

## **Towards Becoming Truly Rights-Bearing Citizens: Twenty Years of Trans Activism in India**

**Sakthi Brinda D<sup>1</sup>**

Ph.D. Research Scholar Department of English, School of Social Sciences and Languages  
Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India.

Mobile: 7639971010

Email: [brindasakthima@gmail.com](mailto:brindasakthima@gmail.com)

**Dr. N. Gayathri<sup>2</sup>**

Assistant Professor Senior, Department of English School of Social Sciences and Languages,  
Vellore Institute of Technology Vellore. Tamil Nadu, India.

Email: [ngayathri@vit.ac.in](mailto:ngayathri@vit.ac.in) Mobile: +91-9486046688

---

### **Abstract:**

“All of us are put in boxes by our family, by our religion, by our society, our moment in history, even our own bodies. Some people have the courage to break free” - Geena Rocero

The society at large is scared of accepting something that deviates from the majority. The ones who try and break free of the accepted norms are brutally criticized and ostracized. Transgenders are a classic example of this attitude of the society. One needs grit and conviction to overcome the odds and find a place for oneself, and transgenders have long been fighting for their legitimate place in the society as honourable citizens. Despite the oppressive conditions, or perhaps as a result of them, transgender people have crossed a considerable progress in taking forward their civil rights, social visibility and right to equality in India in the last two decades (Srivastava, 2014). Transgender activism, in fact, emerged and evolved to become one of the recognizable movements in this period. This activism has largely focused on alleviating cultural stigma associated with transgender identity. The activism of transgender community has found its collective face by aligning itself with the lesbian, gay and other sexual minorities who are together known by the general umbrella term LGBTQI Community. This paper traces the history of transgender activism in last twenty years. It attempts to map out the important phases of transactivism in India. It also highlights the modes and strategies adopted by the trans activists in taking forward their struggle for equal rights and a life of dignity. The legislation of transgender Rights Act, as well as criticisms against this Act are also analysed. Life narratives written by transgender activists Revathi, Laxmi, Manobi, Vidya and life stories of others are taken as the source for tracing the trajectories of trans activism, along with journalistic reports, columns and other first-hand narratives.

---

<sup>1</sup> First author

<sup>2</sup> Second author

## Introduction

Transgender persons constitute one of the most marginalized sections in India. Despite their presence in trusted positions throughout the history of the Indian Subcontinent, transgender persons continue to face manifold forms of oppression, stigma and othering from the mainstream society (Hinchy, 2020). Their marginalization and othering from the mainstream society is, to the most part, an outcome of social stigma and anxiety at the cultural as well as interpersonal levels caused by their non-confirming gender identity (Srivastava, 2014). Apart from the widespread practice of negligence, stigma, derision and marginalization in the social milieus and cultural realms, transgender persons continue to be the subjects of denial of many civil rights and economic opportunities, most of which are readily available for people in the mainstream society. Their access to healthcare facilities, public spaces, social welfare schemes, education and employment also remain to be highly restricted and out of their reach (“Denial of Rights to Sexual Minorities,” 2008; RAO, 2015; Reddy, 2010).

As Taylor et al. (2018) categorically point out, a large portion of transgender people, even in a developed country like the United States, happen to be the victims of discrimination, poverty and violence. This is particularly true to the Indian context where the traditional occupations erstwhile available to the transgender people have largely vanished. Even while transgender persons, persons belonging to the male-to-female (MtF), Hijra community in specific, continue to be sought for performing rituals

in many parts of India, the common attitude outside such ritual participations are no different. “Although people believed they had “special powers to bless and curse,” even these reactions were mixed at best, combining respect in particular, circumscribed contexts (such as during their “ritual” or badhai performances), with outright derision or stigma in most other social contexts” (Reddy, 2010, P. 13).

All these, and a rightful claim for a place in the society, transgenders have consolidated their position in fighting for their rights. Transgender activism traces the struggle of these marginilised people whose ongoing struggle has been successful to an extent that people are slowly changing their perceptions. It might take a longer time for them to be accepted as normal, but at least the change has begun. This paper speaks in detail about the transgender activism at its various stages.

