

At the Margins: The Socially Excluded Third Gender People

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Abstract

On the streets of Indian villages one sometimes comes across an unusual sight of a group of closely shaven persons in female attire, singing and dancing, making overtures to the onlookers, cracking sexually charged jokes at men and making loud clapping sounds with their hands. To people these individuals may look very interesting and outlandish freaks of nature. Not because they sing and dance but because of their ambivalent physical appearance. They shave, smoke and talk like men but dress and behave in a more feminine way. On seeing them, one question which would immediately strike relates to who are these people, male or female? And if they are neither males nor females, then what? In the Indian society these peoples are popularly referred to as 'Hijras', 'Khusras', 'Asexuals', 'Neutrals', 'Eunuchs', etc. All the terms included in the nomenclature are used to describe the identity of these people who have one thing in common and perhaps the most decisive one that there is something wrong with their sexual organs. So one can say that, for years we have looked at Hijras, but never seen or understood them.

Key words: Third Gender, Hijras, identity, Stigma, Neutrals, Eunuchs etc.

Introduction

In our society, we speak the language of rights loud and often. But, do the marginalized really have access to these rights? Individuals are denied their rights in the name of sex, sexuality, caste and religion. Social exclusion is a situation where certain groups or community within a society are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against. These groups are often differentiated by race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion, caste or gender. The third gender people who are extremely marginalized from the mainstream society are also included in the category of socially excluded in the Indian context. The moment the person decides to assert their gender identity as a third gender (hijra), the family casts them out of the house. The family's rejection is often conditioned by the wider societal intolerance towards gender non-conformity (PUCLK, 2001).

On the streets of Indian villages one sometimes comes across an unusual sight of a group of closely shaven persons in female attire, singing and dancing, making overtures to the onlookers, cracking sexually charged jokes at men and making loud clapping sounds with their hands. To people these individuals may look very interesting and outlandish freaks of nature. Not because they sing and dance but because of their ambivalent physical appearance. They shave, smoke and talk like men but dress and behave in a more feminine way. On seeing them, one question which would immediately strike relates to who are these people, male or female? And if they are neither males nor females, then what? In the Indian society these peoples are popularly referred to as 'Hijras', 'Khusras', 'Asexuals', 'Neutrals', 'Eunuchs', etc. All the terms included in the nomenclature are used to describe the identity of

these people who have one thing in common and perhaps the most decisive one that there is something wrong with their sexual organs. So one can say that, for years we have looked at Hijras, but never seen or understood them.

Who exactly are these Third Gender people or Hijras? There is not one but a number of descriptions given by few scholars who have attempted in-depth studies on them. One of the beliefs is that they are castrated males and hermaphrodites. Reddy (2006) uses the term Hijra in her study and argues that hijras, as one knows, are men who desire to be feminine; they might be hermaphrodite by birth, or men who choose to castrate themselves or those who merely wear feminine attire. A “real hijra” is said to be like an ascetic or sannyasi (a wandering, homeless ascetic)- completely free of sexual desire. Today, some of them refer to themselves as belonging to the “third” gender. Serena Nanda (1999) in her work argues, “He (hijra) is a third gender role in India, who is neither male nor female but contains the element of both”. She argues that hijras express the most common view, held by both hijras and people in the larger society, that the hijras are an alternative gender, neither men nor women.

Third gender people are subjected to different forms of the marginalization in the society. The problems related to third gender individuals include from lack of gender identity, lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, social abuse and social stigma and finally leading to overemphasized and unwanted differences and injustice at every point of their life. Third gender people are part of the society but are hidden most of the time as the society confirms only a binary classification of gender. Individuals are expected to relate themselves with the gender of their biological sex as well as the gender roles and expectations associated with that particular gender. Normally, people are characterized as males or females, those who do not express characteristics attributed to the other gender are stigmatized and seen often as social deviants. Inconsistency in the performance between biological sex and gender expression is usually not tolerated by the society (Gagne, Tewksbury and Mcgaughey, 1997). As these individuals violate conformist gender expectations, they become targeted for discrimination and oppression. Therefore, they become the members of a marginalized and vulnerable population that experiences more psychosocial and health problems than other social groups (Lombardi, 2001).

