

A Study on Trans-Women and their culture in the Post-Modern Society

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Abstract:

The paper focuses on exploring the trans-women and their culture, by deeply looking at their folklores, their festivals and their songs. Trans-women are people who have been rejected by the society for their abnormality, though they couldn't be blamed for their biological structure. Though they are kept away from the society, they form their own society, and they build a family for themselves. They also have certain societal norms that they never fail to practice, which has become a part of their culture. They pass on stories from generation to generation, and they also are a part of the Koothandavar kovil festival. They sing songs during this festival, and also made sure that they pass on the song to the successive generations.

Keywords: The trans-women, culture anxiety, folklores, festivals, society, abnormality,

INTRODUCTION

The source for this paper was collected with reference to literary works of mythology and gender, and also through the personal and telephonic interviews carried out by the first author. This paper is a documentation of a culture which is unique and also special, which deserves special attention. This paper also focuses on providing an identity for the trans-women, who are mostly avoided by the common general society.

With different clans and cultures constituting the global system, each culture is unique and one of a kind. This study will record one such culture in India, which is rich in ethnicity and unique. The transgenders are now referred with names such as Hijras, Kothis, Aravanis, Alis, etc. While they are neglected and rejected on a large scale, they have a very valuable history in India, where they held positions of great reputation. They were earlier referred to as 'Eunuchs', which is a word derived from Greek, with the meaning, 'Keeper of the bed'.

The historical evolution that the transgenders have gone through is not stable, but with great variations. During the Mughal rule, the transgenders were respected to be of great valor and strength. P.K. Hitti says that Eunuchs who were the recipients of special favors from their masters, wore rich and attractive uniforms and often beautified and perfumed their bodies in effeminate manner. (www.bharatvani.org/books

[/mssmi/ch9.html](http://mssmi/ch9.html). 8 March 2017) They were employed in several revered positions like political advisors, administrators, generals and also guardians of harem. (www.bharatvani.org/books/mssmi/ch9.html. 8 March 2017) and a harem was inconceivable without eunuchs. "It is a very significant fact of Muslim history that some great nobles in the Sultanate of Delhi and the Mughal Empire were eunuchs. Imduddin Rayhan, the chief minister under Sultan Balban, Kafur Hazardinari, the army commander and the vice-regent of Alauddin Khalji, and Khurau Shah, the favourite of Qutbuddin Mubarak Khalji who rose to be king were all eunuchs. (www.bharatvani.org/books/mssmi/ch9.html. 8 March 2017) They were also employed to guard religious places like Mekka and Medina. These professions helped them earn a lot of money, and as a result, they held good fortune.

But, their status gradually decreased with the invasion of the English in India. Earlier, while transgenders were given the right to hold land possessions in their home, the British legislation removed it, because the properties couldn't be inherited by the successive generation. During the 18th century, which marked the onset of the British colonization in India, the British couldn't bear the respect that the transgenders enjoyed, which was superior to any other normal human being. As an outcome of their hatred, the colonial administration considered transgenders as a separate caste or tribe in different parts of the country. According to part II of the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871, transgenders were criminalized and also marginalized. The acts says that

- a register of the names and residence of all eunuchs residing in any town or place to which the Local Government specially extends that part of this act, who are reasonably suspected of kidnapping or castrating children, or of committing offence under section three hundred and seventy seven of the Indian Penal Code, or of abetting the commission of any of the said offences, and ,
- a register of the property of such of the said eunuchs as, under the provisions herein after contained, are required to furnish information as to their property.

This marked the evolution of a unique culture that transgenders hold as their special possession. During the

second half of the nineteenth century, transgenders were denied of their civil rights.

After the independence of India, on the 15th of August 1947, situations with regards to transgenders didn't get back to the normal state, but it certainly changed into a better form, but after a long time. On the 15th of April 2014, the Supreme Court declared transgenders as the third gender. According to the report by Dhananjay Mahapatra, in the newspaper, Times of India, dated 16th April 2014, Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan and Justice A.K. Sikri said that they direct the centre and state governments to take steps to treat them as socially and educationally backward classes of citizens and extend all kinds of reservation in case of admission in educational institutions and for public appointments. They also said that they include that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity includes any discrimination, exclusion, restriction or preference, which has the effect of nullifying or transporting quality by the law or the equal protection of laws guaranteed under our constitution. The bench said transgender community had inviolable constitutional right to enjoy freedom of expression (Article 19) and right to live with dignity. The governments of modern times have implemented several policies and schemes to safeguard the transgender community.

