

V. CONCLUSION

WINNERS, NOT SINNERS THEY TOO ARE OURS

(TTG 204)

A just and egalitarian society that does not pigeonhole people because of differences cannot be created by politics alone. Every individual should perceive the basic principles behind these differences. Many movements like feminism, gay and lesbian have been fighting for social justice. Just like them or even a notch above them the transgender movement has of late, been espousing the cause of human rights. Its agenda is explicit, it is not just fighting about sex but it is about earning freedom of expression of its inner urge to live in the gender they feel comfortable with.

The works chosen aim at betterment of the transgender life style. They have striven for the emancipation of the transgender people. They have exposed the multi level nature of violence against transgenders. They do not stop with that but they also validate their existence by their delineation of the sociological and cultural practices. The texts serve as illuminating and helpful guides to those who want to augment their discernment and sensitivity towards the challenge these people encounter. They are sources of information and hands-on advice for better perception of the transgender issues.

Several positive outcomes can be cited as the results of their prolonged battle. Their long drawn war against human insensitivity has begun to show some favorable results, at least in some of the states of India. The three works, along with some other

achievements of transgender people, have brought Tamil Nadu well ahead of other states in the country in the welfare measures taken up for the upliftment of the transgenders. By providing an unsparing look at the prejudices and hate crimes the texts have jolted the readers as well as the State awake.

Research actually happens when there is collaboration across disciplines. Literature, an outcome of emotions need not be removed from the day to day hardships of the victims. There are huge opportunities to explore a way out of predicaments and seek solutions through art and literature. Literature cannot be pried away from working for the welfare of mankind. The transgenders of Tamil Nadu have fully realized this and that is why there is enormous output in the field of arts viz. the first poetry collection by a transgender titled '*Kuri Aruthen*' by Kalki; the autobiographies of Revathi and Vidya, the first novel by Priya Babu, the TV anchor Rose Venkatesan, the first news reader, danseuse and musician Padmini. All these have been possible through their decision to 'come out' and fight out their cause. Some of the transgenders have opened up the vistas possible, for the people of their kind. They have proved by example that people who are like them can also afford to live a decent life, without resorting to prostitution and begging, if they have adequate back ground to support and guide them and stand with them during times of trials. They have shown how they can live in this society without the stigma attached to the community affecting them.

The positive change in reality has made the Supreme Court of India recognize transgenders and transsexuals, as the third gender in what has been hailed as historic judgment. It is for the talented people in the community to address the various issues without thinking, that they are insurmountable monoliths. The antidote to shunning is

embracing and including queers and positive knowledge about them in all aspects of professional and social work. This can be done by starting to talk about queers, collecting positive stories and relating them to others in conferences and seminars and speak outs. Prejudice, bigotry and hate related violence sparked by strong feelings about some aspects of human diversity have been a part of human attitude and behaviour. Only nurturing the difference will promote human rights. Promoting respect for the rights and privileges to other, understanding and appreciation of human differences and the constructive expression of ideas will produce the desired results.

Hinduism allows opposites to confront each other without resolution unlike western culture, which attempts to resolve sexual contradictions by segregation. It has recognized the possibility of the universe being various. To this characteristic Indian ability, to embrace differences at the social and cultural levels, these authors appeal. They believe that they can not only be accommodated but even given their legitimate rights.

Hijras have been gaining rapid visibility in the South Indian mainstream be it in the media, the courts or in daily life. Following the 1936 decision to give them right to vote, the hijras have gained much. They have the third gender column included in the voter rolls. They won the right to run for political office in 1994. The dalit eunuch, the first in Asia has become the mayor of Raigarh. She sculpted modern history by winning Mayoral election in Chhattisgarh. The Times of India reported that Madhu Kinnar competed as an independent candidate and defeated all her rivals to achieve this laurel. Rose, a well known transgender television anchor has decided to float a political party against corruption and to advocate sexual liberation and to call it as Sexual Liberation Party of India. They are “transforming themselves in the public

imaginary from objects of ridicule and repositories of shame to ideal citizens of the modern nation state” (Reddy 223).

