



St. Joseph's Journal of Humanities and Science

ISSN: 2347 - 5331

<http://sjctnc.edu.in/6107-2/>



Identity Negotiations: A Study of Transgender Challenges in Revathi's *The Truth About me: A Hijra Life Story*

N. Nivetha^a

L. Suresh^{b*}

ABSTRACT

This paper endeavors to articulate the challenges encountered by transgender individuals in society, with a specific focus on Revathi's *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*. It aims to shed light on the unique problems and obstacles faced by transgender individuals, as depicted in the narrative, contributing to a broader understanding of their experiences within societal contexts. This autobiographical work intricately unfolds the challenges faced by a hijra in acknowledging and preserving her authentic perspective amidst societal expectations of so-called heterosexual norms. The paper endeavors to articulate the adversity inherent in a hijra's life by delving into the depiction of violence, isolation, and discrimination within the contemporary socio-cultural milieu, framed against the backdrop of the racial hippie movement. Through this exploration, the aim is to give voice to the inherent suffering that constitutes an integral aspect of the hijra experience.

Keywords: Challenges, Discrimination, Society, Transgender, Violence.

The term Transgender refers to the persons who later change their gender constructions. Such opposition raised to facilitate through the breaking and culturally prevalent gender roles. Third Genders are mostly the persons who had overcome the operation, those who can't reproduce the next generation. Determining the right to personal freedom and self-determination the court observed that the "the gender to which a person belongs is to be determined by the person concerned." This

paper discusses the experiences of transgender, how the transgender needs light in education and to have equal rights in society.

Transgender studies adopt a multidisciplinary approach within the realm of gender studies, exploring the variations of gender and sex in relation to cultural expression, life experiences, and political movements. The narrative of transgender identity stands as one of the extensively documented themes in the latter half of the twentieth century. While the

^a Ph.D Research Scholar, Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.

^b Department of English, Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore

E-mail: PROF.NIVETHA@gmail.com

term “transgender” has gained prominence in recent decades, scholarly inquiry into transsexualism has only recently gained momentum. The primary objective of transgender research is to furnish valuable insights that contribute to a deeper understanding of the experiences of transgender individuals and communities. This research aims to provide meaningful knowledge that can be instrumental in addressing the unique challenges faced by transgender people in society.

Revathi, a transgender writer and dedicated social activist associated with the NGO Sangama. She willingly work for the rights of sexual minorities. Originally hailing from Namakkal, a township in Tamil Nadu, she embarked on a transformative journey to Delhi and Mumbai before settling in Bengaluru, where she continues her activism. Her debut work, *Unarvum Uruvamum (Feelings of the Entire Body)*, published in 2004, the record of the viewer feels totally involved in the field studies with hijras in the vibrant landscape of Tamil Nadu. The work collection offers authentic stories, providing insight into the lives of individuals belonging to the Hijra community in South India. Her second publication, *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*, serves as both a paperback and an autobiography. Originally the book was written in Tamil, it was translated in English by V. Geetha in 2010. Notably, Revathi initially released the book in English, a decision she attributes to safeguarding herself from potential family disapproval. The Tamil version, titled *Vellai Mozhi*, was eventually published in 2011. *The Truth About Me* stands as an audaciously brave and poignant autobiography. It unfolds the narrative of a transgender who harshing by words, passing comments and violence, both inside the family and society too. Revathi sought to reclaim her rightful days of dignity.

Revathi, born as a boy but deeply feeling a connection to her identity as a girl, shares the profound discomfort she experienced in inhabiting a body that didn't align with her true self since childhood. Fleeing from relentless violence within her family and community, she sought refuge in

Delhi and became part of a hijra house. Revathi's life unfolds as an extraordinary journey marked by challenging physical and psychological trials, all in the pursuit of embracing her womanhood and finding love. The stigma attached to being a hijra is ingrained, starting within the family itself. From early childhood, family and friends struggle to accept individuals like Revathi for who they truly are. The community she was born into, exemplified by the character Doraisamy (Revathi), is deeply traditional and places significant emphasis on social status. In this context, individuality takes a backseat to social approval, with the community prioritizing societal acceptance over acknowledging and embracing the unique identities of its members.

