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RESEARCH ARTICLE

GENDER EQUALITY IN INDIA: ASPIRATIONS OF TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Civil society instilled hope and confidence among humans in the recent past in the 21st century. Aristotle, Locke, Mandela, Gandhi were all the global states men and philosophers staunchly supported the cause of social change and transformation through constant and peaceful struggles. The civil society through leadership efforts made turbulent changes in the modern world and got place and faith in the hearts of the present human generation. Transgender people in the modern era made a tremendous impact in the society by their initiatives for changes. Number of sensitization programmes through media made strenuous efforts to make a real change in the life of transgender community. This piece of research paper analyses about such initiatives taken by those people who believed in the societal change.

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INTRODUCTION

Initiatives

Origin of state and governance in terms of functioning can be traced back in the centuries of antiquity. Almost all theories of state viz., matriarchal theory, patriarchal theory, force, evolutionary, social contract so on emphasised their ways and means in different manners. But all theories accepted that state exists for the sake of the betterment of the communities. Aristotle stated that "happiness is the ultimate motto of all governance". And happiness related with morality has been discussed by Aristotle in his highly celebrated work "Ethics". Although, the above mentioned thesis is different and subjected to different analysis, the existence of state was never questioned. People of different nature exercise their rights as per the constitutional provisions of the political system. If certain community or group were denied the basic rights, then the existence of the state system can be under multifarious queries. In the same sense, the present condition of transgender are under suspicious questions, which raises so many doubts about the welfare policies of the existing state system.

Society, State and Revolution

From the state of nature, the primitive societies were engulfed with discontent and dissatisfaction against the state system. Locke advocated that men "surrendered all the rights to the state except right to life, liberty and property. And further he stated that, if these rights which are surrendered under threat, the people possess right to revolt against the authority. Civil society in the 21st century are booming and mushrooming which fights endlessly for social justice. Most of the Arabian and African Nations fought against the autocratic and dictatorship empires and succeeded. In the same way

transgender under the aegis of non-governmental organizations (NGO) and self-initiatives gradually assert themselves as an unshakable community in the present junction. Individual initiatives particularly started in Tamilnadu, India for empowerment and to attain social justice on par with the "Normal or common subjects".

Initiatives and Social Change

During the 'raj empire', Hijras or Eunuchs can be arrested without warrant under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, if they indulged in playing music, dancing and dressed like women particularly hijras were harassed by police organization under the IPC Sec. 377.

During 1990s support for transgender community spontaneously erupted in Tamilnadu due to major initiatives taken by NGO's. Initially it was meant and utilized for preventing transgender from acquiring sexually transmitted diseases (HIV / AIDS). In 1997 AN was initiated which denotes (Community Action network) in order to take steps against the 'exploiters' who indulge in abusing transgender.

Also in 1996 (Noorima) a transgender in Chennai started 'Aligal welfare' center for protecting and preventing transgender from various kinds of social and legal evils. This served as an eye opener for the transgender community to initiate same type of organizations in various parts of Tamilnadu. This step also helped the community to assert themselves as a part and parcel of the same society in which common people live in. Also in the same year chess society was started and it provided free lands for 22 transgender. This particular step made other transgender to realize their significance and they come to know that some elements in the society are generous enough and concerned about their welfare.

In the same year in Villupuram District “Miss Transgender” competition was held in which the DSP Ravi made a clarion call to all transgender that they should be called as “Aravaanigal” in the concert. Hence forth all transgender called themselves as Aravaanigal and each year the same competition is being conducted with cine play, procession and Seminar, Debates also conducted during the occasion in which more controversial topics were discussed in order to boost the self – confidence of transgender. The role of media is never underestimated, since it focuses all the glittering events and displayed in the front page which asserted the role of transgender in the main scenario.

In 1998, one transgender **Asha Bharathi** started Tamilnadu Ali Association which instilled enormous hope and self-confidence among transgender. The association also indulged in inducing the government and political parties to initiate welfare policies and schemes for the development of transgender. In the same decade Samudhram a famous tamil writer wrote first novel about transgender “Vaadamalli” and awarded Adhitanar prize of Rs.10,000 which he donated for the welfare of the entire transgender. This type of magnanimity and generosity acquainted and generated similar thoughts among the writers and speakers to provide fund for the welfare and development of transgender community.

From 1990 onwards, in Perambur church, every 3rd Saturday special prayer was organized for the welfare of the entire transgender. This step also inculcated and spread out the awareness of transgender in the contemporary society.

By all the aforementioned initiative and measures the common people come to realize the importance of transgender. The transgender community also come to the realization that education is the only panacea for developing their community. In 2003 central social initiative movement was started in order to freely educate transgender community.

2004 was the year of recognition for all transgender community in India. In March 6, in Chennai High Court, a transgender named **Priyababu** case for the livelihood of transgender and the verdict for this first case was providing voting rights, choosing their sex and register themselves.

The judgement was considered as a landmark one since it touched all the hearts and minds of transgender which served as a good precedent for the overall development of the community. India was one among the first country which established universal adult franchise to its citizens. But the founding fathers lacked to visualize the problems of transgender community which may be a great fault on the side of constitutional makers. The British imperial system should be find fault within. From the period of ‘raj empire’ these communities are affected. But the conditions and status are not well known since they are considered as ‘sub human’ or equal to some sales commodities.

In 2005 more number of awareness programmes were organized by conducting skits, and speaking sessions. Major boon came from famous M.S. Swaminathan foundation joined with “Sudha” which organized skits like “ManasinAzhappu”, UraiyadhaNinaivugal”, Maatram so on, These skits emulated

transgender’s inherent problems, social alienation and isolations, questions related to love, legal rights.

In 2006, a documentary film was made in Tamilnadu “Ali Vazhakarugal” and also a book published, “UnarvumUruvamum” which portrayed the real causes and issues of transgender community. In the same year “transgender procession” was held in which more than 700 transgender participated from all the southern parts of India. The media and dailies spreaded and focussed the event in a great manner which served as a “primary opener” for the development of the community. Dadabhi when written the book “Un British rule in India”, it gave a very sharp picture about the exploitative polices of “Raj empire”. People from all parts of India come to know the inbuilt issues of British Political System only after reading the Naoroji’s work. In the same sense, transgender community developed and followed the same awareness policy and programmes.

In the same year **Vidhya** a transgender written the book “NaanSaravananenraVidhya” which was translated into many languages. In Stella Maris College, the work was incorporated into English syllabus Scholarly works like this always has its own impact and the transgender community utilized the opportunity in the right and proper manner.

In 2007, for the sake of enquiring violence against transgender an organization named “Action Aid” involved in scrutinizing 300 case studies in which was attended by very well-known Judges, Police officers, Human Rights Representatives and others.

In all these initiatives and governmental actions, gradually awareness of transgender spreaded out and people were acquainted with various issues related with the community. 2009 is the year of recognition for transgender in which Tamilnadu government started a “Welfare Board” for the development and unleashing Justice.

Up to this year, several initiatives were made and to a larger extent the perceptions related to this community was changed. We may appreciate the leading personalities like Kalki, Rose and number of unknown other transgender for their self-sacrificing commitment and conviction for the development of the entire community.

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