The transgenders are inadvertently being incorporated into a wider gay world for political agendas. But one reading of the literature from them is enough to suggest that their engagement and articulation with this world is very different. The books construct their individuality and talk of the need for emancipation in the public domain, which is slowly gaining momentum.

Satire can be a means by which subtle changes can be effected. Humour can be used to question gender clichés that defeat and destroy them and can be used to deliver messages within and outside the community. But the transgender people should not forget that changes cannot be wrought in a single day. They should remember that only small stokes bring down great oaks. The members of the community should not be prejudiced and nurture anger against the society. A positive result can be achieved only by mutual tolerance.

Adhering to old rules of communication and traditional demography of languages in social discourses should not be encouraged by the society. The use of new positive knowledge and words should not be limited or curtailed. The practitioners of social discourse may continue to use the positive changes in languages. This will begin to counter slanderous assertions that will definitely bring to eradicate the failure syndrome that has been forced on transgender people. There should not be any intimidation for youngsters who want to pursue research on the queer lines. There have been changes in the attitudes, which should be ably supported by colleges and universities, which must encourage such scholars.

The prospects of opening new avenues of gender studies have been made more positive which can be substantiated by the encouraging news which have been making the headlines in most of the newspapers in India. A certificate course in gender queer subjects has been planned in one of the leading colleges of Tamilnadu, The American College. Scholars from Europe, former Principal of American College nad A Revathi a transgender and activist are among the board of directors who have agreed to interact with the students. The appointment of the first transgender principal of a college in West Bengal who assumed office on 09 June 2015 is another of the positive changes taking place. Manabi Bandopadhyay has become the principal of Krishnagar women's college after serving the institution as associate professor.

The transgender population, tired of its portrayal of them in the mainstream media, has created an alternative media to show their pains, lives and aspirations realistically. Nadodi (Nomad) film society and Tamil Nadu AIDS Initiative of Voluntary Health Services jointly organized a short film competition on transgenders, effeminate men and female sex workers to encourage meaningful depiction of marginalized lives. The film festival was titled Anbin Mozhi, (language of love) Priya Babu an activist claimed "Love is the one thing we all long for." The constant struggle for acceptance is another aspect that received importance.

Academia can sensitize students towards what happens in public sphere and how politics is shaped. Important new coinages and vocabulary can be etched in the memories of youngsters when they are at an impressible age. When children are taught early about the Oxford Dictionary's attempt at including a gender neutral title Mx as an honorific for transgender and for anyone who does not identify with a particular gender they would assimilate the usage into their systems. The Oxford

Dictionary's claims of it to be the first addition to the accepted honorific in recent history will be also put to good use.

The struggles of transgender community of the earlier generation, with the support and guidance of several forums and individuals have started yielding results. These are notable changes in the attitude of the governments and other agencies besides the general public these days, making the lives of present generation of transgenders less miserable. One of the land mark judgment of Supreme Court has been the upholding of the rights of these persons "to decide their self identified gender" and direction to governments to grant legal recognition to them 'as male, female or as third gender". But in the process, the judgment has reduced a complicated medical condition merely to a matter of the choice of an individual. Lack of medical clearance for determining gender has the higher probability of creating anomalies as in the case of lesbians, gays and bisexuals who cannot be classified under the same category as transgender. The bench spelt that:

"Social justice does not mean equality before law on paper but translating the spirit of the constitution, enshrined in the preamble, the fundamental rights and the directive principles of state policy into actions, whose arms are long enough to bring within its reach and embrace this right of recognition to the transgender which legitimately belongs to them". (14)

Some state governments have taken up the issues and have seen to the construction of special public toilets. They have devised social welfare schemes and public awareness campaigns to eradicate social stigma and have set up of departments to look into the medical issues. To change the reality that hijras are synonymous with

sex work and begging, the implementation of a five point programme has been suggested by the highest court.

