

Writings of the Marginalized from India - *Rasaathi: The Other Side of a Transgender*

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Abstract

*I was ransacking books of literature to throw light on the marginalized community in the peninsular India. I was able to locate a contemporary Indian Writer Sasindran Kallinkeel, who has captured the life journey of a transgender till date, in *Rasaathi: The Other Side Of A Transgender*, published in May 2020. This is author's debut novel and a tribute to Transgender Community. The word 'Transgender' is not a name of an individual, today it stands for the community a 'Third Gender Community'. This perplexed male or female community is called with different nouns -Aravani, Eunuch, Hijira, kinnar, Napumsakam, Gay, etc., but India holds fast to an obsolete system of bigotry. Honestly we feel it is a glimpse into the lives of probably most shunned and misunderstood community in the Indian Subcontinent. What is the quintessential work this book does to the readers? - Right knowledge is the ultimate solution to all our problems. The story is narrated by the protagonist of the novel *Rasaathi*, a transgender. After scrolling down the pages, The 'Third Gender Community' people discover themselves - their purpose, lifestyle, rituals, studies, job and ways to lead a harmonious life with the society. The other two Genders – Males and Females attain deliverance from the social stigma or prejudice about the Transgender or the Third Generation Community -by travelling with *Rasaathi*, the living icon of the community. Ignorance that plagues this marginalized community is removed. 'Third Gender Community'- i.e., the Transgender after reading this novel feels proud about God's creation – themselves. Quality society is a healthy society. Right knowledge and understanding about this tribe will only bring revolution to equality of sex and holistic wellbeing. This paper aims to bring out the marginalization of the transgender community.*

Keywords: *marginalization, ignorance, caressed, ritualistic, hopeful*

Transgender people have a gender identity or gender expression that differs from the sex that they were assigned at birth. Gender identity is our internal knowledge of your gender – who am I? Man or a woman or another gender. Gender expression is how we present ourselves to the outside, through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice or biological characteristics. Feeling the need to be complete and stable act of a victim to match a personality between gender identity and expression is gender transition. This process happens a tany time of his/her childhood, between ages four to eighteen. At this adolescent stage a transgender abandon by their natal family and never face them again in the whole life. This abandonment is the beginning of marginalization and exclusion of this community in the society.

Marginalized communities are confined to the lower or peripheral edge of the society. Such a community is denied involvement in economic, political, cultural and

social activities. There are multiple factors for marginalization - gender, geography, ethnicity, religion or disability. Marginalization negatively impacts individuals' physical, psychological and emotional health. Also Individuals who are pushed aside are in a position with limited protection and have the highest risk of poor health outcomes. Hence, marginalization may result in poor self-esteem, lack of self-efficacy, labeling and homelessness.

Rasaathi: The Other Side Of A Transgender, is a long narrative, an autobiography of a transgender, a fictional novel that reveals the hardship and abuse a transgender has to go through in the Indian society. Often neglected and seen as the mysterious and unwelcomed community occupying apart of our Indian society. Author Sasindran Kallinkeel, unveils the other darker side of the transgender to help readers know the physical, mental suffering and the challenges they go through in everyday life. His efforts to start prompt a few of us readers to view them as equal by

narrating this touching story of a transgender - Rasaathi, the protagonist itself.

Rasaathi was born on 3rd August 1970 at Calicut, in Kerala. By birth he was a boy who was delivered at home assisted by midwives. The Midwife advised, there was nothing to worry about and his pennies would be alright as he grows up. As a newborn, she were the most beautiful of the siblings and the visitors love to hold in their arms. He was the called the lucky mascot by the parents as the father won a lottery ticket worth one lakh that he was accustomed to buying for long years with nil fortune. The Gods were shining up on. Out of the tree children only he was the blissful child to occupy their Papa's lap. Everything went well for him till he reached his age 4 or 5. The time he attracted to girls of his age and developed desire to wear girls dress, ornaments, use mascara, bhindi and bangles, and play with dolls. He started to admire and enjoy everyday seeing in the mirror. Wearing boys' clothes was like being in a fancy dress competition.