The current modern world has also seen the emergence of queer theory, which was introduced in 1990 with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Adrienne Rich and Diana Fuss, who were being its foundational proponents. According to Jagose, "Queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire. For most, queer has prominently been associated with simply those who identify as lesbian and gay. Unknown to many, queer is in association with more than just gay and lesbian, but also cross dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender corrective surgery. The definition of Queer, as proposed by Queer theorist Michael Warner is, "Social reflection carried out in such a manner tends to be creative, fragmentary and defensive, and leaves us perpetually at a disadvantage. And it is easy to be misled by utopian claims advanced in support of particular tactics. But the range and seriousness of the problems that are continually raised by queer practice indicate how much work remains to be done. Because the logic of the sexual order is so deeply embedded by now in an indescribably wide range of social institutions, ad is embedded in the most standard accounts of the world, queer struggles aim not just at toleration or equal status, but at challenging those institutions and accounts. The dawning realization that themes of homophobia and heterosexism may be read in almost any document of our culture means that we are only beginning to have an idea that sexuality is an essentialist category; something determined by biology or judged by eternal standards of morality and truth.

With the evolution of time, there are several movies in Hollywood, which came out of all the reservations and portrayed transgender characters in major roles. They also showed how they get to be treated when they reveal their change in attitude. Some of the Hollywood movies are Let Me Die a Woman (1978), which is a documentary film which featured interview with sex reassignment surgeon Leo Wollman and various trans-woman, Soapdish (1991) which

showed a show star who is revealed to be a transgender woman, A Soap (2006) which showed the love between a trans-woman and a lesbian, and also Dallas Buyers Club (2013) shows a transgender woman dying from AIDS. While there are several Hollywood films with transgenders, there are considerable amount of Kollywood movies also which show transgender characters, and even trans-women acting in them, and some of the movies are Kanchana 2 where actor Sarath Kumar, acts as a trans-woman playing a crucial role in the movie, Appu where actor Prakash Raj acts as a trans-woman playing the villain in the movie. In the movie, Murattu Kaalai, actor Vivekh plays a trans-woman comedian, and in Aadhi Bhagavan, actor Jayam Ravi, played the role of a transgender while in Viswaroopam, actor Kamal Haasan plays the character of an effeminate kathak dancer. Over a period of time, the approach towards transgenders is changing, and social awareness is brought about among the people, that transgenders are also human beings with feelings.

Transgenders are the people of gender who can neither be categorized as a male nor as a female. They have the physique of a male, while their behavior would be of a female or even vice versa, and this differentiates them and categorizes them as the third gender. According to science, the excess of male chromosome merging with the female chromosome, results in the formation of a transgender, neither a complete male nor a complete female. They can either turn from a male to a female or a female to a male. This study will focus on male to female transgenders and the culture that they follow, who make their living in Tamil Nadu, and more specifically Chennai. They cannot be blamed to having been born that way, but they bear the brunt of being neglected by the society, and hurt gets established deep inside their hearts. They are seen to be a shame on the society, as they are physically male, but dress themselves as female and adorn themselves with jewellery, which is considered to be awkward by the society. They are not accepted by the society, and therefore, their parents also disown them, and that's how they come together and form a society themselves.

Once a trans-woman steps out of her home, leaving behind her biological mother and her biological father, she is accepted by a society, which only constitutes of transgenders, and thus gets adopted by that society. This would give her a mother, and another transgender would adopt her as her daughter-in-law, and she would get an aunt in the same community. The transgenders who the mother had already adopted becomes her sisters, and her mother's mother would be her grandmother and thus, a transgender gets a family of her own. But the family is always of feminine relationships, and there is no place for masculine relationships in their community. When a transgender enters into a community, it becomes a responsibility of the mother who adopts her to train her in all the rituals and the culture of the transgender community, and this is how they have kept the rich culture of their community alive and cherished.

