

EXPLORING THE “OTHER” AND THEIR CULTURE: A STUDY ON GENDER AND THE ‘OTHER’

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Abstract

Gender is a social construct that binds the world in its universality. The connection of each individual is often met with either male or female. This construct has passed on patriarchal nature leaving no room for any other gender to be introduced and with the intervention of Christianity, any idea of gender apart from male and female is dominantly and influencing not accepted. The term Transgender is use as an umbrella term in contemporary India. However its meaning is quite different as compared to the western idea of a Transgender. With the emergence of laws and reservations, the Indian society has at the least tried to incorporate the livelihood of Transgender in their everyday world. We learn of Transgender as artists, teachers or working in a corporate field. On the other hand, the transgender community was far more inclusive in society in the past than at the moment. They were given the role of taking care of Princesses and Harem. They were respected in the society. But as man evolve into the dawn of a new era; their status in society has succumbed to that of a beggar or a sex worker.

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In India, when we think of a Transgender, unlike the west, we think of men in sarees begging in the streets or in the trains. However the power of the hijras as a sexually ambiguous category can only be understood in the religious context of Hinduism. In Hindu mythology, ritual, and art, the facility of the combined man/woman, or androgyne, may be a frequent and significant theme. Bahuchara Mata, the most object of hijra veneration, is specifically related to transvestism and transgenderism.

All hijra households contain a shrine to the goddess that's utilized in daily prayer. Hijras also identify with Shiva, a central, sexually ambivalent figure in Hinduism, who combines in himself, as do the hijras, both eroticism and asceticism. One of the foremost popular sorts of Shiva is Ardhanarisvara, or half-man/half-woman, which represents Shiva united together with his Shakti (female creative power). The hijras identify with this type of Shiva and sometimes worship at Shiva temples. The religious meaning of the hijra role is expressed in stories linking hijras with the major figures of the Hindu Great Tradition, such as Arjuna who as we've learned

lived for a year as a eunuch within the epic, The Mahabharata, Shiva, Buhuchara Mata, the mother goddess, and Krishna, all of whom are related to sexual ambivalence.

The trauma that a transgender undergo in India worsens the situation even more. As they identify and orient themselves to the community of transgender, it implies that they are stepping into neglected society for the rest of their life where they are supposed to lead a lifeless life throughout. In India transgender people usually beg for money for their livelihood, targeting trains and shops. They're been stripped of their dignity and respect and most people look at them with a sore eyes. Sex work is one of the ways in which they earn their livelihood. All though not all transgender suffers the same fate, some are fortunate enough to be accepted and respected me in the society. The trauma the transgender people go through mentally, physically and psychologically is immeasurable.

In India, transgender community is greeted in several forms. within the north, people actually invite transgender to weddings and ceremonies like naming of a toddler for his or her blessings because it is taken into account nearly as good luck. within the south they're considered to be the avatar of Lord Krishna and that they are referred to as 'Tirunangais'. There are the remainder who works in trains, begging for money from the passerby. They build relationship with a couple of people that frequent the stations and therefore the ticket collectors in order that their 'job' won't be affected. The others beg within the streets going from one shop to other for alms. Many from the transgender community beg for a living is because the society shuns them and consider them untouchables. they're even denied an opportunity to elucidate and justify themselves, and judge one just by the mere sight of them.

Often many of the people from the transgender community also are sheltered by NGOs and there are big houses within the cities that house them until their change operation. Many beg because it is their only thanks to earn enough money for the specified surgery. This houses headed by elderly transgender and that they have a senior base administration. However, transgender in India aren't encouraged thereto extend, though their presence in auspicious occasions is taken into account nearly as good luck. Recently they need been given the status of 'third gender' however it lacks tons of other elements which will make transgender live a far better life.

The Hijra community in India although termed as Transgender community in paper features a sort of culture on their own. they need various ceremonies that holds dear to them. Not every woman born a person has the courage to be a hijra. It includes ceremonies of initiation and later after Nirvana they need an entire ceremony of congratulations. The household of a transgender is sort of rigid than that of a hetero household. they need rules and regulations that require to be followed strictly. consistent with Laxmi in her book 'Me Laxmi, Me HIjra', two green saris is given to the new Transgender as a ritual and also crowned with the community dupatta, after which a 'Reet', the christening ceremony, was performed and thereupon an individual becomes a Transgender.

The central ceremony of hijra life—and the one that defines them as a group—is the emasculation operation during which all or a part of the male genitalia are removed. This operation is viewed as a rebirth; the new hijra created by it's called anirvan. For the hijras, emasculation completes the transformation from impotent male to potent hijra. Emasculation links the hijras to both Shiva and therefore the mother goddess and sanctions their performances at births and Weddings, during which they're considered vehicles of the goddess's creative power. Bahuchara features a special reference to the hijras as emasculated, impotent men. Hijras believe that any impotent man who resists a call from the goddess to emasculate himself are going to be born impotent for seven future births.

Emasculation increases the identification of the hijras with their goddess, and it's in her name that the operation is ritually performed. A hijra, called a "midwife," performs the operation after receiving sanction from the goddess.

Transgender existence traces back to the Mahabharatta. India being the bearer of the longest epic within the world still fails to simply accept the “Avatars of Krishna” .There are limited opportunities for Transgender in India and are mostly ignore or avoided. Kamala Das has lucidly explained the views of trauma that beguiles the community. But being born during a society that's not as broad minded as how identity or differences explains how the transgender community are victims to physical abuse, repression, negligence, pain and most of all, a loss of family.

The ritual of the surgery and many of the postoperative restrictions involving special diet and seclusion imitate those of a woman who has just given birth. At the end of the forty-day isolation period, the nirvan is dressed as a bride, is taken in procession to a body of water and subsequently to a ritual involving fertility symbolism relating to marriage and childbirth, becomes a hijra, and is then invested with the power of the goddess. In the hijra emasculation ritual, we have a culmination of the paradoxes and contradictions characteristic of Hinduism: impotent, emasculated man, transformed by female generative power into creative ascetics, becomes able to bless others with fertility and fortune.

These are just a few cultural etiquettes that the Transgender community possess in the India, however keeping in mind the vastness of the word transgender, in India, people only think of Hijras, but not those who are female turn to male. Thus as said before, Transgender is just a universal term that should not be confused with the standardization of the hijra community.

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