</u>	<u>GAY</u>	<u>BISEXUAL</u>	<u>TRANSGENDER</u>
A lesbian is a female who expresses romantic or sexual attraction to other	Gay is a term that primarily refers to a homosexual person or the trait of being	Person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to	Transgender is the state of one's gender identity (self-identification as

females, whether primarily or exclusively, or a female who self-identifies as lesbian.	homosexual. (Homosexuality refers to sexual interaction between individuals of the same gender.)	more than one gender. Also called “bi”.	woman, man, neither or both) or gender expression not matching one's assigned sex. ³
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Above mentioned terms are classifications of the some specific community of the society. There is a thin line of demarcation between these terms. As far as, it is known that the concept of gender is concerned with the concept of maleness and masculinity or femaleness and femininity. One's gender identity is the sense of one's self as male or female and doesn't refer to one's sexual orientation or gender role. People who feel their gender is the opposite of their biological sex are referred to as being “**Transgendered**”. Thus, a woman may feel that she is truly a man, and a man may feel that he is truly a woman.⁵ Transgender people are individuals of any age or sex whose appearance, personal characteristics, or behaviours differ from stereotypes about how men and women are “supposed” to be. Transgender people have existed in every culture, race, and class since the story of human life has been recorded. Only the term “transgender” and the medical technology available to transsexual people are new.

2. Historical Preview

The contemporary term “transgender” arose in the mid-1990s from the grassroots community of gender-different people. In contemporary usage, transgender has become an “umbrella” term that is used to describe a wide range of identities and experiences, including but not limited to transsexual people; male and female cross-dressers (sometimes referred to as “transvestites,” “drag queens” or “drag kings”); inter-sexed individuals; and men and women, regardless of sexual orientation, whose appearance or characteristics are perceived to be gender atypical. In its broadest sense, transgender encompasses anyone whose identity or behaviour falls outside of stereotypical gender norms. That includes people who do not self-identify as transgender, but who are perceived as such by others and thus are subject to the same social oppressions and physical violence as those who actually identify with any of these categories. Other current

synonyms for transgender include “gender variant,” “gender different,” and “gender non-conforming.”¹¹

Asian countries have centuries-old histories of existence of gender variant males - who in present times would have been labelled as ‘transgender women’. India is no exception. Kama Sutra provides vivid description of sexual life of people with ‘third nature’ (Tritiya Prakriti).¹ In India, people with a wide range of transgender-related identities, culture, or experiences exist- including Hijras, Aravanis, Kothis, Jogtas/Jogappas, and Shiv-Shaktis. 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.⁵ In India, the Supreme Court on April 15, 2014 recognized a third gender that is neither male nor female, stating "Recognition of transgender as a third gender is not a social or medical issue but a human rights issue."⁸

3. Transgender, Patriarchy and Son-Preference in Indian Context:

Apart from the cultural and religious aspect, the social acceptance of gender variant people is very less. They are not supposed to live in the mainstream of the society. As it is well understood that India and several other countries across the globe practice patriarchy and son-preference has been pervasive for centuries in the particular form of society. Son-preference is deeply rooted in patriarchal cultural and religious beliefs that uphold the essential value of having a son in a family. The kinship and inheritance systems in a family also powerfully drive son preference. The belief that sons are essential for social survival for a family by carrying on its lineage sustains the ideology of son preference. And it is also a belief that without a son, one cannot get “*Moksha*” after death. Sons are also seen to ensure a family’s economic security over time as providers of income and resources to parents in their old age.⁷ This set of beliefs has become a big hurdle for gender variant people to achieve a social identity as such as they want to be. They may suffer great psychological stress trying to live in a body that doesn’t feel comfortable or accurate for their gender identity or their sense of being male or female. Sometimes they live for decade trying to fit into expected gender roles, societal expectations of what are appreciated traits, characteristics, and behaviours of boys versus girls, men versus women. Because society places so much importance on people conforming to expected gender roles, many transgendered people struggle with the realisation that they do not fit psychologically with the way their body appears physically. To deal with their suffering, some

transgendered individual practice **purging**, which is the attempt to be as masculine or feminine as possible, to suppress their feelings and avoid admitting to their true gender identity, which doesn't fit their body's appearance.⁵

“The term Transgender in common parlance is used by most only to refer to trans-women (male to female) MTF rather trans-men (FTM). There is hardly any public understanding or knowledge about who these trans-men are” said Gee Ameena Suleiman, a film-maker and a researcher. In most of the cultures, MTF people are higher recognitions despite the fact that FTM people also existed. FTM people were also recognised as men and took on traditional male roles within their society. However, as time passed and civilization began to develop, the rise of patriarchy threatened transgender people a great deal largely because they were believed to be gifted with special knowledge and male leaders began to fear this. In time, transgender people became repressed in many societies, although matriarchal societies continued to maintain their views and acceptance.⁹

4. Transgender facing problem of Social Exclusion:

Social Exclusion Framework is increasingly used in highlighting the issues and problems faced by disadvantaged and disenfranchised groups. It provides a multidimensional and dynamic framework that focuses attention on both the causes and consequences of social disadvantage. Adapting the Social Exclusion Framework to TG, one can understand how TG communities have been excluded from effectively participating in social and cultural life; economy; and politics and decision-making processes. This section uses this framework to illustrate the multiple forms of oppression faced by TG communities.