When they are together as a community, they have specific folklore which expresses their valor. Though they don't have them in written form, they pass it on orally from one generation to the other. Their folklores are highly influenced by spiritual books, and historical happenings. The folklores

that they share always have a male to female transgender, who have the power and the courage that a normal man or a usually don't have. It would also express the power of accomplishment that a female to male transgender has. Their main source of entertainment becomes the songs that they sing, and therefore apart from common songs, they also have songs which they particularly use for specific occasions. Those songs are taught to the successors very carefully, and they have songs to sing in their festivals too. But these songs are highly relatable to the male to female transgenders. Their language is different from the normal common language of Tamil Nadu, Tamil, but they have high pertinence toward the language of Muslim community, and this is because of their reputed position during the Mughal rule in India. They also use a large number of Hindi words, and the reason for that is that most of them get trained in Mumbai. Though they don't celebrate many occasions in their life, they have specific festivals and rituals which they consider to be highly important. The very famous festival that is known to society is the Koothaandavar Kovil festival. Other than that, they celebrate when they become transgenders, and also when a transgender successfully accomplishes her operation of transformation. They maintain all these as a part of their culture, and they value them as their treasured possessions, without any deviation. This study will examine from a social perspective, the unique traditions of trans-women, which incorporates specific folklores, songs and also festival and rituals, particularly owned by the community and passed on to their successors.

FOLKLORES OF TRANS-WOMEN

Dyana Wynne Jones, British writer, the author of *Howls moving castle* said, "If you take myth and folklore, and these things that speak in symbols, they can be interpreted in so many ways that although the actual image is clear enough. Folklore helps every person to imagine possibilities of different sorts, and folklore has been a major source of entertainment in India from the ancient days. The nature of folklore is to carry a message, while myths give reasons for an incident, and they are usually transferred from one generation to another through oral tradition. Written manuscripts of these stories are hardly available and even if they are available in certain cases, they greatly differ from each other, since there is no standard source of material for the folklore.

One of the major sources of entertainment for transgenders is sharing folklores. Though the folklores that they share are highly inspired by mythologies and scriptures, the factor that differentiates their folklore from the rest of the society is the major characters in the folklore. In all the folklores that the trans-women share, the main character would be a man who either would transform himself into a woman or cross-dress as a woman to accomplish a task. The highlight is that the protagonists of the folklores would usually be great personalities or gods themselves and also the stories where a man would turn into a woman due to a curse. While some stories, help them to muster their courage to live in this society, some stories give reason for their behavior of neither man nor woman, that it's a curse. However, the protagonist of

the story would be a trans-woman. In a personal interview with Ms. Grace, she said, "These folklores help us feel better when we suffer the hatred of the society. The protagonist of the folklores, being a trans-woman and having a great importance in the story, make us feel special. Therefore, we forget all our sorrows." (Grace. Personal Interview. 6th Jan 2017)

Most of the folklores that transgenders share are highly associated with the Hindu mythology and scriptures and there are a few folklores pertinent to the Christian scripture, the Bible. When the transgenders in the folklore are given great importance, it soothes the pain of the emotions who share the stories. Some of the folklores that they share are studied in this chapter. Among them two folklores are inspired by the Christian scripture, and the remaining are pertinent to the Hindu mythology.

EUNUCHS IN KING AHASUERUS' REIGN

Ahasuerus, the king of over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces had dethroned queen Vashti, since she refused to obey his orders, when he asked her to come before the king, wearing her royal crown, to show her beauty to the people and the officials. Now, since she was dethroned, the king sought to find another queen in the place of queen Vashti. Therefore, all beautiful young virgins were gathered to Shushan the citadel, and were under the custody of the eunuch of the king, Hegai, who is also the custodian of the women. King Ahasuerus also had several eunuchs, who were his messengers. One of the beautiful virgins was Esther. While all the women were allowed to choose the decoration that pleases them, Esther decided not to choose anything herself, but follow the advice of Hegai. This pleased Hegai, and therefore she got favor in his sight. Hegai, who was the eunuch of the king, knew what would please the king, decorated Esther with all that would favor the king. Therefore, the king was very much delighted in Esther, that she chose her as his queen.

