

**PARADIGM SHIFT FROM MARGIN AND EXCLUSION TO RECOGNITION  
AND ACCEPTANCE FOR TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY IN  
INDIAN SOCIO-CULTURAL SPACE**

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**Abstract**

*The key concept of this research paper's discourse is to set a new light and approach to the study and analysis of marginal representation of the transgender community in the country who were relegated at the fringe of society and have had been deprived of their rights in such a society in which they have been born and brought up. Their voices and experiences could only be shared with the literature that confronted as the important part of fourth world literature and now has been the inseparable and most significant head of the main stream literature. In the wake of recent studies in forth world literature I find that there is great scope to explore the voices and representation of the marginalized transgender community. Their representation must occupy a significant room and space in main stream society that I envision and intend to make it happen at ground level reality through my research paper. My central focus remains on voicing the problems of marginalized transgender community in the Indian society. Marginalization refers to the social process of being excluded or becoming marginal especially as a group within the larger society or nation. Marginal people are those who do not find room and space in the main stream development of the society. In other way marginalization is a process of being relegated to the various marginal fringes of the society. As the marginalized group is relegated and excluded, the power equation between these groups are very evident. Though it appears difficult to set a discussion on the sexuality of transgender and gay's community and sometimes it is felt inappropriate to have debate and discussions over their issues but fact cannot be ignored that any advance society does not manipulate the rights of any community of its own. Despite the appropriate numbers of these community members in the society, their needs, interests and concerns are ignored and neglected. The efforts from Supreme Court, Election Commission of India and U.G.C. to recognize them, to assist them financially to pursue their education and provide them an identity as third gender and a social protection that they need at the time, is very much admirable.*

**Key Words:** *Hizra- eunuch, Indigenous- aboriginals, philanthropist- lover of mankind, paradigm shift- refers a change in social order, U.G.C.-University Grant Commission, kothi- a married male eunuch*

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-DR. SANTOSH J. MISHRA

One are the days when no writer persuaded the stories and experiences of transgender community and allowed them to occupy the marginal space in the periphery of central plot of the creative writings. Nowadays transgender community is marching forward against all odds and hurdles and has been receiving strong ground and recognition for their social privileges in recent times. They have made a significant contribution to the literature by expressing their own pains and problems and they are well appreciated and received by the writers and the readers of the present age across the globe. Some of transgender activists turned up as writers and came up with their own autobiographical creations that speak well their sentiments, emotions and painful experiences of their lives.

In the recent times the creative works by different transgender writers have started to come up that have been approved as milestone to the other transgender people in the community as there were hardly works of the writers which depicted their agonies and voiced them. Moving from just documenting their lives to fictionalizing the transgender community in is an important trend in this genre, making transgender themselves realize that they are the significant part of the society they live in. The popular social activist and writer Umer states, "since the transgender community is yet to achieve their rights, they have to come up with both fiction and non-fiction, portraying their issues"<sup>1</sup>

The key concept of my research paper's discourse is to set a new light and approach to the study and analysis of marginal representation of the transgender community who were relegated at the fringe of society and have had been deprived of their rights in such a society in which they have born and brought up. Their voice and experience could only be shared with the literature that confronted as the part of fourth world

literature and now has been the inseparable and most significant head of the main stream literature. In the wake of recent studies in forth world literature I find that there is great scope to explore the voice and representation of the marginalized transgender community. Their representation must occupy a significant room and space in main stream society that I envision and intend to make it happen at ground level reality through my research paper. My central focus remains on voicing the problems of marginalized transgender community in the Indian society. In presenting the paper I, too, wear in my mind constantly Wole Soyinka's view of the contemporary critic's responsibilities;

"Criticism is so important because... a critic's job is not merely to review an existing piece of work but also to create an atmosphere of appreciation, of tolerance; to cultivate an experimental attitude not only in writers but in the audience"<sup>2</sup>

The terms Fourth World refers to those people who were the natives and in majority but were forced to live in exile and isolation. They live beyond modern industrial norms and are claimed as hunter gatherers, nomadic, pastorals and peasants residing in extreme isolated urban areas. They are structurally considered irrelevant in the society as they neither produce nor consume which is important aspect of modernity as per the globalization. In his book, "The Fourth World: An Indian Reality" George Manuel thinks of the Fourth World as the "Indigenous people descended from a country's aboriginal population and who today are completely or partly deprived of the rights of their own territories and its riches"<sup>3</sup> Therefore Fourth World includes stateless, poor, marginal nations inhabiting minority group whether ethnic, linguistic, cultural or religious. Now days the whole spectrum of marginalized, oppressed nations are struggling and voicing for their right, recognition, opportunities, liberation from oppression and exploitation of their own richness. Their life and literature has attracted the attention of literary scholars and philanthropist across the world to rationalize their problems and come with genuine solutions. As an academician, I strictly find myself confined with the duty to highlight the ongoing oppression and discrimination in present social system even in so called modern societies.

