

THE  
CHANGING  
FACE

# Contents

Preface	05
Living Conditions and Quality of Life of Transgender in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh	07
Welfare measures and Transgender issues in Kerala	15
Equipping Transgender in Kerala for mainstream jobs	23
Shadows and Light Project of FPAI for Transgender	27
Mainstreaming Transgender Community in Kerala	33
A long, steady struggle, it was and still is	37
Interview with Sri. T.P. Ramakrishnan Minister, Labour and Excise, Government of Kerala	41
Interview with Mr. Muhammed Hanish, IAS Principal Secretary II and Former Managing Director, Cochin Metro.	47
KFC brings joy to the Transgender Community through CMEDP	53
Transgender Healthcare	57
Challenges Faced by Transgenders and their Solutions...	61
The Transgenders too have a Right to Life....	65
The hues of struggle and success...	69
Gifted with Wings to fly high....	73
From Bitter Experiences to Success in Life...	77





## *Preface*

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KILE is enlightened to earmark the current issue as the 'Changing Face' to honour the transgender community. In 2018, through a landmark verdict, the Supreme Court of India decriminalised consensual homosexual intercourse by striking down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code and excluded consensual homosexual sex between adults from its ambit. This paradigm shift has given a mileage to the whole transgender community in the country to achieve their life goals with self-respect. It is the responsibility of every welfare state to provide safe and respectful living to its transgender community. Different organizations both under Government and NGOs are working for the welfare of this community. Among them, KILE has a major role in creating a safe working environment through counselling, educating and training the transgender community. (There are various reasons ranging from the self-reluctance of the transgender persons for fear of the general community and attitude of employers in determining a low share for transgender in the mainstream job sectors). They are generally engaged as make-up artistes, running restaurants, and other menial jobs or even forced to engage in sex-work to make a living. KILE has plans to undertake the hard task of equipping the transgender community in Kerala through month long counselling, training and guaranteeing placement in the mainstream job sectors. Transformation of transgender and other general community members in the society is essential for the acceptance of transgender in the mainstream job sectors. Its effort is through a combination of psychological, social and personal factors to equip both the transgender and general community to accept each other. We are optimistic of getting a warm response and support from the transgender community and experts working among the transgender community in Kerala and other States. Expert opinion, articles and write-up in the area of Transgender studies are included in this issue of KILE NEWS. Hope this will give valuable inputs to the on-going strengthening activities for the welfare of transgender community around us.



**M. SHAJEENA**  
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# LIVING CONDITIONS AND QUALITY OF LIFE OF TRANSGENDER IN KURNOOL, ANDHRA PRADESH

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## INTRODUCTION

Transgender is an umbrella term for all people whose internal sense of their gender (their gender identity) is different from the sex they were assigned at birth (WHO, 2010). The term “transgender” has been derived from the Latin word ‘trans’ and English word ‘gender’ and different sorts of individuals come under this category. No particular form of sexual orientation is meant through the term transgender. The way they behave differs from the ‘normative’ gender role of men and women; leading a life as a transgender is difficult because their sexual orientation is “unacceptable” to society’s vast majority.

Their hope of dignified living seems quite difficult. Transgender people choose different terms to describe themselves. Around the world, many terms are used for trans- people like Kathoey (Thailand), Muxe (Mexico), Travesti (Argentina, Brazil) and Waria



(Indonesia), more typically to describe trans- women or those who are identified as a third sex. The United States and Brazil have the highest transgender population in the world followed by Philippines and Thailand. The Population of transgender people in the cities of Rio De Janeiro and San Francisco is greater than anywhere else in the world.

## TRANSGENDER IN INDIA

The transgender communities in India have the history of more than 4,000 years in ancient texts. The transgender community comprises of Hijras, Eunuchs, Kothis, Aravanis, Jogappas, Shiv-Shakthis etc. Eunuchs have existed since the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC. Hijras played a significant role in the royal courts of the Islamic world, particularly in the Ottoman empires and the Mughal rule in the Medieval India. Through the onset of colonial rule from the 18th century onwards, the situation changed drastically. Accounts of early European travelers showed that they were repulsed by the sight of Hijras and could not understand why they were given so much respect in the royal courts and other institutions. For centuries they were respected as spiritual figures in society, but now they are facing discrimination in India. Transgender people live as a separate community and they lead their life by begging and dancing at the marriage or societal functions. It is reported that some of them earn their livelihood through prostitution, which is neither prestigious nor hygienic for their safe living. Andhra Pradesh also has a very visible transgender community.

As per 2011 census, there are 487,803 transgenders in India of which 43,769 are living in Andhra Pradesh. Transgender people in India mostly belong to two social groups i.e., scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. The total transgender population among SC and ST is 78,811 and 33,293 respectively.

In India more than 66% of the population identified as third sexual orientation lives in towns. The most elevated extent of the third sex populace, around 28%, was identified in Uttar Pradesh , 9% in Andhra Pradesh, 8% each in Maharashtra and Bihar, more than 6% in both Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal and nearly 4% in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Odisha. Punjab and Rajasthan have less than 3 percent transgenders.

The extent of those working persons in the transgender group is lower (38%) than general population 46%. According to the 2011 census, the total literacy rate among transgender is as low as 56%. The literacy rate of transgender in Andhra Pradesh is 53.33%. Kerala, Mizoram, Maharashtra, Gujarat have the highest literacy rate of transgenders (Census of India 2011).





## THIRD GENDER

The gender studies are gaining importance day by day and the government is also taking interest in empowering transgenders. In October 2013, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MSJE) constituted an expert committee to study the issues relating to transgenders, to make an in-depth study of problems faced by the transgender community and to suggest suitable measures that can be taken by the government to solve the problems.

In April (2014), India's Supreme Court recognized transgender people as the third gender along with male and female. A bench of Justice K.S.Radhakrishnan and A.K.Sikri, in separate but concurrent judgments, said eunuchs, apart from the binary gender, is treated as the third gender safeguarding their rights under our constitution and the laws made by parliament and the state legislature. Earlier, they had to write male or female against their gender. In India, less research has been done on the livelihood opportunities, living conditions, status and health issues of the transgenders.

## TRANSGENDER HEALTH

Hijras are a greater number of cross dressers. Many transgenders undergo sex change operation or take hormones to end up distinctly as "flawless" females. The World Health Organization recognizes health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The transgender person still struggles to access basic health services in government hospitals and support that others rely upon or even take for granted. Rooted stigma has intensified their struggle in accessing housing, land, education and employment. Study has found out that third gender people are leading a miserable life. Lack of support from the Government departments makes their life more miserable. Due to this discriminatory attitude, they are deprived of educational facilities at school.

The majority of transgenders suffer harassment at the hands of the police (both railways and traffic) particularly for begging and soliciting clients for sex work. There are also some cases where hijra respondents have been raped and even gang raped by the police especially in the first-class compartments of the local trains in Mumbai. Such inhuman incidents made them to stay on the fringes of Indian society for their survival.



## HEALTH PROBLEMS FACED BY TRANSGENDER PEOPLES

**HIV-** Transgenders are 49 times more at risk of living with HIV compared to the general population. Social exclusion, economic vulnerability and lack of employment opportunities force them to believe that sex work is often the most viable form of income available to them and so a high proportion of transgender people engage in sex work.

A study in Andhra Pradesh found, when enquired about their occupation and income, 66.4% in begging and just 33.6% self-employed. Transgenders were engaged mostly in occupation like begging and dancing and singing on auspicious occasions like marriage or childbirth.

Income is a major factor which decides anybody's economic condition and wellbeing situations. All respondents have stated that what they earn is not sufficient to live a good life because they are staying in a smart city where the cost of living is very high. Most of the time they have to compromise to live their life easy. Almost all respondents were found working and the monthly income was just Rs.7,545/-.

*'Majority of us are continually engaged in both begging and dancing due to the irregular nature of income from these occupations. Many of us also tried to change our occupation but society didn't help us to live a life like others' (A transgender, Andhra Pradesh).*

## HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOR

The utilization of a health care system may depend on educational levels, economic factors, cultural beliefs and practices. Other factors take into consideration environmental conditions, socio-demographic factors, knowledge about facilities, gender issues, political environment, and the health care system itself. Though transgenders belong to a minority group and a most vulnerable group, they face many health challenges.

Most transgenders preferred to visit private doctors who accept them and understand their problems. Information about savings for health and insurance showed their concern for wellness. The Majority of the respondents did not save anything for health emergencies. We found that more than half of those who had not saved had never thought about saving for health care. Knowledge of health insurance in general and government health insurance in particular was also low among a majority of the respondents. Regarding treatment seeking behavior, more than 60 per cent of the respondents took medicine from the



pharmacy.

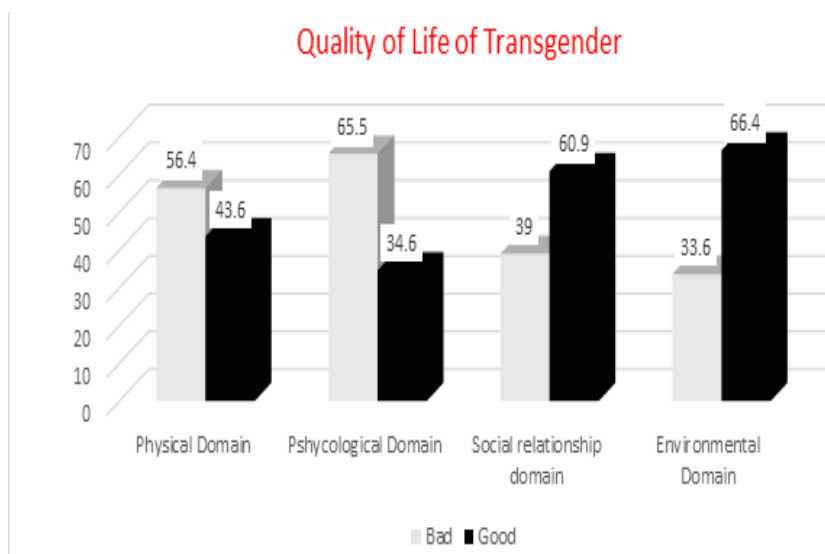
Nearly one fourth of the transgenders went to private doctors. Qualitative information revealed that the treatment seeking behavior of transgenders can be explained by their lack of faith in doctors. The direct cost of common illness was around Rs. 500 to Rs 1000 while the indirect cost was around Rs 1,500. The majority of the transgenders (90%) had paid from their own pockets for their treatment.

*'I don't need any health coverage because if I fall sick, my transgender friends are always there to help me, we always help each other in an emergency, we are like one family' (A transgender from Andhra Pradesh ).*

### SELF-RATED HEALTH

Information on Self-Rated Health of transgender, Kurnool has the highest 53.6% and it was found that they had good overall health. More than half of the transgenders were found to have good overall health because of the place they live and the support which they are getting from their transgender friends in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh.

*We had our own colony (Hijras colony) in Kurnool, and around the place we are living, all are transgenders and the support from our transgender friends in Kurnool made our life better (A transgender, Andhra Pradesh)*





## QUALITY OF LIFE OF TRANSGENDER

The graph highlights the transgender score of quality of life in Physical Domain : 56.4% transgenders experienced bad quality of life, whereas 43.6% experienced good quality of life. In Psychological Domain, 65.5% of the transgenders experienced bad quality of life, whereas 34.6 % experienced good quality of life. In the Social Relationship Domain 39.0% transgenders experienced bad quality of life, whereas 60.9% experienced good quality of life. In Environmental Domain, 33.6% of transgenders experienced bad quality of life, whereas 66.4% experienced good quality of life.