1. A central government grants of Rs.1000 a month to the parents of the transgender children. Parents who want to be sure about the welfare of the children when they are old, who are worried if their children would be victims of hate issues and who are apprehensive about their children's orientation may change in later life should have their fears assuaged and only then total support would be given by them to their wards.
2. Scholarship during the most crucial period of their lives from standard VII to X when they become aware of the difference.
3. Scholarship for higher studies even if they do not get adequate parental monetary support.
4. Skills training schemes if they dropout from school due to their deviance so that they do not stand at a disadvantage from lack of skills.
5. A monthly pension scheme to aid the transgenders who have lost their prime earning capacities.

Laws and governments in general must neither infantilize nor place the people in the category of saints. They need to be human or else the laws will not be just ineffective but even counterproductive. One should not forget that human achievement can be possible through questioning some attitudes and that only a critical attitude can yield better results. Free movement of ideas alone can bring about changes in attitudes and only attitudinal changes will result in the success of welfare schemes.

Transgenders in Tamil Nadu have won major battles of inclusion due to some pioneering effects. In an unprecedented move, the State has issued ration cards with a separate third gender category- a major step in the demand for citizenship rights. The emergence of transgender icons and role models who have created safe spaces for sharing ideas, the friends clubs or 'Natpukkoodam' attached to clinics in the state is yet another peer supporting activity that has boosted the morale of new entrants into the order. Apart from providing ration cards, the transgenders are given welfare cards, insurance cards, voter identity cards, green houses and free sex reassignment surgeries. Housing, which is a major hurdle faced by transgenders everywhere, is taken care of, by the government of Tamil Nadu. The Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board has allotted 260 of its 638 flats to transgenders as the report of the Hindu says. In building green houses a subsidy of 1.80 lakhs is given to transgenders, who can shell out one lakh. But the national scheme Indra Awaz Yozana gives them houses free of cost.

To integrate into society at large and finding a job, transgenders of Tamil Nadu, who are about 3,00,000 in number, have been making innovative ventures. Shunned and traumatized as a youngster Bharathi now preaches to a congregation of forty five parishioners as a pastor of the Evangelical Church of India. As reported in the Times of India Swapna has become the first member of the transgender community to choose her own sex and get legal approval for it and has been allowed by the court to write her public service commission examination for group II services as a woman. Another report in the same daily says that a transgender K. Prathika Yashini has been the first to be allowed to undergo the physical test of Tamil Nadu Uniform Services recruitment board after clearing the written examination. Though she failed by a second, to clear her physical ability test, her determination to make a

second attempt has been abetted not only by her friends but by everyone present in the stadium.

Transgenders of Tamil Nadu have realized through experience that stigma can be erased only when they are assimilated into the mainstream society. Their effects have been numerous towards achieving this goal. They have found innovative and self sustaining ways of earning. Self help groups Vasantham (spring) Vaanavil (Rainbow) and seven stars are a few of them. They market products and the income they earn prevents them from taking to amoral acts. One of the postulates of social welfare department has been to actively encourage transgenders to use their stamina for others. There have been many acts of planting trees, praying for sick children and pledging their eyes as gestures of good will towards their local communities. The partnering with anganwadi (Village level social) workers to deliver messages of feticide, medical insurance and tuberculosis to the public has gone a long way in breaking the barriers and bridging the gaps.

These initiatives that have been taken up must be carried on by transgenders by enrolling in Kendriya Vidyalaya Schools as third gender. Moreover the University Grants Commission has decided to include transgenders as a separate category for its scholarship and fellowship programs. These and very many similar opportunities that come their way must be utilized by the community to lop up a decent share in the job markets. The government has partially met Vidya's demand, "all I want is legal approval and recognition that will enable us to walk free in public" (142).

There are other aspects of the problem that cry for due attention from the authorities. Vidya further asks "why can't we legalize the sex change operation when tirunangais cannot help being what they are, when they cannot change nature?"(143).

This is a very valid point that will be a solution to many issues. The state laws can be made sympathetic. The state can assuage the psychological trauma, by helping the people cope with medical procedures and emotional stability. The greatest problem that a transgender encounters is the lack of information from readily accessible sources. The process of getting information is at times time consuming. The state can make available these at a low cost and without much time being wasted.