Marginalization refers to the social process of being excluded or becoming marginal especially as a group within the larger society or nation. Marginal people are those who do

not find room and space in the main stream development of the society. In other way marginalization is a process of being relegated to the various marginal fringes of the society. It is very closely related to the social exclusion. In this process marginalized groups are systematically excluded from certain social aspects preventing them from full participation in the normal activities of society. As the marginalized group is relegated and excluded, the power equation between these groups are very evident. One group dominates other and takes hold over the power control dynamics. This power is not attained but retained by creating certain socio- cultural ideologies directing the community to maintain the social status. This creates unequal power equation that increases and is carried out through time and generation meticulously. Any attempt to disrupt this social fabric is perverted by the powerful dominating masses of the mainstream society. In social context it can be claimed that marginalized are those who live in minority and try to enter in the centre to change the established power equation in any society.

Those who are seen marginal, are female, black, disabled, non- heterosexual, exiled, immigrants, tribal, rural indigenous, outcaste, who are thrown at the margin in the social system since decades. Now there has been witnessed a paradigm shift from exclusion to recognition and they have started to move from margin to centre from all around sides of the social structure. Their movement towards the centre is due to the opposition that they make against their constant oppression, deprivation from the fundamental rights, exploitation, discriminations and dis-connectivity to the mainstream society. Since years they are excluded; their children grow up as marginal and are not allowed to enjoy the social status. They are, too, excluded from all the social benefits for what they deserve. They have been treated as objectionable objects in the society. But for them a new age has been at the skill to open new horizon of better opportunity and treatment as they have been protected by law and order, recognized by the election commission of the country, and accepted by the society little bit in better way than earlier. New reformative measures have been implied to ensure their rights. Even U.G.C. autonomous body has recognized them and their needs and has now sanctioned certain specific amt. as the scholarships for transgender community in the country.

India has been a country that comprises large classes and communities of people who form the social structure of the country. Transgender community is one of them who are marginalized in the country and are rarely granted any social status to enjoy. Voices across the country and even across the globe have been raised to attain the space in the main stream society. They are raising their protest for their rights; they have started participating in the mainstream events of the country and demanding a reformation in the act and attitude as well. No doubt since thousand years they have been marginalized and were made invisible from the mainstream society meticulously. It is the community which was never granted any social privilege to enjoy. Even they are treated as untouchable in the society and are not allowed to participate in any socio- cultural events of the society. Nowadays they are considered as transgender people.

Though it appears difficult to set a discussion on the sexuality of transgender and gay's community and sometimes it is felt inappropriate to have debate and discussions over their issues but fact cannot be ignored that any advance society does not manipulate the rights of any community of its own. Despite the appropriate numbers of these community members in the society, their needs, interests and concerns are ignored and neglected. Most transgender and gays are isolated and made to live a secluded life. They have no gender identity. On documents and formal communications they have been mentioned as no gender; such was their identity.

In Indian social context, some hizras do not define themselves by specific sexual oriented gender. Their sexual energy is transformed into sacred power. But however, these notions are put aside and they are often thrown into prostitution. They are left with no option for their bread and butter. Furthermore, in India a transgender male who takes a receptive role in sex with a man is identified as kothi who are usually distinguished from hizras as a separate gender entity. They often dress as women and behave in a very feminine manner in public spaces; even they, too, use feminine language. 'The usual partner of hizras and kothies are men who consider them heterosexual as they are one who penetrate.'<sup>4</sup> These male partners are often married and often their marriage and sex relations of kothies are kept secret from the community at large. But their marriages are not usually recognized by law and religion. But somehow some of them enjoy their

romantic company with their heterosexual partners. But the mass of transgender population lacks such biological needs. They are compelled to depend on the mercy of some traditional eunuchs. They are thrown in orphanage and prostitution and are exploited mentally and physically. They are considered as abusive community and treated as untouchables with whom no one intends to have touch and contacts publically. No society bothers with their concerns, pains and agonies. They are oppressed under the suppression and suffocation of the indecency of their traumatized lives, they live in. Their inner pain never gets exposed before the society.