## Transgender Activism as a Social Movement

As Benford (1992) and Taylor et al. (2018) demonstrate, social movements attempt to mitigate the oppressive, isolated or neglected condition of a sizable population. Benford (1992) defines ‘social movement’s as “Collective attempts to promote or resist change in a society or a group”. Social movements can be revolutionary in nature (such as socialist revolutionary movements or Islamic movements) aimed at fundamental political and economic transformation; or they can be reformist in purpose. The latter category of movements defined as ‘reformist’ seek to secure political, civil and economic rights as well as ensure access to resources and cultural

spaces on par with others (Taylor et al., 2018). Examples of this category of movement include environmental activism, disability rights movements and movements for educational and employment reservation to oppressed sections. Such social movements are collectively taken up by persons belonging to a particular section and individuals as well as groups committed to the cause of uplifting the particular community and securing their legitimate rights. They together constitute the 'interest groups' involved in advocacy, activism and organised movements. Going by these criteria, transgender activism in India qualifies to be considered as a reformist social movement, with the virtue of it being a collective movement for civil rights, economic opportunities and social equality for transgender individuals.

Emergence of activism and social movements are facilitated and expedited by a complex set of factors including, but not limited to, political opportunity structure, existence of parallel social movements and the level of State intervention (Taylor et al., 2018). Sociologists McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1988) illustrate that the phrase 'political opportunity structure', which is an essential macro factor in the emergence and growth of social movements, involves conducive political climate, receptivity of the existing political structure to the demands of activist voices and rules of political participation. As Meyer and Imig (1993) further opine, a conducive political structure that is vulnerable or receptive to activist voices help the development and survival of social movements and their organisations. Likewise, successful social

movements, as Taylor et al., (2018) point out, encourage the emergence of synergistic movements.

In India, last three decades were marked by the democratization of political space for hitherto neglected and marginalized sections, fruition of which is visible in the movements for feminist, Dalit, disabled, and queer activism and their wide scale mobilization into social organisations. As Srivastava (2014) observes, this is also the period in which there has been a deepening of public sphere for the open debate, challenge and counter-narratives about the issues so far considered private. This has given rise to the LGBTQ movement or 'queer politics' to challenge the heterosexual notions of gender identity and discourse of 'normalcy' attributed to the heterosexual behaviors. In the social and cultural spheres, the LGBT and QI activism or 'queer politics' has gone a long way in "re-scripting the rules of engagement regarding family, marriage, and kinship - the three cornerstones of human society" (Srivastava, 2014 P. 368). Within the political spectrum and in the legal discourse, the LGBT activism has emerged as an indomitable voice against repressive sexual laws, State violence and absence of political representation for the sexual minorities, along with their demand for educational, economic and civil rights.

Another vital factor that contributed immensely to the emergence and growth of LGBT activism in India was the vibrant movements of the transsexuals and other sexual minorities in the United States and Europe. As Srivastava (2014) elucidates, LGBT activism and queer politics was an

offspring of the new leftist movement of the 1960s, which in turn was an outcome of the civil rights movement. Gay liberation movement and lesbian feminist movement emerged to critique the notions of family, gender and acts of sexual repression. New discourses relating to sexual orientations and identity assertion which were major components of the queer politics in the west immensely influenced the gay and lesbian movements in India where these group of self-identified individuals mostly included persons from educated, upper middleclass and urban backgrounds. This political awareness of taking pride in one's sexual orientation that is not necessarily heteronormative gained its momentum with the transgender persons largely through the works of non-governmental organisations working for the rights of sexual minorities.

### **Hijra Community and Transactivism at the grassroots**

Despite its western origin and markedly elitist orientation, the LGBT activism found a new dimension in India with the organised movements of the transgender community. In particular, the Hijra community, which comprises of male-to-female transwomen, took the center stage in taking forward the transgender rights in India. As Laxmi (2015) claims in her life narrative, Hijra community constitutes the oldest and largest section of the transgender people in the world. As she states elsewhere, “” In the South Asian context, being a transgender, male-to-female in particular, carries other important distinct cultural significance and ritual resonance beyond their transformed gender identity and sexual orientation. The transwomen are thought to be bestowed with

the power to bless and curse, and they are included as a part of rituals relating to birth, marriage, death, etc.. Yet, this community arrangement in itself comes with cultural isolations and social stigma which again transcends their sexual orientation as transsexual persons and identity as transgender individuals.