*'I was begging for the whole day still I was not able to earn money for my meals, and I had lot of body pain at night. I faced lots of problem while begging. Some people used to scold me, abuse and threaten me, I felt very bad because of their abuses and scolding' ( A transgender, Andhra Pradesh)*

## TRANSGENDER IN MODERN INDIA

The Central government named the transgenders as the third gender. While this has helped in terms of their personality, Indian specialists now need to actualize court mandates for mainstreaming the transgender group, ending oppression on them, also, tending to their social protection needs which have long been denied, like the privilege to vote, possess property, wedding, and claim a formal recognition through a visa or other government-approved proof. They have the right to get food subsidies, employment, education and health. Transgenders have no options; they depend on others for livelihood; otherwise they engage in sex work and it leads them into the hands of law enforcement bodies.

Tamil Nadu has the largest number of known transgender or hijra (10,679) individuals living in the State and have the most progressive welfare schemes like job training and financial assistance up to Rs 20,000. Madras High Court directs allocation of the medical seat to transgender aspirants, batting for social empowerment of transgender. The court also directed the state to issue guidelines on the “determination of the community” and “reservation in employment” for transgenders. Prithika Yashini, India’s first transgender police officer, won acceptance after fighting against social stigma, gender bias and many class ceilings; she became the first transgender to be appointed as a police officer in Tamil Nadu.

Odisha has become the first state in the country to provide food grains, pension, health cover, education and housing benefits




to the transgender community and they were put in the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category. This step was taken to empower the transgender community.

Uttar Pradesh set up transgender welfare board which will identify transgenders across UP, enlist them, issue identity cards, get them enrolled in educational institutions, provide them accommodation under various hostel and housing schemes of the state government. Transgenders will also get right to inherit agricultural land in Uttar Pradesh. The State cabinet cleared an amendment to the UP-Revenue Code of 2006 for inclusion of third gender in the nomenclature.

Rajasthan had a welfare scheme limited only to persons identified as hijras who make less than Rs 60,000 annually.

Kerala, Kochi Metro Rail Ltd, an enterprise owned by the government of Kerala, appointed 23 transgenders. The company planned to scale up the number of transgender employees to 60. As part of skill development, five transgenders in a district would be given driving lessons. On the demand for a law for transgenders, Kerala was the first state in the country to come out with a transgender policy in 2015. The policy aims to enforce the constitutional rights of transgenders as mandated by the Supreme Court in NALSA V/s. Union of India. This will remove the stigma and discrimination faced by transgender persons. Transgenders above 60 in Kerala now get a monthly pension. State Finance Minister Dr. Thomas Issac made the proposal in the budget for 2016-17 to bring this marginalized section to the mainstream.

Transgender in Andhra Pradesh are to get pension and houses in 2017. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu announced welfare measures for transgenders, including a monthly pension of Rs 1,500. Apart from a pension, transgenders would be given ration cards and houses. Andhra Pradesh has joined a selected group of states which had announced welfare measures for the members of the third gender. Janaki from Andhra Pradesh who holds a double degree in computer science and education, has been hired as a data entry operator at the state housing board. Ganga Bhavani from Anantapur has grabbed the job of a researcher at the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (NIRD) as part of her research activities at the NIRD. She will be travelling to districts and villages in Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to provide suggestions through a report to the union ministry of rural development on the measures to improve the life of hijras and transgender people. On the other hand, a transgenders of Kurnool, K. Rajasekhargoudmadhuri was denied admission to postgraduate course in the university



under the third gender category, although the Supreme Court recognized transgender as a third gender. Transgenders must be provided with third gender quota in government jobs and special reservation must be extended to them on par with SCs and STs. The government also announced a policy to provide employment and equal opportunities to transgenders. Janaki is the first beneficiary of this scheme.


A transgender activist from Maharashtra joined the Lok Adalat panel. Vidyakamble, who has been working as a social activist for around 10 years, is the first transgender to be a panel member of the Lok Adalat in the state, district legal aid committee secretary Kunal Jadhav reported. Laxmi is a famous dancer, dance instructor, and hijra guru. She also adopted two grown up children as her kids. 'Food for thought' cafe in Navi Mumbai hires transgender staff. The cafe currently has six transgender employees, four of whom work as table attendants, one in the kitchen, while one works as the manager. Sana Khanna serves food at the Third Eeye café in Navi Mumbai where her life changed and confidence boosted.

Transgenders in Kashmir struggle for identity; there is not a single graveyard for transgenders in Kashmir and they are also not welcome in the places of worship.

In Madhya Pradesh, Shabnam "Mausi" Bano is the first transgender Indian or hijra to be elected to public office. She was an elected member of the Madhya Pradesh legislative assembly from 1998 to 2003. Hijras were granted voting rights in 1994 in India. Shabnam Mausi also intends to use her position in the legislative assembly to speak out against discrimination of hijras as well as to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS. Shabnam Mausi inspired a lot of hijras in India to take up politics and participate in mainstream activities.

Chhattisgarh police plan to recruit transgender constables, deploy them to combat Maoists. In 2014, the Supreme Court declared transgender people as the third gender and ruled that they have equal privilege under the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution. Chhattisgarh police proposed to recruit 35,000 constables from 27 districts, of which 17 are reeling under Maoist insurgency. Chhattisgarh's transgender community falls under the other backward class (OBC) category, a status that guarantees 14% reservation in education and government jobs.

In West Bengal, a woman who became India's first transgender judge, Ms. Joyita Mondal was appointed as a Lok Adalat judge in north Bengal. Joyita continues to fight against widespread social bias and discrimination against transgenders in education and employment across India.



Andaman and Nicobar, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, and Mizoram states do not have welfare schemes for transgender, hijra or other sexual minority persons.

RTI data show that the majority of states in India (at least 20) do not have social welfare schemes, sexual reassignment surgery or laws and policies for the gender non-conforming sexual minorities of India. This is a big problem and the group of such persons is often left marginalized and discriminated against by society with harmful effects such as poverty, sexual and physical violence and violations of their rights to dignity.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. There should be an evaluation committee to examine whether transgender community is able to take an advantage and whether they can access to the rights and policies related to them.
2. Transgender issues should be also included in the curriculum in schools and colleges.
3. The transgender community should be empowered to boost their self-esteem, to ask for their rights, raise voice against violence on them and live a life with dignity.
4. The government must implement welfare schemes to enable them to lead a better life.







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# WELFARE MEASURES AND TRANSGENDER ISSUES IN KERALA

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## INTRODUCTION

Evidences of harassment and discrimination across the world are documented by various studies. A 25% higher rate of suicidal attempt was reported in Transgenders compared to the general population (Ann P Hass, 2011). A fourteen year old in New York City was suspended in 2003 for wearing T-shirt with the slogan “Barbie is a lesbian” (Paisley Currah, 2006). Different studies report employment discrimination between 20 and 57 percent, including being fired, denied a promotion or harassed (<https://www.hrc.org/resources/discrimination-against-transgender-workers>). The discrimination and exclusion that start from family includes estrangement from family and friendship networks, harassment at school, which can, in some cases lead to underachievement at school, school drop-out, mental ill-health and homelessness. This discrimination not only denies LGBT people equal access to key social goods, such as employment,



health care, education and housing, but it also marginalizes them in society and makes them one of the vulnerable groups who are at risk of becoming socially excluded. (Chatterjee Subhrajit, 2014).

The Honorable Supreme Court of India has established the right to equality and equal protection under Articles 14, 15 and 16 by prohibiting discrimination on the ground of gender identity vide Judgment dated 15 April 2014. This Judgment ensures right to freedom of speech and expression, self-identified sex can be expressed through dress, words, action or behavior or any other form. The expert committee constituted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment recommends transgender has the option to identify as 'man', 'woman', or 'transgender' (TG). LGBT (Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) commonly referred as transgender face legal and social difficulties all over the world and in Kerala. Kerala became one of the states in India to establish a welfare policy for transgender community. Numerous events and interventions have been held across Kerala to get recognition and acceptance in the society and for the benefit of the community. Various schemes ([http://sjd.kerala.gov.in/beneficiary-info.php?benef\\_sl=N3NWOHVxUiN2eQ==](http://sjd.kerala.gov.in/beneficiary-info.php?benef_sl=N3NWOHVxUiN2eQ==)) have been visualized and started in Kerala are:

- **TRANSGENDER CELL CONSTITUTED**

All members of the cell are from the Transgender community and the main objective is to provide assistance, support, formulate and coordinate transgender welfare initiatives of the state transgender justice board.

- **IDENTITY CARD FOR TRANSGENDER**

An online application facility for identity cards is initiated and it is issued with a hologram for ensuring security and avoid duplication.

- **SCHOLARSHIP FOR TRANSGENDER STUDENTS**

To bring the marginalized Transgender to the mainstream a scheme is initiated for providing scholarship to Transgender students from 7th standard onwards.

- **24X7 HELPLINE FOR TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY**

Social Justice Department has launched a 24X7 helpline to provide necessary assistance to transgender who are in distress through counseling and legal assistance.



- **SELF-EMPLOYMENT SCHEME AND ASSISTANCE FOR TRANSGENDER**

Through this scheme sewing machines are distributed for those who have undergone tailoring or embroidery training. Along with Kerala State Women's Development Corporation the Social Justice Department launched a loan scheme to provide Rs. 3 lakh for starting the self-employment initiatives.

- **SCHEME FOR IMPARTING SKILL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING TO TRANSGENDER**

Skill development training is planned as part of the comprehensive welfare scheme formulated by the social justice department. An amount of rupees five lakhs to the district Social Justice Officers for meeting the expenses for conducting the course for Transgender participants

- **SCHEME FOR IMPARTING DRIVING CLASSES TO TRANSGENDER**

Under this scheme, five transgender from each district will be provided four-wheeler driving training classes which enable them to be self-sufficient and with job opportunities in different sectors.

- **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME TO TRANSGENDER FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT**

Financial assistance of Rs. 50,000/- is made available under the scheme for self-employment.

- **SABHALAM SCHEME FOR TRANSGENDER STUDENTS PURSUING PROFESSIONAL COURSES**

This scheme provides an opening for Transgender who are eligible for higher education like Degree/Diploma level professional courses. A maximum amount of Rs. 1 lakh per year is provided through this scheme

- **SAMANWAYA CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR TRANSGENDER**

This is a continuing education programme which helps the Transgender to complete their education which they have dropped out at an early age.



- **MARRIAGE ASSISTANCE FOR LEGALLY MARRIED TRANSGENDER COUPLES**

An amount of Rs. 30,000/- has been fixed as marriage assistance for Transgender individuals married after Sex Reassignment Surgery(SRS)

- **FINANCIAL AID FOR PROVIDING HOSTEL FACILITY TO TRANSGENDER STUDENTS**

The Department of Social Justice has introduced a scheme for Transgender to provide Rs 4,000/-as financial assistance for finding hostel facility or accommodation during the study period.

- **FINANCIAL AID TO TRANSGENDERS FOR SEX REASSIGNMENT SURGERY AND FURTHER TREATMENT**

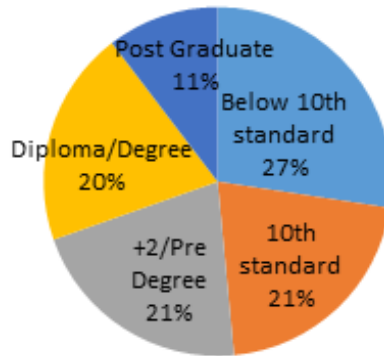
Maximum financial assistance of Rs. 2, 00,000/- is provided to the transgender lessons to enable surgical transition. An amount of Rs. 3,000/- will be provided for further 12 months from the date of the surgery as an assistance to meet counseling, treatment, food and other expenses.

