



A Study of Third Gender in Indian Television and Films: with Special Reference to “Shakti Astitva Ke Ehsaas Ki” and “Chitrangada”

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Abstract : The objective of this present paper is to present the status of third gender in modern Indian society; where every character is involved in a ‘search’ for identity. Some of them are honest enough to accept their identity while some are hesitant and try to escape from it. It explores various issues on the problem related to third gender. This paper highlights some basic causes of third gender imbalance against masculine gender and feminine gender includes patriarchal family settings, ignorance lacking of opportunities personal liberty, freedom of expressions, right to education, poverty and exploitation. Third gender live all over the country in some small communities which is named as Hijras community. They are totally isolated and abused in our society. They have their own language, culture and way of living .

Key words- equality, isolated, abused, education, neglect, employment “Sex is what you are born with, gender is what you recognize and sexuality is what you discover”. Hijras are generally considered as third gender, neither male nor female. Biologically they are unable to produce, therefore, in the Indian continent they are called eunuchs or hijra who are sometimes supposed the curse for the society and a mistake of God’s creation. The importance of this study lies in one of the most fundamental human values; being a free individual. But people are discriminated on the basis of their gender identity. “... Gender is not sane. It’s not sane to call a rainbow black and white.” – Kate Bronstein. “I am neither a woman nor a man. I am hijra”. Laxmi Narayan Tripathi.

This community encircles transgender male and female, eunuchs, transvestites, and hermaphrodites. Traditionally hijras play an important role in Indian society. People believed that they bring good luck to newly married couple and newborn children.

Unfortunately they suffer a lot of ill treatment and exclusion from society and their

families as well. Bangladesh has passed legislation to protect Hijras rights. Third gender can be described as a category of people who neither fall under feminine gender nor under masculine gender straightway. They have certain physical characteristics which are expressed in morphology, and many have some normal and genital characteristics. The different characteristics of third gender can be described as below:

- Eunuch: The word “eunuch” is derived from the Greek work “Euneukhos” which literal means ‘bad chamber attendant’. Eunuch is an historic English term for a man who has been neuter to perform special social functions
- Intersexual: a term referring to people who are born as male and female hormonal, chromosomal and genital characteristics.
- Hijras: a term originating in south India referring to a person usually born male or intersex, but who like dress up as feminine attire. An older name for Hijras is kinnar, which is used by some hijra groups as more respectable and formal term. An abusive slang for hijra in Hindi is Chaka.

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- Transsexuals: a term referring to someone whose gender identity is different from the one traditionally assigned to their sex category.
- Drag: a term that comes out of gay culture, involving someone temporarily performing a gender not usually associated with their sex.
- Transvestite/ cross dresser: these are older terms with meaning and often the term is used in a derogatory fashion. In terms of practice though, cross dressers are often not gay, but straight man who simply enjoy dressing up as women.

This community is a part of the social order and they have an equal right in everything that is available to all others in the world. These people often face contradiction and aggression right from the home. The problems domain from verbal and physical abuse to isolation and rejection. Gender identification makes a victim of stigmatization and exclusion by the society. Social dishonor includes being negative attitude towards third gender as sex workers and sex advocate. Hijra are physiological males who identify themselves as females they wear women's clothes and act like feminine gender.

They have their own values, traditions, and cultures. In western world, the closet form of hijra would be known as a transgender. In Indian society they play an important role. They adopt female behavior and get up. Hijras traditionally earn their living by collecting alms and receiving payment for performances at weddings, births and festivals. Indian people happily offer them money because it is believed that hijras bring good luck to the newly wedded couple and newborn baby as well. It is true that people welcome eunuchs but only for certain occasions otherwise they ignored and not accepted at all. They suffer a lot. No one is ready to consider them even as human being. They are unwanted and undesired being. they are punished for the act they have not done. They definitely suffer an agonious pain. But who does care ? The hijras ,thus

The hijras, thus, face the identical problem and alienated look in the society. No one thinks about eunuchs' emotion, feeling, and ideas

while people think that we are supreme creatures of God but have forgotten that in the eyes of God everyone is equal and God lives in everyone whom He has created in this universe. They are a different creation of God not an inferior being. Like all other hijras are also the part of our environment. They too are sent by God. We must accept them as they are. Nevertheless, our society does not give respect them since people think that they are not biologically equal to us. They have always been deprived of all the social norms, customs, culture, tradition and existence in the society. In other words, they have been cut off from the cultured society just because they do not come under the extent of complete man and not having the ability to expedition the generation.

