



Identity crisis in Transgenders with special reference to Laxmi & Revathi

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ABSTRACT

The exploration of identity is a fundamental aspect of the human experience, shaping the trajectory of personal development and societal integration. Within this intricate tapestry, transgender individuals navigate a distinct and often tumultuous journey in defining their identities. This paper embarks on an inquiry into the phenomenon of identity crisis among transgender individuals, delving into the multifaceted challenges that accompany the process of self-discovery and societal acceptance. In this paper, we embark on a comprehensive journey to dissect the layers of identity crisis experienced by transgender individuals. As we delve into the subject, we acknowledge the profound significance of understanding the multifaceted nature of transgender identity development. By examining the factors that contribute to this crisis, including societal attitudes, familial dynamics, and internal struggles, we aim to shed light on the intricate tapestry of challenges that shape the transgender experience. As we navigate through this exploration, it is imperative to recognize the resilience and courage exhibited by transgender individuals in their quest for authenticity. Through a critical analysis of existing literature, personal narratives, and psychological insights, this paper seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of transgender identity crisis, fostering empathy and support for a community that continues to navigate the complex terrain of self-discovery and acceptance. This research paper is a humble initiative by the researcher taking example of two transgender woman (and their 2-2 renowned books) to bring to limelight the plight of this minority community and ignite some empathy in the heart and mind of elite and gendered classes of society.

Keywords: Transgender, gender expressions, trans activism, exploitation and kinner

Introduction- A transgender is an individual who is born a male but who identifies itself as a female and is found to dress up and behave more in a feminine way despite of having masculine characters and body structure (Dutta & Roy, 2014). The scientific reason behind a transgender child being born depends both on the genetical factors and hormonal changes that occur in the body of the individual. Transgender people can be called by different names which include Hijra, eunuch, heterosexual, trans-sexual, transvestite, ambisexual, gender bending, neuter, epicene, intersexual etc. Transgender people have identity crisis and gender issues and are not readily able to explain their gender expression and sexual preferences (Loh, 2011). The Identity crisis issue severely hampers their growth and normal up-bringing which arrests their overall personality development and they feel suppressed and outcast in the society to which they belong (Fig.1). For many years in India the transgender people were not able to enjoy the basic humanitarian and fundamental rights that were the right of every Indian citizen irrespective of gender, caste and age.

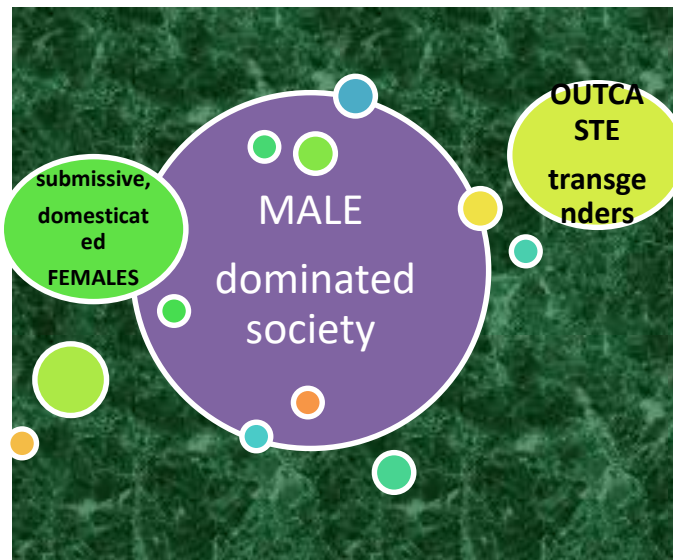


Fig.1- Indian society and the place value of people on basis of gender

For this research paper total 4 books were selected that are mentioned along with the author names and publication year in Fig.2.

