

# Problems, Challenges and Experienced Faced by Trans-Genders People in Indian Society

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## Abstract

The trans-genders have experienced many problems and obstacles within the course of their development, but now measures have been implemented to safeguard their conditions. The growth and development of education and generation of employment opportunities amongst the trans-genders, protection of their rights, allowing them equal participation in the development of the programs, equal say in the decision making matters, and elimination of stigma, discriminatory treatment, abuse, harassment and human rights violation are the factors that would lead to progress and enhancement of their socio-economic status. The implementation of these policies and measures are required in the day to day lives of these individuals so that they do not feel vulnerable and are able to sustain their living conditions in an appropriate manner.

**Keywords:** *Trans-genders People, Socio-Economic Status, Problems, Challenges,*

## Introduction

The term trans-gender is used to describe those individuals who contravene the social gender norms. The term trans-gender arose in the mid-1990s from the mass community to designate the people who are gender different. It is often used as an umbrella term to indicate the individuals who confront rigid, binary gender constructions and who present culturally widespread stereotypical gender roles. Trans-gender people may live either full time or part time in the gender role opposite to their biological gender. They are variedly referred to in different places, though they are cross-dressers. They are socially

underprivileged, economically disadvantaged and politically marginalized<sup>[1]</sup>

India has a history of people with a wide range of trans-gender associated characteristics, beliefs, and practices. People with such characteristics include Hijras, Aravanis, Kothis etc. Ancient myths grant them with special powers to bring good fortune and abundance. These characteristics have always been part of the wide culture and were treated with reverence in the past though in the present only some are accorded with reverence. Despite this evidently sanctioned place in Indian culture, trans-genders experience discrimination and mistreatment in all areas in contemporary India and they are subjected to unjust treatments like verbal abuse, physical and sexual violence; false arrests; denial of share in their ancestral property, services, and admission to educational institutions; and victimization in multiple settings like family, educational institutions, workplace, health care, medical centers, and public

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places. [2]

### **Historical Evolution of Transgender**

Trans-gender persons had been part of Indian society for centuries. There was historical evidence of recognition of third gender or the persons not sanctioned to male or female gender in near the beginning texts of ancient India. The concept of tritiya-prakriti or napumsaka had been an integral part of the Hindu mythology, folklore, epic and early Vedic and Puranic literatures. The term 'napumsaka' had been used to designate the absence of procreative ability, presented by identifying the difference from masculine and female signs. Thus, some of the early texts comprehensively dealt with the matters of sexuality and the idea of third gender which was a recognized thought therein. In fact, the Jain text even mentions the concept of 'psychological sex', which put emphasis upon the psychological make-up of an individual, different from their sexual characteristics. The trans-genders are sanctioned with powers to confer blessings on auspicious occasions, like marriage and child birth. During these occasions and inaugural functions, they sing, dance and confer their blessings. The trans-genders have played a prominent role in the royal courts of the Islamic world, mainly in the Ottoman empires and the Mughal rule in the Medieval India. They rose to renowned positions as political advisors, administrators, managers, officers, generals and guardians. Trans-genders were considered ingenious, shrewd, truthful, responsible, loyal and had free access to all areas, places and sections of the population, thereby contributing an important part in the politics of the empire building in the Mughal era. The British administration considered them to be separate castes or tribes in different parts of India. In the present world, there have been implementation of many schemes and policies by the government to safeguard the trans-gender communities. [3]

The trans-gender individuals, who were older, less educated, unemployed, had low household income or were single showed a decline in their living conditions as compared to those who were young, possessed high education, were employed, had a high household income or had a companion. [4]

### **Problems and Issues Experienced by Transgender in Indian Society**

There have been number of problems and issues experienced by the trans-genders within the community and these have been stated as follows: -

**i. Low level of Education** – These individuals do not possess high education and this has been largely disadvantageous to them. They have either not been enrolled in educational institutions or have dropped out of school at an early age. Those who discontinue their education, they usually feel unsafe in school because of their gender expression, they are not treated in a proper manner and are harassed and abused, and this makes them feel vulnerable within the school environment. Another cause is their financial position is low and they are not able to pay for their school, hence at an early age look for means to generate the source of income.

**ii. Lack of Safe Environments** – The trans-genders usually experience confusion and negative responses because of their gender atypical behaviours. The main problems that they face are the lack of safe environments, deprived access to healthcare and medical services, insufficient resources to address the mental health concerns, verbal and physical abuse and a lack of continuity of care giving by the family and the community members. Due to depressed living conditions and problems, the trans-genders even think of taking their own lives. They develop this notion that their existence is meaningless and they do not have any recognition within the society.