Table - Various Dimensions of Social Exclusion for Transgender

-Exclusion from social and cultural participation.	- Exclusion from Economy,	-Exclusion from politics & citizen participation
-Exclusion from family and society.	-Exclusion from employment and livelihood opportunities.	-Restricted access to collectivisation
-Lack of protection from violence.		-Restricted rights of citizenship
-Restricted access to education, health services and		-Restricted participation in decision-making processes

public spaces.		
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5. Exclusion from Social and Cultural Participation

a) Exclusion from family and society

In general, Indians tolerate, accept, and respect a wide range of differences in cultures, religions, languages, and customs. Most families do not accept if their male child starts behaving in ways that are considered feminine or inappropriate to the expected gender role. Consequently, family members may threaten, scold or even assault their son/sibling from behaving or dressing-up like a girl or woman. Some parents may outright disown and evict their own child for crossing the prescribed gender norms of the society and for not fulfilling the roles expected from a male child. Parents may provide several reasons for doing so: bringing disgrace and shame to the family; diminished chances of their child getting married to a woman in the future and thus end of their generation (if they have only one male child); and perceived inability on the part of their child to take care of the family. Sometimes, the child or teenager may decide to run away from the family not able to tolerate the discrimination or not wanting to bring shame to one's family. This means many Transgender are not educated or uneducated and consequently find it difficult to get jobs. Some members of the society ridicule gender-variant people for being 'different' and they may even be hostile. Even from police, they face physical and verbal abuse, forced sex, extortion of money and materials; and arrests on false allegations.

b) Discrimination in healthcare settings

Even in the healthcare settings, TG people face discrimination. Often, healthcare providers rarely had the opportunity to understand the sexual diversities and they do not have adequate knowledge about the health issues of sexual minorities. Thus, TG people face unique barriers when accessing public or private health services.

5.1 Exclusion from Economic Participation and Lack of Social Security

TG communities face a variety of social security issues. They face a lot of challenges especially when they are not in a position to earn (or has decreased earning capacity) due to health concerns, lack of employment opportunities, or old age. Most employers deny employment for

even qualified and skilled transgender people. Lack of livelihood options is a key reason for a significant proportion of transgender people to choose or continue to be in sex work - with its associated HIV and health-related risks.

5.2 Exclusion from Political Participation

a) Legal, civil, and political rights

Legal issues can be complex for people who change sex, as well as for those who are gender-variant. Legal issues include: legal recognition of their gender identity, same-sex marriage, child adoption, inheritance, wills and trusts, immigration status, employment discrimination, and access to public and private health benefits. Especially, getting legal recognition of gender identity as a woman or transgender woman is a complicated process. Lack of legal recognition has important consequences in getting government ration (food-price subsidy) shop card, passport, and bank account. Transgender people now have the option to vote as a woman or 'other'. However, the legal validity of the voter's identity card in relation to confirming one's gender identity is not clear.⁴

6. Case Studies of Socially Excluded Transgender:

- I. **Xavier Amnal** (by birth male): She is a 48 years old trans woman and a singer by profession. She said that when she was 13 years old, she had to leave home because her parents said her that she is like a woman. Her childhood was torture. She got operated on in 1976. Since then, she has been on the road for livelihood earning. Very often she feels sad about that her family don't recognise her or ever call her.
- II. **Vijji**: (by birth male): She was ridiculed as feminine from young age. Her family realised that she was different from stereotype of male but expected her to like a boy. When she expressed her any feelings, they used to say "just get out of the house or kill yourself".¹⁰
- III. **Bobby Darling** (by birth male): Original name Pankaj Sharma is a renowned TV actor and have done various roles in many Hindi feature films, also expresses herself as a trans woman. She was bullied by the people at workplace, school, and college in earlier. Once a while, she

underwent severe humiliation and the intensity of humiliation was so higher that she lost the zeal of life and tried to kill herself. It took a long time to accept her as she is, by her family members.⁶

7. Conclusion:

Above mentioned case studies reveals out the fact that how much these “two spirits” people are disliked by the society. Even their family members don’t support them. They automatically get excluded from the mainstream of the society and their family. They have to suffer from the miseries that are not at all meant for them. They are forced to get into the professions like prostitution, beggary and pick pocketing etc. They are not supposed to have a good education and employment. They are supposed to keep distance from even getting the basic amenities for a better living standard. This mindset of our society has become a big challenge for the gender variant people and they are struggling with their self-identities. Most of them are still not ready to disclose their real identities to the world. They leave their native place to find their lives in cosmopolitan cities. For a transgender person, living life as one sex while knowing deep down that they are opposite sex can be very difficult. They are excluded from their family and society because they are one of them whose mind and body disown their biological sex. TG people are remained a hidden population due to fear of social stigma and the prosecution under the law (Article 377 which deals with the unnatural offences).

In a nutshell, Transgender requires 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 are and what they want to be.

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