These transgender and gays are left isolated in their own homeland and deprived of their rights, their social status. This community has hardly any power equation in the society. But their constant struggle to raise their voice for their rights and their demand for their freedom, equal opportunities, expression and participation in political system have compelled the society and its law and order to make required amendment to protect their interests. Now they contest elections and play significant role in transforming their status equation in the society. Though their social status still needs to be improved in all the streams yet they have been occupying better space in area of education, politics and even commercial activities. Recently Mumbai like city has been experiencing a fever of transgender' activities. In Mumbai there has been a social campaign performed by transgender to create an awareness regarding the traffic rules. Apart from these activities now they have been started to provide school education, job opportunities in certain private sectors, and social recognition in the society. Earlier they only had occupation of begging in trains, at the streets and in the towns and colonies. Their only recognition was as a community which only expected to come and bless the family when any couple has received the birth of new baby in a family.

Another reason for the isolation of transgender community is because of their homosexual relations. In India like society the marriage like social institution is in full swing force. It provides consent to two opposite sex to live together and enjoy the physical and sexual relation to produce the baby. No doubt two opposite sex tie up together because of their biological needs that they feel at the time. Do we consider about the biological needs of transgender? Do we take care of their relations? Does our society permit any

opposite sex to marry with them? The answer we get is no, never, ever... Does any society bother with the interests and concerns of this transgender community? Does any social institution come forward to help them to occupy better and secured life- space where they can enjoy their privileges and lead a common life? Even scholars and creative writers rarely preferred to write about their sentiments and emotions. But since last few decades the social tendency has been changed and central themes of some creative writings have been occupied by the issues and concerns of transgender community. In recent times transgender have started to come up with the creative works and autobiographical novels of their own depicting the pain and problems of the community. These books inspired many social activists and transgender writers to share their own stories of pain and agonies they had experienced since the ages. Such kind of activities turned up as milestone in the area of improving their life standard as they started to protest their concern and interests. They started to voice their issues at national level and their activities started to receive the attention by local, national and global media and societies. 'Recently Election Commission of India allowed transgender a third gender choice- 'other' on voter registration form for the first time.'<sup>5</sup> This change was made for national elections taking place currently. But this kind of amendment by the election commission brought new kind of recognition and identity to the transgender community. It paved a new way of hopes and aspirations for the community.

Though since Vedic period there is no. of references of various transgender characters who have been projected with their specific qualities. Even Arjun from Mahabharata had to lead his life as a eunuch during his tenure of exile. Brihannala is another character who is also worth quotable here to depict the status of eunuchs enjoyed by them during the Vedic period. Even during medieval age in the rein of Muslim emperors like Akbar and Shahjahan, eunuch had bee appointed in their haram to look after their Begams (queen). This shows that had been granted certain privileges to enjoy in the society. But after wards their position in society deteriorated and worsened day by day till the present century and their marginal oppression increased. Since last few decades their pathetic life started to be voiced and expressed through different social Medias, literature, organizations and N.G.Os. They began to oppose and protest their interest and concerns

and started to occupy a dignified space in the main stream society. They have been started to be considered and recognized as the significant part of the society. Some of the intelligent transgender people started voicing their community's pain, agonies and problems in their own autobiographical writings. A Revathi, and Living Smile Vidya, both the transgender writers broke the silence of their community when they came up with their autobiographical works, 'The Truth about Me: A Hizra's Life Story' and 'I am Vidya' to speak about the community and its social status.

These works of transgender writers and social activists led a kind of awareness among the people of the community to protest for their concerns, rights and status in the society. This also inspired other transgender to come with their stories about transgender community. Writers like Era Natarajan, Ma Thavasi, Va Mu Komu, Laksmanna Perumal and Bharathi Thambi took up the characters from transgender community in their stories to share their inner conflicts, pain, psychological wounds they have been wearing since decades, their trauma and agonies with public. Through these characters writers came up with several issues of transgender community before the society and mirrored their agonies of deprivation and refusal of their rights from the centuries. Being part of the society, they are never considered significant part of the society in which not only they are born and brought up but also have grown up as an individual with half of identity;- no gender/ common gender which has been accepted now as third gender or transgender. Now the society, law and order and even the Apex honorable Supreme Court has granted them a status of third gender or transgender in its verdict. The court noted that, "it was the right of every human being to choose their gender while granting rights to those who identify themselves as neither male nor female. The court said in its order that the spirit of the (Indian) constitution is to provide equal opportunity to every citizen to grow and attain their potential, irrespective of caste, religion or gender."<sup>6</sup> This verdict of Supreme Court gives a new recognition and identity to transgender community in Indian society. It opens a new horizon for the community which is going to experience a reformative and revolutionary change in the social mind set among the citizens of the country. It would bring better life conditions, education and opportunities to the transgender community.