**iii. Lack of Employment Opportunities** – Reputed jobs and employment opportunities, expect individuals to possess some level of education or at least the basic literacy skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Due to low level of education, these individuals are unable to find employment opportunities in well reputed organizations and institutions. But there have been implementation of measures that have led to an enhancement in their status, hence, they were employed in projects, either run by themselves or by the members of the civil society, who have employed trans-genders in their respective community based Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). These NGOs primarily centred upon HIV/AIDS and other related issues and it is vital to understand that the availability of the trans-genders for the interviews is positive in these projects. [5]

**iv. Health Problems** – Due to lack of safe living conditions and other facilities, the trans-genders do experience health problems. They suffer from one or the other kinds of illnesses such as low or high blood pressure, diabetes, pain in the legs etc. An area of great concern has been an increase in the number of trans-genders who are HIV positive, they do not reveal their status, nor take any kind of treatment and thus get this disease at a young age. Other kinds of health problems that these individuals experience are, cold, flu, typhoid, malaria, asthma and so forth. Health problems of various kinds are experienced by all individuals and not just the trans-genders. Most of the trans-genders have been appreciative of the treatment that they are receiving and the attitude of the private doctors in their clinics. In the present world, doctors and physicians have been positive about treatment for those who are prompt in paying the fees.

**v. Discrimination** – Trans-gender people face discrimination on a large scale, which itself is referred to as stigmatization. They experience unfair treatment

in every aspect of life, be it employment opportunities, enrolment in the educational institutions, lawful recognition, access to social resources, including living a decent and a normal life and development of skills. In various areas, these individuals are turned away as it is believed that they always ask for money. For the trans-gender communities, the struggle begins at an early phase. The non-conformity to the prescribed gender roles makes them vulnerable and often leads to verbal and corporeal abuse at the hands of their parents, siblings and other family members. In educational institutions, the discriminatory treatment that they experience compel them to leave their studies and drop out of school. Discriminatory treatment gives rise to mental trauma amongst the individual.

**vi. Oppression** – Oppression is another negative area that is experienced by the trans-genders. Trans-gender women in Kashmir experience oppression to a great extent; they are treated cruelly, unkindly, they are harassed and discriminated against. They have low levels of independence and confidence to participate in the social and political decision making. Due to low levels of education, they become ineligible for white collar jobs and are engaged into minority jobs, which do not provide sufficient income. The oppression that they experience compel them to move to other places and the nature of oppression primarily includes, verbal and physical abuse which has a serious influence upon the psychological approach of these individuals. The mental health problems include, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Oppressive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Major Depressive Episode (MDE), suicidal tendencies and panic disorder. [6]

#### **Status of Education amongst the Trans-genders**

Trans-genders are referred to the third gender in the Indian Constitution. Within the Indian context, there is not any popularity for trans-gender education, they are deprived of the family and the

school environment. In educational institutions, they are discriminated against, which compel them to discontinue their education; this even compels them to put at risk, their future career opportunities, the reason being that well reputed white collar jobs require educational qualifications, which they do not possess, hence they are not able to obtain good employment opportunities. The trans-genders are the ones who are in most cases uneducated or undereducated, their enrolment is significantly low and there has been an increase in their drop-out rate. The main reasons that their status of education is low are, they experience discriminatory treatment and harassment within the educational institutions, they are quite often asked to leave the school and are not accepted by the society as other individuals and they are not provided with any prospects or openings, hence, they have fewer opportunities as compared to others.

In India, some states work for the development of the status of the trans-gender communities. Tamil Nadu has been the only state, which has been successful in generation of innovative methods in inclusion of the trans-genders by introducing the trans-gender welfare policy. In accordance to the policy, trans-genders will be able to access the free Male to Female Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) in the government hospital, there will be free housing program, various citizenship documents, admission in government colleges with full scholarships for the higher studies, the alternative sources of livelihood for the formation of Self-Help Groups and initiating of income generation programs (IGP). Tamil Nadu is also the first state to form the Trans-gender Welfare Board in 2008 with representatives belonging to the trans-gender community. There have been implementation of measures, policies and efforts by the states to bring about empowerment of the trans-genders. [7]

### Challenges in the Trans-gender Education

The challenges that these individuals experience

within the course of attainment of education have been stated as follows:

**i. Confidentiality** – The trans-genders are normally deprived of care and affection and are often abused and mistreated by their family members. Trans-gender individuals experience many difficulties and problems in their life time that affect their quality of life. Starting with the rejection from their families at the time of origin of their childhood, the denial experienced by the trans-gender individuals develop in every walks of life in the society, as they grow up.