Research through innovation



Fig. 2 – Books and Authors chosen in this research work

Discussion-

Now is presented a meaningful discussion from the 4 chosen books-

Books by A. Revathi-

Book 1- *Truth about me* - Is a book written by A. Revathi who is herself a transgender. The book has detailed inscription about her personal life since her childhood and until she grew up into a woman as strong as to defend her against the odds of the society. The book portrays about how individuals are offended of their principle fundamental rights and right to living a decent life can be snatched away by the society in the name of sex and sexuality. She yarns about how her life got abstruse because despite of being born as a boy she wanted to lead her life as a female. The book is a description of the everyday experience, the pain, the discrimination and resentment she had to bear because she was a transgender. She clearly states that the book has not been written to ignite any hurtful sentiments to any section or person in the society but the sole aim of the book is to let the readers know about how a transgender leads her life; the culture, the dreams, the desires and the expectations from other fellow beings and the society (Revathi, 2010).

Taking a look at early childhood the book states that she was born in a poor family and being the youngest son who was named as Doraisamy she was most pampered by both the parents and older siblings. The father was a milk vendor and they had to make both ends meet. When she was about 10 years old and a student of class 5 she used to go to village school with other neighborhood girls and come back with them it was then when she developed habits

and desires of dressing up like a girl wearing skirt-blouse and putting a towel like a turban on the head and let the other end of the turban flow around. She would also help her mother in the kitchen and was fond of sweeping the floor and making rangoli art on that which is called as *Kolam* in Tamil Nadu. At that point of time the other family members thought that she will grow up and all these habits will be left behind. At home the things were pretty okay but outsiders use to tease her calling her names like ‘number 9’, ‘female boy’, ‘female thing’ etc. After some years there was a student that came to live in a nearby house and she would go to him to get assistance with school assignments and lessons; the boy would kiss him, teach him, and even pinch the cheeks; she liked it all very much but never opened up saying that (Revathi, 2010).

At few places in the school and in the village where she dressed up like a female gave her immense pleasure of femaleness and in class 10, she started after the onset of hormonal changes she started thinking that she is a female soul trapped in a male body. It was the time of extreme dilemma and anxiousness; she even had suicidal thoughts complaining to God that why he did not create him either as a full male or a whole female. Because of the mental humdrum she failed in class 10 in the subject of English. For this she had to stay at home and repeat the English exam; she was granted permission for tuition from the father and was given a bicycle to ride to the nearby town for the tuition. It was then when she met a few likeminded and like-behaved people that made her realize that she was special creation of God-that she was a *neuter*.

Few inscriptions from -*The truth about me* (all from Revathi, 2010)

She was severely beaten up by her brothers and even the mother did not support her (p. 55)

The physical education teacher teased her, beat her and asked to pull the trousers down to let him check (p. 7)

The horror and terror of choosing prostitution as a means of livelihood was excruciating, samguinary, yet the only choice available (p. 110)

She was physically abused and stripped of her clothes by a policeman at the police station and he used his wooden stick to struck at her private parts asking whether there is a way that the stick can enter her body (p. 206)

At the bus stand she was not allowed to use either the men or the female toilet and she was rejected on the grounds of being a Potter (p. 54).

Book 2 - *A Life in Trans Activism*: This book vignettes the journey of Revathi from being and outcaste, timid, shy and sorrowful individual who was unsure and guilty about her sexuality into transforming and becoming a woman that always lived in her heart. It is a journey from obscurity to becoming renowned spokes-person speaking of transgender issues and rights thereby becoming an living legend and inspiration for others. The description of trans-man and the tragic stories of their becoming marginalized, their courage, their failures and victories as individuals is the unique feature of this book which also mentioned that several of such trans-men have been adopted by her as

her sons because she cannot biologically bear any children. All the children adopted by her call her as mummy and she says that this is the purest form of motherhood that she could ever experience (Revathi, 2016).

The book mentions names like - *Ombodu, Ali, kattavandi, khoja, chakka, pombalasatti, duss, mattuvandi, double decker* some of the Tamil words which are used as offensive remarks for trans women. Revathi in this book has mentioned how difficult life was after she accepted and identified herself as a woman living in a man's body. She has also mentioned about trans-man who are born as a man but who identify themselves as a female and she has clearly described that in present times trans-women do have little sympathy and social acceptance from the society. But trans-man are the people standing on the verge and hanging from a thin thread with no societal, emotional, or familial support. She mentions an incidence when she wanted to make a passport for herself but there were only two gender categories male and female. The government doctor to which she went for gender certificate humiliated her naked in front of a horde comprising of watchmen, nurses, ward boy and compounders which all simpered and hee-hawed at her. Finally, she got a gender certificate of being a female and also could later on able to get the passport becoming the first trans women in the country to have a passport (Revathi, 2016).