This judgment of Supreme Court has been recognized by worldwide media like BBC, Gay Star News, and Pink News etc.<sup>7</sup>

Mahes Datani appears a very sensitive and a successful playwright who bravely explores the sexuality and gender role of gay and homosexuals in his plays. His plays are very poignant in depicting the lust and love of the gays who are represented by his protagonists like Babur, Kamlesh etc. His play 'On a Muggy Night in Mumbai' portrays the sentiments of gay character Kamlesh who had been in relation with his future sister in law. This play explores his denial and refusal of his own existence more deeply as he is under the impression of guilty that he had been in relation with the same sex person. He does not dare to come in to social focus with the fact he had been with. He tries to avoid coming in light as he is afraid of the fact that with whom his sister is going to marry, had been in relation with her own brother. He tries to hide himself from his sister and the entire society. The only fault he had that he had a relationship with the man she is dating. Even his former boyfriend struggles with his own denial. They are filled with a sense of guilt for being gay and for having homosexual relations. Such kinds of explorations of sexuality raise the problems and fears of the gays and even of transgender community who encounter themselves as an object of shy and shame for the family and society. They are haunted and haunted ever and feel crushed under these social malignity and oppressions. They feel insecure from their inner self in such a society where they are relegated at the fringe of isolation.

Now is the time to think upon the situation of these transgender, to allow them to be part of the mainstream society by providing them better life style, job opportunities, accepting them in social events and political system as well. The society needs to change its mind set against the transgender community and accept them in the society. No law and order can turn effective till it is accepted and respected by heart by its own people. Though it will take time to improve their life and give justice to their sentiments and rights but initiative must be taken to improve the situations of transgender and gay community in the country. Society must consider their worst situation and biological needs that, too, should be granted to fulfill through social consent, society must change their rigid mind-set regarding their homosexuality and physical affairs also. Marriage does not mean only to

produce child but also to fulfill biological needs that happen with male and female genders. If it is likewise why a transgender should be deprived of the same? But more than this issue is the identity of these transgender... they must be accepted as third gender and must be provided all facilities such as healthcare services at govt. hospitals, education, job opportunities and opportunity to run their own business so that they may obtain a better life style and become the significant part of the society. The efforts from Supreme Court, Election Commission of India and U.G.C. to recognize them, to assist them financially to pursue their education and provide them an identity as third gender and a social protection that they need at the time, is very much admirable and appreciable. My only intention lies in exposing their miserable, unhygienic, pathetic, wretched life that make me feel that they, too, deserve to enjoy the social privileges that constitution grants to each and every citizen and is enjoyed by a common man in the country. They must enjoy their life with full sense of pride, worth and dignity. They must be treated in the way as common person is treated in the public system without any discrimination regardless of their gender and sex. I have shown mine concern with the community through my own words in which I have tried to reflect their longing for identity, relation and a social reformation ;

**“Who am I ...?”**

I ...  
Who am I ...?  
Never dare to disclose  
But till when...?  
  
A moment comes,  
Saddens the entire skies  
And the earth,  
A new Hizra has taken birth.  
Parents, shaken & afraid of  
What to do,  
Where to go  
How to hide the fact  
That a eunuch has taken birth...  
  
Grew up without sex  
In a secluded, excluded sphere  
With no centre,

Only margin.

Floating in the vacuum  
With no life, existence and society,  
No one to share,  
to support,  
to love & care.

Life, a hell like,  
Deep trench,  
Full of extreme dark  
and isolation.  
from where no voice of pain emerges.

Thrown at the margin  
To bear the burn of  
the wound of being transgender.  
Left with no room and space,  
No life and care.

Left as left out,  
No one and nothing needs that.  
Who cares who am I ...?  
I ask myself  
What fault of mine is?  
What role did I play  
in shaping my gender?  
I think of those  
Who have...  
Raping and raping ceaselessly.

I, too, have heart,  
Filled with emotions,  
Looks for warmness,  
Existence and recognition...  
But do I get...?

Think upon...!  
Stop throwing us at the margin...  
Stop turning us as left out...  
and depriving us of our rights  
Be shame full of yours...  
Not of mine,  
Raping the daughters and minors.

Today is ours  
Life appears blooming  
With small buds and flowers  
Hanging at tiny spots,  
seen rarely and occasionally.

Margin started moving  
& shifting  
Slowly, gradually,  
towards the centre.  
Creating a tiny space  
With a more tiny objective existence,  
seen at microscopic level.

But we thrive & strive  
For our pain, not seen earlier,  
For our pleasure ignored,  
And for our existence neglected  
And relegated ever...’ 9

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