They normally have families which are not supportive and they experience violence and ejection from their home if their gender identity or gender expression is disclosed to their family members. Therefore, due to these reasons, they are compelled to maintain their confidentiality.

**ii. Inclusion in School, College and University** – Within educational institutions and the classrooms, the individuals belonging to trans-gender communities are treated in a different manner as compared to other individuals; they are discriminated against. The trans-genders experience problems of inclusion with the other people. The main challenge is to make provision of equal opportunity to education amongst these individuals. A trans-gender or gender non-conforming child who acts against the binary gender norms of the society experience culturally infused trans-phobia and psychological trauma within the family. In addition to one's own sense of estrangement and misunderstandings during self-identification, strongly negative messages about homosexuality in their homes and school environments, make the sexual identity formation of the trans-gender individuals, a procedure categorized by changeable amounts of rejection and approve. [8]

**iii. Lack of Access to other Facilities** – Trans-genders often lack safe access to facilities, such as public restrooms. They are assaulted and abused if they use the restroom that confirms their gender identity or are forced to use a restroom that does not confirm their gender identity. In any area, where people use lockers to keep their personal belongings, these individuals do not have access to locker room facilities that confirm their gender identity. In educational institutions, they may experience these kinds of problems, hence, this proves to be a severe problem and a challenge for them.

**iv. Lack of Ideal Personality** – Trans-genders usually feel isolated and secluded from the community. They are treated in a different manner as compared to other males and females in educational institutions and employment settings. They either possess low levels of education or no education at all, hence, these prove to be barriers within the course of their attainment of employment opportunities and enhancing their living conditions. Though there have been initiation of programs that employ trans-gender people, there have been development of libraries that provide information about biological sex and gender, gender identity and being a trans-gender and formulation of measures that contribute in improving their financial position. These measures and programs have contributed in alleviating the problems and the challenges that they experience.

**v. Other Challenges** – Education is regarded to be vital for the development of a person, society or country. During the ancient times, the trans-genders were respected, but they in the present existence, do experience problems and challenges. Due to low levels of education and lack of recognition within the society, they get involved into certain problems, which can be forced sex work, begging, performing dances and singing during marriage ceremonies or other occasions, such as child birth, alienation from

the family and society, and insecure living. These problems need to get resolved and in the present existence, trans-genders will be given admission in schools and colleges with all the facilities approving their admission, under the category of the disadvantaged groups defined by the Right to Education Act, 2009. Trans-genders are eligible for 25% reservation under the economically weaker section (EWS) and disadvantaged student's category for admission. They are regarded to be belonging to the socio-economically backward sections of the society.

In the Indian culture, people are allowed the right to freedom and expression. They have the right to education, practice their religion, and get engaged into the employment of their own choice; every individual has the right to be independent. The concept of globalization is associated with the west, but different viewpoints have been formed with the impact of globalization, and there have been progress and advancements in every sphere and phases. The trans-genders are still regarded to be the deprived and the backward communities, in order to lead to the development of the nation, it is vital to focus upon the development of the trans-gender communities. Whether trans-gender identity is described as the third gender or a transition from one gender to another, whether trans-gender workers are stereotyped as healers, or sex workers, and how gender identity is related to sexuality are all areas that are rooted within the cultural background. With the influence of globalization, it is recommended that the trans-genders individuals should be provided with equal rights and opportunities, they should be allowed to participate in decision making, have the right to education and employment opportunities and sustain their living conditions. All individuals are required to work together towards creation of a society, in which there should not be any kind of discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, race, ethnicity, religion or socio-

economic background.

### Conclusion

The trans-genders have experienced many problems and obstacles within the course of their development, but now measures have been implemented to safeguard their conditions. The growth and development of education and generation of employment opportunities amongst the trans-genders, protection of their rights, allowing them equal participation in the development of the programs, equal say in the decision making matters, and elimination of stigma, discriminatory treatment, abuse, harassment and human rights violation are the factors that would lead to progress and enhancement of their socio-economic status. The implementation of these policies and measures are required in the day to day lives of these individuals so that they do not feel vulnerable and are able to sustain their living conditions in an appropriate manner.

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