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Transgenders in Odisha: Some reflection of their socio-economic status

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Abstract

In a country like India with 1.2 billion population, there lies a need for understanding the outcry of a gender, known as transgender, which has lived the ancient Indian legacy for approximately the last 4000 years. These people in our society today are labeled as different and are often treated with disrespect despite being invited to on homes for auspicious occasions. Social relationship constitute a problem area for them. They are rejected by the society and at the same time are subjected to violence and discrimination. This paper based on secondary data collected from different sources like research publications, journals and various websites on their socio-economy status along with source suggestions for the upliftment of transgender in India.

Keywords: transgender, socio economic status, odisha, bpl, unemployment

1. Introduction

Transgender people are sometimes called transsexual if they desire medical assistance to transition from one sex to another. They are the people who belong to a third gender. The definition of transgender included "people who were assigned a sex usually at birth and based on their genitals but who feel that this is false an incomplete description of themselves".

Many transgender people experience gender dysphoria and some seek medical treatments such as hormone replacement therapy, sex reassignment surgery or a psychotherapy. Some transgender people go for these treatments and some can't afford because of financial or medical reasons. This transgender communities are not only rejected socially but also subjected to violence. In 2012, 53% of anti LGBT homicide victims were transgender women. They are four times more likely to live in poverty because of unemployment. 90% of transgender people report experiencing harassment, misunderstanding and discrimination on the job.

Family doesn't accept them after their identity change. Some parents become violent on them to change the behavior which forces them to run away from their home. They are continuously insulted by friends as a result they discontinue their studies and are more in search of people like them. They face sexual abuse from their friends and teachers in school. They are forbidden from education, health services and public spaces, excluded from politics, restricted rights to citizenship, restricted participation in decision making process, excluded from employment and livelihood opportunities. Being discriminated at all levels they try to form their own world in search of a secured life.

2. Objective

This study is focused on the observations of the present socio economic status of the transgender in Odisha.

3. Methodology

The study is based on the secondary data collected from various articles, publication, government and non-government organizations and different websites.

4. Third gender in India

According to Times of India May 30 2014, the official count of the third gender in our country

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is 4.9 lakh. However transgender activists estimate the number to be six to seven times higher. Of the total number of transgender identified by the census 2011, almost 55,000 are in the 0-6 population. During the voter registration process only 28,341 people registered as belonging to the third gender, said Kalki Subhramaniam transgender rights activist and founder of the Sahadori Foundation.

Over 66% of the population identified as third gender lived in rural areas, very close to the 69% of the over all population that likes in villages. The census data reveals the low literacy level in the community, just 4.6% compared to 74% literacy in the general population.

Table 1: State wise status

State	No. of third gender persons (000s)
Uttar Pradesh	137
Andhra Pradesh	44
Maharashtra	41
Bihar	41
West Bengal	30
Madhya Pradesh	30
Tamil Nadu	22
Odisha	20
Karnataka	20
Rajasthan	17
India	488

Source: *The Times of India*, May 30, 2014

The highest proportion of the third gender population is about 28%, was identified in Uttar Pradesh followed by 9% in Andhra Pradesh, 8% each in Maharashtra and Bihar. Over 6% in both Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal & over 4% in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Odisha, Rajasthan accounted for over 3% of the total transgender population and Punjab for 2%.

5. Socio-economic status of Transgender in Odisha

As per socio economic and caste census (SECC) 2011, the transgender population in Odisha stands at 43,161 in rural areas and 4,632 in urban areas. The Times of India (June 21, 2017) shows the total population of transgender in Odisha is around 70,000 of whom only 2000 agreed to be identified as transgender. The social security and empowerment of persons with disabilities (SSEPD) department had assigned Xavier institute of Management, Bhubaneswar to conduct the study to know the status of transgender in Odisha. The study conducted by Prof. Niraj Kumar faculty of XIMB reveals "around 75% of the transgender had to abandon their education before they completed their 10th standard. Around 20% among them completed class XII and out of those a very few went for graduation and higher student. The main livelihood of transgender was begging, dancing in private functions and working as sex workers. This being a comparatively high paying occupation (income up to Rs. 500/- to 2000/- per month) for younger transgender. More than 90% of transgender person reported that most of them were able to earn on an average Rs.15000/- to 20,000 per month".

Other different issues faced by transgender are lack of education, lack of employment, lack of shelter, lack of medical facilities, lack of hygiene discrimination, depression, electoral rights and sexual abuse, HIV affected.

6. Steps taken for the betterment of transgender in Odisha:

In April 2014 Supreme Court recognized transgender as a

legal third gender and called on the government to ensure their equal treatment. The court recognized the community as a marginalized group and directed authorities to implement policies to improve their socio economic status.

An orientation program was organized by IGNOU, Bhubaneswar in which 20 transgender individuals participated. The university has decided to provide free admission to transgender in all programs offered by the varsity. The main aim of the initiatives is to mainstream members of transgender community and facilitate their higher education.

Odisha has become the first state in India to include the transgender community in the category of below poverty line (BPL) beneficiaries in the last calendar year. This enables them to be covered within all social security programs of the government like food grains, pension, health, education and housing. This includes welfare scheme like free housing, 100 days of paid work annually, loans with financial incentives to start up their business. Also as per India's National Food Security aid plan they would be entitles for 5 Kg of food grains every month. This is in line with the Supreme Court's 2014 mandate to recognize transgender as a legal third gender.

Last year, the state government announced that the parents of every transgender will get a financial assistance of Rs 1,000 per month. For pre-matric scholarship (Class VIII to X) the day scholar will get Rs 150 and the hostel inmates Rs 350 for 10 months in a year. Similarly, government had said the transgender students will get monthly post-matric scholarship (XI and above) of Rs 550 for day scholar and Rs 1,200 for hostel boarders for 10 months. For their skill development, the government announced Rs 15,000 per transgender trainee for 200 hours of the course.

7. Conclusion

Though the transgender community is said to constitute 0.3% of the general population, the absence of empirical data and scientific analysis of any data has led to lack of awareness about the community and its need among planners. Even though they there is some degree of recognition and social acceptance they are still majorly excluded from the society. The need of the hour is to create and recognize transgender rights in India which thereafter can significantly enable us to fight the battle against HIV/AIDS epidemic to the sexual minorities. With this India can also be recognized as a role model for other nations to recognize transgender based rights.

8. Recommendations

Transgender community needs to be extended an olive branch and imparted livelihood training along with increased focus on their acceptance in the society. There has to be awareness campaigns (majorly state sponsored) to sensitize the society to come out of the taboos associated with the third gender. There has to be lot of social activism (besides government initiatives) through NGO's in collaboration with general public to come forward and honor the third gender for their peaceful and decent living. They shouldn't be discriminated as because they are transgender. Government should initiate some awareness programs for accepting them as individuals within family right from their birth. As their political participation is NIL, they should be encouraged in participating in the political discourse. Transgender should be included under the Right to Education Act for the betterment of their future.

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