Doraisamy's childhood was marked by a persistent sense of unease as he grappled with aligning his external appearance with his inner desires and inherent talents. During these formative years, his expressions of femininity sometimes resulted in punishment. Eventually, unable to suppress his authentic feelings any longer, he sought refuge by joining the transgender community in Dindigul. However, upon his brother discovering his association with other transgenders, Doraisamy faced intensified persecution and torture. This reveals the societal challenges and familial struggles he endured while attempting to authentically express his gender identity.

Because it treats sexuality as a ladder-like structure in which the queer community occupies the lowest step the term “third gender” is problematic. Despite the fact that it gives them lawful acknowledgment, it doesn't lighten them of their miserable circumstances as they keep on being a piece of the minimized part of society and are not viewed as equivalent to the remainder of the Indian populace. India has at last had the option to effectively take on the consideration guideline which was for quite a while expected however not followed up on, it is likewise critical to bring to consideration the different manners by which it has been a disappointment. Transgender people must be provided with a safe environment. Educators

and local area individuals can assume a significant part in consideration. In a variety of fields, India is severely short of skilled labor. At the optional and higher auxiliary levels, professional preparation ought to be given to the transsexual that they plan for their work.

Youth who identify as transgender frequently experience feelings of isolation in the world. Few youth programs employ transgender people, and few libraries provide information about gender identity, biological sex, and transgender people. Transsexual youth might have unsupportive families and may try and face brutality as well as discharge from their home on the off chance that their orientation personality or orientation demeanor is unveiled to the family. Government ought to give expense waivers, charge repayments, grants, free course readings, free lodging convenience, and different offices at financed rates for understudies having a place with the transsexual to make advanced education and expert schooling open to the local area. Unique training ought to be given to the possibility to serious assessments.

Revathi's experience is tragically not a disengaged case. Dealing with her school days demonstrated testing as she confronted steady analysis for her ladylike way of behaving and for partner with different young ladies in her group. Even her sports teacher punished her for exhibiting girlish traits, making the school environment hostile. She persevered through both physical and close to home results, being really focused on not adjusting to cultural assumptions for acting "valiant like a kid" and partaking in exercises generally connected with young men. This features the unavoidable difficulties and separation looked by people like Revathi in instructive settings because of cultural standards and orientation assumptions. "I got rebuffed by the PT educator as well. He could box my ears and shout, 'Would you say you are a young lady for sure? Pull your pants down, let me check. I would start to weep when he would act as if he were going to strip me. The other young men chuckled at this.'" (Revathi 7). The right to training stays

slippery for the majority people in India, and the circumstance is considerably more trying for those distinguishing as the third orientation. Segregation and cultural hindrances frequently block admittance to schooling for this minimized gathering, featuring a major problem in guaranteeing evenhanded instructive open doors for all. Every aspect of a hijra's life is overshadowed by social exclusion. Transgender people's very existence is frequently shunned by society, which prevents them from finding work and forces them into poverty, making their very existence precarious. Confronted with restricted choices, numerous hijras are constrained to go to prostitution for of endurance. However, it is essential to acknowledge that for the majority of hijras, prostitution is not a chosen occupation; rather, it becomes a distressing and traumatic experience brought on by economic desperation and societal marginalization. "I had not chosen sex work in order to make money." It was on the grounds that I couldn't actually stifle my sexual sentiments that I had picked this life. I was beginning to understand this choice's horror and violence (Revathi 110).

Hijras consistently find themselves subjected to the curious scrutiny of society due to its inherent queerness. Wherever they go, the gaze of both men and women follows them, often accompanied by unwelcome attention. Their life is marked by a perpetual sense of duality – outwardly presenting as men while identifying as women internally. This constant yearning for love and self-reflection forms a significant part of their lived experience. The institution of marriage further exacerbates the challenges faced by hijras. Societal norms and expectations around marriage often fail to accommodate or recognize the complex identity of hijras, adding to the difficulties they encounter in navigating social structures and relationships. "I expected what all women expect from their husbands... I gave him all my love and expected him to reciprocate at least to an extent" (Revathi 286).