Lakshmi Narayan Tripathi

Book 1- *Me hijra: Me Lakshmi* is a first-person narrative of her, about her and by her. The book starts from her childhood days where she was teased and harassed because of her sexuality. Book has lucid experience is which states that it is the people, not the society who were unable to accept her as their own part. She grew up listening to different names and derogatory terms that people used to call her.

She painfully remembers that people were not willing to understand that people of this clan are also human beings with a heart, mind and soul (it only the bodily structure that differs) and they get hurt like other humans too. Also, it is not the people of this particular community who are to be or who should be blamed for the type of people they are. In other words, she meant to say that the people of transgender community suffer for no reason at all; for no crime /sin that they have ever committed. In one of her incidences, she writes that sexual assault from people made her secretive and cocooned. She started hiding herself under her tortoise shell and stopped sharing and communicating feelings with families and friends and these incidences and oppression of feelings made her grew up before actual time in life (Chowdhury & Bhattacharjee, 2018).

Book 2- *Red lipstick: The men in my life* written by Lakshmi is a chronicle starting from her childhood days and the processes in which she identified herself as a transgender. It is a supernal exemplum where she has described about how complete and elated, she felt when she dressed herself in gorgeous sarees and expensive makeup. She is

one of the trans-genders who has travelled the world and attended international conferences and has been interviewed by people like Salman Rushdie.

In this book Lakshmi states that her existence on earth she believes is of an activist rather belonging to any particular gender or in that case, being genderless. She believes that even the best of laws cannot bring a change in the society until and unless the mindset of people gets reincarnated in a way which teaches them to respect all fellow beings despite of whatever gender they belong to (Priya and Pandey, 2023). She says that she is not a 9-5 office activist but she is a 24X7 activist. She identifies herself only in one form which is *the Lakshmi* - that's it !!! nothing more, nothing less. The book delineates about the process of becoming a *Hijra* where there are particular *Gharana* that accept a person to be a chela of a particular Guru and after the Guru accepts the chela there is an initiation ceremony called *Reet* where the chela is bestowed with two green colored *jogjanam* sarees and the head is covered with a community dupatta (Varshni, & Sunitha, 2021).. The book recites and details about men who had called her as mother and sister in daylight that became so lustful that they keep longing for her; a person who is not a biological woman but even then, they are so attracted and mesmerized by her presence/ elegance and beauty that in a drunken state they wanted to share her bed and even sacrifice the relationship that they had in daytime. It is then when she realized that a woman has XX chromosomes and is complete in herself, it is the man who has the XY combo and hence has a woman element (the X) in himself.

According to Laxmi the incomplete XY chromosomal inheritance of man gave birth to his manliness that was actually a cover for the coward men to have a convenient social structure and keep women under their power and control. The book *Red Lipstick* details about how deeply Lakshmi has understood the patriarchal system and the reasons that she shares feelings of empathy with fellow women in the way they act, live, and behave under the complete dominance and dictatorship of a man (Priya & Pandey, 2023). The book has detailed the history of transgender or *kinner* as they were called in that times collecting inscriptions and memories from tales of both Ramayana and Mahabharata (Rogers et al., 2013).



A happy soul- a eunuch in green dress

A trans-woman begging at traffic-signal

Image 1- Two faces of transgenders

It gives an insight to the audience that transgenders have always been existent on earth and have been an integral part of the human society and still are very less understood and respected and even less loved (Image 1).

Firm determination and will to achieve something can change the life of any person be it a transgender women. We have already seen that in case of Laxmi and Revathi. One more example the researcher ants to quote here and it is of can be learnt from the example of Seema² Kumar Javed Ali who is a transgender women from Mumbai. She was abandoned by her biological parents and even by the foster family and since the age of 10 she has always been homeless and alone living under constant fear of being abused physically and socially.