While transgender activism definitely has its roots in the rather holistic LGBT movement and queer politics, transgender community in India had its own distinct concerns to fight for. This has been the case even among the transgender persons in the west where the lesbian and gay movements had subsumed the trans issues for a considerable period. For instance, Taylor & Haider-Markel (2014) explain how the transgender rights received little attention from media and researchers until very recently, when the transgender public policies, nondiscrimination and equitable treatment have been seriously advocated, recognized and legislated in the United States and elsewhere. In India also, the gay and lesbian movements have largely focused on the moral, legal and equality aspects for the sexual minorities. Typical concerns of gay and lesbian activists include the legal recognition of same-sex marriages, alleviation of moralist opposition by religious groups against nonheterosexuality, sociocultural taboo towards non-binary sexual preferences, mitigating the spread of HIV-AIDS Etc. But for the transgender persons, their discrimination and stigma involves, along with the aforesaid concerns, other serious everyday demands such as admission to educational institutions, access to public toilets, obtaining essential

documents like ration cards, driving license, passport and voter identity card, facing of violence at the hands of the police and public, and negotiating opportunities for their economic sustenance.

The nature of Hijra community network, with its own system of conjugal family, occupational structure and cultural identity, has supplied pivotal reasons for activism. It could be argued that transgender activism, which was mostly taken forward by the interest groups from within the Hijra community, was largely motivated by exploitations and violence against them. Their concerns hence transgress mere demands for liberty to personal choices or sexual preferences; they include very basic human and civil rights for equal citizenship. Laxmi (2015) recounts: “the hijras were the ultimate subaltern, deprived of fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution. We were slaves, non-persons. We had been suffering injustice for centuries” (P. 90). Another pioneer trans activist Revathi states the transgender activist concerns thus: “Are basic human rights meant only for males and females? Aren’t hijras human enough to enjoy those rights? Aren’t we citizens of this country? Don’t we deserve to get voting rights, passports, driving licenses, ration cards and property rights? Don’t I have the right to reassign my gender identity? I did not purchase these emotions; nor did I borrow them. I was made thus by nature. Respect that. Recognize me as a woman and give me all the rights due to a woman. This plea for equality and human rights for transgender people has been the pivotal point of my transgender activism” (Revathi & Murali, 2016. P. 9).

As evinced from the transgender life narratives, the emergence of trans activism in India could be traced back to fundamental rights for equal citizenship, legal protection, social equality, ensuring equal access and a positive cultural identity. The movement for equal civil rights, as could be traced from individual accounts of Bandopadhyay & Pandey (2017), Revathi (2010), Revathi & Murali (2016), Vidya (2013) and Laxmi (2015), started cropping up so naturally out of the day-to-day oppressions faced by their denial of basic rights at the hands of the State, bureaucracy, police and the society at large. Revathi (2010) recounts the strenuous processes she had to endure and extra bribes to be paid out in order to obtain her license, get a ration card, obtain a passport and to get her father’s house registered in her name.

As she points out, transgender individuals were constantly harassed by two important factors while trying to obtain government documents. Firstly, while there exists a provision to change the name of a transgender person from the one assigned by the family to the one representing their newly identified gender, no arrangement was in place to change one’s gender or sex in legal capacity. Secondly, the transwomen who are part of the Hijra Community lacked the proof of address as they migrate very often and live apart from their actual families. Revathi had to spend an extra two thousand rupees for bribing the officials for issuing her a driving license, of course with all the driving skills where a mere 150 Rupees would be enough. “We’ve never had a case like this before” was the reply she received from the Break Inspector

responsible for issuing the driving license, even after taking the bribe. She got her license issued only after going through a lot of bureaucratic hurdles (Revathi, 2010 P. 74).

Getting a passport proved to be a huge challenge for the trans activists like Revathi and Laxmi. Revathi had to endure a vicious cycle of humiliations and apathy at the hands of the officials and the medical authorities. She narrates the painful memory of being asked to produce medical proof for her sex change operation by the passport authorities, and being asked to show her genital part by the government hospital gynecologist before his entourage of healthcare workers during the medical examination. She recounts, "He (The doctor) invited a group of nurses, ward boys, compounders and watchmen to watch him examine an 'unusual case'. They gathered around the examination table in voyeuristic delight as they gazed at a naked Revathi. 'The doctor examined my breasts and genital areas. The crowd around was smirking and many of them could hardly suppress their laughter. To them, I was a freak; an object of curiosity. But I put up with the humiliation because I wanted the passport'" (Revathi & Murali, 2016, P. 14). After all, Revathi had to go through all these for representing her country at an international conference about HIV AIDS and women trafficking. She managed to obtain a passport at last back in 2003, becoming the first transgender person in India to hold this travel document that is taken-for-granted for the mainstream society.