Serena Nanda (1999) argues, “He (hijra) is a third gender role in India, who is neither male nor female but contains the element of both”. She argues that hijras express the most common view, held by both hijras and people in the larger society, that the hijras are an alternative gender, neither men nor women. The hijra role is a magnet that attracts people with many different kinds of cross-gender identities, attributes and behaviours. Such individuals of course, exist in our own and perhaps all the societies. What is noteworthy about the hijras is that the role is so deeply rooted in Indian culture that it can accommodate a wide variety of temperaments, personalities, sexual needs, gender identities, cross-gender behaviours and the level of commitment without losing its cultural meaning. The ability of the hijra role to succeed as a symbolic reference point giving significant meaning to the lives of the many different kinds of people who make up the hijra community, is undoubtedly related to the variety and significance of alternative gender roles and gender transformations in Indian mythology and traditional culture.

Sharma (2009), argues that having known the fact that hijras, being sexually deformed carry a stigma, this biological condition causes identity crisis for them. According to third gender people themselves, this state of theirs makes their acceptance very difficult in the society. The fear of stigma is

so strong among general populace that it not only drives third gender people out of their homes but also put into danger their families' relationships within the kinship circles and also hinders formation of new relationship with others. Being sexually deformed, they are not capable of reproducing. Inability to reproduce, in view of the cultural traditions of Indian society is socially disapproved. Any such individual is singled out in the society. It is on account of sexual deformity that the third gender people become stigmatized. In any human society there is always every likelihood that people, in general, would practice discrimination against any stigmatized individual. The sense of stigma practiced, as Goffman puts it, is the gap between what a person ought to be, "virtual social identity", and what a person actually is, "actual social identity". Anyone who has a gap between these two identities is stigmatized.

The stigma of asexuality makes third gender peoplesome kind of an outsider in the society. The stigma not makes him an outsider in relation to members of the society as such but also isolates him from his family and from the society at large. He, therefore, does not find a space in the family and consequently is forced to look for an alternate arrangement for his living. But, since their presence in the family attaches a stigma therefore they have no alternative other than to leave home and live with others of their kind(Sharma, 2009).

The present paper has tried to look into the whole process of exclusion and marginalization they undergo even today despite of the introduction of "The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019. Before one actual see into the areas wherein their marginalisation takes place, it is important to have a look at the bill which was introduced to safeguard their interests and to include them in the mainstream society.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 19, 2019 and was passed on 5th August, 2019.

Definition of a transgender person: The Bill defines a transgender person as one whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth. It includes trans-men and trans-women, persons with intersex variations, gender-queers, and persons with socio-cultural identities, such as kinnar and hijra. Intersex variations is defined to mean a person who at birth shows variation in his or her primary sexual characteristics, external genitalia, chromosomes, or hormones from the normative standard of male or female body.

- Prohibition against discrimination: The Bill prohibits the discrimination against a transgender person, including denial of service or unfair treatment in relation to: (i) education; (ii) employment; (iii) healthcare; (iv) access to, or enjoyment of goods, facilities, opportunities available to the public; (v) right to movement; (vi) right to reside, rent, or otherwise occupy property; (vii) opportunity to hold public or private office; and (viii) access to a government or private establishment in whose care or custody a transgender person is.
- Right of residence: Every transgender person shall have a right to reside and be included in his household. If the immediate family is unable to care for the transgender person, the person may be placed in a rehabilitation centre, on the orders of a competent court.

