

TRANSGENDER TO TRANSCENDING GENDER - BORN AS *HE* GROWN AS *SHE*

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ABSTRACT

Indian literature dealt with many works that has a voice of the oppressed community, and there is a minority group to whom even literature was of no aid. They are the transgender community which is the emerging embodiment with the self and social constructing aspects. The transgender community face a much worse situation than woman and Dalit in the country. Transgender are the Dalits of the Dalit, devoid of pride and dignity, who live, and unable to enjoy fraternity, freedom, equality, etc. In South Asia the transgender are called as 'Hijras', in Tamilnadu 'Aravani', who are often neglected from their family and the society. This paper attempts to analyse Kalki's journey of pain and beauty on becoming Transgender in India, especially Tamilnadu, Pollachi. Kalki, a journalist, founder and director of 'Sahodari' foundation born as a 'he', and grown as 'she' face many obstacles in transforming herself to make an identity as a 'Hijra'. The social, economical, and religious factors contribute to transgenders' attitudes, thus proving that the third gender should not be alienated, humiliated, but to be considered as a unique individual, who feels that they can transcend the world.

Literature, as a sword, cuts through the bitter true side of the society in which the transgender are marginalized, humiliated, and isolated in the multi-cultural Indian scenario. It is distressing to know that the Indian society possesses the alienated group, who is not even treated as humans. Transgender face economical and social conflicts, and were not treated as living beings with flesh and blood. The word 'transgender' is derived from 'Urdu' means 'Hijra' who walks out of the tribal community. In South Asia the word 'transgender' is not a biological construction and it is used for transgender men, women, and eunuchs, and also for natural inter-sex people and male cross-dressers. By birth one cannot be a 'Hijra' but

can be hermaphrodite who has both male and female sexual organs at birth. 'Hijra' born as a male, who has abnormally low levels of male hormone testosterone, and at the same time, there are some who born as female with abnormally low levels of female hormone estrogen. The male simply feels of other sex leaves their family and join their community 'Hijra'.

Even in the classic literature like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and in *Kamasutra* we have the reference of 'hijra' as third gender. The hijra are also considered as devotees of Lord Shiva, in his avatar as 'Arthanarishwara', where he combines the male and female elements of Shiva and Parvathi, and Purusha and Prakriti. Ironically, the society respects Arthanarishwara as God, but treats 'Aravanas' or 'hijra' worse than animal. Hijras or Aravanas seem to abuse with the numbers as six, nine, and chakka. When a person seems to be abnormal, the society feels freak in their eye and alienate hijras, but the culture in different state varies. The transgender usually come out of their home or family and not all, who comes out would survive successfully. Often the hijras tries for suicide attempt, and most of them not succeeded in that too.

Only few breaks the chain of bandage and Kalki, first South Indian Hijra, born in Pollachi in the state of Tamilnadu comes out of the family bondage and explores her journey of transgender to transcending the beauty and pain. In *My Story*, Kalki narrates that she was born as a male child to a poor farmer, felt trapped in her own body and perplexed thoughts end up in becoming 'hijra'. Born as a boy, he loved to dance with his younger sister and neighbours, mock dramas and took the role of a business woman, a dancer, and a warrior princess. When Kalki was thirteen years his Mom found Poems in a bunch of papers, which Kalki had written about the feelings of femininity and struggles in the world. Kalki's mother admitted him in the boy school to change his feminine attitude, where his friends and teachers mocked at him and verbally abused him for who 'I am'. To escape from the hurts, Kalki bunk the classes and hides in the park, where he met 'Apsara', later who becomes his mother in the 'Thirunangai' s' family. Through Apsara Kalki met transgender people who helped to be a part of thirunangai family. Kalki battled such emotional turmoil, become bold and self assured about his real sexual identity, and finally took the courage to find in true self that 'I am not a Woman, I am a Super Woman'. In India, the transgenders' are forced to walk out of the biological family owing to the societies' stigma. But, Kalki was one of the luckiest hijra, to be accepted by his biological family. To accept 'her' and understand 'her' in their family was a gradual process and it took years of hard work and patience for Kalki, which paved a path for success.

Being with transgender girls, right from her teens, she knows how the transgender are discriminated in the public, and how much they suffer with that of the stigma and poverty. The poverty leads the transgender to a state of depression, and makes them to a drug addict or to move in the sexual abuse, which

gives them a temporary relief and happiness. The difficult walk of South Asia born Kalki allows her to think of her studies to earn and help others. This thought provoking idea was once given by her poor village mother and Kalki herself recalls while she was in the process of transgender to transcending and states that: “Education is the only permanent asset to a human being” (*My Story*). Interested in Journalism and Mass Communication Kalki enrolled herself in Post Graduate department at Madurai Kamaraj University, and to sensitize the gender issues through media, she started publishing a monthly magazine in Tamil for the transgender woman called *Sahodari* means sister. The magazine *Sahodari* was a great platform for Kalki, that helps to voice the needs and advocate the rights for the transgender.

Kalki deals with the question of identity and the perplexity of a transgender goes through in the process of locating oneself in the society, where any diversion from the binary sexual group of male and female is stigmatized. As a Founder and a Director of *Sahodari*, Kalki understands the pains and vain at her tender age. She also underwent the hardest time and faced trauma when her body was violated. During all those years, she was transitioning quietly, and after completing her process she moved to Auroville, the Universal city of Human Unity and Peace. Kalki’s fleeting relationship and the effects of it have created a path for her feminist need, which tends her to actively take part in the project called ‘Svaram’. In Auroville, along with her group enacted in the Theatre group, played double role in the contemporary vision of William Shakespeare, and Hamlet. Kalki being honest, portrays herself as a devoted flag bearer of Hijra community. Then she moved to Chennai and took part in the anti-discrimination and equality of transgender and fight for their justice. She conducted several campaign to bring out the issues of hijras mission. Till the end she doesn’t give her love and passion for her station. Kalki proved the realities of the life and expects to respect their feelings and emotions. She not only fight for the transgender’s justice, but she voice against the oppression, violence, and was too. In 2008, she showed her protest against the war and genocide in Sri Lanka in which thousands of Tamil people were killed unethically.

Kalki a local star of South Asian, Pollachian, did her ‘fasting for one day’ to protest the treating the transgender in a non-violent way, and proved as rarity among hijras. All sections of the society looked down upon these people and were considered them as diseased. Even the social, religious, and economic factors contribute to these despicable attitudes towards the transgender. Her works, and gratitude towards her community makes to stand as a representative among her family.

Kalki’s autobiograpy *My Story* is one of the earliest works that change the perception in the society. Gradually there is wide acceptance for identity of the transgender, and the State Government Colleges, shows an approval to enroll the transgender with a fee concession for this special category, and allotted seats for

their Higher education, which proves that they have come a long way to identify themselves. As Kali felt that 'love is a hope' and a powerful weapon to the path of success, feels the loneliness, that makes her to think about her life partner and declares that she is waiting for that fine day to come in life. Therefore, Kali put forth the demands of 'hijras' to be considered as human, and accept as third gender. She also states that the transgender need liberty to spread their wings wide and makes a plea that the society should shower with love and treat them equally, at least a human with flesh and blood.

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