2 https://www.db.com/news/detail/20220517-transgender-in-india-seema-s-journey-from-hardship-to-hope?language_id=1

Starting with a merger salary of 1000 INR as a domestic helper and later on entered a torturing and abusive marriage. She shunned off that on purpose by leaving her house with a small amount of 20,000 INR only. She found her way to a beauty salon and started learning the beautician courses over there.

During the covid-19 locked down period she attended night school by the name GSPM night school in Mumbai and then appeared for secondary school exams. Looking at the immense potential and will power of the young

devastated lady which was determined to stand on her own feet Deutsche Bank² is providing a loan of 1,50,000 INR to Seema so that after completing her beautician course she can start her own salon and becomes self-reliant. This is one of the CSR activities that the bank supports along with supporting night school education for people who wants to work and study to make their life better. So we see that not only social organizations and NGOs but there are even other banks and reputed business houses that are coming forward to support the transgender women in India. But the thing is that the initial step is to be taken by them for themselves so that they can stand in the society with their head held high asking for their share in society.

The second book by Revathi states that Revathi³ is now an actor, a writer, a gender activist, a theatre person, and a respected name among the intellectuals which clearly describe and indicates that it is possible for every human being to construct a palace with the bricks that are thrown at the person by the society (Remya, 2019). In this very book the readers come to know about the plight of trans-man one such individual has been presented below in Fig.3



Fig. 3 *Rudra – A trans-man from Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh under-going top-surgery (Image credit below)

*<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/india-transgender-discrimination-health-gender-affirmation-surgery/> (Image credit)

³ <https://www.amazon.in/Life-Trans-Activism-Revathi-ebook/dp/B01N7KKH0H?asin=B01N7KKH0H&revisionId=db39c7d8&format=1&depth=1>

Any change in the society cannot be achieved without the support and co-operation of the general masses that frame that very society. Everything cannot be just accomplished by making laws and amendments in the administrative and legal framework. It is the mind-set of the people that needs to be changed if any big or small change is needed in the society. The government can only make the laws and the governing bodies can implement it. It is the local people of the society who have to accept and abide which is the only means to make any law or regulation a success. This is necessarily required in the case of transgenders because they live among the society but are disregarded and disrespected for something which they did not choose for themselves and which was not under their will and action. It can already be seen in the urban above paragraph that many transgenders after facing the brutal truth and reality of people and society have student and raise their voice not only for themselves but also for their entire community and the people and media just need to stand in support and not on the other side of the aspect.

Yes, this stands absolutely true that along with people it is the media (Dhiman, 2023) that can promote or damage the very soul of any social campaign because media is now the fastest mean of spreading information across the international borders and otherwise it is the media which can frame perception and attitude of people towards any social issue. Thanks to the media people that now they are giving more coverage promotion and space to voices of transgender people across the country. There are many latest interviews both in print (newspaper) and on internet that are interviewing transgenders and presenting their voice among the general population (Dhiman, 2023). There are even many types of latest feature films both in regional languages and in Hindi that have tried to express the flight and journey of transgenders on the screen the worth mentioning ones are depicted in fig.-4



Fig. 4 Role of media/films in creating mass awareness about plight of transgenders

There is even a latest web series enacted by Miss Universe Sushmita Sen by the name *Taali* (which is streaming in many regional languages including our national language) on Jio cinema which is the must watch for people of all genders and it has definitely served the purpose of bringing to limelight the hidden aspects and brutal truths that a transgender has to face in his entire life. Watching such shows not only gives a piece of entertainment but surely brings a cart load of information and understanding about social issues enlightening them on things which are regarded as a taboo and are not otherwise talked about in general public.

Conclusion- The wave of change has finally occurred when in the 12th Five-year plan (2012 -17) gender empowerment issues were raised (Hotchandani, 2017) and since then there are directions from the Center and Supreme court to grant legal recognition to of people of 3rd gender in all possible ways which include having separate columns in forms and applications all over the country. Chandigarh administration and Punjab University Chandigarh were pioneers to implement this. The time has come when we understand that trans-genders are human beings like others. So, they should have equal human rights that apply to otherwise all male and female citizens of India. The eunuchs yearn for nothing (De Oliveira et al., 2018) but only respect and love in the eyes of society, and respectful means of livelihood to lead a life of dignity, contentment, and happiness.

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