The furious father one day got annoyed by his repeated doing the same dressing like a girl. He was labeled as son of a bitch. Rasaathi was very innocent to understand the reason behind his father's anger. Now he was alienated from the other two siblings and kept under constant vigil. He has started to long for wearing the girls' dress with which he felt complete. He became a laughing bud to other siblings, neglected even for dinner together; he was body shamed, humiliated after inspecting his naked body by the father and found him to be a Aravanichi. Struck by loneliness, boredom, fear, nobody allowed to play or speak crushed his soul for seven days. Now the scenario was contrast to the past, he felt like nobody to lose his blissful fathers' lap to his brother. Hoping his trusted god - Guruva yurappan will change everything overnight he slept that night. Frustration prevailed between the parents too, until the father decided to leave the child in Erode, where the child will be happy with people like him.

Next morning the father and son reach Erode by train. They reached the remorse area in Erode by foot when the day ended. He saw small hut made of mud and palm leaves, dimly lighted with chimney lamps. Initially he was perplexed about the place and people. His anger for papa

leaving him behind disappeared. Then his heart grow fonder to the people there because of caressed the child with affection and pure love. The people entertained me with their songs and clapping and dancing around me in circles. His smile at them, made them happy and now and then there was anxiety and grip of fear. He was home sick and lot of commotion inside his head, how his papa left him behind and how to end up to the new habitat. What made him happy was he remained of his sunny days while he was the apple of the family's eye. All the people were dressed in a way he liked and harboured the same feelings. Its here he was named Rasaathi.

An elderly person, Amma very meticulously caressed him to understand his likes and dislikes. Despite of limited facilities, he was happy there. As time passed by, he was introduced to lot of people there. Akkas and Ammas revealed the life of the transgender - birth, childhood, biological growth, lifestyle and career, he was curious to know more. His longing to meet his parents disappeared. Through Amma, the author reveals the conspiracy about this Transgender Community through myths which have its fundamental origin in Hindu mythology, emphasizing that even the parents will not want them back. They are marginalized Community of the society.

Purpose of Hijiira in the world is revealed by the story of the epic Hindus, the Mahabaratha. Kurukshetra battle was won because of a Hijira - the great Shikhandi. If Shikhandi was not there, Pandavas wouldn't have won against Kauravas. Nobody could Bhishmacharya, because he got the boon to stay immortal, as long as he wanted. This immortality was restricted to effect by the curse of Princess Amba that neither man nor women could kill him. On Lord Krishna's advice, Arjuna put Shikhandi, an eunuch in the battle against Bhishmachariya promptly put down the weapons allowing Arjuna to come from behind Shikhandi and killed him. That was the turning point of the battle and hijras were recognized in the world. We were born for the mission of God. The depressed child was very inspired.

The child Rasaathi now became very happy and proud about its birth. Arjuna also lived as a hijra for a year by the curse of Urvashi. That was a blessing in disguise. Rasaathi took positively- God created him to fulfill a mission and was proud of him and his community through Amma. Thus the child was given the knowledge about their

purpose, their mission and setbacks of being a hijira or Aravanichi.

The myth of Mahabaratha, Koothandavar and Yellammaisunfolds in due course of the story stating that they hijras, neither cursed nor untouchables they are the once who have an identity. At the apt ages and Rasaathi also undergoes all the rituals of a hijira by the guidance of her guru Amma. The story of Koothandavar has its origin from one of the versions of the epic of Mahabaratha. Before the Great 18 days War of Kurukshetra, both Pandava and Kaurava approach Sahadev, master in astrology to make rituals to win the war. Sahadev said that it is need to sacrifice a man filled with all the good qualities of warfare, darma and beauty to Kali. Krishna worried about Arjuna who has all those qualities and search for another in their side. Aravaan, son of Arjuna and Ulupi, a serpent princess volunteer for sacrifice his life with all the qualities with 2 demands. Atleast one day's life as a married man and to see the Kurukshetra war after his death. Krishna accepted those demands. And search for a girl to marry Aravaan but no one wants marry the men who died tomorrow. So Krishna takes a avatar of Mohini, a transgender at that night to marry Aravaan.