Under the existing favorable conditions in our state, a study was conducted under the annual work plan study (AWP 2018-19) of Population Research Centre, among 95 transgender in Kerala during 2018 to understand the discrimination they face in different dimensions of life like familial and social. Many transgender have a strong, persistent feeling to live in the 'other' sex in which they do not belong to. heir problems begin at a very early age when they feel a conflict with the sex at birth. They face grave violations of rights, constant labor discriminations, expulsion from the job, unemployment, unjustifiable access to health care etc. They don't even have the courage to disclose the conflict they face during their adolescent years.

Among those who disclosed, only 45.9% have done it with their mother father or sibling. The support and substance received from intimate family members are not adequate or satisfactory according to them. Only 39% received family support for the mental conflict they underwent. Compared to the younger population, those above the age of 45 shared their feeling of loneliness and anxiety for the coming years.



**Fig 4 : Educational achievement of transgender**



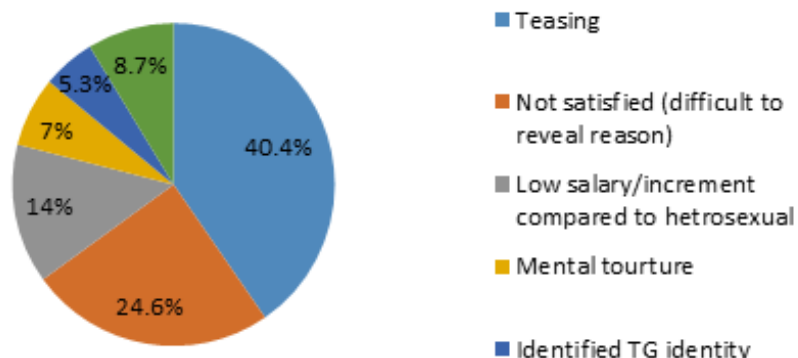
Being literate only is not enough to achieve success in life. Many reported dropping out of school due to harassment and teasing by teachers and friends for gender expressions other than the assigned sex. Analysis of the educational scenario of this group of people revealed that only 48.5% of them had education up to 10th standard or below. Those who had degree level or more education constitute only 30 percent of the total population surveyed.

Many transgenders reported that they had to face targeted harassment and discrimination at workplace. The majority (80%) of the respondents are engaged in low paid jobs viz. home nursing, employees in hotels, beggars, sex work, cleaning staff etc., 32.89% were working(25 out of 76) in different projects by NGOs and TG cell(4 persons) formed for handling the issues of TGs by Government of Kerala and 18.42% were artists in different sectors like TV shows, stage programs. 26% revealed that they are doing sex work both for pleasure and for earnings and 5-8 persons agreed that they were not using condoms either in all or in some of their relations.

Analyzing the reasons for loss of previous job among 40.4% it was found to be due to teasing from employer or co-workers. For 24.6% it is the unfavorable working atmosphere and for the remaining it was low salary or no increment while giving higher salary and increments to hetero-sexual people.

The fundamental rights guaranteed by Article 14 of Constitution

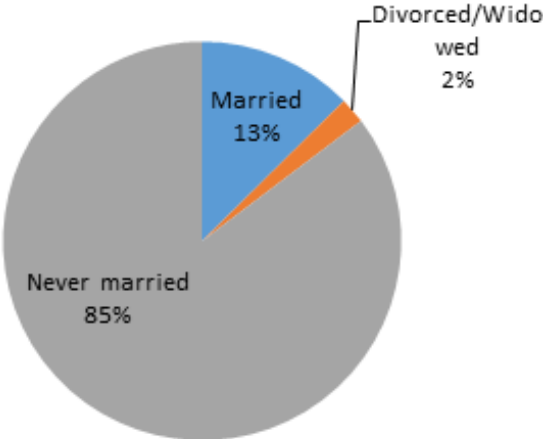
**Fig 5: Reason for discontinuation/change of previous job**





of India claims right for transgender marriage. Even though it is permissible by law the reluctance in family and society prevent them from doing so. It was found that 85.3% were remaining unmarried 12.6% were married and 2.1% were divorced or widowed.

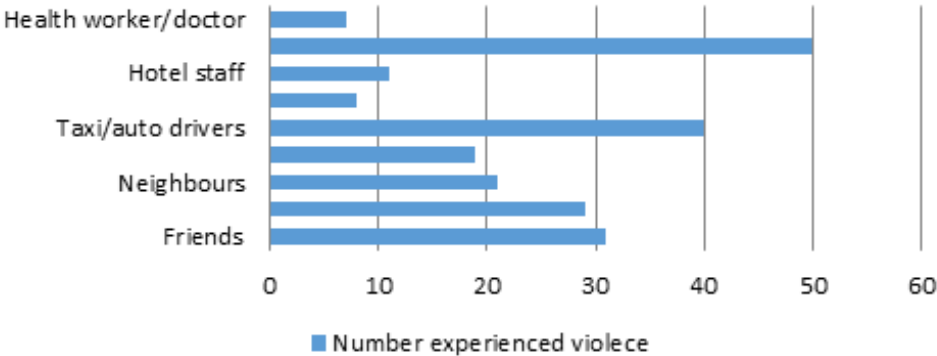
**Fig 3: Marital status of the transgender**



Homelessness was another important problem reported by the respondents. They are living out of home either because they were thrown out of their home for expressing their gender identity or left home to escape the problems they faced in their own house. About 52% were homeless.

Among those who were staying in their own house, 32.6% reported facing discrimination or violence from father, mother or siblings which includes physical violence, teasing and mental torture. Other than violence from own house they experienced violence from society. Among them, the reported violence faced from police was 52.63% and the most cruel form of violence experienced from police was physical violence or unnecessary charge of legal cases on them. 42% reported facing of different forms of violence from the auto/taxi drivers that includes teasing, denial of trip etc.

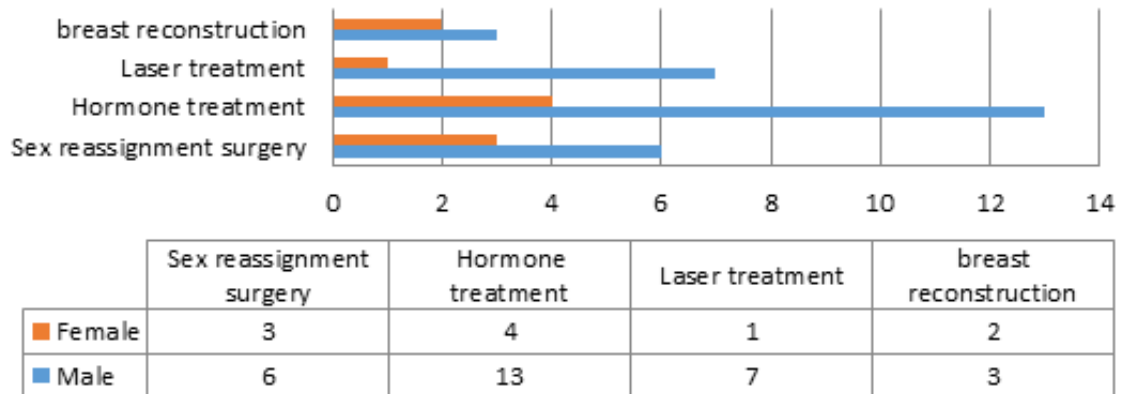
**Fig 6: Number experienced any form of violence**





The medical transformation of changing the sex needs a variety of surgical procedures and huge expenditures. To satisfy their gender expression they undergo different processes such as medical or non-medical means. 32.63% had not undergone any medical method for transformation. One may be using multiple methods as those who did SRS also did hormone treatment.

Fig 2: Medical procedures done for transformation to opposite sex

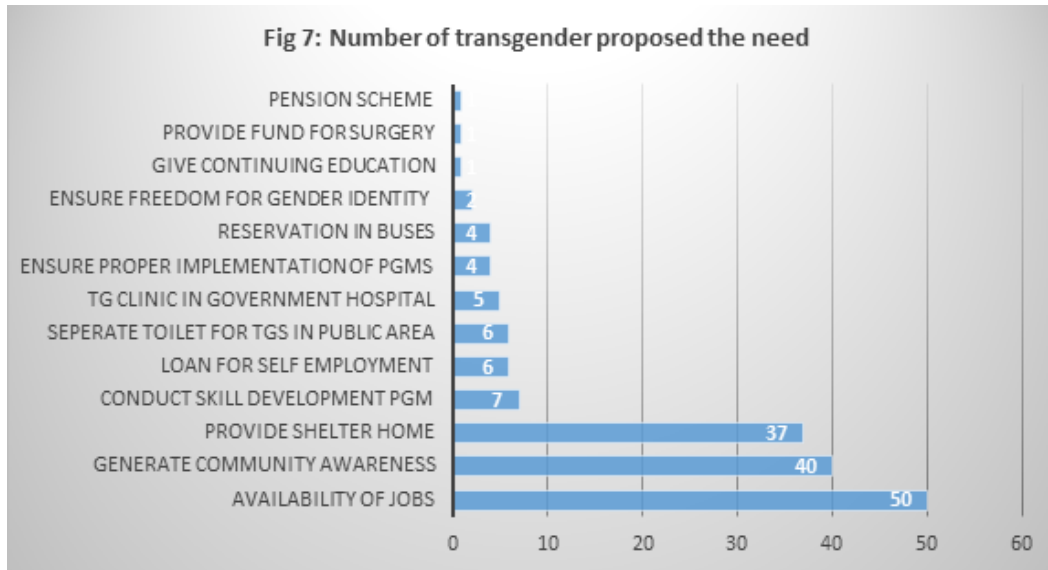


In our study 6 males and 3 females were found having done sex reassignment surgery (SRS) to transform to their desired sex. The average cost for surgery was one lakh ninety seven thousand two hundred and twenty two and ranges from one lakh to 5 lakhs. All have done the surgery in private hospital without undergoing any counseling or evaluation for gender dysphoria. The hormone and laser treatments are continuous; one must continue to do the hormone treatment even after sex reassignment surgery.

The initiatives by the government increased acceptance among public, reduced violence from police, discriminatory attitude of public like teasing. 53.68% of the respondents pointed out such a positive change in the society. There are many NGOs and CBOs working for the welfare of transgender community. Of the total respondents, 77.9% had a membership in at least one of the organizations.

The three major needs reported are necessary employment opportunities, generate community awareness and shelter home for homeless.

The implementation of Government programs for the betterment of TGs is sometimes not proper i.e. the officials responsible to disburse the funds allotted were making enquiry at the household level and the parents, neighbors or relatives who are against their change of identity may report negatively so that they do not get the benefits. It is reported by the transgender



community that many initiatives look bright on paper, but the reality is different and for better results a proper implementation strategy has to be formulated by the respective governments and initiatives should be more affirmative. Even though the government of Kerala has stepped up efforts to bring them to the forefront of some other issues pull them back without permitting them to use even the given facilities. E.g. more than one third who employed in Kochi Metro left job because of unavailability of decent accommodation at reasonable prices and discrimination they faced from society and at the workplace '<https://www.firstpost.com/india/watch-transgenders-in-kerala-continue-to-face-discrimination-as-poor-understanding-of-issues-negate-govt-efforts-3965517.html>'. Assessments by qualified mental health professionals is a necessary component of the process of transformation and is needed for those who experience gender dysphoria (Britt Colebunders, 2015). But it was not followed in any of the respondents we interviewed, who underwent the surgery.

