

## **Transgenders and Social Development: A Study on “Dhwayah” Arts and Charitable Society in Kerala.**

**Dr. Grace Varghese**

*MA, MPhil, PhD Pullannivelical House Mylapra Town P.O Pathanamthitta Dist Kerala, India.  
Corresponding Author: Dr. Grace Varghese*

---

### **Abstract**

Transgender are the people who are born with male or female anatomies but they feel different from their body structure. Transgenders are most among the vulnerable and marginalized population in all over the India. Based on the geographical area they have to know the different name in different place. Transgenders are faced great adversities from their childhood; experience a poor quality of life that continues to their adulthood. The term transgender signifies a person who is neither male nor female. Basically, Transgender (TG) plays opposite gender roles ascribed to the person wherein the male plays the female and the female plays the male. The identity of transgender could be either masculine body with feminine voice/behavior or feminine body with male voice/behavior. Such things generally characterize them as transgender. Transgender has several meanings the most common being an umbrella term to describe anyone who doesn't choose to adhere to the strict attributes society imposes on gender. In South India they face innumerable difficulties in their day to day existence such as barriers to accessing health care, social stigma and gender discrimination. Transgender people are the oppressed sect in the society. They are the potential target because of the wide spread prejudices. Transgender individuals experience a number of direct and indirect discriminations. The society accosts them with negative comments, verbal, physical or sexual abuse or threatening behaviors. Transgender students are often bullied and lose educational opportunities when they don't conform to stereotypes of how boys and girls should look or act. They are often harassed in the work place and treated unfairly in public accommodations, housing and credit transactions. Most of them are unemployed or underemployed while many others are routinely fired by their employers. The study aims to discover social economic development of transgenders the role of Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society and its impact on overall socio economic and educational development of transgenders in Kerala.

**Keywords:** Transgender, Society, Discriminations, Unemployment, Opportunity, Kerala.

---

Date of Submission: 29-04-2019

Date of acceptance: 13-05-2019

---

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The word transgender, derived from Latin, can be divided into two parts: Trans and gender. Trans is a Latin prefix meaning “across or beyond” and Gender shares the same Latin word as genus. „Trans” is sometimes used as a short form of transgenders. Transgender is a popular term commonly used all over the world. On the other hand though, in Kerala, majority of the normal population is not aware of such terms and repeatedly use negative words popularized by films and other media.

In India, the total population of transgender is around 4.88 Lakh as per 2011 census but the majority of them are invisible in mainstream society. In Kerala, the policy estimated that more the 25,000 transgenders are living but less than 4000 transgenders are ready to come out to the mainstream society with their own gender identity. The socio-economic and caste census reveals that rural India has over 70,000 transgenders with Uttar Pradesh topping the list with nearly 13,000. Kerala is the first state to publish a policy for transgenders. The policy clearly proves such people face discrimination in their every aspect of life such as education, employment, housing, health and other areas. The transgenders have existed all over the world and many of the countries have implemented separate policies and programs for transgenders and other sexual minorities. They have been known under different names in different places: ‘baklas’ in Philippines, „berdaches” among American Indian tribes, „xaniths” in Oman, „serrers” in Africa, Kathoey in Thailand, and Waria in Indonesia and hijras”, „jogappas”, „jogtas”, and „shiv-shaktis” in South Asia.

Transgender is the state of one's gender identity or gender expression not matching one's assigned sex. The definition of transgender includes, "People who were assigned a sex, usually at birth and based on their genitals, but who feel that this is a false or incomplete description of themselves. The land mark ruling of the

Indian Supreme Court that transgender people as a third gender has stirred immense intellectual debates about the status to be accorded to this hitherto socially excluded and oppressed group. On 15 April 2014 Justice KS Radhakrishnan, who headed the two-judge Supreme Court bench, said in his ruling that recognition of transgender as a third gender is not a social or medical issue but a human rights issue. "Transgender are also citizens of India" and they must be "provided equal opportunity to grow", the court said. —The spirit of the Constitution is to provide equal opportunity to every citizen to grow and attain their potential, irrespective of caste, religion or gender. This verdict has no doubt raised a voice against the violation of human rights of a minority group of citizens of a country who were economically marginalized, socially stigmatized and politically deprived.