Next day, Aravaan sacrifice his life to Kali and pleased her. Draupati requested Kali to give back his life. Aravaan reborn with a great powers and fought in Kurukshetra. His head falls down by Alambasoora in 8th day of the war and still fought with enemies by Koothandal only with head as a result of Krishna's boon. Krishna made his head calm and watched the war silently. After the 18th day of war Krishna ordered Garuda to leave Aravaan's head in Sarbanga River. His head reached Then pennai river bank in baby form and became son of king Chandragiri. He back to his head form after killing koothaasura and King Chandragiri cried a lot about his son.

Aravaan said at every full moon day of Chithirai, he'll appear as a man and shower my Blessings, Mohini, a Transgender form of Krishna will marry me on that day. Call him as Koothan, since his head fight in a war like a dance. That village became Koothanagam, Koothan Aravaan home now koovagam and Every chithra ponnamiie., full moon day April to May, transgenders in all

over the world came to the temple and marry him. The next day, they mourn the god Koothandavar's death through ritualistic dances and by breaking their bangles. Apart from this, in this 18 days festival, an annual beauty pageant and several other competitions like singing contests, Dancing and etc., are held. They conducted seminars and other discussion about their Rights and Health. And the good thing is that festival is helping them to improve their status in society as 3rd Gender.

The festival takes place at the Koothandavar Temple. Rasaathi also participants with many marry the Lord Koothandavar, thus reenacting an ancient history of Lord Krishna. They believed they are incarnates of Mohini set out to marry koothandavar, they wore silk saree with ornaments on and hair decorated with jasmine flowers and marry the koothandavar accepting thali by a priest as in a hindu weddings, the drama of Kurusetra war was reenacted and Rasaathi, suddenly had a vision of Aravan on the battlefield but he disappointed in a split second. Being pushed by the hijra near who stood behind me, Rasaathi became a real hijras in spirit. Now she has to perform all deeds of a hijra. The next day they all mourn with the funeral elogy, God Koothandavar's death through ritualistic dances and by breaking their bangles. And that was a horrible deed to go through to accept widowhood.

Regarding the life of a guru, once a guru is chosen he is not allowed to change his guru. The guru has the responsibility to act as a care taker, provide food, and also guide regarding life decisions. They earn by begging, blessing and by involving in prostitution. The guru's earnings support their followers till they are ready for their hunt for money. They are not able to go to job because human heart is not enlarged to support a hijra though men are attracted to their beauty and care. The world questioning their charity and extruding them from the society is more feared by men who wish to help the transgender who wish to bring revolution for the betterment or upliftment of their Transgender community. Thus the struggle to uplift life, and survival for everyday living is persistent in each Transgender's life.

The first begging experience started playfully as Rasaathi was young, beautiful and had sexually appealing appearance. She was taught to clap her hands and whistle

and bless married couple and new born for she liked it as it was a respectable job for hijra. Begging in the streets is unsafe to them - teasing, fondling annoyed her initially, but she was happy in getting more money. In due course, we feel she was exploiting her teen age and beauty that a normal human being will never do. Most of the men give money only as an act of making a woman oblige to have sex with him. She spares a part of her earned money to provide food and the other half goes to the deposit plan for the upliftment of their community. She longs for a better future for her community.