We must identify the transgender people early in their life, e.g. identify them in schools even at primary or secondary levels of education with the help of teachers, and give support and prevent drop out of schools and equip them for continuing their education to higher levels. The existing laws should be amended or modified to include the specific needs of TGs. More research is needed to identify the concerns of transgender people in different sub populations.





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# EQUIPPING TRANSGENDER IN KERALA FOR MAINSTREAM JOBS

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**T**ransgender is a common term used to denote different socio-cultural groups within trans people like hijras, kinnars, and other identities like - shiv-shaktis, jogtas, jogappas, etc. Transgender persons were treated with respect in India and were engaged in reputable jobs during different segments in Indian history. 'Vedas' has recognized three genders which is evident in the descriptions in Ramayana. Mahabhaya (200 BC) by Patanjali and Tolkappiyam in Tamil (300 BC) considered three natural genders and were treated as normal. The offerings by Transgender community on special occasions were considered sacred and they were given appropriate donations also.

During the period of Mughal rule, these people rose to well-known positions as political advisors, administrators, generals. Hijras were considered clever, trustworthy and fiercely loyal and had free access to all spaces and sections of population, thereby playing a crucial role in the politics of empire building in the Mughal era. At the beginning of the British rule, the privileges of the Transgender were continued with restrictions. However, radical changes occurred when they vigorously criminalized the hijra community and denied them civil rights. Hijras were considered to be separate caste or tribe in different parts of India by the colonial administration. This situation continued in the modern India also.




For the past one decade, several policy initiatives were made in order to help the Transgender persons to join the mainstream in India. For the first time, the Census of India collected information about Transgender. It revealed that in Kerala, 3902 persons were reported as Transgender in 2011. It is less than one percent of the total Transgenders in India. However, Transgender person in Kerala are first in the case of literacy in India along with Mizoram. Inclusion of them in MGNREGA offered a better job opportunity. The programme like National Urban Livelihood Mission ensured housing to these marginalized community.

However, still, most of these Transgender communities are street dwellers and considered apartheid in the mainstream job sector and are forced to engage in sex work for making a life.

The Transgender Bill (2016) put forth provisions for ensuring respectful jobs to the Transgender community. It prohibits discrimination against a transgender person, including unfair treatment or denial of service in relation to employment, education, healthcare, access to public goods and facilities, etc.

- Section 3 (b) of the bill prohibits the unfair treatment of a transgender person in employment or occupation.
- Section 3(c) prohibits the denial of employment and discriminatory termination from the same.
- Section 10 bars establishments from discriminating against a transgender person in matters related to employment such as recruitment, promotion and other related issues.
- Section 11 creates an obligation on establishments to comply with the provisions of the legislation and provide necessary facilities to trans-people.
- Section 12 creates an obligation on every establishment consisting of more than 100 people to appoint a compliance officer who would deal with complaints regarding violations of the Act.
- Section 15 creates a duty on the appropriate government to formulate welfare schemes and programs to facilitate and support livelihood for transgender persons, including their vocational training and self-employment.
- Section 17 provides for the formation of a National Council by the Central Government with a representative from the Labour and Employment Department and Department of Legal Affairs, amongst others.
- Section 19 (d) provides for penalties and punishments in the event any person harms, injures or endangers the life,




safety, health, or well-being of a transgender person or tends to do any act which causes abuse of any nature whether physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and/or economic abuse.

According to National Human Rights Commission, about 92 percent of transgender (TOI, 2018) are deprived of the right to participate in any form of economic activity in the country, with even qualified ones denied of jobs. There are several efforts taken to engage Transgender in mainstream job sectors both in private NGOs and Government. Among them, Kochi Metro Rail Corporation (KMRL) has gained popularity as a public sector, first of its kind, by appointing 23 Transgender in its initial stage through Kudumbashree at various stations of KMRL. However, only a few of them continued in the service. Lower salary to meet high rent at Kochi, internal issues and non-interest of Transgender etc were primarily pointed out as the reason for large level withdrawal of Transgender from there. Yet, detailed analysis is required to identify the actual cause of failure of the so-called model attempt in Kerala.

NGO's offer different levels of jobs to Transgender. Self-employment schemes are another way for this community to cherish. Kudumbashree and other Government departments in Kerala have made several attempts to engage Transgender in agriculture, restaurants and other self employment sectors. Providing 10 cents of land each for cultivation at Vyttila hub is one among them. During the period of the pandemic, we had seen many of the Transgender struggling and succeeding in making a life through running restaurants, street delivery of food etc.

The department of Social Security, Government of Kerala has constituted a Transgender cell to train Transgender people and it identified more than 1300 Transgender in the State through different network programmes. Coming out from the family and engaging in sex work make them vulnerable. Experts opined about high school dropout among them. Providing education is believed to have a positive impact on their life as low level of educational achievements was seen among transgender community. Identifying them in the earlier stage of life is also important to give support and prevent dropout from schools and equip them to continue education. Studies in this regard have not been conducted in Kerala. Family Acceptance Project (FAP) (2009) in U.S indicated that family's reactions have a major impact on the risk and wellbeing.

Families who were conflicted about their children's LGBT identity may result in the children leaving the home. Family support is much needed for the children who experience gender




conflict at adolescence to thrive in the world. Homeless LGBT youth without economic support, often engage in drug use and risky sexual behaviors and often develop mental health disorders.

Engaging transgender in different socially accepted job folio and promoting their presence in a comfortable manner is crucial. When the world of fashion industries accepted trans-women and trans-men in Europe and America as cover page of leading fashion magazines, it generated societal acceptance also. When the U.S. Department of Defence (2016) officially declared that transgender Americans could serve openly in the military, and could not be discharged “just for being transgender”, it enthused more number of Americans coming out as transgender openly. Many employers responded to awareness of transgender workers by developing new policies aimed at accommodating them because of complaints and lawsuits against discrimination.

In India also, other States have taken steps to strengthen its Transgender people. The states like Maharashtra, Odisha and Tamil Nadu have initiated various programmes for the welfare of the transgender persons. Transgender welfare boards in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and ‘Sweekruti’ in Odisha provide vocational training, short-stay homes for transgender persons, educational assistance with pre & post matric scholarships, personality development, skill development etc, for achieving mainstream job opportunities for the transgender community. The Centre had constituted the National Council for Transgender Persons (NCTP) to formulate policies, programmes, draft legislation and projects for achieving equality and full participation to them. A collective policy and programme for implementation and monitoring the results of welfare programmes for Transgender are essential. Process evaluation is another important aspect as there is a higher chance of discrimination against a transgender employee both from employer and co-workers. The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey (2016) disclosed that nearly one-third of the transgender had been fired from job, denied promotion, or had experienced mistreatment (including assault) as a result of gender identity or expression.

Along with creation of mainstream jobs at various sectors one must consider the determining factors like accommodation issues, workplace harassment, expulsion from home, interest of Transgender to be engaged in a particular sector etc. Measures need to be taken to assess their area of interest. They may be well off in areas like make-up, cooking, stitching and performing arts like dancing and acting. Equipping the Transgender for neo-liberal job sectors needs thorough training in personality development, strong communication skills, adaptability skills, professional skills, multi-tasking etc. Training programmes may



be conducted in a friendly manner with interactive sessions to attract them.

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# SHADOWS AND LIGHT PROJECT OF FPAI FOR TRANSGENDER

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**Dr. Sobha Mathew**

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**T**ransgender people are those people whose gender identity is different from their gender. That is, transgender people have a gender identity different from the sex that they were assigned at birth. Transgenderism in Kerala was different from that of other states in India. Hijra culture prevails in transgender communities all over India except in Kerala. Kerala people didn't want the Hijra culture to come to Kerala. The Social setup of Kerala didn't accept transgender people and so in Kerala, transgender people were invisible till recent past. They lived in the society by hiding their real identity. But in the last few years, transgender people in Kerala started to come forward revealing their identity. But life as a transgender person was not easy in Kerala. There was stigma associated with the transgenders. Transgender people were not considered as normal human beings. It was difficult for them to reveal their identity and go to work. There were cases of discrimination to transgender employees from employers and colleagues. But gradually the picture changed as the Govt. of Kerala became the first Indian state in 2015 to launch a State Policy of Transgender that envisaged a just society for the community with equal rights. The policy states that it supports the attainment of a just society where men, women and transgender people have equal rights to development opportunities, resources and benefits; the right to



live with dignity and enjoy a life free from all forms of violence; the right to freedom of expression in all matters that affect them, and the right to an equal voice and participation in key development decisions that shape their lives, their communities and the state. It provided support to transgender persons in employment, education, housing, health etc. Kerala Government is trying to make the State transgender-friendly. However, there still exist a lot of challenges for them in workplaces.

## **FPAI**

Family Planning Association of India (FPAI) is a non-governmental organization established in 1949 in response to the growing population and limited health facilities in India. Currently, FPAI works on a wide range of Sexual and Reproductive Health issues encompassing family planning, comprehensive sexuality education, maternal health, child survival, adolescent care, HIV/AIDS, safe abortion, reproductive tract infection, cancer screening and prevention and mitigation of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a manifestation of inequitable and deep-rooted norms, behaviors and practices that exist in society. FPAI has been implementing empowerment initiatives since seven decades. This program aims to deliver improved health and standards of living, better decision-making and greater self-reliance. FPAI has been creating awareness among marginalized and vulnerable groups and empowers them to take action when their rights are violated. FPAI Trivandrum Branch conducts various training programs, sensitization programs and health service sessions for most vulnerable and marginalized groups such as Women, Children, Sex-Workers, Transgender, Injecting Drug Users, Prisoners and Migrant Workers.

## **SHADOWS AND LIGHT PROGRAMME**

In the year 2015, the branch has implemented a 'shadows and light project' among transgenders. The main objective of the project was to bring about behavior changes among TGs. The objectives of the programme were to establish regular contact with the target population through outreach and communication programmes. It also aimed to create Enabling environment through Advocacy and Net Working-with the police, health sector/service providers, policy makers, media, community/religious leaders, public etc. and thereby reduce stigma and discrimination and create a conducive environment for practicing safe health behaviors. The project tried to strengthen the initiated Community Mobilization programs through more member enrollment etc. Building up of civil society partnership/cooperation in HIV/AIDS prevention, care treatment and creation of awareness on Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C were also done.

## THE MAIN ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

- **Outreach & Communication:-** It includes Interpersonnel Communication using BCC tools, Peer Education, BCC events, Dialogue Based Interpersonal Communication (DIPC), Counseling.
- **Basic Services:-** HIV/VDRL/Hepatitis B /Hepatitis C screening , General Health Management.
- **Condom programming:-** It includes Condom Education, Free Condom distribution Negotiation skill development programs, Development and maintaining of outlets especially non-conventional outlets, Monitoring of outlets.
- **STI management-** Includes STI education, Project / DIC clinics, STI treatment, STD counseling, partner notification, Out Reach STI Camps and Regular Medical Examination.
- **Referral Services;** ICTC, STI, 'Prathyasa Kendram', Enabling Environment Creation.
- **Advocacy and networking:-** Analysis of Power structures, advocacy and networking initiatives with various organizations / departments, Project advisory/ Steering Committee meetings.
- **Community mobilization:-** During the phase, the project has strengthened the existing community support with PRIs, Health authorities, Law enforcements officials, etc.

The branch has provided above mentioned services to the TGs. Three TG positives were registered and during the intervention 10 VDRL reactive cases were reported. The branch



has also identified 2 HCV and 2 HbsAg positive cases which were referred for further investigation and treatment.