Laxmi also went through several bureaucratic hurdles for getting her passport in 2006, again for going to an international conference on HIV AIDS as an Indian delegate. Thanks to her education, contact network and a few good-hearted officials, Laxmi was spared from the ghastly humiliations Revathi had to face, she had to bear with the administrative apathy and pressure from her own Guru though. As she chose not to undergo the castration or 'Nirvana', she had to face an extra layer of bureaucratic hurdle which fortunately got cleared by an empathetic gynecologist (Laxmi, 2015, pp. 80-83).

### **Violence eradication and Crises Intervention**

Revathi (2010) recounts the manifold instances of police tortures and brutal violence against the transgender persons, especially the Hijra transwomen who are involved in street-based sex work and begging. With the help of Sangama, an NGO working for the rights of sexual minorities, Revathi and her companions managed to arrange for legal aids for the Hijras, and she gradually mobilized the Hijras to form a community-based organization by the name Vibudha. Revathi narrates the crucial moment of her life when she was introduced to the elite, educated urban activists working for the rights of sexual minorities through her Chella (adopted transwoman daughter) Famila. This benefited a huge Hijra community in Bengaluru where one of the pioneering organised movements of transgender



community in India emerged (Revathi & Murali, 2016, P. 33). Sangama also organized a Hijra Habba (Transwomen festival) in 2003, and followed up with some of the remarkable moves for asserting transgender rights. Several NGOs like Samvada, LESBIT, Shrishti and Sampoorana started fighting for the legitimate human rights and basic dignity of the transgender community. Their initial interventions were mostly focused on protests against violence and protection of human rights for the trans community.

Revathi recounts several important interventions of Vibudha and other NGOs against police atrocities. Vibudha fought a year long legal battle against the false charges of the Bengaluru police upon a transwoman and her husband with malicious intentions. In 2004, transwoman Kokila was raped by a gang of goondas in Bengaluru. The police, instead of arresting the culprits, took Kokila to the police station, tied her to the window, gang-raped her and abused another trans activist Chandini. A huge solidarity march of sexual minorities and more than 25 activist organisations from various Indian states was held against the police atrocities. The moment of that victory still fresh in her memory, Revathi recounts, "This success demonstrated the power of collectivization and solidarity in advocacy initiatives. The transgender community, for the first time, saw the power of uniting for a cause and asserting their rights to a life of dignity" (Revathi & Murali, 2016, P. 34). This also marked the realization and recognition of transgender rights as human rights by the media, society and the State to some extent.

Sangama, as Revathi as its director, launched a massive sensitization mission throughout Bengaluru after the police assaulted and arrested many transgender persons including protesters, NGO staff and activists. Fifty thousand pamphlets were circulated, interactive awareness campaigns were held and a 'black solidarity day' was observed in order to educate the police and society at large (Revathi & Murali, 2016). It was followed by a painful legal battle for a transwoman Shilpa. The police falsely charged two other transwomen who were living with Shilpa, Baby and Mangala, of kidnapping Shilpa and castrating her. Worse, they also forcibly made Shilpa undergo the phalloplasty, an operation to rebuild the male genital organ which she had voluntarily, consciously and desirously got castrated. Eventually the trans activists won the case and disproved the police charges, but only after Baby and Mangala's nearly three years of imprisonment and an irreparable as well as outright violation of Shilpa's bodily integrity. All such struggles for human rights, dignity and access to legal, medical and social protection led to the more vocal demands for transgender legislations, welfare boards and formidable policy interventions in the second decade of the twenty first century.

#### Judicial Victories and Parliamentary Legislations

The street protests and awareness programs for mitigating police violence and denial of basic rights to the transgender persons found its next step forward with efforts for political lobbying and legal suits for nondiscrimination and welfare measures. Their demands included proactive steps

from the State to accord legal recognition to their gender status, citizenship rights and policy interventions for uplifting the lives of trans persons in India. Even though such movements for political participation and equal rights had started coming up since the late 1990s, they remained mostly the endeavors or aspirations of only a small politically conscious group (Altman, 1997). It was only since 2005 or so that the transgender rights were fought for in a more organised and systemic manner (Reddy, 2010). In this line, a public interest litigation filed in 2005 at the high court of Madras pleaded for the recognition of transgender people as the 'third sex'. The litigation also demanded dignified treatment, equal rights, access to public places and empowering policies for the transgender community (Reddy, 2010). Although the High Court judgement was not promising enough, the government of Tamil Nadu established the Transgender Welfare Board in 2008 to address the concerns and hurdles faced by the transgender community.