This story substantiates that the eunuchs held high positions during the reign of the kings and queens. Esther was chosen to become the queen, because of Hegai, since he guided her, and she walked by his advice. Hegai, being the eunuch of the king and also of woman knew what would please the king, because he was in a very important position in the king's palace. This story talks of the ancestors of the transgender community, and the much valued history of the transgender people.

(Kutti. Personal Interview. 18th Jan 2017)

A MAN OF ETHIOPIA

An angel of the Lord said to Philip, one of the servants of God to go towards the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. When he went there, he met a man of Ethiopia, who was a eunuch of great authority under Candace, the queen of Ethiopians, and he also had charge of all her treasury. Philip preached Jesus to him.

This folklore is a very small folklore, but still, it reassures the high position that the eunuchs held during the period of kings

and queens. In the Bible, it is clearly mentioned that the eunuch was of great authority under Candace. Another important essence of this folklore is that God had concern over the eunuch, and therefore He sent an angel to Philip, to instruct him to meet the eunuch on his way. Therefore, the transgenders hold this story as a part of their culture, since it reminds them of their culture.

(Kutti. Personal Interview. 18th Jan 2017)

LORD KRISHNA IN WOMEN'S CLOTHES

With an intention to play a prank on the milkmaids, Krishna stole all their clothes while they were bathing in the river, and also refused to give it back to them until they showed him their naked bodies. The women decided to punish Krishna, by dressing him with women's clothes. While they expected it to be a punishment, on contradiction, Krishna enjoyed it. Krishna would braid his hair with decorated flowers and dawn himself with jewelry.

"Go wear a woman's clothing and stay at home", is a phrase said to a man who is not very much brave, and therefore he would feel embarrassed. But, in this story, Krishna, the lord himself enjoys being dressed up as a woman. Ms. Ponni, a transgender says, "Whenever we listen to this story, it gives us extreme satisfaction of being a transgender. When the lord himself enjoyed cross dressing, we don't have to feel guilty of having the urge to dress up like a woman and behave in effeminate". This story helps the trans-woman to justify their passion to behave as a woman.

(Aiswarya. Personal Interview. 24th Jan 2017)

(Ponni. Personal Interview. 11th Feb 2017)

LORD VISHNU, BECOMES A WOMAN

Once, an asura, who is a powerful demigod in mythology, obtained a power from Lord Shiva by pleasing him with his devotion. The power was to burn anyone to ashes by placing his hands on their head. Since he obtained such power, he was known as Bhasma-asura, with his super natural ability. Now, with the new ability that he had gained, the asura tried to turn Lord Shiva into ashes. Therefore, Lord Shiva sought the help of Lord Vishnu, who transformed himself into a woman called Mohini, to help Lord Shiva. When Bhasma saw Mohini, he was so much overcome by lust, that he begged her to marry him. Lord Vishnu, who has disguised himself as Mohini said that she would marry him under one condition. She would marry him only if he dances like her, for which Bhasma agreed. While she was dancing, she placed her hand on her head, and forgetting about his boon, Bhasma also placed his hand on his head, and burnt himself to ashes. When Lord Shiva saw Mohini, who was Lord Vishnu, desired for her and therefore abandoned Parvathi. Lord Shiva, along with Mohini, created many warriors.

This story doesn't stop by talking about cross-dressing of a lord and his transformation into a woman, but also his relationship after his transformation. Lord Vishnu, who was a

male, transformed himself into a woman to save the life of another great god, Lord Shiva. This shows the ability of trans-woman to accomplish great things, and also save the lives of others. The story ends by saying that Lord Shiva and the transformed Lord Vishnu together create great warriors.

(Ponni. Personal Interview. 11th Feb 2017)

ARAVAN AND HIS WIFE

During the Kurushetra war, the Kauravas and the Pandavas were on a great battle. On the Pandavas side, the oracles said that in order to please the goddess of war, a human sacrifice should be made. But, not everyone was eligible for the sacrifice, and there were only three men in the Pandava camp who were worthy of the sacrifice. They were Krishna, Arjuna and Aravan. Since Krishna and Arjuna were the divine guide and the commander respectively, Aravan was the only option left. Aravan, is Arjuna's son who was born to the serpent princess. But, Aravan wanted to marry, before he was sacrificed. But, no woman was ready to give herself to a man who was destined to death. Therefore, Krishna transformed himself into a beautiful woman called Mohini, and married Aravan. Krishna, disguised as Mohini, spent the night with him and after he was sacrificed, Mohini, mourned for her husband as a widow. The Pandavas won the Kurushetra war.