The branch also conducted FGDs to identify the various issues related to the life of TGs. During the intervention, the branch found that most of them faced stigma and discrimination from the families, society and friends. Most of them have stopped their studies during the teenage and so most of the HRGs registered were having poor educational qualifications and were from the low socio-economic background. The majority of them were unmarried. It was also found that they were not allowed to attend the family gatherings and also social gatherings. They were excluded from the society. Most of them were homeless. During certain seasons the TGs go to the neighboring states for begging and using that money some of them have underwent sex reassignment surgery and hormone therapy. Some of them have conducted breast transplantation also.

As a part of the project, a session on Sex assignment, Gonadectomy and Vaginal Creation was held for TG. 72 participants attended the programme. Dr. Lekha, Consultant and Gynecologist of District Hospital, Peroorkada explained the Sex assignment, Gonadectomy and Vaginal Creation and clarified the doubts regarding hormone therapy and the side effects of the therapy. Mr. Shiju Unnithan, Legal Consultant led an awareness programme on FIR, Meaning of charge and Section - 377.

In order to increase the visibility of the TGs, the branch conducted various cultural activities including dance Programmes, Fashion shows and music concerts. The prizes were distributed to the winners. The programme was inaugurated by Mr. G Venugopal (Playback Singer), Goodwill ambassador of FPAI Trivandrum Branch.







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# MAINSTREAMING TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY IN KERALA

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India witnessed a landmark judgment from Supreme Court in 2014 accepting the existence of the transgender community in India. A gender status, namely third gender was assigned to them so that they were entitled to all citizen's rights including right to live with dignity. This community has been marginalized from mainstream society for so many years in history. They were not given the opportunity to education and employment. This happened due to social stigma and the negative attitude of society towards them. In the judgment, the Supreme Court asked the Centre to treat transgender as socially and economically backward group.

They asked the states to make provisions for their education and employment to compensate for the discrimination and consider them as other backward communities. The apex court also said that states and the Centre would devise social welfare schemes for the third gender community and ran a public awareness campaign to erase social stigma. This was the result of a long standing struggle by the community for many years.

Following this, Kerala Government drafted a transgender policy in 2015. Before drafting the policy, Social Justice Department conducted a situation analysis to understand the problems of them and it reflected the realities of the life of them. The study



showed that majority of the transgender people did not have access to health care, education and employment mainly due to stigma and discrimination. Many of them have attempted suicide. After the policy, Government of Kerala formed a transgender cell, State and district transgender board and announced various welfare programs.

Training programs are being conducted by various departments like social justice, Health and family welfare etc. After this, there is some change in the attitude of people towards the transgender community. But there is a long way to go for fulfilling the needs of the community.

There was rights-based movement of the community in Kerala for a couple of decades. Community organizations were formed and they conducted various public processions like “Queer Pride March”. They have participated in the situation analysis as study subjects and experts ; without their participation, it would not have been possible.

After the policy, they are given identity cards, informal education, and employment opportunities in some domains. Yet, they face various problems like lack of care from home, violence from the public, stigma and discrimination. While they were given jobs, they did not have housing facilities and social support for a dignified life. They were forced to leave the job due to this. Even basic facilities like public toilets are not available to them. They also do not have access to health as other people. There is discrimination from health care institutions. Many of them have a desire to change their sex through sex reassignment surgery, hormone therapy and other allied bodily treatment. But they do not get these services with an affordable rate in Kerala. Since there is scarcity of public health institutions catering to their specific health care needs, they often approach private health care institutions outside the state or within the state. This may be affordable only to a few people.

Also, they need counseling services, especially during the adolescent period. They usually may have identity crises and stress due to non-acceptance from family and society. They often get humiliated in schools and other public places. Much psycho-social support is needed during this period, for which we do not have sufficient number of trained counselors.

Transgender people are in the process of mainstreaming in Kerala. On the one side, they got more visibility in the public. Some of them got identity cards, but not all. Many of them are still invisible because of stigma and discrimination which may take more time to get abolished. There are some welfare programs also like Kudumbasree units for them. But they have not reached a position to find means of living by themselves for being subjected to long period of marginalization.





At this juncture, they need a lot of support from Government institutions. Reservation should be given to them in educational institutions as well as in employment. Already some effort is taken from the side of Government. But along with this, a social support system also must be developed. There are some initiatives already taken in this direction. For example, there are short stay homes for transmen community to provide care and support whenever there is a need like post-operative care. This is of much help to them, because those who are outcast from their own homes, nobody will be there to look after their health. Similarly, understanding their real-life situation is important in developing appropriate schemes.

They are diverse in their social conditioning. There are people who do not have even basic needs like food and shelter and also those who can earn, but cannot fulfill their desire to legally marry or adopt a child. So, each issue must be studied specifically before developing schemes for them. When employment is provided, we have to see whether an accommodation facility is available for them. House owners may be reluctant to give rooms for them. They may require skill development also for availing more job opportunities. So, mainstreaming will be complete only after addressing all the challenges they face during this process. Challenges persist in different planes of their life, like intimate relations, education, health, social relations etc. making mainstreaming difficult.





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# A LONG, STEADY STRUGGLE, IT WAS AND STILL IS

For transgenders , it was a task to get their rights acknowledged. Now their effort is to get accepted as part of the mainstream

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**Smt. Aparna Nair**  
Chief Sub Editor, The Hindu


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**R**ose Venkatesan remembers the time she was on an official trip to Kerala. In the IT precincts of Kakkanad, she was welcomed with warmth as an IT trainer and a professional. Her reputation preceded her; she was the first media anchor in Tamil Nadu from the transgender community way back in 2008 when in Kerala, transgender was a word more horrific than a taboo. In Tamil Nadu, however, the scene was slowly changing for the transgenders with government interventions since 2002 helping to integrate the community with the mainstream.

Tamil Nadu had set up a transgender welfare board, which was inspiring the members of the community to get educated and take up jobs. There was a slow revolution happening, with the community aligning itself with activists from various strata and fighting for its rights. There were people from the community like Nartaki Natraj and Priya Babu who rose to fame fighting odds, one as a classical dancer and the other as a social activist. Transgender groups in Coimbatore formed sought-after teams of Biryani masters who freelanced in reputed hotel chains and in public ceremonies. Rose Venkatesan also chose a similar path, got herself educated, and became a professional trainer and celebrity anchor and activist.

“The Kochi IT crowd was extremely warm. But out in the



streets, people mocked at me, some stalked, and some used inappropriate language,” she said. What she faced on Kochi streets may be quite the same in rural areas of the country, but cities like Chennai, Coimbatore and Bangalore have certainly become more affable to transgenders. A reason for this, apart from the interventions at the government level, is the awareness among the community members about the need to better their prospects. The result is that they are seen out in the society more than before and are taking up courses and jobs that are more to their liking and talent.


As regards the employment sector, at least in the corporate offices in the metros, transgenders are being valued better. Job fairs organised in major IT hubs like Bengaluru have sessions on the topic of integrating transgenders in mainstream workspace. Voluntary and even commercial organisations have come up that offer skilling courses to the transgenders to help them join the IT and ITeS sectors. Latest legislations like Transgenders (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, promising equal opportunities for them at workplace, have helped in the process. As per media reports, such legislations have also prompted companies including KPMG, Infosys, Accenture, Nestaway and Sodexo to introduce policies and hiring plans for the marginalised community.

Even though there are such developments happening in the corporate field, the state of affairs in traditional sectors, including the public one, is still grim. Transgenders have had to fight it out legally for being considered for the selection processes if they chose to maintain their gender identity. Media had reported some such legal cases filed.

The transgenders who waged those legal fights are now placed in jobs in government departments but do not want to recount their story now because if they spoke of it, they could invite departmental action. And spotting them would be easy, as they are the only one or two such people working in their respective offices.

“So, we cannot say all is well for us. Even now, only 5 per cent among us are employed in jobs deemed respectable by the society and 90-95 per cent are still into sex work and begging,” Rose says, adding there needs to be more done for the community, which as per the 2011 Census, is 4,87,803 strong in India.

The count of literacy among transgenders in India is also an indicator to the odds meted out to them. The Census revealed the literacy rate among transgenders to be 57.06%. Now compare this with the data by the Central Board for Secondary



Examinations that said only 19 transgender students appeared for the Class 12 board exams in 2020 and six transgender students for the Class 10 exams. But as per the 2011 Census, there were 54,854 transgender children below the age of six who should be between the ages of 10 and 16 in 2020. Some of them should have been taking the board exams. The obvious question that arises then is where all those children or at least some more of them are.

Contrasting this data to the literacy level, we can only conclude that the children were forced to drop out being denied even school education. Most often, the dropping out is due to the mental and at times physical harassment at school. They then grow up to either join sex work or begging to make both ends meet, thus further widening the alienation of the transgender community.

If this is the situation elsewhere in India (where transgenders are supposedly better accepted), in Kerala, their state is distressing though there have been very strong development moves from the government after the April 15, 2014 Supreme Court verdict on a NALSA petition that called for concrete steps towards transgender welfare. “Before that, many among us had moved to other States because the social and religious structure in other States had more acceptability for transgenders,” Shyama S. Prabha, the State coordinator of Transgender Cell.

Post the NALSA verdict, Kerala’s administrative machinery moved fast, organised a survey and spotted about 25,000 transgenders through snowball sampling, and devised a Transgender Policy, probably the first such policy in the country. As per this, Budget allocations were made for the community and a transgender welfare board was created to execute the plans. A cell for the community’s welfare followed, and then special Kudumbashree units that are now 51 in number where transgenders get together to brainstorm and execute employment opportunities and other activities. Kochi Metro followed in 2017, reserving jobs for transgenders. Two years ago, two seats at the UG and PG level in colleges were kept aside for transgenders and in January this year, an option has been incorporated in government communications where transgender status can be specified as a gender option. “We were eons behind till 2014 as compared to other States. But now, the rate at which the State is moving ahead with programmes is slowly turning Kerala into a model one as regards the welfare of the community,” says Shyama S. Prabha.

Despite such official moves what makes the situation disagreeable here for the transgenders is the standoffish response of the society to the community’s mainstreaming. The literacy figures and the development indices the State boasts



of are often just cosmetic, and as one studies the social strata deeper, one can find very prominent cultural and religious influences causing the ostracisation of sections such as the transgenders especially in the northern parts of the State. The testimony to this is the accounts of several transgenders from the area who have tales of inhumane treatment to narrate even as recent as eight years ago.

Some transgenders who were interviewed for this article remember how as children they had to hide their gender identity to go to school for fear of being called “chanthupottu” (after a popular transgender character in a movie). There were also media reports of transgenders who were killed because they were feared to have AIDS. To the society outside, they were practically invisible and were almost non-existent in the social constitution of Kerala. Yet they were there, abandoned by their families and clustered in dingy, rented rooms working as sex workers, hotel helps or cleaners, and tolerating the abusive terms showered on them. They would come out during some temple festivals when men would dress up as women as offerings to the Gods. That was probably the only time people of the State knew they existed.

The change in social psyche can be brought about with only prolonged awareness programmes that start right at the grassroots. According to the transgender activists in the State, the effort has already begun. Sensitisation drives are being organised in 10 schools and colleges of each district, aiming to make them transgender-friendly, and similar programmes are being done among people in the administrative and law and order machinery as well. Also, a campaign to create more awareness among the public is being put together and a proposal has also been sent to the Education Department to incorporate sensitivity towards gender identity and marginalised sections in the school curriculum. So, though it may take some time to change mind sets, efforts are on the move, says officials of the transgender cell.

Such interventions are needed across the country too, and some reservation in key sectors such as education and jobs could also help, they feel. Again, to better the head count of transgender students in schools and colleges, frequent review of the situation could be done. The community could be included under the category of “disadvantage group” as defined by the Right to Education Act. This implies that the transgender children will be eligible for admission under the 25 per cent reservation set aside for economically weaker and disadvantaged students.

