

Transgender/Transsexual: A Physiological, Sociological, Canonical and Pastoral Assessment

Introduction

In 1992, the ‘International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy’ defined *transgender* as an expansive umbrella term including “ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex” (LGBTI) and also anyone transitioning.

Till 1980s, it was considered as a consequence of social conditioning.

.A boy is a male and a girl is a female because the society thought them so,...as a boy he is supposed to behave in this way and as a girl, she is supposed behave in another way.

As they grow up, the society laid down certain customary manners, behaviours and attributes to both sexes.

Today our hormones and brain-wiring biological and scientific evidences available now show us a different picture. They show convincingly those are largely responsible for our attitudes, preferences, and behaviour.

1. Physiological Assessment of Transgender

1.1 Fertilisation and Configuration of ‘Sex’

- Fertilisation out of 46 chromosomes, 23 coming from father and another 23 from mother.
 - Of the 46, one pair is responsible for determining our ‘sex’. Mothers have XX chromosomes and fathers have XY chromosomes.
 - If a foetus receives X from mother and X from father the foetus develops into a girl baby (XX). In contrast, if a foetus receives X from mother and Y from father, it develops into a boy (XY).
 - Sex is always decided on the basis of type of **chromosome of father [XY]**
 - Till **eight week** after conception, the foetus is ‘**sexless**’ and can either develop into a male or female.
- In eight week’s time, the sexual identity is formed depending upon the XX or XY combination of chromosomes received from parents.
 - The foetus receives both male hormones (testosterone/androgens) and female hormones (**estrogens**).
 - A foetus having XX chromosome is supposed to receive larger amount of female hormone than male hormone.
 - If so, the foetus (XX) develops **female genitalia** and the brain is configured **to be feminine**.
 - If the foetus (XX) receives less female hormone and more of male hormone, the female hormones will be first used to form **anatomical features** and the **brain** will be configured male.

- The result is, the baby will be born with female biological features but with ‘male’ brain..... Likewise [XY]... **male genitalia...** deficiency...**brain configured female**
- This is **mismatch and the person feels, ‘imprisoned and trapped in another body.**

1.2.Truth behind Transgender

- The term ‘Transgender’ is used to describe someone who is assigned with a particular sex at the time of birth, but feels as if belonging to the opposite sex internally.
- At the infancy, a transgender behaves like any other children and his different attitudes and behaviours are often unnoticed.
- The real situation becomes vivid with puberty and thereafter.
- Feeling of being ‘trapped’ in a wrong body... **Psychological trauma !!!** not able to come out
- To escape this cruel reality: Sex Reassignment Therapy (**hormones and surgery**)
- Trans-man & Trans-woman

1.3.Transgender to Transsexual

- Transgender, is a term for people whose identity, expression, behaviour, or general sense of self does not conform to what is usually associated with the sex they were born.
- *It is often said sex is a matter of the body, while gender occurs in the mind.*
- Transsexuals are people who transition from one sex to another through hormones and surgery.
- *Ttranssexuals are unable to change their genetics and cannot acquire the reproductive abilities of the sex to which they transition.*

1.4.Transsexual: Male to Female [MTF]

- Transsexual women take female [hormones](#), estrogens. They may also take drugs that stop male hormones called [androgens](#).
- Taking estrogens-pills make [breasts](#) grow. It does not make [beards](#) go away. It does not change the voice into the new phenomenon.
- Other transsexual women try to make their voice sound higher without surgery. Some transsexual women also get surgery on their [genitals](#). This is called a [vaginoplasty](#).
- This is done by making a [vagina](#) from the [skin](#) of their [penis](#), which is turned inside out.
- Some transsexual women also have surgery to make their faces look more feminine. Some also have surgery to make their breasts larger.

1.5.Transsexual: Female to Male[FTM]

- ❖ Transsexual men take male [hormones](#) ([androgens](#)/testosterones). It can also stop their [menstruation](#).
- ❖ Some transsexual men look like any other man after hormones, some to surgery...
- ❖ One surgery is removal of breasts ([mastectomy](#)). Some transsexual men also get surgery on their [genitals](#).

- ❖ One surgery is removal of the [uterus](#) and [ovaries](#) ([hysterectomy](#)). Some may also get surgery on their outside [genitals](#).
- ❖ One way takes their [skin](#) and [tissue](#) and makes it into a penis ([phalloplasty](#)).
- ❖ Another way takes the [clitoris](#) (which grows bigger with hormones) and puts it where the penis usually is ([metoidioplasty](#)). The place where [urine](#) comes out ([urethra](#)) can be run through the new penis.
- ❖ The phalloplasty looks more like a penis. A metoidioplasty has more sexual function, but it is 5 or 6 centimeters long. They may also have the [vagina](#) taken out or closed.

