

BEING QUEER

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Abstract: This article is the outcome of an interview conducted with the inmates of *Sahayathrika*, located at Thrissur, Kerala, a rehabilitation centre for the sex minorities like the Lesbians, Trans-men, Trans-women, and F to Ms. Here they express their reticence with the society as for how they are treated and also represented in the visual media, and their apprehensions on the future. This also looks into a few laws and bills passed in favour of them.

Introduction

A girl, or a boy? This is a question that any parent faces on the birth of a baby. This question itself suggests that a person who is neither male nor female is not even expected. There wasn't even a decent word in any language to address them. Whereas the ancient epic poem did have a powerful word to address the transgender: the Ardhanareeswara. While it is history that marriage was not forbidden even for them, the present situation is not very bright. Religions have taken a strict position against them, and with the use of law and other instruments, they violate their human right. It is a biological fact that it is possible to have multifaceted sexual orientations apart from being female, or male. But a society blind folded by a superfluity of religions, rebukes sexual minorities as criminals or psychopaths. Various categories such as Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, Trans-men, Trans-women, F to Ms, Bi-Sexual, Inter Sexual, asexual, or generally speaking, the queer community, are a outcasts for our society's feudal perceptions.

Usually the coming-out age gives a sense of discomfort and inappropriateness about one's sex, said one of the inmates of *Sahayathrika*, a rehabilitation centre for the F to Ms and lesbians. Some of us do get wish to be rid of one's genitalia and desires to live life as a member of the opposite sex, but gender affirmation surgery is too expensive and the chance for a hundred percent success is very rare, even after three or four subsequent surgeries. So we confine to changing only the physical looks. Some of our partners

are preparing for a surgery, but like in Rithuparnaghosh's Chitrangada, we are not sure if we will have that same feel that we have towards these female partners now, after the surgery, wondered one of the lesbians. All of our disturbance has been continuously present for years during early adolescence and is not limited to a period of stress. So it is actually a long process of thought before we decided what gender to choose, they continued.

So how is it possible to educate the general public in accepting all genders and the queer? We know movies do a tremendous influence in the society. Cinema has perhaps the greatest potential to be the most effective mass media instrument. Besides proving cheap entertainment for masses, it can easily become a means of mass instruction and mass education. People are easily exposed to the dangers of the crudity and debasing of the queer in the pretext of entertainment, if not treated delicately in the movies. The queer people are always underrepresented in the media, opened up a lesbian girl once in an interview. When the individuals from queer community get cast in stereotyped and negative roles in films, it simply reflects the existing aversion in the real world, and also makes them more unreceptive in the society. The gender minorities are usually treated as either wiped out by being unseen or kept in the back ground with an imprecise representation. Transgender individuals are usually represented either as dangerous individuals who need treatment or as those people exploited by and large and mainly stuff to laugh at. Most of the movies had represented the queer characters as gaudy, laughing stocks creating comic relief in serious movies. Mostly they typified homosexuality as a mental illness and such characters were represented in a negative role. This is because someone else is writing stories for them and acting in it, pretending to be queer. In the case of mainstream movies the role of a transgender confines to a make-up artist or so. The most celebrated movie Fire by Deepa Mehta also gives a wrong notion that homosexuality is a byproduct of a failed straight relationship. But this movie really did help in creating a frustration within the dominant, patriarchal, gender that women do not need men necessarily for love or sex. Still, a movie that represent the queer in the mainstream or represented as doing mainstream jobs is yet to be born, she added. The movies seem to represent trans people for their trans-ness. Their type of their characters is never revealed. The hopes, dreams, their struggles to get into mainstream,, etc are always neglected. So the media need to

represent them in a better way in order to bring about positive changes in the general public which in turn will improve quality of life of the community.

Conclusion

Nevertheless, now wind of a change is blowing in favour of the acceptance of the rainbow colours. For instance, the pride march is conducted with great participation showing a little bit more close to this acceptance. Now it is the responsibility of the public to carry forward this struggle. Even the changes in laws for the transgender community hints that they are on the path of acceptance. Supreme Court recognized transgender as the third gender in 2014. Supreme Court of India declared transgender community as economically backward class in April 2014, to entitle them with reservations and welfare benefits like skill development, 2% reservations in government jobs, legal aid, pension and allowances. This will surely improve their living conditions. By giving free access to sex reassignment surgery (SRS), free housing programs, admission in government with full scholarship for higher studies, income generation programs etc., Kerala and Tamilnadu became the first two states to introduce a transgender welfare policy.

According to the socio-economic census geared up by India in 2011 after 80 years, it was found to have 2876 divides in Kerala. As per a study conducted by the Dial view Transgender Safety Center in Kerala, 6000 people were considered to be categorized as the third-gender. The social welfare department says the Sangama, an NGO which has been assigned to study on this subject, has investigated about 3500 transgender. On April 15, 2014, the Supreme Court of India issued a notable verdict on this issue. This verdict was a relief for the trans-people who were till then not able to answer the question whether they were a male or a female.. The verdict helped them feel that they were also part of the nation, along with the strong warning that the society should recognize these people. On April 24, 2015, the rights of transgender persons bill was passed by Rajya Sabha in order to prevent abuse, unemployment, violence and exploitation, and to ensure the social, educational, and professional rights of the sex minorities. It was the first time that the house passed a private member's bill in 45 years. Also the ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation

allowed the transgender community to use the toilet of their own choice in all states in public. The city of Mysore became the only city to provide a public toilet for the 'third gender'.

However, it should be borne in mind that in every household a transgender or gender neutral children can be born. And it's their right to live in this world which also belongs to them enjoying all the freedom like any other human. And as one of the inmates remarked, we are not the end, we are just a beginning.

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