- **Employment:** No government or private entity can discriminate against a transgender person in employment matters, including recruitment, and promotion. Every establishment is required to designate a person to be a complaint officer to deal with complaints in relation to the Act.
- **Education:** Educational institutions funded or recognised by the relevant government shall provide inclusive education, sports and recreational facilities for transgender persons, without discrimination.
- **Health care:** The government must take steps to provide health facilities to transgender persons including separate HIV surveillance centres, and sex reassignment surgeries. The government shall review medical curriculum to address health issues of transgender persons, and provide comprehensive medical insurance schemes for them.
- **Certificate of identity for a transgender person:** A transgender person may make an application to the District Magistrate for a certificate of identity, indicating the gender as 'transgender'. A revised certificate may be obtained only if the individual undergoes surgery to change their gender either as a male or a female.
- **Welfare measures by the government:** The Bill states that the relevant government will take measures to ensure the full inclusion and participation of transgender persons in society. It must also take steps for their rescue and rehabilitation, vocational training and self-employment, create schemes that are transgender sensitive, and promote their participation in cultural activities.
- **Offences and penalties:** The Bill recognizes the following offences against transgender persons: (i) forced or bonded labour (excluding compulsory government service for public purposes), (ii) denial of use of public places, (iii) removal from household, and village, (iv) physical, sexual, verbal, emotional or economic abuse. Penalties for these offences vary between six months and two years, and a fine.
- **National Council for Transgender persons (NCT):** The NCT will consist of: (i) Union Minister for Social Justice (Chairperson); (ii) Minister of State for Social Justice (Vice- Chairperson); (iii) Secretary of the Ministry of Social Justice; (iv) one representative from ministries including Health, Home Affairs, and Human Resources Development. Other members include representatives of the NITI Aayog, and the National Human Rights Commission. State governments will also be represented. The Council will also consist of five members from the transgender community and five experts from non-governmental organisations.
- The Council will advise the central government as well as monitor the impact of policies, legislation and projects with respect to transgender persons. It will also redress the grievances of transgender persons.

In the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, one still sees that the rights of the third gender/transgender persons are not protected and hence they are socially excluded and marginalised.

Social Exclusion, Social Stigma and Marginalization

Many people of India believe that the hijra community regularly checks up on births that have recently taken place and even visit hospitals in search of children who are born intersexed and if they come across such a child they take it away forcibly, and in earlier times even had a legal right to do so

(Talwar, 1999). However, Nanda(1999), during her extensive research within the community found no evidence to support such an impression, as all the hijras she met had joined the community voluntarily. On the other hand, Sharma (2009), who undertook a similar research within the community mentions of a case, who was born intersexed, but whose parents regularly ‘paid off’ a local hijra in order to keep the child. He also mentions another case, whose brother, out of jealousy, informed the hijras about him, who then came and took him away against his wishes and those of his parents.

One to four percent of the world population is intersexed, not fully male or female. After independence, however, they were denotified in 1952, though the century old stigma continues. This stigma reduces the third gender people to individuals who are not considered human, thus devoid of all human rights. They suffer a whole lot of mental, physical and sexual oppression in the society (Narrian, 2003). Their vulnerabilities, frustrations and insecurities have been historically overlooked by mainstream society. In India, mainstream society does not accept others beyond the male-female gender norm. Those who live beyond this continuum are subject to harassments and abuses. The third gender people claim that mainstream society does not understand their culture, gender and sexuality. Dimensions of their social deprivation and harassments to them have never received attention of development sectors (Khan et. al, 2009).

It has been seen that this community used to possess higher social prestige due to their specific social and cultural role but for most, that role is changing. While they used to have a power through ability to bless and curse, in contemporary world, the society ridicules gender-variant people for being different, which puts this group in a vulnerable situation and now socially they are excluded from the mainstream society. In addition, today their existence and the roles are still overlooked by the legal framework and are excluded from the economic, political and social services because of being identified as third gender or third sex. The complex gender approach has put the third gender community in the marginalized position from the beginning of their journey of life. In the transition from childhood to adolescence third gender people found themselves unlike other boys, for instance, they used to play with girls and feel attraction toward boys. While the incompatible sex-gender roles and attitudes are tolerable to some extent during the childhood period of third gender person; later on in their adolescence, it has always been disapproved as unnatural approach by the society and ultimately by the family. Therefore, third gender people are often devalued from their family members and receive different treatment in terms of clothing, properties or assets, moral supports and other opportunities compared to their other siblings who are in the binary social norm (Khan et. al, 2009).