The Indian Government took bold steps to recognize transgender as a separate gender for the first time in the country and named it as Third Gender. Finally it is recognized the rights of transgender people and treating them as equal to other Indians. While this has helped in terms of their identity, Indian authorities now need to implement court directives aimed at mainstreaming the transgender community, ending discrimination against them, and addressing their social protection needs which have long been denied basic rights, including the right to vote, own property, marry, and claim a formal identity through a passport or other government identification. They have also been unable to secure government services such as food subsidies, education, employment, and health.

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Gagne and Tewksbury (1996, 1998) found that many MTF individuals who disclosed their gender identity at work were fired, demoted, pressured to quit, and subject to harassment by co-workers. If they remained on a job during a transition, they were pressured to have a rapid, complete, and convincing feminine presentation. They also found that MTF people who lived full-time as women were vastly underemployed.

Clements-Nolle, Marx, Guzman, and Katz (2001) found that FfMs had more education and a higher income than MTFs. Eighty-one percent of FfMs had obtained money in the past 6 months from part-or full-time employment, but only 40% of MTFs had obtained money that way.

In Lombardi's study (1999), Trans people who had a higher proportion of trans people and relatives among their close confidantes had fewer depressive symptoms than trans people with smaller proportions of trans people and relatives among their close confidantes. Lombardi compared these findings about the close confidantes of Trans people with results from the 1985.

### **Objective of the Study**

The overall objective of this research is to understand better the improvement of transgenders and social development through Dhwayah Arts and Charitable society in Kerala. The specific objectives of the study are given below.

- 1, Observing present socio economic status of transgenders in Kerala.
- 2, Analyse their awareness on issues trans people are facing.
- 3, To find out trans people human right.
- 4, The study aims to discover empirically the nature of relationship between the socio economic development of transgenders and formation of transgenders Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society and its impact on overall development of transgenders in Kerala.
5. To assess the employment and monetary achievement of Transgender members in Dhwayah Arts and Charitable society in Kerala.
6. To evaluate the significance of Dhwayah Arts and Charitable society improving the overall socio-economic status of Transgenders in Kerala.

### **Hypotheses**

For achieving the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses are tested.

1. There is no significant association between Socio-Economic Development of Transgenders and Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society
2. There is no significant development between Socio economic and educational Developments of Transgenders in Kerala.

### **Research Methodology**

The study is conducted with the help of primary and secondary data, the study follows personal interviews focus group decision Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society members. The study aim to discover socio economic development of transgenders in Kerala through Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society. The study follows personal interview as a tool of survey using and interview schedule.

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted among 25 members. Based on the results of this study and personal observation, the requisite social factors have been identified to know the status of Transgender members in Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society. Apart from the social status, Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society needed to concentrate on economic status and creating their members employment. Due to this, there is widened the scope of the study by incorporating the areas of social and economic status and financial viability of the members.

### **Relevance and Anticipated Outcomes**

The Transgender community in India, represented largely by hijras and kothis, has long borne the brunt of male chauvinistic social prejudices and draconian laws that criminalized alternative sexuality. This is despite the fact that India has a 4,000 year history of 'third gender' and eunuch culture<sup>6</sup>. Only if they enjoy basic human rights, social and political, can their self-esteem grow. In India, there are approximately one million Transgender people and they are looked down upon and they are removed from society. The vast majority live in slums with limited job opportunities. Their basic survival, sources of income and everything are removed and they are forced to a pathetic life. Generally most of the Transgenders are engaged in sex work and begging. Transgender in Mumbai plays a main role in all the rituals from birth till death, because the people in Mumbai deem it a boon to be blessed by the Transgender and they readily pay whatever the Transgender demands. Apart from this there are many other sources for the Transgender to earn a living. They usually begin shops, do some menial household works for the Jains and help them in shopping, while most of them are sex workers.

