

Transgender – Give a chance to live with us

“We are powerful because we have survived “

~ Audre Lorde

Today on the crossroads an Eunuch was looking for an identity and when we were trying to make the title for this article it was coming like – “Eunuch - Some Unfolded Pages”, “Eunuch – Looking for parallel to gays and lesbians”, “Eunuch – The product of miscalculation of chromosomes”, “Eunuch – Looking to stand with you”, “Eunuch – Looking for their place in the society”, “Eunuch – Waiting for acceptance”, “Eunuch – Where we are wrong?” Now it is for the readers to choose the right one!

From time immemorial the existence of Eunuchs are there, in India they are basically known as *hijras*. They are the most neglected community in our society. The general awareness about *Hijras* is quite low because when you ask them questions like ;who they are and how they are , probably no answer will come. The children get afraid of them and even the most sophisticated people would prefer to ignore them. You will find them on various cross-roads in nearly all the cities of the country begging on the red-lights. They will go from one vehicle to another with the hope that while the traffic jam is there or the vehicles are parked due to red-light they will be able to get some money from the willing persons. A sheer sense of insecurity makes them to move in the groups. They are transgender – neither male nor female. But they prefer to dress in female costumes with a lot of make-up. A typical noise comes when they clap, the clapping is to make their presence felt in the crowd .It is a known biological fact that Hijras are the result of abnormal fertilisation of eggs by two sperms as a matter of intersex. Besides having an ambiguous-looking external genitalia, true hermaphroditism in humans differs from pseudohermaphroditism in that the person's karyotype has both XX and XY chromosome pairs (47XXY, 46XX/46XY, 46XX/47XXY or 45X/XY mosaic) and having both testicular and ovarian tissue. One possible pathophysiologic explanation of this rare phenomenon is a parthenogenetic division of a haploid ovum into two haploid ova. Upon fertilization of the two ova by two sperm cells (one carrying an X and the other carrying a Y chromosome), the two fertilized ova are then fused together resulting in a person having dual genitalial, gonadal (ovotestes) and genetic sex.

Another common cause of hermaphroditism is the crossing over of the SRY from the Y chromosome to the X chromosome during meiosis. The SRY is then activated in only certain areas, causing development of testes in some areas by beginning a series of events starting with the upregulation of SOX9, and in other

areas not being active (causing the growth of ovarian tissues). Thus, testicular and ovarian tissues will both be present in the same individual.

A Hijra is born like a normal child in the womb of a lady. In case, the parents want to hide the transgender child, it can only be till the age of twelve to fourteen years because thereafter the voice culture and the body structure makes them different from normal male or female. When the child is born in the hospital or at home, the group of *Hijras*, visit the place as a matter of the right to have some good money on one hand in the form of blessings on the other hand it solves their purpose to know as to whether another member of their community has come on this earth. Somehow it is a custom in our society that the transgender child is given to the Hijra community and the parents are not allowed to keep the abnormal child with them as their off-spring.

The *Hijras* dresses and make-up themselves in such a manner that it may not be possible to differentiate them from a beautiful lady; it makes them to earn their livelihood by way of indulging in prostitution which is quite common in our society.

The recent Supreme Court judgement of recognising *Hijras* as a transgender human being is really a welcome step, giving long overdue justice to *Hijras* because in some rare cases we witness quite intellectual and intelligent *Hijras*. Some journalists took their interviews where we could see that the *Hijras* are not lacking in any manner if we talk about their articulate power and communication skills. Some of them have gone too far in acquiring education and became research scholars too. There is a great amount of fear psychosis among them - a sense of insecurity and lack of belongingness which affects their self-esteem to a great extent.

Here by way of this article we are trying to encash upon the Supreme Court verdict directing the government to rehabilitate them by giving reservation under OBC quota in employment. How far we will succeed it is really a big question. The *Hijras* are not allowed to live like a normal citizen whether they have got the voter's ID or a ration card or any proof of identity what to say about passport, it is also suspense. There are very few instances when they have harmed anybody physically or otherwise; though, as compared to normal male or female they have got more muscle power. The begging is not enough for their survival that makes them to indulge in prostitution in the form of cheap unnatural sex. Who is to be blamed? It is also a matter of debate like any other prostitute they are also victim of police harassment and atrocity.

Can we change the mind-set of the people? Of course yes, but set-mind cannot be changed. How can we change the attitude of the people towards *Hijras*? What efforts are required to be made to uplift them? How can we afford them to acquire some respectful position in the society? Most importantly, how to enrol them in the schools to get some basic education? The Supreme Court verdict of recognising them

as transgender by giving reservation in employment will be of no use unless we provide them education which will be necessary for seeking employment.

There is mushrooming of NGOs in our country enjoying hefty grant from government of India and from abroad but their main area of operation is poverty alleviation, drug trafficking, begging, HIV affected people, education for the downtrodden people, upliftment of leprosy affected people and campaign for the cause of poor people, prostitutes, drug addicts, etc. etc. We have never seen any NGO who is working for *Hijras*. Why? It is still a question, looking for an answer.