Third gender people are often discriminated against not only by wider society but by their own families, and denied the opportunity to live a full and meaningful life. The influences of predominant norms have always forced them to give up their family and other social relations and later on are included in the hijra community by adopting the traditional life and occupations that the hijra community has developed to live and survive (Khan et. al, 2009). Thus, the moment the person decides to assert their gender identity as a third gender person, the family casts them out of the house. The family’s rejection is often conditioned by the wider societal intolerance towards gender non-conformity (PUCL-K, 2009). Josim (2012) argues that, a basic right such as accommodation is also inaccessible for hijra community in the mainstream society.

For the transgender communities the experience of the family is frighteningly different. The institution of the family plays a significant role in the marginalization of these communities. Instead of protecting their child from the violence inflicted by the wider society, the family in fact provides an arena to act out the intolerances of the wider society. Those who violate the existing social codes which prescribe how a man or a woman is to behave are subject to daily humiliation, beatings and expulsion from the family itself. The extreme stigmatization surrounding transgressions around alternative sexuality as well as sex work makes it extremely difficult for families to accept their children. Further, there are very few cultural/social resources for families to draw upon that will enable them to understand the sexual and gender identity and behavior of their children (Harsha and Ramesh, 2016).

The third gender people of Jammu region are also facing the same kind of social exclusion. A few of the third gender people visit their biological families as most of them were from outside the Jammu region. Many of them had no idea about their family of origin. Secondly, because of the fear of social stigma and that their deformity can create problems for their family they didn't visit their biological family and thirdly, they were also not allowed to go by their gurus. The third gender people further argued that most of the time because of insecurity felt by their gurus, the chelas were not permitted to visit their families and when asked the Guru's they argued that the chelas might take the valuable items collected during the badhais for their native families, so they were not permitted. Most of the chelas were even not allowed to interact with the Gurus of the other dera.

Ojha (2011), argues that, the various stages of grief may include shock, numbness, confusion, denial and anger. It can be particularly hard for parents to deal with uncertainty, when decisions are being delayed in the best interests of the child. Sometimes this means a parent literally cannot hear what a health professional is telling them "All I could see was his mouth opening and closing". Parents need: A physician with good information or who is able to make a referral to someone else who is more informed; information and resources as a bridge over this space of numbness, confusion and shock, and time to sift through it; a resource that provides answers to the typical questions asked by family members, schools, etc.

While hijra community is socially excluded from the mainstream social life, the civil society is not giving enough attention to this issue. Their basic rights and social acceptance with dignity are absent in every step of the development sector. Thus, a third gender individual due to sexual deformity is a stigmatized person. The stigma of asexuality makes him some kind of an outsider in the society. The stigma not only makes him an outsider in relation to members of the society as such but also isolates him from his family and from the society at large. He, therefore, does not find a space in the family and is consequently forced to look for an alternate arrangement for his living. Such a state of isolation from his kith and kins is a compulsion and not a choice. It is so as most of them express their emotional attachment with their families by saying that they wish to be with their parents, brothers and sisters. But, since their presence in the family attaches a stigma, therefore they have no alternative other than to leave home and live with others of their kind. The identity crises, therefore, forces him/her to accept an alternative way of living in a mini society of hijras (Sharma, 2009). Due to social exclusion, third gender people have to live on the extreme margins of the society.

Education, Social Stigma and Marginalisation

Third gender people often experience loneliness and abusive treatment in school either by the classmates or by the teachers because of their complex gender approach. For instance, the fellow students refuse to play or share the knowledge with third gender people, accused by the teachers as effeminate boy for violating social norms and so on. This vulnerable hijra community, though, is willing to access the education with ordinary people; they often leave the school of the hostile environment and lack of friendly social behaviors by the society, and also fail to find safer place to have education opportunity due to their gender behaviours (Josim, 2012). Being a third gender in this world spells discrimination. They grew up as one, without education. It was found that in Jammu region, the third gender children were denied education as their names were stuck off from a well known private school when their identity was revealed. This clearly showed the extent of gender injustice done to the members of third gender community. Now these children were again readmitted to another private school where the principal knew their identity but it was kept secret from the school staff as well as from students. It was further found that even the general public also argued that the third gender children should not study with the other children because of the fear that their children might learn their culture and way of behaving. ‘should Hijra children study with the other children?’ was a question asked to the general public, in order to study the stigma which the society attaches with the community and it was found that majority of the respondents from the general public argued that third gender children should not study with the other children because of the fear that their children might learn hijra culture and way of behaving. So one finds that the general public in Jammu region, somewhere consider them as being ‘outsider’ in the society even after the recognition by Supreme Court of India.