Yet it is not reservation and government interventions alone that can help the community to break free from the titanic societal



taboos and attitude. “The members of the community have to come out for their rights and be ready to fight the odds,” says Rose. They should resolve to educate themselves, to live and let live with dignity, and be assets to their own selves. They should equip themselves with skill sets that would set them apart.

The governments could help there, by setting up voluntary educational and skilling programmes. But the struggle is a harder and longer one and the community members have to help themselves more than what any government can help them by moving on braving the odds on the way.









# INTERVIEW WITH

## Sri.T.P. RAMAKRISHNAN

MINISTER , LABOUR AND EXCISE, GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

interviewed by



**M.SHAJEENA**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KILE



**Q** The representation of transgender in the work places in Kerala is very low. And what steps the Department of Labour would take to change the low acceptance they have?

The issue of the transgender was a new one before the Department of Labour. It is in recent times that the transgender issue has come to the forefront of public

attention. This was due to the attitude of the Left Democratic Front government in Kerala. When the Metro Rail started operating, a certain percentage of new job opportunities were set aside for the transgender community. It was a good beginning. Based on this, the LDF government took all possible steps to promote the transgender community to the mainstream of the society. Based on this, the Labour Department is seriously examining this issue. The Department of Labour intends to take necessary steps

to ensure that the transgender can be protected in all areas where they need protection and security.

**Q Is it possible to include the transgender into various courses and training programmes currently conducted by the Labour Department in the areas of skill development and to ensure their representation?**

Some realities we have to consider in this context. Today this gender is undergoing



changes in a particular manner. Sometimes a man changes into a woman and for some reasons, and at other times a man gets converted into a woman. It happens at a certain stage in the development of a human being. As such, there are persons in the transgender community with high educational qualifications. Often they are not recognized according to their educational qualifications. It is a matter of awareness in the society, and the government is now taking various measures to change the mindset of the society.

In that case, the government will definitely look into the possibilities of their employment in IT or other fields and take a supportive stance towards the transgender.


**Q Bringing the transgender community into the mainstream is not the sole responsibility of the Department of Labour. Co ordination of various departments is essential in this regard. Will there be a policy decision on the part of the Labour Department for this purpose?**

To maintain the identity of the transgender in a way, it is said to be retaining their recognition as well. Governments generally seek to fulfill this public responsibility. It does not depend on a particular department alone. In this regard, there must be a combination of all departments. The transgender, no matter how small their group is, have to be taken to the forefront of the society. The Government is taking a supportive stance to this end.

**Q The transgender community generally shows a tendency to distance from the efforts of the Department of Social Justice to bring them into the mainstream. In this situation, how can they be brought to the forefront by the intervention of the Labour Department? What is the government's stand on this issue?**

The government's stand in





this matter has been made very clear. Various issues have to be considered, like the potential of the transgender community. How can we ensure their safety? Which departments could they be kept employed in, and it is not providing jobs alone, but they should be provided also with job security. There are often instances in the society which have created problems by misusing this category. The transgender organization also demands that all such attempts should be stopped completely and that a well-protected approach be adopted.

The task is to study what and how far protection can be ensured. In this case, even new legislations will have to be introduced. The government will consider fulfilling that responsibility. The government can never abandon this community. The government's proactive approach to this section is to fulfill its responsibilities and act accordingly.

**Q Kerala has been globally branded as a developed society on the basis of social reforms. In a context where the transgender community has become a fact and reality, can they be included in the state labour laws?**

It is the Department of Social Justice that can solve the problems of such groups and find how to uplift the transgender community. As never before, the Department

of Social Justice has formulated and implemented a new model, joining with different sections of the population, to ensure their protection, employment, food and accommodation. Its focus is the protection of the people who are facing varied problems. The Government will then examine all the existing circumstances and then if any legal intervention is required for their further protection, it will seriously be done and adopt a positive approach in this regard. The government will formulate a policy only after hearing and considering the opinions of the transgender community.

**Q We see that big efforts taken by the Kochi Metro failed at half way and the main problem was the lack of better wages and accommodation facilities. Will there be any steps and efforts on the part of the Department of Labour to overcome the shortcomings and present a better model?**


As mentioned earlier, the awareness of the people is very important. In this regard, the efforts of KILE in creating awareness among the public through its novel schemes and policies are widely accepted and applauded. If this responsibility can be undertaken by various systems, the society can act as a shield for the protection of the transgender. One of the main issues they point out is that they have to pay extra rent for accommodation which they

cannot afford and often those who have absolutely no adequate income cannot afford such high rent.

The Government of Kerala is currently implementing the Life Project with the assistance of Local Self Governments. The government is capable of providing houses for those who are in need of a shelter. The stand that the government has taken is that it will provide enough houses for all those who are in need of one, even though it would take some time. At present there

are about eight lakh pending applications to be considered. After scrutinizing the applications, the beneficiaries will be selected. The dream of the life scheme is a home for the homeless. As part the scheme, the transgender also will be provided with houses. All those who have participated in 'adalath' have a ration card and an Aadhaar card. The problem of housing can be solved by the government through the current housing scheme. The government will include the transgender in the present housing scheme and give them enough protection.






**Q** The Department of Social Justice will issue an identity card based on the school certificate. But over a period of time they become a different person due to hormone imbalance, but the employment exchange issues the transgender identity based on the school certificate. Would the Labour Department be able bring about a change in the matter?

At present, there is a system in our country that the school certificate remains a proof to prove one's religion, caste, gender etc. So we have not seen any transgender any time in the past. This is a matter to be addressed. An approach is currently being made to register them in any employment exchange and to obtain a transgender certificate while maintaining their identity. They have to be given whatever identity they prefer to maintain. Considering their demand as reasonable, the government will definitely consider changes and do whatever is possible following the existing practices. I can now assure solution of the issue concerning the employment exchange. If the employment exchange registration is hampered in any way, it will be resolved. It is because I know the issue in depth. Such an issue has not come to my notice yet. If there is any impediment in getting one's name registered in the employment exchange, it will

be solved then and there. The government will never have a negative approach towards this issue. The government will solve issues taking into account the opinions of the transgender too.

**Q** Accommodation is usually arranged in an establishment provided the number of employees is more than a certain limit. Is there any attempt to bring the transgender into this special arrangement?

This is a matter which could be looked into. It is in tune with the situations that arise. When such issues arise we can make in-depth studies and bring about enough changes. All this comes down to the people's awareness and that is why I appreciated KILA's efforts. As part of this, when the people are aware enough, the society will take the responsibility to protect the transgender. Some of them who are the beneficiaries of the life scheme may have priority ration cards. That means, they are getting rice and kerosene free of cost. Different from the old system, the ration cards have been categorized into BPL, APL and various other categories of APL. It is to improve the living conditions of each section and so the cards are being categorized. The present segregation does not seem to highlight the transgender community. Therefore, solutions will be sought to overcome these shortcomings.



**Q** A grading system has been introduced for labour establishments and employers based on the excellence in welfare matters of the employees. Could the representation of the transgender be considered while grading?


The number of the transgender should be determined. There are very few such individuals and they should be protected accordingly and if any legislation has to be made it will be done. Institutions are being identified in order to enforce the labor rules. The grading of the institutions is done by considering all these as good service for good workers. This is not the only important factor in the implementation of the Shop Act, but a scheme has now been inaugurated in identifying and honoring 15 laborers who are putting in their best service. There may be better labourers when we identify this group.

**Q** Could you tell me about the transgender who would be able to bag the ‘Worker of the Year Award’ next year and how will they be appreciated?

If a transgender worker is willing to do work, they will be encouraged. The government will stand firm behind them so that they get all the recognition they deserve. What I believe is that, it has to be well studied to find out what extent the transgender

are entering their professional fields; then necessary action has to be taken. The other day a transgender with an MBA came to me. The desire to get a job as per his educational qualification is being ignored in some private sectors. That is an attitude that needs to be changed. There are a good variety of people in the community who want to work at a higher level. Once they are identified, the Labour Department can find out in what areas of work the transgender can be accommodated in.

**Thank you sir for sparing your precious time from your busy schedule as well as for your answers to these important questions, and for speaking so patiently elaborating everything in detail.**









# INTERVIEW WITH

## Sri. APM. MOHAMMED HANISH, IAS

Principal Secretary II and Former Managing Director, Cochin Metro.

interviewed by



**M.SHAJEENA**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KILE



**Q** KMRL is the first government-owned company in India to formally appoint transgenders as employees. What was the motive behind this? Was it just a publicity stunt or due to the social commitment of KMRL ?

The appointment was made with an emphasis on the principle of gender equality. It is a fact that there is a third gender besides male and female. Embracing that reality, the KMRL employed twenty-five transgender as a



online



transformation model. Social commitment is an important factor but KMRL has been able to set an example to the world in terms of access to technical training and other training courses.

**Q** It was a great move in Indian history to employ transgenders in a company. What inspired you to choose the transgenders for the fresh opportunities in KMRL? What was your confidence level when you employed them?

Internationally, tremendous progress is being made in the trans sector. Organizations are involved in vital activities. The population of the trans section is higher in Ernakulam. This has to be taken into consideration while carrying out such a well-attended activity in Kochi and the biggest achievement of Metro is that it has been able to showcase the efficiency of the operations of this segment in front of others. Of course I had complete confidence. It was doubtful whether they took this work seriously at the initial stage of the work but they seemed more confident when they became part of the system.

**Q** KMRL appointed 23 transgender in 2017. It was not through direct appointment instead it was through a contract with the Kudumbashree. Is it Kudumbashree, which is responsible for their appointment or is it



**Q** the KMRL that played a significant role in choosing the transgenders?

It was KMRL that implemented the mainstream employment of the trans section..There were a number of limitations for the direct selection of the candidates by KMRL. As the selection of the candidates was made by Kudumbasree, KMRL was able to tackle many practical and technical issues. That is why, KMRL entrusted Kudumbasree for the selection of the staff. This move was praised by many agencies.

**Q** What was your experience in working with transgenders? Has the KMRL been benefitted by them? Or was it a process of learning for both?

Initially, there was only very limited interaction. In the beginning, the general public viewed this with much curiosity. But the appointments made by KMRL brought about changes in the attitudes of the public and this move by KMRL was commendable.

The members of each gender have their own dignity. Transgenders are a reality and in this situation they have to be accepted and their identity is to be understood. Other countries are making great strides in this regard. This situation was turned into an opportunity for the general public, the KMRL and even the transgenders .

**Q** Could you recollect the difficulties you faced while bringing the Transgenders into the mainstream jobs like working in ticket counters which demands continuous direct interaction with the public? Did you have any anxiety about public resistance or any kind of resistance from the side of the co-workers?

They expected more from KMRL, but as a new organization we had many limitations. It is a fact that KMRL sought to improve the service and pay conditions. Public and co worker resistance has never occurred. A very positive approach to each other prevailed. The activities were carried on quite efficiently and precisely, and played a major role in creating a new understanding about the transgenders among the public.

**Q** Transforming transgenders and moulding them for a mainstream job is a difficult task. What was your experience in training them and giving them proper placements?

The organization provided orientation training but they quickly adapted to the situations and this impressed the general public.

**Q** On the course of the job, a number of transgender employees left KMRL pointing out different reasons. From your perspective, what are

**the major setbacks behind the large scale drop out of the transgender employees?**

Being a new venture, the trans employees expected more in their service and pay. The Company could not guarantee promotional possibilities and perhaps their needs would have been gradually addressed.