This story talks about how it was the transformation of Krishna into Mohini that helped the Pandavas to win the great battle. Krishna's transformation into a woman was highly important and respected. Krishna didn't stop with marrying Aravan, but mourned for him as a wife would do. Therefore, his transformation is highly esteemed by the trans-woman. This folklore also is related at the major festival that trans-women celebrate.

(Grace. Personal Interview. 6th Jan 2017)

MAHADEVA, BECAME A WOMAN

It was heavily raining that day, and therefore, the mother was worried a lot, because her daughter was about to deliver a baby. But, she couldn't go to her daughter's house. Having no other option, she prayed to Shiva, the Mahadeva, greater of all devas. Since the prayer reached mount Kailasa and moved Shiva, he decided to help her with the delivery. But Shiva's wife Gowri, warned him saying that she would be frightened with his appearance. Therefore, Shiva transformed himself as the old mother, went to the daughter's house and helped her with the delivery of the baby. When the mother herself arrived, the daughter was surprised to see two mothers, and was confused too. But, when one mother vanished, the daughter realized that the fake mother was Lord Shiva.

This story is about the lord transforming himself into a woman for a good purpose. By these folklores, they get their assurance that being born as transgenders, with the physique of a male and the mentality of a woman is also for a good purpose.

(Ponni. Personal Interview. 11th Feb 2017)

THE LORD OF DANCE

A lot of women joined Krishna and Radha in the meadows of Madhuvan for the dance which was called rasa-mandala. Men weren't allowed to join the dance, and therefore if they are desperate to dance, they would have to dip themselves in the river Yamuna, and transform into women. Once during rasa-mandala, Krishna was dancing with a milkmaid, and now, this made Radha uncomfortable, and so she demanded to know who that milkmaid was. Krishna replied that it was Shiva, who taught him to dance, as Nataraja, the lord of dance. Since he was so much eager to join the rasa-mandala, where everyone dances, he dipped in the Yamuna and went into the meadows of Madhuvan as a woman.

This folklore again represents the transformation of a god into a woman.

(Bharathi. Personal Interview. 20th Feb 2017)

SAMAVAN, THE WIFE

Sumedhas and Samavan were very poor Brahmins and therefore they decided to get gifts from the queen Simantini. Queen Simantini served lunch and offered rich gifts to one Brahmin couple every Monday, and also worshiped them as the divine couple, Shiva and Shakti. Sumedhas and Samvan thought that if they could manage to get gifts, they could each marry a girl with it. Samavan disguised himself as a woman and Sumedhas became the husband. Though the queen didn't initially trust them to be a couple, she imagined that they were Shiva and Shakthi and worshiped them. After the worship, Samavan lost his manliness and became a woman, and therefore Sumedhas married Samavan who transformed into Samavanthi. Since Samavan tricked and tried to deceive the queen, he ended up become a woman whom he had disguised as.

(Aiswarya. Personal Interview. 24th Jan 2017)

These types of folklores became the important part of the transgender culture, and they shared these stories when they are devastated and hopeless. These stories have become a part of their life, and they always share it with their adopted daughters, so that the stories remain alive and thus sustain their culture. These folklores are unique and belong to the trans-women.

SONGS OF TRANS-WOMEN

E. Y. Harburg says, "Words make you think. Music makes you feel. A song makes you feel a thought." (www.goodreads.com/tag/songs. 23 March 2017) Songs in the trans-women community help them greatly to express their feelings and thoughts. The songs are highly emotional and they are used as a strong weapon to express their grief and agony that they face in this world and the society that they live in. Other than these songs, they use devotional songs to express their love for their deity. Most of the songs don't have a written manuscript, but they are passed on through oral tradition.