While third gender (hijra) community is excluded from the mainstream social life, the civil society is not giving enough attention to this issue. Their basic rights and social acceptance with dignity are absent in every step of the development sector. Due to social exclusion, third gender people (hijras) are denied access to education. Majority of them are either not educated or less educated and this can be seen from the data given in the table no. 3.2 (in chapter 3). High dropout rate and low school years among them are alarming. Their dropout is not by choice but by force. Insensitive attitude of teachers towards the third gender community has adverse impact on the continuity of the education of third gender in a school.

During review of secondary sources, few examples were also looked into. A transgender from Chennai namely Naleena Prasheetha told the Times of India about the difficulties she faced during her studies. “For transgender students on educational campuses, it is no cakewalk. While some colleges have opened their doors to them, it is still a huge struggle at the school level”, says Naleena Prasheetha, the only transgender student in Loyola college in the current batch (2016). The viscom student, who had to drop out of school after she underwent the operation, says she studied her plus two years of schooling at home and wrote the exams. The issue at the school level requires a lot more attention as gender identity and sexuality is understood during teenage. “Even though I wanted to go back to school, I couldn’t. If the authorities set a tone that everyone needs to be treated equally, students too will become aware”, she said speaking on the sidelines of a conference on mainstreaming transgenders at Loyola college. While her keen interest in academics made her pursue higher education, she says many others are not confident

of enrolling in various institutions. This depends on how approachable educational institutions are to attract more such students.

Naleena argued that a separate category for transgenders in admission forms is one step of being approachable but it shouldn't be for the sake of it. "I had applied to four colleges when I completed schooling. While Loyola gave me admission immediately, the others were hesitant. So, the attitude of acceptance matters more than just having a 'T' option sign in forms", She said. Naleena who is now the secretary of women welfare in the student union of the college, recalled how frightening it was when she first entered the college campus. "Initially, there were whispers and taunts by a few but the teachers were extremely encouraging which helped me make it through my first semester. As I participated in extra-curricular events, I got to know other students who made me feel comfortable," she said.

Identity Crisis, Social Stigma and Marginalization

Deprived from family and school environment, third gender reported that, as feminine boys, they were often told that their attitudes, body-gestures, and behaviors were unlike other boys. The third gender people are confused about their sex-gender alignment: "Am I a male, female, female mind in a male body, or a third gender?" Many third gender people claimed to have a soul of a female trapped in a male body which means that the third gender people have penis like men and breasts like women to indicate that they are neither males nor females but a mix of both. Many play a double-life in this dichotomous gendered society to avoid stigma and discriminations. They wear female clothes and adopt feminine names while visiting peers. However, they wear male clothes and adapt male gestures while living with or visiting relatives. Their feminine role is denied. They cannot avoid dilemma of their identity crisis (Khan et. al., 2009).

In relation to stigmatized persons, Goffman argues, "By definition, we believe that a person with stigma is not quite human. On this assumption, one exercises varieties of discrimination through which one effectively, though unthinkingly, reduce one's life chances. We construct a stigma theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority and count for the danger he (possibly) represent". He was interested in the gap between what a person ought to be, "virtual social identity," and what a person actually is, "actual social identity". Anyone who has gap between these two identities is stigmatized (Ritzer, 2000).