They involve in prostitution if they like or don't like to financially support their followers and group. Moreover, by blessing others, giving sex they get happiness on making others happy. For men who have more sex drive by nature wife may suffer unable to balance, such men satisfy their sex needs by having oral and anal sex with the transgender who have more stamina than ordinary women. The transgender are physically harassed by men which ruins their health in long run finally succumbed to death. They dress vibrantly to conceal their sufferings and shame. Another conspiracy about the Transgender is revealed – in truth, The Transgender's according to the novel have no arousal for sex.

The Transgender's like any other human being falls in love, not for sex, but for more things other than sex. Practically impossible to live in, they end up their feelings knowing how their lifestyle could only be. The Death of an Akka, reminded of Rasaathi's responsibility to the hijira family where she was brought up while her family abandoned as a child. Fifteen years of struggle is showcased here. A normal child will get a share in the family property. But here it is now impossible, the natal family never thinks for them even they are born of them.

Reliving pain has become a part of their lifestyle. As an oasis to the desert is Shankar coming into the life of Rasaathi. Maybe we can call him as her lover. He obliged to whatever decisions she took to be fair. They had great compatibility, chemistry, understanding and future plans. She believed him he never turned back of some mis happening and not purposive. Her plans and mountainous hope to get married to a man and live a normal life is shattered on hearing Shankar's marriage with his cousin.

She fought hard to overcome her feelings as every lover does but finally understanding their community needs their support again took up begging and prostitution to earn money for the living. She remembered to be unselfish, determined and committed to mission, sacrificing everything including the beloved but never regret anything at a very young age.

There is another incident the entire folk of the transgender with Rasaathi is unforgettable till death is the kidnap and gang rape. In addition to teasing, abusing, humiliating, unexpected group of people - kidnapped and used her as a ragdoll to fulfil all their sexual perversions. She was raped again and again till she lost her consciousness by a group of men in front of the other Akka Hijiras. Our folks wanted to lodge a complaint at the police station which was a laughing bud to the police and they shouted and chased away labeling us whores. Despite of showing how they have dreadfully harmed me at this young age of twenty, they refused to waste their time to file an FIR. Even animals were protected by PETA, but a hijira has nowhere to go. Only time heals their scars throughout their life. Their wisdom took them this far and not their emotions.

Rasaathi's goal is to form a National Association for the Hijiras at Delhi to address their plights to the Government. So she visited to Mumbai and Delhi. She was happy to see some of hijiras doing some dignified jobs in the Kodambakam, Chennai. Rasaathi found that even the normal prostitutes were being paid well in places like Mumbai and hijiras were only illtreated. She represented about forming an association for Hijiras in Bombay and Tamilnadu. Their Tribe was happy to follow Rasaathi and proud of her bravery. Her goal is to get a good remuneration and good treatment like any other person in the society - the wellbeing of their Transgender Community in the society.

All the problems faced by a marginalized community like economic, political, cultural, social activities, limited protection and have the highest risk of poor health is faced by them all their way of living. There is always smoke in their heart to level up their living. But they end up physically attacked, verbally harassed, illegitimate partner violence, Sexually assaulted and extruded people from

society. Comparing themselves with animals, prostitutes rehabilitation reflecting their lower self-esteem. Their longing to live like normal people is suppressed and killed in their mind itself. Their very name Transgender is shunned and mocked at. The books last page is an appeal, addressed to Narendra Modi ji as a note of gratitude and a plight to every brother and sister in India to consider them as equal and give opportunity as employees. They are born of a biological disorder only a mismatched hormonal fate.

In an effort to throw light on this marginalized Transgender Community, I am hopeful and understanding them true to my heart, everything will change for better to them in years to come. The reader's ignorance that fogs our heart and soul is clear after understanding them and evokes humanity in us. Hoping to bridge the mind gaps the

author, Sasindran Kallinkeel has penned this novel in a very simple style. He has shown great care to capture their feelings. They are sensible – they cry, laugh, and fall in love. The impact after reading this novel on renders will move inches of consideration about this God's creations and it's not needed to shun at them, rather give face to them, help them and uplift them and treat equal.

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