In India, it is believed that if a man or women has not power to accelerate generation, are looked down upon. Therefore, in the present time eunuch's insignificant role in the civilized world compelled them to create there new society in which they themselves made their different cultures, norms, role and status. Eunuchs always mourn over emptiness of life and the hollowness of their existence. Everything seems to them awful, dried, fruitless, joyless, and colorless. The sexual identities have always affected their equality rights to education. Transgender community faces the discrimination in every path of their life. They often feel isolated and abuses in the society they are not allowed to share common grounds with classmates. Transgender community needs a facilitating environment to explore educational and employment opportunities. "Shakti Astitva Ke Ehsaas Ki" is an Indian Hindi family drama. The series is produced by Rashmi Sharma Telefilms Limited. The main purpose of this drama is explores multiple dimensions of the problem of being a third gender.

The story is about two sisters. Soumya and Surbhi. Soumya is a main lead heroine of this drama who plays a role of Kinnar. Soumya is neglected by her father and grandmother but she is loved by her mother. Soumya is kinnar is very calm and quiet fellow. She faces discrimination in her family and is caged at

home. It is a story of a Punjabi family where a mother fights with her husband and mother in – law to protect her daughter. Mother- daughter relationship is presented here very well.

The mother is ready to accept the reality and father is shown to be huddle with difficulty in accepting the **fact**. The story talks about the social reality of third gender who suffers from social exclusion in diverse ways. It digs into various issues related to third gender. It also shows the difficulty that lies to start a conjugal familial life by the people of third gender.

The first issue is the acceptance of third gender identity within the institution of family. Very often it is reported that whenever a third gender disclose its identity the family members react to it very strangely. The main goal of this serial is to give the same rights as the other gender have..

The Bangali film “Chitrangada” was released in Bengali in 2012. It is directed by Rituparno Ghosh. The film is based on the story of Chitrangada from the “Mahabharata”. The film explores multiple dimensions of the problems of being a third gender. The pain of being different sex is highlighted in the film as the choreographer who is struggling with his gender identity. Sex is not the same as gender, although many people use the term interchangeably in everyday speech. Sex identity as undesirable and unbearable.

The film “Chitrangada” is based on Rabindranath Tagore’s dance drama “Chitrangada” that is taken from the great epic “Mahabharata”. The films talks about the inequality of third gender who suffers from social exclusion in many ways. The movie is about a king who had a wish for a male child, who becomes a choreographer instead of an engineer. But he is blessed with a girl so he is unhappy and asks the girl to play the role of a boy. The princess continues to grow as a boy. She meet with Arjun and falls in love with him. She is unable to keep her reality as manhood. At last she decides to reveal her love Arjun. The real experience as shown in T.V serial tells the similar story. The film portrays the father is shown to be huddled with difficulty in accepting the fact.

The films talks about the reality how third gender is abused by people in the society. Rudie, who discovered the desire to have a child in Partho, convinces him to go for a sex reassignment surgery. It will help them to adopt a child otherwise the society as well as law will never permit two men to adopt a child. Hence to be a woman physically he decides to change his sex.

The suffering of the Rudie is that when his boyfriend Partho left her because of his gender. Partho wants to marry a real woman not an artificial woman as Rudie. The film has got a philosophical dimension too. It brings epistemological question on the biological shape of body, its forms and formation. The reality of this film is surpassing the concept of feminine and masculine gender. The story ends with the line ‘Be what you wish to be’. The movie reveals the struggles of gay choreographer and his father and mother.

The study of third gender attracts growing interests in the recent years. It is clear from the research that decriminalizing transgender will lead to moral degradation and subsequently to the loss of self- worth and confidence which in turn hit to the very core of individuality. This denotes that they should be accepted as “normal” human beings.

Indian television serials show similar trend as other films show on transgender . This is a reflection of society portrayal of life stories and issues faced by third gender, and other identities as “queer” in films in a positive manner. The issue appears prominently in the serials and films as it appeared prominently in the society. The prejudice of homosexuality in India can be considered as one of the major causes of production of third gender in films and the screening.

The film and play focus on the multiple dimension of the issues problem of third gender facing difficulties. These problems can be well addressed by implementing some progressive measures as sensitize the society with regard to transgender identity. Another point which should be highlighted is that homosexuality in Indian films will happen only when the characters are portrayed without fusing over

them. Film makers would be able to function in an atmosphere of more tolerance and freedom. Finally it can be said that the situation is changing gradually. Now they are organizing and trying to set up their position in the society.

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