The third gender people from Jammu region reported that maintaining two different life-styles in and outside the home created an identity crisis. A third gender individual is compelled to go through strenuous situations and struggles to be declared as a self-identified hijra in a society where it is seen as a curse. It is difficult for them to cross the boundary of male-female dichotomous gender norms and to find a healthy, safe and peaceful space in this hetero-normative society. The respondents said that feminine emotions trapped inside a masculine body were ignored and denied. Hijra sexuality and sexual behaviors conflict with her biological sex, and her biological sex mismatches with her preferred feminine gender roles. Thus, the third gender people living in Jammu region said that conflict relating to self-identity had diminished their human dignity and self-reliance. They generally use their actual social identity as third gender during badhai collection but during interaction with their relatives or during a visit to the market they used to show their virtual social identity.

India's election commission has given third sex individual an independent identity by letting them state their gender as "other" on ballot forms. Their recognition as an independent group is the first step towards official recognition of a community that has so far remained on the margins of society. The

recognition comes 15 years after the third sex was granted the right to vote in 1994. Besides the electoral rolls, in 2011 census also third gender people were counted under “others” category. Meanwhile, in the landmark judgment, giving legal sanctity to the third gender, the supreme court on 15th April 2014 created the “third gender” status for transgenders. In the judgement it is stated that these transgenders, even though insignificant in numbers, are still human beings and therefore they have every right to enjoy their human rights. It is with this recognition that many rights attached to the sexual recognition as third gender would be available to this community more meaningfully. The Supreme court asked the centre and states to treat transgender as socially and economically backward classes of citizens and extend all kinds of reservation in educational institutions. Thus, the apex court’s judgement provides opportunities to revamp and restructure their educational planning and management as well as change their classroom environment and practices to differentiated learning processes to education inclusive and accommodative of transgender learners. Instead of claiming that they are variants, they are to be considered as third gender and be included in our general educational system (Raj T, 2016).

Occupation, Social Stigma and Marginalization

The hijra claimed inability of getting mainstream job due to lack of education, “unusual” non-conforming lifestyle unacceptable for the working environment. “We because of our feminine gesture, do not have access to any job. We are always kicked out from the job on the grounds of ‘destroying’ the job environment”. Most third gender respondents in Jammu region expressed their desire to be involved in any occupation. However, they were denied in the job market. They were involved into the occupation of badhai (blessing a newborn child through dancing and singing) collection. Almost all the third gender people of Jammu region are into the occupation of collection of badhai during the marriage, mundan ceremonies, at the birth of a son etc. Thus, the economy of third gender people living in Jammu region was based on badhai collection. They celebrated and endowed wishes on the birth of a male child and on the marriage ceremony of the son within the families. People give them money in return to the dance they perform in their home. None of the third gender person was found in the government profession or in any other business. Thus, the third gender people of Jammu region have no means of earning other than badhai collection. But, these days traditional hijra occupations are constrained in many ways. For example, badhai became difficult now a days, particularly in urban areas, and in rural areas, even if allowed, finally they were refused to be paid at the end of performance. These constraints influenced them in making rude remarks followed by traditional clap and lifting sarees to show their “castrated” genitals in public. When asked to the general public in Jammu region, do they have any objection if third gender people work as domestic worker in their homes, majority of the respondents argued that they would not prefer them, as they argued that they are not a part of the society and should be kept outside the society.

Thus, disowned by their families in their childhood and ridiculed and abused by everyone as “hijra” or “third gender”, eunuchs earn their livelihood by dancing at the beat of drums and often resort to obscene postures, but their pain and agony is not generally noticed and this study is just a reminder of how helpless and neglected this section of society is. Thousands of welfare schemes have been launched by the government but these are only for men and women and third gender do not figure anywhere and this demand only showed mirror to society (Sharma, 2012).

In a male dominant society where women itself are finding hard to make a mark, a third category of gender is added- transgender. Transgender have made advances in the last decades. The status of transgender has started to rise but they are not considered to be equal to other gender. Society is finding it difficult to accept the roles transgender play and they are discriminated, harassed, humiliated and exploited in home and at work place which makes the transgender feel stressed and depressed. Inclusion of transgender at workplace is a significant trend that encourages to have a career. Transgender experience discrimination in their everyday life. A survey by the ‘National Transgender Discrimination’ revealed that transgender lost job due to bias and harassment at work place, and assault. Many factors have helped transgender to occupy position in work as full or part time. The major of all is the advent of internet. Internet allowed transgender to identify and communicate with their community. They come close in contact with each other and were not isolated because of this communication. Transgender also have the right to avail facilities that match their gender (Raj. T, 2016).