### **The Third Sex Judgement**

The Supreme Court of India delivered a landmark judgment on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 in the National Legal Services Authority versus the Union of India case, which came to be known as the 'NALSA Judgement'. This judgment directed the Government to treat trans persons as socially and economically backward, and it accorded them the other backward caste (OBC) status ((Bandopadhyay & Pandey, 2017; Revathi & Murali, 2016; Sopna, 2017; Daum, 2020). This judgment recognized the legitimate rights and concerns of the transgender community in India, and it unequivocally

established that the non-recognition of the trans people's gender identity amounted to a gross violation of Article 14 of Indian Constitution. The apex court also directed the appropriate governments to ensure their right to education and employment as well as to rollout welfare policies for them. As a remarkable development, the judgement shifted the responsibility for the suffering of transgender persons from their own fault to the society's failure in recognizing and accepting them (Bandopadhyay & Pandey, 2017; Revathi & Murali, 2016; Sopna, 2017).

However, this judgment was not without its own set of problems. As Revathi points out, the 'third sex judgment' placed the trans people in yet another problematic terrain, for what the transwomen and transmen wanted was a clear recognition of their changed gender identity.. they wanted to identify as (trans)men and (trans)women, contrary to the Supreme Court's categorization as the 'third sex'. Secondly, the judgement hardly took the plight of transmen into account (Revathi & Murali, 2016, P. 73). Nevertheless, as Bandopadhyay and Pandey (2017), and Sopna (2017) point out, this judgment came as a welcome move to accord equal rights and ensure the human dignity of transgender people in India; "In spirit and letter, the Supreme Court judgment was a huge victory for transgender people, who face intense stigma, discrimination and violence across the country" (Anasuya, 2018). This also led to several states establishing the transgender welfare or development boards, like the earlier one setup in Tamil Nadu. It also sought the opinion of all Indian states about



devising welfare schemes and providing reservation to the trans people. All these pronouncements made a separate legislation inevitable for empowering the transgender community.

### **The Transgender Bill and a Rights Act**

Subsequent to the NALSA Judgement, the Rights of Transgender Persons Bill was moved in the upper house of the Indian Parliament by Tiruchy M. Siva as a private bill, which got passed unanimously on the 24th of April 2015. Widely accepted as a brilliantly drafted Bill, it included many foresights and provisions that would go into the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (2019). Admiring the Bill for its inclusion of transmen and various other trans identities, Revathi is full of praise for its features: "non-discrimination, participation in society, equality of opportunity, accessibility and acceptance of transgender persons as part of human diversity. . . . protection of child rights of transgender children (especially against birth family violence), inclusive education for transgender children, adult education for transgender persons, non-discrimination in employment, social security, non-discrimination and barrier-free access in health care settings, including provision of SRS free of charge, rehabilitation programmes in health, education and employment based on comprehensive assessment of issues faced by transgender people, reservation in jobs and setting up of state and national commissions for transgender persons" Revathi & Murali, 2016, P. 124).

However, the Government decided to move a separate Bill in 2016 for legislating an Act

for the transgender rights. After widespread protests from the trans and queer community and oppositions both inside and outside the Parliament, the Bill was revised twice before it could be officially enacted as a law on fifth December 2019, under the title Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (2019). The TPPR Act called for ending discriminations against the transgender persons by Government establishments and in other public places. It also constituted a national counsel for transgender persons in order to deal with the concerns of trans persons, besides insisting the governments to initiate policy interventions for their empowerment. Yet, for valid reasons, the Act has been widely criticized by the transgender community. At least three significant lapses have been pointed out by many trans activists in the Act as it exists at present.

Firstly, the TPPR Act (2019) mandates the production of medical certificate to the proof of having undergone the sex reassignment surgery (SRS) in order to be legally certified as a transwoman or transman. In other cases, any trans person would be certified only as a 'transgender' (Transgender Persons Act, 2019, Secs. 6-7). This is in sharp contrast to the NALSA judgement and the private Bill introduced by Tiruchy M. Siva, thereby drawing widespread opposition from the trans community. By legislating the TPPR Act in its present form, "the Indian Parliament effectively abandoned the idea of self-determination of gender identity in favour of the medical 'certification' of transgender identity" (Hinchy, 2020, P. 206). Secondly, the TPPR Act does not guaranty any reservation for the trans

persons in education, employment and other social welfare schemes. Trans activists have termed the absence of affirmative action or promising policy intervention from the State as “an attempt to bury the NALSA Judgement in letter and spirit”.