Let us see if this virgin area of thinking about *Hijras* is going to invite attention of the people after the Supreme Court verdict, there is no doubt about it that it will take considerable time to change the mind-set. What can be easiest and quick process, we need to debate on it on various forums.

Our country is having more than 90% labourers in un-organised sectors who are *below* poverty line in every industry. One way or the other unskilled workers are essentially required in the field of agriculture and construction industry. Can't we think about consolidating these *Hijras* by way of making groups as a large workforce to be used for physical work? Of course, it will require some sort of training and also psychological counselling to *Hijras* because it cannot be one sided affair. We need to change their outlook towards life. We have to sell our ideas to motivate them by way of changing their behaviour and the way of life what they are practicing since ages and are quite accustomed.

Let us think about some areas where *Hijras* can be deployed gainfully. See we always cry about shortage of police force in managing the traffic when it is not possible to have automatic signalling systems on all crossings. The police personnels find shortage of manpower. We always look for domestic help who is hardworking sincere and is devoted to look after household works. Can we think about the easy solution of overcoming these problems by way of educating, training and deploying *Hijras* to manage the traffic. It can be force like home guards and for that purpose we require a different kind of training institute where they can be trained for acquiring the skills to perform both these jobs.

Our country is having the base of agriculture where there is need to have workers who can devote time and energy by working in the fields. The railways are having a great demand of coolies for loading and unloading of the baggage of passengers, besides the loaders in the go-downs for carrying the cargo in the railway wagons. We can employ them in these areas without replacing the existing manpower. One can say that it will be great amount of interference and encroachment in the area of operation of existing labour population but just think, are they not human beings? Why they can't be considered like other citizens? These all alternatives and

suggestions for the welfare of *Hijras* are now coming in our mind when the Apex Court of the country has given recognition to transgenders¹.

Let us accept the nature- if the child is born transgender let him remain in the family like any other family member. Afterall, it is like any other child. Why *Hijras* should be allowed to form a separate group by taking away the transgender child from the hands of parents? No parent would like to throw away a child who is transgender, especially when a physically handicap or the child suffering with down syndrome, spastic child or mentally retarded child, the child suffering with polio or any other mental disorder is allowed to live with the family despite of having lot of deformity. Then why we can't afford to have a *Hijra* as a family member when he is capable of doing everything except the normal sexual behaviour for procreation of children?

We have very little knowledge about this community, their living conditions in other countries; probably more study is required and research scholars need to touch upon this important aspect of mankind. One way we are recognising gays and lesbians and legalising their associations, debates are going on justifying their existing despite not having normal sexual human behaviour. They also cannot go for procreation of children like *Hijras*, then what is the problem if the *Hijra* is allowed to go for healthy association like the gays and lesbian go.

The entire society becomes united barring a few people for giving recognition to lesbian and gays but so far nobody has raised the voice for the cause of *Hijras* – it seems we are quite hypocrite and non-sensitive for transgender. One way the doctors claim that they can change the sex from male to female and strongly advocate that affinity and attraction towards opposite sex is quite a natural phenomena but they never talk about the sexual behaviour of *Hijras*. Is it not unfair? Why the psychologist and psychiatrist for that matter cannot think for doing some research for transgender *Hijras* with the objective of making a way so that they are accepted in the society like gays and lesbians. We fail to understand where they are wrong? After all they are product of biological process, may be the result of some abnormal process of fertilisation for which no one is responsible. It is the nature or you can say destiny .one never knows who will give rise to *Hijras*

Another interesting thing is the super natural power that these *Hijras* are having where it is a matter of one's own experiences but a lot many people have observed that the blessings given by *Hijras* really work. They get intuition which comes quite true in times to come. They are being able to anticipate the things in some cases they go for making predictions like an Astrologer. There are large number of instances where people have narrated true stories that a *Hijras* blessed their infant with prediction that he/ she will become a doctor/ engineer/ pilot and so on which is recalled after decades when the same things come true. Sometimes they bless for the recovery when you pay the money to them while you are not feeling well.

At times on a red-light while waiting for a green signal on a very important day of our life, say going for the job interview and the ten bucks to the *hijra* beseech his blessings for success. It happens in most frequent cases. Well it is a matter of experience confined to one self and same cannot be generalised; on the other hand some people have reported that their refusal to pay money to *hijra* has resulted in some kind of ill will. Though normally, these *Hijras* are not in the habit of abusing if you refuse to pay. We find them quite organised in the matter of their area of operation for begging process if four *Hijras* are there on a red-light crossing they have mutual understanding as to which row of parked vehicle one will beg. Once we have paid the money, whether it is one or ten rupees the *Hijra* will never come back again to ask for more money. A great amount satisfaction is there on his face.

It is a closed book with large number of unfolded pages if we are talking about the life of *Hijras*. We are looking for researchers, NGOs and other social activists to have some courage to touch upon this virgin issue. Thanks to the film industry that some of the directors projected them and have good roles in the form of dance episodes or side characters . Even there are some documentaries made on *Hijras* but with very few takers.