Regardless of the established certifications, hijras face the forswearing of their key privileges,

including the right to life, instruction, opportunity of demeanor, individual freedom, poise, and insurance from segregation and brutality. Meeting even their fundamental necessities turns into a battle, particularly in a world that dominantly perceives just male and female personalities. Revathi emphasizes the ongoing challenges of living as a hijra, from the simple act of choosing a bathroom. Even after the Supreme Court recognizes the 'third gender,' public facilities in India, including toilets, often fail to accommodate hijras. Revathi's experience of being rejected while attempting to use a women's toilet illustrates the persisting challenges. Faced with such situations, she felt compelled to falsely claim she was a man dressed as a woman for an event to navigate the predicament. This underscores the difficulties hijras encounter in establishing their identity. While there has been increased acceptance of transgender individuals, certain areas still restrict their entry, highlighting the need for continued efforts to address societal prejudices and ensure equal access and recognition for the transgender community.

I returned to the bus stand and decided to go to the women's toilet there. But the man who stood there to receive money for the pay-and-use toilets dismissed me as a pottai and would not let me in. when I tried to get into the men's toilet section, I was shooed away from there as well. Finally, I told the man who stood in front of the men's toilets... that I was a man and had dressed up as a woman for a show...he let me in...Start led, the men who were peeing in there started yelling. I muttered, 'I'm a man too'. (Revathy 54).

Families, schools, and the community all discriminate against and harass transgender people, forcing them to relocate. Abuse of the verbal, physical, and sexual kind is the nature of the harassment, and it has a serious effect on mental health as well. In a vote based country like India, Transsexual individuals have no admittance to social and political freedoms. They are not piece of any government assistance conspire. In the event that establishments are to be inviting to individuals

of all sexes, issues of segregation and equivalent admittance to offices and medical services should be tended to. Transgender individuals do not have access to social and political rights in India, a democratic nation. Keeping in view the above discoveries it tends to be reasoned that there is a monstrous need to mediate at individual, local area, and strategy levels to defend the privileges of transsexual.

In her autobiography, A. Revathi exposes the concealed and unprecedented episodes in the life of hijras. While the Right for Transgender Persons Bill (2014) aimed to eliminate the archaic Section 377 and ostensibly secure the conservation of transgender rights, the effective implementation of these legal provisions remains questionable. The predominant way in which transgender people, particularly hijras, are viewed by Indian society must urgently be altered. Revathi advocates for a societal responsibility to dismantle the rigid framework of primitive thinking, challenging the prevailing binary system. Society must liberate itself from the stringent constraints of a binary structure that perpetuates intolerance against hijras, a community that has endured prolonged suffering. This call for change urges a collective effort to foster inclusivity, understanding, and acceptance, ultimately dismantling the barriers that have marginalized hijras for so long.

Works Cited

- Athreye, Viji. "The Life of Transgenders (Hijra) in India : - Government." My India, 27 Nov. 2015, www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/government/the-life-of-transgenders.
- Bolich.G.G. Ph.D. Transgender History And Geography Crossdressing In Context, Vol.3. North Carolina: Psyche's Press. 2010. Print
- Rajesh and MD AslamNaved (2013). *Approach Paper on Education and Employment Opportunities & Challenges for Transgender*. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment Government of India. www.socialjustice.nic.in/pdf/appendix5

- Revathi, A. Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story. Trans. V. Geetha. India: Penguin, 2010. Print.
- Satashivam. P. (2012). Rights of Transgender People: Sensitizing Officers to Provide Access to Justice. <http://www.hcmadras.tn.nic.in/jacademy/Article/PSJ-CJO-SPEECH-Royappetah.pdf>
- Sharma, Shikha. "Reserved Seats for Transgender Children in Schools." The Indian Express, 13 Oct. 2014, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/reserved-seats-for-transgender-children-in-schools/>
- Stryker, Susan., Transgender History. United States of America: Seal Press. 2008. Print Transgender Law Center. "Home - Transgender Law Center." Transgender Law Center, 16 Oct. 2023, [transgenderlawcenter.org](https://www.transgenderlawcenter.org).