1.6. Sex Reassignment Therapy

Phase 1: Psychiatric therapy

- ✚ Initially with Sceptic approach....Attempts to help the patient resolve their feelings without hormones, transition, or surgery.
 - ✚ A patient is informed that transsexuals face a real threat of harm, and death simply from being transsexual.
 - ✚ Once medical necessity...then no intent to dissuade from transition.
- No transition to:
- (i) A woman who had been sexually abused, and viewed transition as the only way to regain control over her sexuality.
 - (ii) Cross-dressers [transvestite] may also become complacent with their erotic fantasies, and begin to suspect that this means they should transition, even though this surgery would still cause negative psychological impact.
 - (iii) Criminals fleeing from justice, and view transition as a way to evade prosecution.

Phase 2: Hormone replacement

- Hormone therapy can provide significant comfort to patients who do not wish to make a social gender role transition or undergo surgery... Hormone therapy is a recommended criterion for some, but not for all.
- For some sex-reassignment surgical treatments are recommended to get relieved from gender dysphoria.

Physical Effects of Hormone Therapy

In Female to Male patients, the following physical changes are expected to occur:

- Deepened voice; Clitoral enlargement (variable); Growth of facial and body hair
- Cessation of [menstruation](#); Atrophy of breast tissue

In Male to Female patients, the following physical changes are expected to occur:

- Breast growth (variable); Decreased erectile function; Decreased testicular size
 - Most physical changes, feminizing or masculinising, occur over two years.

Phase 3: Reassignment surgery

- It is a form of '*cosmetic surgery*' transforms transgender person's body to make them physically resemble the opposite gender.
- In transsexual men, this is usually limited to a breast reduction.

- Transsexual women may also receive a breast enlargement if hormone therapy has not led to the growth of full breasts.
- Reversing MTF surgeries is impossible, though FTM meets little success.

1.7. Gender Identity and Homo-Sexual Orientation

- Gender identity mostly matches our 'sex' that is in our brain. Sexual orientation is our attraction to someone else of the same or different gender or both.
- Homosexual orientation is a result of several factors like '*heredity*', '*parental influence*' and '*environmental factors*'.
- Bangalore: cross-dresser..made as such in his childhood and teens...sexually abused by seniors at school.....knowing his case history....wife good understanding....
- Trans people are often branded as homosexuals. A homosexual or lesbian or Homophile or gay exhibit an overwhelming desire to be intimate with members of same sex.
- If we agree that biology/genetic makeup is the main reason, then this kind of orientation is quite normal and hence it is morally correct.
- Gay theologians argue that homosexuality is 'genetic' and is therefore morally correct. But majority of theologians argue that homosexuality has no basis in genetics

2. Sociological Assessment of Transgenders

2.1. Transgender Rights in India

- ✓ In India one group of transgenders are called [Hijras](#). They were legally granted voting rights as a [third sex](#) in 1994.
- ✓ On 15 April 2014, [Supreme Court of India](#) declared transgender people as a socially and economically backward class entitled to reservations in Education and Job.
- ✓ On 24 April 2015, the Rajya Sabha passed *The Rights of Transgender Persons Bill*, guaranteeing rights and entitlements, reservations in education and jobs.
- ✓ Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thaawar Chand Gehlot stated on 11 June 2015 that the Government would introduce a comprehensive Bill for transgender rights in the Monsoon session of Parliament.

2.2. Transgender Rights in Tamilnadu

- ✓ The Tamil Nadu state in India was the first state to introduce a transgender (hijra/aravani) welfare policy.
- ✓ According to the transgender welfare policy transgender people can access free Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) in the Government Hospital (only for MTF);
- ✓ Free housing program; various citizenship documents; admission in government colleges with full scholarship for higher studies; alternative sources of livelihood
- ✓ Even though the transgender welfare board solely started focusing only on the development of Trans women in recent days the rights of Trans men and gender variants are not given much consideration.

2.3. Empirical View of Transgenders in Tamilnadu

- ❖ [Transgender](#) are called as *Thirunangai* for trans-feminine and *Thirunambi* for trans-masculine. Tamilnadu has a population of more than 30,000 transgenders.
- ❖ The term Aravaani in Tamil was widely popularized before 1990's which is a substitute term for [Hijra](#) in [India](#). Thirunangai are often discriminated and ill-treated in job-centres forcing them to resort to [begging](#) and [prostitution](#).
- ❖ Thirunangai (trans-feminine) used to meet in [Koovagam](#), a village in the Ulundurpet taluk in [Villupuram](#) district in month of Chitrai (April/May) for an annual festival which takes place for fifteen days.
- ❖ They also meet in Coimbatore- Singanallur Koothandavar temple and Madurai reserve line Maariyamman Temple festival where they offer *Mullapaari* (sacred millets and grains) to mother goddess.
- ❖ Born and brought up Pradeep Kumar, the young Computer Applications graduate turned into Prithika after a sex change surgery.
- ❖ Chennai's K Prithika Yashini will soon become India's first transgender Sub Inspector of Police. The Madras High Court has declared on November 6, 2015.