Most of the third gender people(hijras) in Jammu region lived at the margins of society with very low status. Many of them got their income by performing at ceremonies or by begging. Those who perform ceremonies call themselves as “ManglaMukhis” the people who beg only for blessings. In the words of the president of the community “hum tohsabka mangal chahte hain, hum kisi se, dukanonmein yaa railway station par beekhnahin mangte, hum toh badhaimangte hain, issiliye hum ManglaMukhi hain”. But one can also see some third Gender people (hijras) begging in the market. The respondents argued that they are not into the profession of begging like other third gender people in other parts of India. However, during the fieldwork, it was also seen that some men, dressed like females begged at the traffic signals and tried to defame the third gender community in Jammu region. On being asked about them to the ManglaMukhis of Jammu region, they argued that these are the men only who by changing their attire pretend to be third gender and beg in the city and they have often entered into conflict with them. Even the authorities don’t support them (third gender people), as begging and beggars were found in and around the city.

Marriage, Social Stigma and Third Gender

Enforced marriage is another crucial challenge interfaced by transgender community. The heterosexual convictions and homophobia compel transgender people into marriage. Many of the parents think that marriage is a remedy for gender identity disorder. Compulsory marriages and divorces drive them in to mental depression and it leads to alcoholic consumption and other unhealthy habits (Rakhi, 2016)⁴². Similar situation was seen, in the life of Jyoti (a case from Kashmir region discussed in chapter 5). On being asked, what was the main reason of leaving her home? Jyoti replied that “Gharmeinbadi problem thi, agar gharmeinrehtatohladki se shaadikarnipadti”.

Marriage was not only a problem for the third gender people, due to biological deformity but it also became the problem for their elder/younger siblings. The third gender people, generally, hid the information regarding their biological families, because they were afraid that this would create problems for their family as well. They argued that because of their sexual deformity, there is hindrance in the marriage of their brothers and sisters. Though, social stigma was attached with the community because of their sexual deformity, but on the other hand there was social stigma in terms of marriage of their brothers and sisters also.

Jena (2016), in his paper argues that practice of stigmatizing the hijras is at a melting pot now. With their declaration as third gender, with their national and state level enumerations, with the proliferation of literature on them through research and popular writings in the media, with increasing deliberations and social activism, their stigmatization is in a melting point. Now they have started accessing educational institutions, health centers, recreation centers, transport and communication systems which were erst while banned for them. In the city of Bhubaneswar, it is noted and they claim that they are now using the normal entitlements enjoyed by the city dwellers. Voter's identity, Aadhar cards, Pan cards, ration cards are now issued to them. This puts an end to their stigmatization and forcefully accommodates them into services and supports ensured by the Government.

Thus, one can conclude that, yet, as a result of their marginalization, a closely-knit subculture has evolved, and in recent years hijras are slowly emerging on the national stage, standing up for their rights (Sharma, 2009). Further, hijras argue that society may hate them, but they live and bear all the tortures, abuse and exclusion from the society. They lead a socially secluded life of their own and live in isolation, i.e., away from the whole society.

The third gender people (hijras) want society to know that they want to just be looked at as a group that is different and unique in their own way. Hence from the above discussion it may be concluded that though the society views the hijras as being nasty, dirty, and a disgrace to mankind, but the hijras are careless because they have no shame in their belief and culture. They feel that it is a freedom of choice and sacrifice to engage in something as extraordinary as becoming a hijra. They think that if they do not follow their ancestors in the tradition then they would be treated badly in their afterlife. It is an honor to the hijra to have achieved that great name. Therefore, one finds through the paper that third gender people keep their head held high no matter what people in society have to say about them and their way of living. They just love being what they are.

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