Human dignity rested on the recognition of the physical and spiritual integrity of the human being. It is harmed when individuals and groups are marginalized, ignored or devalued. Transgender person does not enjoy the natural privileges of his/her acquired gender. Such people are denied civil and political rights and cannot do things others do, such as to find mainstream jobs, vote, marry, inherit property or adopt a child. Pushed to the periphery as social outcasts, they have to beg, dance or do sex work for survival. The prejudice against Transgenders not only started from their home but also from society. The main problem in the society is that there is no proper awareness and understanding of the Transgenders community and many of them are not accepting even they are human beings. The common people look down upon them as they are sex workers and cheaters. On another side, the Transgenders are averse against the society when the basic respect is refused by the society and when they receive ill-treatment from the society they expose their arrogant activities to safeguard themselves. Hence the society should take the minimum required steps that have to be taken in the process of eventually integrating the Transgenders community into the mainstream. If they want to attain all their social privileges, they must improve their socio and economic status. Dhwayah Arts and Charitable society can help trans people to improve their economic and social status. When their economic status improves all other social factors should also automatically improved.

Education is a powerful tool to help the Transgenders to develop themselves. The national plans of development had not reached them. They were living in miserable conditions. They were suffering from low education, low employment, poor health, and social backwardness. The employment generation programme for weaker section was not known to the poor people. The study of Transgenders status and performance would reveal how to develop them. The study will reveal the self-confidence amongst Transgenders, their positive image of contribution to society, policy and economy, their ability to think critically, decision-making abilities, and equal participation in development process.

Employment generation of Transgenders is a process that addresses all sources and structures of power. Education including literacy and attitude development had great role in employment generation of Transgenders for developing their socio economic well-beings. The International Conference on Population Development 1994 had suggested that education was one of the most important means of well-being of all human being with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process.

Dhwayah Transgenders Arts and charitable Society was officially inaugurated by former Home Minister Sri Kodyeri Balakrishnan on 15th June 2017 at Nedumbassery CIAL convention centre. The inauguration was followed by the first ever transgenders beauty contest in Kerala. Social health and welfare minister Smt. Shailaja teacher was the chief guest and program was blessed with the presence of former social welfare minister Dr. MK Muneer. The presence of artists from Bollywood, Tollywood and Mollywood made the show more colourful and won international attention.

Dhwayah was founded on 2017 as a cultural society for the upliftment and to help the struggling transgenders. Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society aim is to help transgenders grow their artistic traits, provide job training, conducting the stage shows and fashion shows with celebrities, classical dance shows etc. Dhwayah foundation's main objectives include, they give trans people a voice in India, advocate for trans people's human rights, raise awareness on issues trans people are facing, support a strong trans movement, conduct and

encourage research for the benefit of trans people etc. Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society is an active part of the international trans movement.

The study is a pioneer attempt to reveal the present socio economic status and employment opportunities of Transgenders in Kerala. The study further focuses on the development of socio economic structure, social development, economic development and entrepreneurial development of Transgenders after their joining Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society in Kerala. The study mainly focused on the emphasis that the Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society are the only way to promote the Socio-Economic Development of Transgenders in Kerala and it will be of immense use to the planners, Government machinery, researchers and social scientists to design plans and execute suitable strategies for the overall development of Transgenders in Kerala. An environment may be created for the development of Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society by establishing self-reliance groups of Transgenders, building capacity of new and existing groups, formation of new group with the help of matured Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society, promotion of Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society clusters and associates and strengthening employment generation programmes for Transgenders through Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society.

Though the Kerala government has not set aside substantial financial resources for the implementation of the policy, VN Jithendran, director of the department of social justice, says the scholarship scheme announced for trans students in schools and colleges will not have a ceiling on the number of students who can avail it. The policy also aims to make laws against gender-based violence TGfriendly, and make TGs eligible for government schemes. A fund is also proposed to be set up for sex reassignment surgeries in government hospitals. The surgeries for trans women include castration, vaginoplasty, breast augmentation and a tracheal shave to reduce the Adam's apple, among others, and for trans men include the removal of breasts, uterus, vagina, ovaries and fallopian tubes, and if necessary, penis construction. The surgeries for trans men are more complicated and more expensive than for trans women, both of whom also undergo hormonal therapy. Moreover, trans men are harder to find than trans women. For instance, 99% of the TGs surveyed in Kerala were trans women. Even if that bill is passed, the spectre of ambiguous Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalises penile-non-vaginal sex between consenting adults, hangs over transgender and gay rights.