**Q Sahaja Social Welfare and Charitable Society (SSWCS) was responsible for the accommodation of the transgenders at Kochi. Majority of the transgender employees pointed out expensive accommodation as a reason for quitting the job. What were the difficulties of KMRL in providing accommodation for the trans ? Why were schemes of accommodation like the “Apnagar’ not introduced ?**

KMRL was unable to provide accommodation to meet the needs of the trans. Initially the company was not able to provide accommodation but if it was arranged making it part of any other special scheme or department the trans employees would still have continued in the job.

The accommodation facilities which were self arranged were pretty expensive. This again caused isolation among the trans. Accommodation in the ‘Apnagar Model’ is beneficial. But the fact is that we have been able to bring them into the mainstream

professionally from the state of a community that is being alienated from the mainstream. By providing separate housing, they are once again being isolated. It is understood that they are currently spending a large sum on accommodation. It is advisable to provide them with Special Home Shelters etc. in the first instance.

**Q Many of the transgender employees in the KMRL were graduates. However, the salary fixed by the KMRL was inadequate. Was this a wrong decision, to have fixed low salaries which finally led to the failure of the programme?**

I mentioned this earlier. At that time it was impossible for KMRL to give a greater remuneration. Each system would have the right conditions of service and pay. Workers doing the same job could not be offered different wages. I strongly believe that providing transgenders with incentives and shelter options would prevent dropouts.

**Q Apart from costly accommodation and lower salary, was there any other reason for the drop out of transgender employees?**

No, I do not remember to have received any complaints.

**Q How far was it easy for the transgender employees to mingle with their co-workers and vice-versa? What were the issues put forth by both parties during this process**



### **of social inclusion?**

Identify the general list of jobs that can be done by the trans. Huge technical qualifications in the primary stage are irrelevant. In addition to this, I am confident that they can be transformed into efficient and punctual individuals and staff by providing them with courses in personality development, mental orientation, health related knowledge, exercise, appropriate diet etc.




# KFC BRINGS JOY TO THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY THROUGH CMEDP



**Sri.Tomin J Thachankary IPS**  
Chairman and Managing Director  
Kerala Financial Corporation

**T**hough COVID-19 pandemic has brought challenges to the lives of millions, it has opened the doors of opportunities for some. More than 2000 entrepreneurs in Kerala have fulfilled their dream of establishing own business, under the Chief Ministers Entrepreneurship Development Programme (CMEDP). Among them are eight transpersons, who have turned their lives around by venturing into new enterprises under the scheme.

Isha Kishore a thirty-year-old a dancer and small-time beautician hailing from Kasaragod, was struggling during the pandemic. Stage programmes and dance tuition was her main source of income which had come to a halt in the Covid situation. KFC loan offered under CMEDP was a pleasant surprise to her. Isha



has set up a beauty parlour and tailoring unit at her home town Kanhangad with an assistance of Rs. 75,000/- under the scheme and now earns a steady income.

Make-up artist NagmaSusmi, along with some friends, she started a home-based spice unit and is conducting door to door sales of chilli powder with the assistance of KFC. The 41-year-old is the president of the Sahodari Cultural Society that works for the welfare of the trans community. Two more from Kozhikode, Kanchana and Sisily have come up with similar units and have set up curry powder units at their homes.

Other emerging entrepreneurs under the scheme include Neha

C Menon, venturing an Online Service Centre at Tirur and Bavana Suresh from Kozhikode who has set up a cattle farm. Most of them had bitter experiences from banks earlier while seeking small loans for business.

Unemployment is one of the major problems faced by the trans community in Kerala. Providing an opportunity to set up an enterprise and earn a steady income would help in empowering them.

CMEDP scheme, announced on the 28th of July last year, received a commendable response from the aspiring entrepreneurs in the state. KFC received over 15000 enquiries since its online portal was opened





for registrations. The applications were ranging from Rs. 30,000/- to Rs.50 lakh and the applicants include people from all walks of life, including transgenders, SC/ST entrepreneurs, differently abled people, Kudumbasree units, etc. From the applications received, around 3000 have been interviewed and five days entrepreneurship training was given to most of them.

Hon. Chief Minister, Shri. Pinarayi Vijayan handed over the first set of Sanction Communications in a virtual event held on 28.09.2020 in presence of Hon. Finance Minister, Dr. Thomas Issac. To date, over 2000 loans have been sanctioned under the scheme.

The CMEDP scheme is set as the revolutionary programme of Kerala Government and a milestone in the history of Kerala Financial Corporation, aiming to support 10000 new entrepreneurs over five years. With loans up to Rs.50 lakh with 7% interest, applicants will also get entrepreneurship training and mentoring services as well. In addition to the State Government subsidy of 3%, the returning NRIs in the state can club the scheme with the NDPREM scheme of NORKA, thereby making the effective interest rate of the loan at 3.5%. Furthermore, processing fee and upfront fee have been completely waived for all loans up to Rs. one lakh.





# TRANSGENDER HEALTHCARE




**Dr. Suja Sukumar**

MD,DNB,DM Endocrinology(PGIMER),  
MNAMS Consultant Endocrinologist  
Renai medicity, Cochin,Kerala

The transgender community is an important and integral part of Indian society. According to the Indian Census 2011, there are 490000 transgender individuals in the country. Kerala state social justice department conducted a survey in 2014-2015 and estimated the presence of more than 25,000 transgender people in the state, out of which 58% dropped out of school before completing the tenth grade and only 11.62% had regular jobs. 51% had to hide their gender identity from their family and 78% had not revealed their gender identity at work. Though 52% felt a need to change their physical appearance through medical or surgical interventions, only 9% could do so. An overwhelming 32% attempted suicide at least once in their life.

The genesis of the problems of the transgender community lies in the stigma and discrimination they face in the society. They are considered an outlier group of society. To rectify this situation,



Government of Kerala released a policy to enforce the constitutional rights of transgender people following the directives in Supreme Court judgment of 2014. Thus In 2015, Kerala became the first Indian state to implement a comprehensive policy for the welfare of transgender persons.

### **Who is a transgender person?**

‘Transgender’ is an umbrella term to describe individuals, whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth. Transgender males or transmen are people assigned female at birth but who self-identify as male. Transgender females or transwomen are people assigned male at birth, but who self-identify as female. When a person’s identity matches the sex assigned at birth, the term “cisgender” is used. Gender identity is the internal sense of being male or female on identifying with both or neither.

Gender Dysphoria /Gender incongruence: The discomfort or distress that is caused by a discrepancy between a person’s gender identity and that person’s assigned gender at birth. To mitigate this gender dysphoria, these individuals have to undergo a range of medical procedures to affirm their gender identity. This can vary from person to person, and include psychiatric counselling, hormone therapy, and surgical and cosmetic procedures to alter primary and secondary sex characteristics


(such as laser hair removal, genital reconstruction, chest reconstruction, voice surgeries, facial feminisation etc.). Individuals may require one or more of these options to manage their gender dysphoria and live fulfilling lives. These options are collectively known as gender affirmative health care.

Gender affirmative care must be client-centred and need-based, recognizing the individual’s preferences and circumstances. Treatment must not be prescriptive and should allow clinically safe choices for individuals.

The main pillars of gender affirmative therapy are

- 1. Social transition** (involve living part time or full time in another gender role, consistent with one’s gender identity)
- 2. Psychotherapy** (Individual, couple, family, or group)
- 3. Hormonal transition** (to feminize or masculinize the body)
- 4. Surgical transition** (to change primary and/or secondary sex characteristics e.g., breasts/chest, external and/or internal genitalia, facial features, voice, body contouring etc.)
- 5. Long term care**

**Psychiatric counselling:**  
Mental health providers screen




for co-existing mental health concerns that might be present along with Gender Dysphoria, such as anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorders, self-harm, history of abuse and neglect, substance abuse, sexual concerns, personality disorders, eating disorders, psychotic disorders etc and aid in alleviating them. These concerns can be significant sources of distress and, if left untreated, can complicate the process of gender identity exploration and resolution of Gender Dysphoria. They can also assess their clients for mental ability to provide educated and informed consent for various medical treatments and prepare them psychologically for hormone treatment.

**Gender affirming hormone therapy:** The administration of exogenous hormones to induce feminizing or masculinizing changes is a medically necessary intervention for gender affirmation of transgender persons. Hormone therapy should be individualized based on a patient's desired goals, the risk/benefit ratio of medications, the presence of other medical comorbidities, and consideration of social and economic issues. Hormone therapy eases the patient's transition into the desired gender role. Deepening of voice, growth of beard and moustache hair, shifts in body fat distribution to masculine and better definition and development of musculature go a long way in adapting a

transman, who was otherwise a biologic woman, in the desired male gender role. Likewise, the development of breasts, shifts in body fat resulting in feminine curves, smoother skin, the reversal of male pattern baldness with better scalp hair growth help the transition of a transwoman, who was otherwise a biologic man, in a female gender role. In effect, hormone therapy provides a real-life experience for gender incongruent persons, as a partially reversible intervention, prior to surgery. Initiation of hormone therapy may be undertaken after a psychosocial assessment has been conducted and informed consent has been obtained.

**Gender affirmative surgery or sex reassignment surgery:** includes various surgical procedures that help a transgender person to affirm their gender identity through body reconstructions like breast implants, facial feminisation, breast reduction, vaginoplasty, hysterectomy, voice surgeries etc. Transgender persons may or may not choose to undergo SRS. It is important to note that a person has the right to identify as transgender irrespective of whether they have undergone SRS. Not all patients require every surgical procedure. The surgical care of these patients needs to be customized to the patient's requirements. Living in a gender congruent role for at least 12 months is very important for the patient, before



undergoing genital surgery such as Phalloplasty/ Mataidoioplasty or Vaginoplasty. This provides a real- life experience of living in desired gender role in all seasons, gaining a first- hand experience, and resolving any conflicts regarding gender expression and sexuality prior to undergoing the irreversible genital transformation, thus decreasing the chances of regret.

Government facilities for gender-affirmative healthcare like hormone therapy and surgical transition are non-existent. There is no government hospital that provides sex reassignment surgery (SRS) due to lack of manpower, absence of training and experience. Currently, all transgender people who seek SRS within Kerala go to private hospitals. Quite often transgender persons go outside Kerala to neighbouring states and undergo botched up surgeries at low cost in small clinics with inadequate expertise and facilities.

**Fertility preservation:** Transgender individuals who undergo gender-affirming medical or surgical therapies are at risk for infertility. Hence the doctor should counsel transgender patients on fertility preservation options prior to initiation of gender-affirming hormone therapy or surgery. Transmen can choose to undergo cryopreservation of oocytes or embryos and uterus preservation allows transmen to gestate if desired. For transwomen, the option for FP is cryopreservation

of sperm. Uterine transplantation in transwomen is the future in fertility preservation strategies.

**Long term care:** Even after undergoing SRS, transgender individuals have to take hormones of their desired gender clinical and laboratory monitoring is to be done every 3-6 months intervals to look for possible adverse effects of medication. Be aware that transwomen who take estrogens have a higher risk of Breast cancer compared with cisgender men. Clinicians should assess the risks for sexually transmitted infections or HIV for transgender patients based on sexual behaviours.

**Multidisciplinary care:** Providing healthcare for transgender individuals requires an interdisciplinary team of doctors who are working together – usually comprising an endocrinologist, psychiatrist, plastic surgeon, urologist, gynaecologist, laryngologist, gastro surgeon, cosmetologist etc. A treatment protocol also needs to be developed to systematize the working of such a team. There should be a provision in hospital information system to include patient's desired name and gender in all patient documents. The washrooms should be gender neutral and clinic staff should be gender sensitized. One should ask the patient regarding the preferred pronoun. Patient should be given a definite algorithm to follow for achieving a smooth transition. Our current algorithm



is broadly based on 7<sup>th</sup> version of Standards of Care for the health of transsexual, transgender and gender nonconforming people (7<sup>th</sup> SOC's3) published by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH). Indian standards of care by IPATH are also being published. Health professionals can assist gender dysphoric individuals with affirming their gender identity, exploring different options for expression of that identity, and making decisions about medical treatment options for alleviating gender dysphoria.