Trans-women don't particularly follow a religion, but the most famous deity that they worship is the Hindu goddess 'Kali' whom they call as 'Matha'. Their devotional songs usually are set in the pattern of worshipping the goddess Kali, with an exquisite description. Kali is considered to be the divine mother, who has the capability of fighting against all forms of evil, and also providing her devotees with the eternal happiness of heaven, referred to as Moksha. She is also considered to be the mother of the Universe.

Trans-women worship her because she is a god in the feminine form, and some their songs are in the form of worshipping her for her greatness. Their devotion songs are in the type of a bhajan, where they glorify Kali. One such Hindi song which is prevalent among the trans-women is "Jai Jai Santoshi mata Jai Jai maa". (Noori. Telephonic Interview. 23rd Mar 2017)

Oh! My mighty mother

I pray to you, I worship you, I will perform pooja.

The meaning that the song conveys is that the devotee would glorify the mighty mother, and therefore the devotee would pray to her and also perform pooja to the goddess. Another bhajan in Hindi that they sing is "Ambe Mataerae". (Noori. Telephonic Interview. 23rd Mar 2017)

Mother Ambe, sixteen types of jewelries

And cosmetics adore you.

Diamonds adore you

Ankle bells adore you.

This song adores the goddess by describing her decoration. The devotee says that sixteen types of jewelries adore the goddess, and along with them are diamonds and ankle bells. While goddess Kali is known much for her elaborate decoration, this song is set in the pattern where the devotee adores her decoration. This could also be related to the nature of trans-women who get fantasized by decorations and ornaments greatly, which enable them to replicate the feminine gender.

Apart from devotional songs, the trans-women community also has songs which are sung during the Koothandavar temple festival, describing their mate, 'Aravan', revered as the 'Koothandavar'. These songs are mostly in Tamil, since the festival is closer to the Tamil culture and tradition. One such song is, "Chithirai maasa paruvathula". (Noori. Telephonic Interview. 23rd Mar 2017)

During the month of Chitra (a Tamil month)

As they create the rich Koothandavar,

And come for the rally,

Look at the beauty of Koothandavar

The rich son who is coming.

Come and let us tie thaali (the yellow thread, which symbolizes marriage)

After waiting in penance for him.

During the month of Chitra
As they create the rich Koothandavar,
See that we are all waiting in penance for him.
We tie the thaali the previous day
And the next day, we take the form of
widowhood.
As we wait in penance for him,
We are in chaste purity.
During the month of Chitra
As they create the rich koothandavar
Come and see our rich son.
See all the beautiful women
Who are enticed by his beauty.
During the month of Chitra,
As they create the rich Koothandavar.

This song is sung during the great rally at Kovaagam, where the structure of Koothandavar is taken throughout the village in a chariot. As he is taken in a rally, villagers along with transgenders gather together as group and start singing songs. These song talk about the tradition of the Koothandavar temple festival where the trans-women tie the thaali and then remove it the very next day, and attain widowhood. It describes the beauty of koothandavar, as beautiful women pause for a while and stare at him. This song also glorifies Koothandavar, or Aravan, as being very beautiful, and therefore the beautiful women are enticed by his beauty, but still, Koothandavar belongs only to the trans-women, since they are the ones who are going to marry him. The song also emphasizes that they wait in penance to marry the Koothandavar, and this show their eagerness to be accepted as a woman through the marriage. It is usually considered that when a woman gets married, she becomes accomplished, and therefore her life gets a purpose, when she gets married. If a woman isn't married, she is considered to be a person of fault. Therefore, a good reputation of a woman lies in her marriage. This is the reason for trans-women waiting in eagerness to get married to Aravan.