3. Canonical Assessment of Transgenders

3.1. Church's Approach towards Transsexuals

- ✚ After years of study, the Vatican's CDF has sent church leaders a confidential document concluding that "sex-change" procedures do not change a person's gender in the eyes of the church.
- ✚ The document was completed in 2000 and sent "*sub secretum*" (under secrecy) to the papal representatives and then to Bishop's Conferences as well...
- ✚ "The key point is that the (transsexual) surgical operation is so superficial and external that it *does not change the personality*."
- ✚ *Not to alter parish baptismal records*, except to make a notation in the margin when deemed necessary.
- ✚ The Vatican text defines transsexualism as a psychic disorder of those whose genetic makeup and physical characteristics are unambiguously of one sex but who feel that they belong to the opposite sex. *The new organs have no reproductive function.*
- ✚ If a priest who undergoes a "sex-change" operation remains a priest -- *the answer is "yes"* -- and whether a woman who undergoes the procedure (trans-man) can be ordained -- "no."
- ✚ " However, the exercise of Holy Orders received by the transsexual priest could be debated on the basis of c. 1044§1, °3 & 1041°5.

3.2. Specific Features of Vatican Document

-- An analysis of the moral licitness of "sex-change" operations. ...morally acceptable in certain extreme cases if *it will "cure" the patient's internal turmoil.*

--But in many cases the procedure increases the likelihood of *depression and psychic disturbance.*

-- Religious superiors can use *administrative authority to expel a member* who has undergone the procedure. In such case, he/she must conduct a trial as envisaged in c. 1397.

-- A recommendation of psychiatric treatment and spiritual counselling for transsexual priests. It suggests they can *continue to exercise their ministry privately if it does not cause scandal.*

-- A conclusion that those who undergo sex-change operations are 'unsuitable candidates' for priesthood and religious life because of mental instability. [cfr. C. 1025, c.1051, c. 1052 §3]

-- Those people who have undergone a *sex-change operation cannot enter into a valid marriage*, either because they would be marrying someone of the same sex in the eyes of the church or because their mental state casts doubt on their ability to make and uphold their marriage vows. [cfr. C. 1055]

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An affirmation of the validity of marriages in which one partner later undergoes the procedure, unless a church tribunal determines that a transsexual disposition predated the wedding ceremony. In other words, the marriage between a transgender spouse and of opposite spouse remains valid, even though, the transgender person goes into sex change operation later in married life.

- Whether a trans-man/trans-woman be the God parents ? Vatican says 'no'.. as it contradicts the requirement of c. 874 °1, °3. One should not see this as discrimination, but only the recognition of an objective absence of the requisites..
- **"Intersex/Hermophrodite** is a condition in which an individual person possesses sexual organs of both male and female.
- This condition is created on account of (i) two fertilised ova fused together resulting in a person having dual genitals and also, (ii) hormones' imbalance (androgens and estrogens) in the early stages of the formation of foetus..
- Morally speaking, surgical operation is permitted in the case of removal of external genital organs as long as the dominant sex character is maintained.

4.1. Pastoral Outlook

- Traumatized as a youngster, 25-year-old Bharathi, a woman pastor at the evangelical church of India stationed in Chengleput, now preaches to a congregation of 45 respectful parishioners, including 14 families, as India's first transgender evangelical pastor.
- Raised as a boy and taunted at school, India's first transgender pastor Bharathi is now called to preside over baby showers and christenings.

- Transgenders are created in the image of God like every other human person. Whatever could be the biological or psychological reasons, they have a right to cherish and enjoy life and that too life in abundance.
- What do they expect from us is genuine love which symbolises the presence of God.
- Unfortunately there is clear demarcation and obvious subjugation even within the Christian communities.

4.2. The Need For A Perceptible Change

- ❖ It is pathetic to note that in our society, often, we do not go by personal decisions but rather worry about what others would say. This is absolutely true of our perception and attitude towards transgenders/transsexuals.
- ❖ Consider them as Creatures like anyone of us
- ❖ Respecting the dignity of transgenders is not a matter of charity but it is their basic human dignity
- ❖ They may be different in outlook, stature and approach, but they also carry the image of God .
- ❖ They are not sex machines as they are often exploited on the grounds of their poverty and insecurity
- ❖ In parish communities, transgender could be given sound counselling which will enable them not to fall into the trap of exploiters.

Conclusion:

- Transgender are highly stereotyped and ill treated in the society. They don't have a proper place in the society.
- They are highly discriminated and often denied of basic rights of citizens. It is our prime duty to regard them as any other human person.
- We should learn to respect their sentiments, emotions and recognise their abilities. Eventually, their status, respect and human dignity will be restored.
- The ways that transgender people are talked about in popular culture, academia and science are constantly changing, particularly as individuals' awareness, knowledge and openness about transgender people and their experiences grow.

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