The lack of recognition of change in gender identity can cause serious and continuing problems for transgenders. There is no protection for people who are in the process of transitioning. Peer support is the only thing that can help them tide over these difficult times. Proper education and support in the workplace, creation of a safe work environment and an explicit employment policy that prevents discrimination based upon sexual orientation can ensure a conducive situation. The society should not forget that they have a right to work and to equal pay for equal work. Discrimination against these people does not diminish them; it diminishes what they can contribute to society as a whole.

Most transgenders do not want to be a part of any group in relation to sexual preference. They just want to be a part of the community of man and be able to live their lives as men or women. In most cases they do not identify with any minority group. Coming out of the closet may bring psychological relief to them from the feeling of guilt but they do not receive any support from the community. The therapists must help them to solve the problems by helping them by observing them in the cross living stage. After adapting to new roles if they still desire to continue in their desired roles their gender congruity surgeries can be advised. Peer counseling and encouragement will help them go a long way during these adverse times. The

problems can be averted once the transgenders and the society realize that one does not become a transgender but that one is a transgender. Perhaps in a few years time the actual reasons for the origin of transgenderism will be found out and till then it has to be treated with rehabilitation of adults who face this problem. Till then it is the duty of the society to understand, love and help them.

A research of this kind can at a later time be widened by cutting across disciplines. This basic study can be used by the state for providing guidance to these people. It can help in restructuring the pace of the process through small steps to make adjustments easier for them and others they live with. Links with support groups can be established so that the experiences can be shared and resources and counseling can be provided to family members to accept reality. They can be helped in navigating through the frustrating barriers of changing a name, and getting identity documents after transition.

Some of the other works by transgenders can be subjected to analysis on these lines and under various other categories. There are works in other Indian languages for example, *Me Hijra*, *Me Laxmi* by Laxmi translated from Marathi by R. Rajarao and P.G. Joshi. Though it is like the autobiographies of Vidya and Revathi, the approach has been different. Whereas Revathi does not hesitate to ruminate on the dark recesses of life, Laxmi's account does not linger long on the victimization aspect. Vidya's education influences her decisions on the other hand.

As for as the diction and analysis of the language of the texts are concerned, the three chosen books have been written by people from South India, who are not well versed in the hijra farsi of the hijras. This language can be subjected to examination by later researchers. More over there are exclusive creative outputs by

transgenders like Kalki Subramaniam who has dedicated a new volume of poetry to the third gender of the country. It is the first poetry publication by a transgender titled “Kuri Aruthaen” (cut off my cock) she says “it is about deep emotional feelings of a transgender’s life... the emotional need for love, romance, psychological support, betrayal, change, bright future, parental support, environment and ignorance of society.” The struggles faced by transgenders in such works can be taken up in future to shed more light on the lives of these denigrated denizens of the society.

A transformation must occur to bring about social equality by coordinating the initiative taken by the activists and the victims who have expressed their views through their works. Social workers can speak the language of empowerment about queers. Educated and social minded individuals can counter slanderous assertions against queer through their intellectual discourses using the works done by the members of the community. Then the half truths and failure to thrive syndrome that have been forced on these people may be eradicated. Amplification and legitimization of subjugated knowledge will lead to challenging oppressive constructions of gender prejudice and sexuality. This will encourage and facilitate diverse knowledge traditions and forms of expression.

The problems of the transgenders, the social stigma, the mental trauma and how they fight their way to emancipation by expressing their feelings, through the media have been amplified, by an analysis of their works. The literary works have given them the much needed assistance to break free from the stigma. An understanding society has also started lending a hand of support. What else can be better proof than the honor given to P.Pooja a transgender, to hoist the national flag on Independence Day at a hospital near Salem in Tamil Nadu. this is a classic

example of the whiff of freedom they have began to enjoy locally. International too Raffi Freedman Gurspan of US became the first transgender staff of the White House.

Won't these attitudinal changes on the part of the society prevent transpeople from venting out their woes in future as Caitlyn Jenner (the transitioned Olympian) did, "This transition has been harder on me than anything I would imagine. Trans-people deserve respect".