We seem to have no problem with gender identities beyond male and female in our mythology and in fact celebrate them in some of our deities. But in our society, we shun and humiliate those who do not subscribe to the binary definition of gender or want to transition from one to another. It is about time we realised that gender identity is a spectrum along which one can choose to be on any point, and that it is an affront to one's personal liberty to not let them do that. Kerala is the first state to respond to the Supreme Court verdict in April 2014 recognising the rights of transgender persons, by introducing a comprehensive policy which does not stop at just handouts to the community and commits to protecting their freedom. Other states, including relatively progressive ones like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, would do well to follow suit.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Black: white, male: female, sweet: bitter- humans have the inherent tendency to classify and segregate as a result of our quest for knowledge. They try to fit their observations, including observations of self into neat divisions. This concept of 'black' and 'white' has conditioned human minds to the extent that a thought of not falling into these categories or being in the 'grey' area leaves them perplexed, aloof from the system of binaries or categorisations. Men and women are socialised into performing their respective genders which aligns with the sex they are born into while transgenders have no such parallel socialisation. Deviation from these traditional socialisations are frowned upon, confronted and stigmatised. The evidence from history and mythological transcripts point out that transgenders have been challenging the concept of binaries and celebrating gender continuums. Yet, the stigma faced by transgender identities in the society proves why a "normal" life is still an aspiration for transgender individuals. They construct, establish and thus realise their gender identity like a long nourished desire. In the life journey of transgender individuals, one aspect that is prominent is the varying degrees of violence experienced by these individuals right from a young age. On comparison with life of an average human being conforming to accepted gender binaries, it is necessary to evaluate the societal attitude towards the slightest deviance from socially accepted norms. The classification of stages mentioned are not to be treated as compartments and have to be used to appreciate the struggle of gender non-conforming individuals while framing affirmative policies for transgenders. Another important aspect that is to be acknowledged while analysing the life journey of transgender individuals is the possibilities of diverse gender identifications within the continuum. The creation of binaries within this spectrum and legitimising them is met with criticism in the academic and activism space of transgender studies worldwide. The challenges associated with "becoming a transgender" and living as one, understood by examining various factors affecting their lives needs be discussed to provide a complete picture of the lives of transgenders. Dhwayah Arts and Charitable Society can change the social status and development of transgenders in Kerala.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- [1]. Sennott, S., & Smith, T. (2011). Translating the sex and gender continuums in mental health: A transfeminist approach to client and clinician fears. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 15(2), 218-234.
- [2]. Bolin, A. (1998). Transcending and Transgendering. In D. Denny, *Current concepts in transgender identity* (Vol. 11). (pp. 63-92). Taylor & Francis.
- [3]. Levitt, H. M., & Ippolito, M. R. (2014). Being Transgender: The experience of transgender identity development. *Journal of homosexuality*, 1727-1758.
- [4]. Dutta, A. (2012). An epistemology of collusion: Hijras, kothis and the historical (dis) continuity of gender/sexual identities in eastern India. *Gender & History*, 24(3), 825-849.
- [5]. Kerala social justice dept, kerala transgender policy, 2015
- [6]. Kaveesher Krishnan 2013, Transgender in kerala : An alarm on social exclusion, *journal of social work*, 2013, 20-29
- [7]. Mohammed Rafeek 2015, Transgender And Human Rights Current Situation And Potential Options Of Development In India, Report on International Congress On Human Rights & Duties.
- [8]. Williams, Cristian, (1965), "Transgenderism = Transsexualism", *Sexual Hygiene and Pathology*, P. 514, Retrieved 4 June 2012.
- [9]. The Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health (APCOM) Report, No 2 July 2008, South Asian Transgender Groups, Organisations and Networks.
- [10]. VenkatesanChakrapani, Priya Babu TE. "Hijras in sex work face discrimination in the Indian health-care system". *Research for Sex Work*. 2004; 12-14.

Dr. Grace Varghese" *Transgenders and Social Development: A Study on "Dhwayah" Arts and Charitable Society in Kerala.* *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. vol. 24 no. 05, 2019, pp. 42-46.