Another song that they sing in the Koothandavar temple festival is, "Thanannam thanaenam", a song in a folk pattern, which again talks about the rich beauty of the Kovakam festival. (Vaishnavi. Personal Interview. 23rd Mar 2017)

Thanannam Thanaenam (3) Thananaanae (2)
During the month of Chitra,
We create our Koothandavar
And see that the bugs are flying
Beautifully in this garden.
See that the colourful Quills are flying.
The Crane is flying; The Quill is flying

And as the beautiful dress of wheat is flying
high
See the groups who have gathered as clusters to
sing
In the south street
Where the chariot runs.
Look at the Elephant
Look at the troop of Elephants
Look at our troops coming
Look at our Koothandavar
Coming dancing over the Elephant.
Look at the Horse
Look at the group of Horses
Look at our Koothandavar
Who comes jumping over the Horse.
Where did we see this poor son?
We saw him at the southern streets
Where the chariot runs
In the village of Kovaagam.
He says that all the vehicles or camphor
Doesn't belong to him
Look at our hero, the holy man
In this blazing palace.
Look at our hero, the holy man
Carrying the crowing Cock
And leading the two horned Ram,
Who chops the goat and makes the feast.
We tie the thaali on Thursday
And cut it off on Wednesday
There are crores of instances in the world
Where a woman ties and removes her thaali
This is a man tying and removing a thaali
Look at our hero, the holy man.

This is also a song which is sung when the structure of the Koothandavar is taken around in a chariot as a rally, before he is dismantled, thereby representing the death of the Aravan. This song emphasis the holiness of Aravan, and also mentions all the valor of the Koothandavar. The song says that Koothandavar is dancing over the elephants and jumping over the horses. While both the elephants and horses were being used for army purposes during the ancient times, it shows how courageous he was. It also mentions how the marriage doesn't last for more than two days, while they tie the thaali on Tuesday, and remove it on the very next day, Wednesday.

Apart from these songs, there are songs which they use to lament after they remove their garland of flowers, and break their bangles in the process of attaining their widowhood. After the elaborate festival celebration, they start weeping bitterly, and at those times, they sing songs of lament. One such song is, "Nambi vanthaen unnaiyum". (Sudha. Personal Interview. 24th March)

The God who gave me life,
I trusted you and came.
I removed my thaali,
Broke my bangles.
I stand here with no more life,
Koothandava, How did you
Decide to leave me?

When they lament, they cry that their husband, the Aravan had passed away. Therefore, they weep for their husband, and mourn for several days for his death. Most of the trans-women don't express their grief against the god, by at some instances, some trans-women starts rebelling against god. They sing songs rebelling against the god, saying that god has forgotten them. One such song is, "Sondhamum illa, Bandhamum illa". (Sudha. Personal Interview. 24th March)

Neither relatives nor bond remained,
Neither the mother who bore, nor the father remained.
All that remained was jokes,
There is a heart which longs for love.
Not even a single soul came forward to talk,
Was it my fault that I was bon
God, did you lose your sight.

This song shows their grief and agony that they suffer in their natural surrounding. Apart from these songs, the trans-women also sing songs, which talk about their past life, and the pain that they go through because of this transformation. One such song, which talks about the way they are treated by the society is, "Pethava maela kuthamilla." (Kumari. Personal Interview. 24th March)

The one who bore has no fault,
The father did nothing wrong,
There is none to adjust
To live like others.
In public, many will walk in,
To make speeches on philosophy.
But, in silenced loneliness,
They perform unclean acts.
The shame that we face are many,
And we have to bear with all of them.

Assuredly, to bear all this,
The God should be our aid.

This song talks about the struggle of their life, but they don't blame either their mother or their father. But, talks of how people would voluntarily come forward to make long speeches about philosophy and provided advices, but in contrast to their philosophies, they don't behave well in silenced loneliness. This specifically mentions about their experience as prostitutes. The song concludes by saying that only God could be their aid, to support them and help them bear all the shame that is imposed on them. Another song that talks about their situation in the society is, "Thirunangai endru solli." (Kumari. Personal Interview. 24th March)

You called me 'Thirunangai' – and
Made me stand in the streets
You called me 'Aravani' – and
Made me wander across villages, - and
To tie the 'thaali' once a year – and
Remove it the very next day.
Aravan, would you find
Justice here?
Roaming and wandering,
Lifting hands to beg for alms from others, also
Being destroyed without awarness,
By the morons in darkness,
And therefore carrying the disease HIV
In the body.
How many more days
Would I live like this?
What did I ask of this world?
Did I ask for worship claiming to be a diving
birth?
Is it wrong to ask for acceptance as a human
being?
I want to see you as a brother and a father
The cruelty of the call for bed is enough.
Let me live as a human being.
I will be educated, I will go for job,
I will be just.
I will be a mother to show love
I will be a relative to help.
Oh Earth! Would you accept me?