Yet another lapse, the Act only sanctions for a very minimum or tokenistic punishment for offenses against transgender people. For instance, the gravest crime of sexual assault or physical violence against a trans person, according to this Act, is punishable only with six months to two years of imprisonment, whereas the same crime against women would warrant up to ten years of jail. The activists have also slammed the Act for its arbitrary assignment of custodial rights to the families of trans people (Anasuya, 2018; Ram Mohan, 2020; Sheikh, 2016; Watch | Transgender Bill, 2019). The trans activists have approached the Supreme Court of India to halt the implementation of this Act even while the Government of India framed the rules for implementing the TPPR Act in June 2020, amidst a largescale opposition from the trans community and their allies.

### **Intersectional Terrains of Trans Activism in India**

When asked about the legalization of same-sex marriages in the United States and its implications for India, trans activist Revathi candidly replied: “How can I talk about same sex marriage in the U.S when even heterosexual couples don’t have the right to marry and love beyond caste here? For us to be liberated from gender oppression, we must also be liberated from caste, race, and religious oppression. Our struggle must be against all these systems of power and not

just one” (Revathi & Murali, 2016, P. 89). Her telling statement is a reminder of the intersectional nature of trans activism that has gained its impetus in the last one decade in India. For instance, the anti-Sterlite protest of Thoothukudi where a huge mass of people protested against Vedanta company’s heavily polluting copper plant saw many transgender people joining hands. They also held open street performances and protests against the police firing at the protesters on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2018 (Muralidaran, 2018). Yet another moment of solidarity was found when the transgender community joined hands with the protesting sections against the much controversial Citizens Charter Act (CAA) legislated in 2019 by the Indian State.

As citizens lacking proof of citizenship and proof of family lineage to prove their nationality, the transgender community, quite naturally, identified itself with the widespread struggles of the Muslims, migrants and democratic forces who opposed the CAA. Likewise, trans activists celebrated the decriminalisation of same-sex relationship, Delhi High Court’s striking down of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code in 2009, along with the lesbian and gay community, even while it had only a minimum bearing for the transgender community (Semmalar, 2014). The solidarity was more palpably visible when the Supreme Court of India, in a notorious judgement in 2013, reaffirmed the legality of IPC Section 377, then considered a major setback for the LGBT movement and queer politics in India. Trans activists like Revathi and transgender organisations vehemently criticized the judgement. Along with other

queer networks, transgender activists challenged IPC Section 377 again based on the NALSA judgement of 2014, and got the notorious IPC Section of colonial origin struck down finally in 2018 (Divan, 2018).

### Conclusion

As mapped out in this paper, transgender persons got their inspiration to fight for their rights from the LGBTQI movements which trickled down to India from the west in late 1990s. Organised social movements and collective struggles of the transgender community, along with other sexual minorities and oppressed sections, have gone a long way in securing some of the legitimate rights of the trans persons in India in the last twenty years. Trans activism at the grassroots started on the fact that transgender persons, especially the Hijra community, faced several distinct hurdles and brutal oppressions to the effect of denying their very citizenship, equality and dignity. A few transwomen like Revathi, Manobi and Laxmi, as evinced from their life narratives, started fighting for their individual rights for holding driving license, passport etc.. NGOs like Sangama and community organisations like Vividha and trans activists like Revathi and Laxmi took forward the struggle for ending police violence, access to healthcare provisions and recognition of trans identity in the mainstream society. In this process, the trans community got the landmark NALSA judgment and 2015 Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Bill by Tiruchy Siva as welcome developments towards securing its rights.

Yet, the 2019 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act has, in effect,

brought further hurdles and systemic discrimination upon the trans community. Simultaneously, trans activists and organisations have largely aligned themselves in solidarity with other oppressed groups who fight for their rights and against oppressions in terms of caste, class, religious and environmental exploitations. Trans individuals like Revathi and Kalki have also taken their activism to theatre performance and poetry, through which they sincerely hope to make more meaningful and engaging sociopolitical as well as cultural interventions. While some remarkable advancements have been achieved towards securing the rights of Indian transgender community through the collective social movements in last two decades, as Revathi and Murali (2016), Laxmi (2015) and Hinchy (2020) rightly point out, the struggle is far from over.

