

# Philosophy of Trans Identity in India

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## ABSTRACT

One of the most celebrated possession of a human being is their identity. Human identity has been explored and analyzed for a long time but the results are still in deep layers of interpretation. When everyone accepts to be identified as either one of the binary layers, there exists a non-binary layer who identifies themselves as Trans with a feeling of not included in the basic genome type of male and female. With a lot of social issues going on in India, the view of trans identities possesses a great challenge to the developing social and cultural structures in India. Though the month of June is celebrated as an International pride month, there is still this huge stigma around the world to classify the Third Sex as an integral part of the society. This article shall discuss the perception of trans identities as per the Indian social and cultural relativism.

## Keywords

trans identity, India, Culture, acknowledgement, refusal

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## Introduction

Every transition in the society has its own existence but the reproach on the trans identity is still in practice. But this was not the case a few generations back when compared to the present scenario. The term trans identity as the Third Gender possessed godly power in various instances in Hindu Mythology and Vedic literature, which is a fountain of rich values to the present and future conjecture to the world. The human body encompasses physical, biological, emotional, and spiritual aspects and the supposition of the term Identity holds a special relationship with the cultural, political, religious aspects of life. India is a land of varied and ancient culture deeply rooted in the religious and spiritual aspects of life. The Other Gender's National and International acceptance and refusal is viewed through the lens of history. The terms like Hijra and kinnar is used to denote this Third Sex in various parts of India. The social-cultural practices of India are a fusion of different conquests in the varied period from the ancient Purana timeline to Mughal conquest, British colonization and the present era. Thus, the Third Gender or the Hijra community always held a special role throughout history. Ancient texts Kamasutra, Manusmriti, the Hindu Buddhist Vedas, the Epics Ramayana and Mahabharata all quote instances of Trans Identity.

The Vedic literature portrayed a woman as high as godly structure and imparted them with equal

strength and significance but the pre-independence time brought their denial in the form of Purdah, sati, and isolation of women from educational and independent development. The same instances can be spoken for the Trans Identity as the Puranas state examples of Lord Shiva as Arthanadeeshwar, Vishnu as Mohini, Arjuna and Shikhandini also had played the role of a eunuch. The etchings of the Khajuraho temple portraying same-gender coalition depicts the acceptance of homosexuality in Vedic times. Mythology invariably becomes the canvas to paint topics that are mostly considered inappropriate to deal with. It is important to be vocal and expressive about the Gender Variance and thus, Mythology in huge helps in dealing with and bringing a solution to this sensitive issue.

The pivotal role of transgender saw its decline during the colonization period when they were sent to the brim of society. Until the year 2011, the Indian census classified them as the 'Other' but it was only during the year 2014, after a long struggle that they were legally recognized as the third gender in the social structure. The implementation of law still does not count because of the constant prejudice and negation prevailing around them. Their social exclusion can well be identified in the present literature and their media struggles further diminishes their social and psychological identity. The stand of an individual in a society is mostly based on their occupation which is proportional to their education but the

occupational position of the Third Gender remains ambiguous because of their low literacy rate and thus they are widely placed in menial jobs or indulge in prostitution. Religion is the backbone of a society and cultural ideas. The ancient religions like Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Buddhism never makes any claim against Trans identity or homosexuality. They are termed as boon-givers but today majority of them undergo sexual abuse and mental torture, as their parents disown them because of their inappropriateness towards their birth gender. Public, health and family rights are denied to them citing their biological difference. Many of them unable to accept this shame run away and seek solace in the Hijra community in various parts of India. Their legal rights for voting is yet another complicated process, though in the past there have been incidents of Third gender contesting and winning in the Indian election. The whole understanding of the community and its upliftment shall bring an immense change not only in India but throughout the world.

### Transition Timeline

Hijras or Third Gender, are often referred to as trans men who dress as women and to relieve them from their sexual desires, they emasculate or undergo castration. Due to this, there is a myth stating that they are endowed with the power to confer fertility and bless the newborn. Some of them remain heterosexual. The anatomy of the third gender community needs to be validated with a timeline from ancient Hindu mythology to the present era. The old Hindu period law accepted same-sex progeneration, gender reversal and other sexual ambiguities. Ramayana depicts Lord Rama sanctioning the Third Sex with a power to confer blessings on people during various auspicious occasions. Mahabharatha details instances on Shikandini and Arjuna's son Aravan who is seen as the ancestor of Aravani community. They were called 'Napumsaka'- neither a man, or woman based on their lack of primary gender characteristics and inability to create an offspring. But the Jains preached Third sex based on their psychological state.

The term Hijra widely came into being during the Mughal rule in India. The eunuchs received special favours in the Mughal royal court and harem due to their dominance over literature and politics in contrast to the present situation. They

were given the right to guard the female space in the zenana and often posed as clever, trustworthy chambermaids to the imperial queens and consorts.

In colonial India, the Third sex lost its Vigor as they were termed as unnatural and as 'criminal caste'. They were arrested and tortured according to penal code of law for cross-dressing, singing, adorning ornaments and were suspected of kidnapping and castrating children. The idea of this dangerous class of drunkards, illiterate and prostitutes were framed in the Victorian period and since then it has been passed on to next generations.

Independent India removed the term 'criminal castes' implying the Third sex but condemned homosexuality. Lots of restrictions were posed on their sexual identity referring to their belief and emotional advancement. For a long time, they remained as the 'other of nature' and any sexual indulgence with them was stated as an offence against the law of Nature. The present Indian system mostly adheres to the misinterpretations of the Third Sex as stipulated by the British colonial rule. By 2014, the Indian court affirmed the need to protect the rights of the transgender, emphasizing on equality of all beings. The recently passed Transgender Bill prescribes that no child born different shall be abused or treated differently.

Awareness must be spread among the civilians to understand the legal and everyday life functioning of the third sex. The Trans Identity should be globally addressed to avoid any prejudice and misconceptions on the Third Gender. Human behaviour needs to be protected and universally accepted as it is an integral part of freedom, dignity which is interrelated to justice and peace of the realm. The origin story of the Third gender is rooted in Hindu mythology but they mostly practice Muslim rituals during celebrations. Therefore, they are a blend of both cultures, assimilation of both religions. Though they are not dominated by any traditional doctrines, their authority in their sexuality is yet to be accepted in society. During the partition, the Third sex community was not harmed because of them not belonging to any religion in particular. There are instances, where the Hijras were able to stop communal riots by threatening to strip naked. Acceptance of the community can be

implemented by portraying their status in mythology and history.

### Conclusion:

“The normalization of heterosexual identity is a part of the process of colonial modernity”.

Rights of the Queer need to be validated within the history of modern socio-cultural practices in India. Revisiting the older period practices can ward off evilness around the Trans Identities in modern times.

Trans men and women expose the art of living defining one's identity according to their terms. Despite being under pressure of experiencing constant prejudices, some of them can break free and achieve high in their social life. They seem to say that they have corrected the mistake done by Nature itself. People nowadays, have the opportunity to change their features, colour their hair, can become size zero or have abs, can change their religion, names, educational details but the Gender change is alone seen in a negative perspective. Society disables us from posing such serious thoughts and questions as to why the change in Gender alone is a stigma. Giving them legal rights and asking them to follow their own identity while they are constantly made to be alone. They dare to accept the truth and it is unfair on the society to pass any comments on their private parts because they are called private for a reason. When a broader outlook on this subject is achieved, the scrutiny on their appearance is omitted and their power and love to the world is appreciated.

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