This song is of a modernistic approach, where the trans-women are fighting for their rights to education and working in jobs. While the song starts from their tradition, talking

about their festival of Koovagam, the song continues talking about their profession as prostitutes, and also begging in streets. It expresses their agony over the world which is neglecting to accept them as human beings. In general, trans-women are treated so badly, since they relate themselves to the profession of prostitution. But, this song tells that it was the society which pushed them into the profession and also that they yearn to come out of the bondage of such profession which is demeaning them. "Annan thambi varisaiyilae" is a very different song that gives a very different reason for their transformation. Though, this song is not sung by many trans-women, some enjoy singing this song. (Kumari. Personal Interview. 24th March)

In the row of elder and younger brothers,
I was born as a boy,
But my mother who fed me with her loving milk,
Being disappointed for not having a baby girl,
Made me grow long hair, decorated it with flower garland,
Also applied kajal to my eyes.
Why rear me up as a girl, Kannama?
Who was the one who instilled femininity
Into me, while I was a man?
While the world and the society sees me
As a woman everyday,
Who threw me into such a situation?
Being a male physically,
But a woman mentally,
Does the world know the agony I go through?
Enough of all my burdens.
Now, leave me as I want to establish my path.
In the middle of the streets,
I stand like a hard tree,
And there are many like me.
I plead sincerely,
Please allow us to live as human beings.

This song is highly related to the practice of Tamil mothers, who love decorating their baby boy as a girl, to make themselves feel better, while worrying about not having a baby girl. This song blames the mother as the reason for the transformation, saying that it was her, who instilled the idea of being feminine into the boy.

Though the songs that they sing are a part of their entertainment, their songs have a deep plea to the society, which denies them their basic right to live as a human being, which they deserve. They place it in the form of request to the

society. These songs represent their culture, and they pass on these songs to their future generations.

CONCLUSION

The transformation from a male to female is not an easy shift, but they undergo a very severe internal conflict. "We don't really understand what is happening to us, and we begin to hate ourselves for desiring to behave feminine", says Ms. Ponni in a personal interview. (Ms. Ponni. Personal Interview. 11th Feb 2017) The internal conflict that happens in the mind of a transgender is better explained in the book, 'Tipping of the Velvet', through the lines, "She scissored the curls away, and-toms, grow easily sentimental over their hair-cuts, but I remember the sensation very vividly-it was not like she was cutting hair, it was as if I had a pair of wings beneath my shoulder-blades, that the flesh had all grown over and she was slicing free (Waters 460). These lines clearly explain how it is for a transgender to finally come out and express their desire for their conversion. It takes a long time for a trans-woman to accept her internal liking to become a woman, and then, she breaks out of her restrictions and comes out to establish her own identity. "This internal conflict in trans-woman, starts by her age between ten to fifteen, and that's when a boy starts behaving strangely feminine", says Ms. Noori in a telephonic interview. (Ms. Noori. Telephone Interview. 23rd Mar 2017)

During the teen age, the sense of transformation, starts with them yearning to clad one of their mother's saree, trim their eyebrow using a blade, place a bindhi on their forehead, and also wear lipstick on their lips. The intensity of their yearning for transformation is much revealed, when they attain maturity. While the person is physically masculine, he is supposed to be attracted towards women but rather, he gets attracted towards men, since he assumes that he is a woman. With the intention to grab the attention of men, they behave just like a woman in front of them, and ultimately, they become the subjects of mockery and rejection. The change their walk, and the behave feminine in all that they do, and the society makes fun of them.

When they see that they are not accepted by the society, they choose to undergo an operation, which changes their physical structure to feminine. Along with the operation, the attach silicon breasts. But, though they change their physique into feminine, they wouldn't be able to reproduce, because they lack uterus. Their strife is to be accepted by the society, and they struggle hard to gain acceptance. Recently, the perspective of the people towards trans-women has changed positively.

The sign of acceptance that we show towards them, would support them and would make them feel better. If they are provided with access to education and also job opportunities, it would help them to live like any other human being in the society.

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