### REFERENCES

- Anasuya, S. I. (2018, December 19). *Why the Transgender Community is Angry Over a Bill Meant to Protect Their Rights*. The Wire. <https://thewire.in/lgbtqia/why-the-transgender-community-is-angry-over-a-bill-meant-to-protect-their-rights>
- Altman, D. (1997). Global Gaze/Global Gays. *GLQ* 3: 417-36.
- Bandopadhyay, M., & Pandey, J. M. (2017). *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi*. Penguin Random House India.
- Benford, R. D. (1992). "Social Movements." In *The Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited by Edgar F. Borgatta and Marie L. Borgatta, 1880—86. New York: Macmillan.
- Daum, C. W. (2020). *Politics of Right Sex, The: Transgressive Bodies, Governmentality, and*

- the Limits of Trans Rights*. State University of New York Press.
- Denial of Rights to Sexual Minorities. (2008). *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(43), 6–7.
- Divan, V. (n.d.). *A Community Effort: The Battle Against S377*. Orinam Section 377. Retrieved May 11, 2021, from <http://orinam.net/377/background-of-sec-377/community-effort-battle-against-s377/>
- (n.d.). *On the verge of a kind of freedom: Ridding India of Section 377*. Retrieved May 12, 2021, from <http://arc-international.net/blog/on-the-verge-of-a-kind-of-freedom-ridding-india-of-section-377/>
- Hinchy, J. (2020). *Governing Gender and Sexuality in Colonial India: The Hijra, c. 1850-1900*. Cambridge University Press.
- Laxmi. (2015). *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* (R. R. Rao & P. G. Joshi, Trans.). Oxford University Press.
- McAdam, D. J. M & Mayer Z. (1988). Social Movements. In *Handbook of Sociology*, edited by Neil Smelser, 695—737. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Meyer, D. & Douglas I. (1993). “Political Opportunity and the Rise and Decline of Interest Group Sectors.” *Social Science Journal* 30: 253—70.
- Muralidaran, K. (2018, May 23). *Sterlite Protest: Speculation Rife That Police Firing Was Pre-Planned*. The Wire. <https://thewire.in/environment/anti-sterlite-protest>
- Ram Mohan, G. (2020, June 5). *Halt Implementation of the Trans Act 2019: Activists*. The Wire. <https://thewire.in/lgbtqia/trans-act-2019-rules-feedback-activists>
- Rao, R. (2015). Hijra. In G. Dharampal-Frick, M. Kirloskar-Steinbach, R. Dwyer, & J. Phalkey (Eds.), *Key Concepts in Modern Indian Studies* (pp. 99–101). NYU Press.
- Reddy, G. (2010). *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India* (1 edition). University of Chicago Press.
- Revathi, A. (2010). *The Truth about Me* (V. Geetha, Trans. Penguin India.
- Revathi, A., & Murali, N. (2016). *A Life in Trans Activism*. Zubaan.
- Semmalar, G. I. (2014). Unpacking Solidarities of the Oppressed: Notes on Trans Struggles in India. *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, 42(3/4), 286–291.
- Sheikh, D. (2016, August 4). *The New Transgender Bill Fails the Community*. The Wire. <https://thewire.in/gender/failures-of-the-new-transgender-bill>
- Sopna, A. M. (2017). *A Voiced Cry of Transgenders*. Educreation Publishing.
- Srivastava, S. S. (2014). Disciplining the “Desire”: “Straight” State and LGBT Activism in India. *Sociological Bulletin*, 63(3), 368–385.
- Taylor, J. K., Haider-Markel, D. P., & Lewis, D. C. (2018). *The Remarkable Rise of Transgender Rights*. The University of Michigan Press.
- Taylor, J. K., & Haider-Markel, D. P. (Eds.). (2014). *Transgender Rights and Politics: Groups, Issue Framing, and Policy Adoption*. The University of Michigan Press.
- Vidya, L. S. (2013). *I Am Vidya: A Transgender’s Journey*. Rupa Publications India.
- Watch | *Transgender Bill: ‘We Want President to Send the Bill Back’, Say, Activists*. (2019, November 27). The Wire. <https://thewire.in/lgbtqia+/watch->

[transgender-bill-we-want-president-to-send-the-bill-back-say-activists](#)