# CHALLENGES FACED BY TRANSGENDERS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS...



**Dr. Chalam Das V**  
Consultant Psychiatrist  
Sunrise Hospital, Kakkanadu, Kochi


**E**ven after the landmark judgment is in force from April 15, 2014, India still faces a number of problems concerning the transgenders.

Let's take a look at what they are :

### **Confusion within themselves**

The first problem that a transgender individual faces is to identify what makes him or her think differently from others. Why does he or she find himself or herself attracted to others (as opposed to his or her sexuality with others) of the same gender? Many questions start to bother them. This stir begins when they reach teen ages. The interactions with people who can give them the right advice and show them the right path release them from this stir. Then they settle themselves and the turbulence gives way to calmness and they decide to move in the right direction.

**Problems from within the family, friends and the general public.**



If their siblings, parents or close relatives do not have enough awareness about the transgender situation, the transgenders will face several problems. This can be in the form of a ridicule, an insult, a disciplinary action, or severe isolation. They even may reach a situation of severe psychological trauma from their own family members and reach the very point of committing suicide, if left untreated.

Despite the changes that are brought about in recent days, social isolation still remains as a barrier in getting a good job and for acquiring higher education. If the transgenders commit a crime the members of the society magnifies it to a very large extent without understanding that they are also members of the same society. They are even accused of behaving in such a way leading to the cultural degradation of the society.

### **Physical challenges**

Different types of hormones and drugs that make changes and the surgeries that the body undergoes and the intense pain that the transgenders have to go through are not insignificant. Purposeful changes have to be brought about in their postures, way of walking and speaking. Much attention, time has to be spent for exercises and preparation for the changes. For some it comes naturally while for others it requires constant and purposeful efforts. They have to constantly face physical

challenges and challenges in connection with their jobs.

### **Psychological challenges**

The stress before gender reassignment is beyond the reach of many. Many people become mentally ill without the support of their own family and community. Anxiety disorder and depression are commonly seen in the transgenders. It is also common for many to turn to alcohol and drugs because they cannot cope up with the mental conflict. The frustrations of not being able to have a complete role reversal are even greater. Many people fall into the trap of not having a good partner and not being able to have a complete family relationship. Many are on the verge of collapse. There is huge frustration in not having a satisfying sex life.

### **Employment challenges**

Even if it is reducing the impact of job segregation, it is not too small. Discrimination in schools and colleges can be a barrier for securing good higher education. This affects the job prospects of the transgenders. What is the solution to the challenges faced by the transgenders?

### **Create social awareness**

Implement this at the school level. Include this in social issue and awareness in the curriculum. Convince the society that it is not due to their fault that they are behaving so and that it is because of the chemical or structural



changes happening in their brain. Use varieties of media like radio, television to create awareness among the public.

### **Counseling for transgender individuals and their family members**

Counseling can also provide moral support to the transgenders .The services of a psychiatrist can be sought to diagnose depression and anxiety disorders. If there are suicidal tendencies or idealization, it can be detected and neutralized.

### **Workplace safety**

It is important to create a clear understanding among the employers and the employees. If legislation is necessary in this regard it must be done. Discrimination and differentiations in the workplace should be eliminated. The workload may be lightened to the transgenders as they are prone to sudden mental stress. The most important point is to get rid of the social stigma and realize that they are just like us and one among us so that they can be held close to the society without being isolated and walk hand in hand into the mainstream.






# THE TRANSGENDERS TOO HAVE A RIGHT TO LIFE....



**Smt. Tannie Thomas**  
Asst. Director of Agriculture  
Moovattupuzha.

**T**he Kudumbasree and the Kochi Metro have been in discussions from the year 2016 -17 to deploy Kudumbasree women in various jobs in the Kochi Metro. There were issues between the transgenders of Kochi and the police, the issue gained widespread publicity both in the print and on the visual media. Mr. Elias George, the then Managing Director, Kochi Metro Rail Limited, India, rang up and enquired whether a part of the work assigned to Kudumbasree could be given to the transgenders on call. Ever since everything moved forward in a quick pace and the Kudumbasree Executive Director Harikishore waved a green signal. We met the then City Police Commissioner Mr. Dinesh. His office provided us with a list of about 40 transgenders from Ernakulam district. The list of those without criminal background was compiled with the help of the police and their leader was also contacted.



Several discussions were held thereafter. The training module was prepared in collaboration with Kalamassery Rajasree College of Social Sciences. It was difficult to bring a severely marginalized section into the mainstream of the society. After having closely watched and learned their lives, I stayed with them for days and worked hard for them.


- Thrown out from their family, they were always a splinter in the eyes of the society.
- The transgenders were those who were destined to engage in the worst occupations for a hand to mouth existence. They had to face many exploitations to get enough food and a place to stay, Some were even brutally exploited and became sick.
- They have no rights to live according to their will or even to dress as they wished.
- Hormonal imbalances often led to expressions of emotions which varied from the expressions of the general public.
- There were a lot of transgenders who did not have the opportunity or space to express their own talents.
- They constantly underwent mental and physical stress.

It is their community alone that

motivated them to survive and thrive. After a month-long training, orders were issued to recruit them to the Kochi Metro. They were placed in various sections suiting to their educational qualifications. Housekeeping, ticketing, customer facilitation etc, were some of the departments. Some left the job a few days later but some still continue to work.

The reasons are many. Eligibility and salaries were fixed for the staff in each section in the Metro. It was not possible to permit anyone to deviate from it. They could not be assigned jobs as they wished due to lack of specific qualifications. Some had to be posted in the housekeeping section even if they desired for customer facilitation as the educational qualification for that post was higher. Some were reluctant to this and they left the job.

An ordinary woman who is a member of the Kudumbasree has a house and enough facilities to cook food at home. So it was possible for them to live within the limits of the salary they were provided with. It is impossible for the transgenders to live in the same salary limits. But this section, which relies on lodges for accommodation and food, has been unable to push their lives forward with the comparatively low salaries they have been drawing. So there are many who had quit their job. However, at least a few of those who were rehabilitated have been able to



build up a better life through the job provided by KMRL.

Similar activities were started in other districts for the transgenders joining hands with the 'ayalkkottam' groups. Self-employment opportunities were made available for many.

Special care must be given while considering the rehabilitation of the transgenders and trying to bring them into the mainstream.

- Provide enough space to live together, cook and eat for those who find it difficult to stay alone.
- They could find a way to stand on their own feet only if they are provided with the financial support to meet the basic needs such as food, clothing, medicines etc .
- Counseling facilities should be given to cope up with

mental stress.

- They should be given opportunities to get and continue education.
- They should be given career guidance and specialized coaching to secure jobs.
- They have a lot of special talents, especially in areas such as beautician choreography, tailoring, jewelry designing and they should be provided with training in special skills in which they could be self-employed.
- Actions have to be initiated to change the perspective of the general public. It should not be forgotten that they too are the children of God and the earth belongs to them too. They have the right to lead their life with dignity like any other individual.







# THE HUES OF STRUGGLE AND SUCCESS...




**Smt. Renju Renjimar**  
Make up artist

**R**enju has hurled a few questions to society. The society has to ponder and re-ponder over the questions raised, to get a satisfactory answer. She asks if human gender is purely about being either male or female and even if it is, isn't there some men in all women characteristics and vice versa?

In some individuals this duality shows up a bit more prominently, and when it does, is it fair on the civilised society to scorn upon such individuals, to mock them, to ostracise or to assault them?

Renju, born as the son of a construction labourer and a cashew factory worker at Poonthathalam in Kollam, is still seeking answers to these questions and making a self introspection even while being a proud member of a community



which we call the third gender, a different gender, and many such nomenclatures. But she still remembers her childhood and early youth while she struggled with the woman mind caged in a male body. There were multitudes of odds that came her way but what kept her outstanding was her choice not to give up.


From a past of severe poverty and despair, she had put in hard work, mental strength, and faced umpteen numbers of criticisms and mockery, to make her way forward to earn herself a life of dignity. Finally, she has become one of the sought-after makeup artists of the Malayalam film industry. Renju fondly remembers all those who stood by her in the days of extreme hardships.

While a student of Government Meenakshi Vilasom School, Poonthalam, Renju was just a boy to her school mates and the world outside but he felt his feminine self showing up often. At first, he tried to cover up this trait but behind closed doors, he totally enjoyed decking up, wearing his mother's sari, trying his sister's clothes, braiding hair with hairpieces, wearing a bindi and beautifying eyes with kajal. But over the years, he slowly found himself turning into a personality that was not his exterior male self but the feminine one that he was trying to hide. As Renju slowly evolved into a feminine individual, scorn and rebuke from the society followed. Despite this, he was part of most of the school activities. And it

was on this platform that he first began trying his skills in make-up, making up his classmates for school programmes being staged.

When he completed Class 10, Renju had to work in a brick kiln to help his parents earn their daily bread. Yet, out of his intense desire to become a lawyer, he joined the Pre-Degree course which he could not complete. While assisting a lawyer, one of his friends offered him a chance to work in a film but he was unable to accept the offer as a perfect career. To make both ends meet, he even worked as a vendor of books. He bought books at cheap rates from Prabhat Book House and sold them to earn a small margin. Along with this he managed to work as a supply boy at roadside eateries working into late nights. But he soon found it not too safe to work there. He then shifted to a place called Edayar, where he teamed up with Mr. R.L.V. Unnikrishnan and began helping him in doing make-up for dance performances. Perhaps, it was around this time that he openly identified his personal gender and preferred to be named as a woman.

Renju's career graph took an upward climb when she got a chance to do make-up for actress Jyothirmayi. She soon started working with leading artistes such as Rambha, Mukta, Nagma, Vani Vishwanath, and Rimi Tomy and rocketed her career to be one of the top make-up artistes in



the film industry, almost always carrying on the job to do make up for leading artistes to perform in stage shows organized by Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA).

Her innovative skill in doing make-up, with no specific academic training, set a trend within and outside the film industry. She now extends her experience and skills beyond the industry and organizes workshops, beautician classes and seminars on the topic in and around the state of Kerala. Apart from this, she established the 'Dhyeya Transgender Arts and Charitable Society,' and works as its secretary.

Renju exclaims her surprises while looking back at the trials, tribulations, struggles, scorns and mockery that she had to face during her past. There were many instances when she had slipped off the track and if she had

chosen not to face and brave the odds, she would have had to face a life in dark confinements. The force that drove her forward was a strong urge to live a life with dignity. Such painful experiences remained blurred deep in her heart and found expression in a short film titled 'Cuticura.' And as recognitions and achievements march to her one after the other, she feels more responsibility creeping into her career.

Renju then resolves to strive to her best and to be a helping hand for the multitudes who are facing the same gender issue she had once experienced. She yearns to save them from the ill treatment of society. She deeply desires to see them live a life of dignity. And she keeps striving to reach greater heights in her career as well. Let's fold our hands and pray for the star to become brighter and brighter and to shoot up high to horizons new.






# GIFTED WITH WINGS TO FLY HIGH....



**Sri. Adam Hari**

India's First Transgender pilot  
(Private pilot license holder)

**K**erala was the first state in India to introduce a Transgender policy. The 2014 Nalsa Judgment and the Transgender Policy in Kerala have helped me to find my identity. As a child, I had to face a lot of isolation and ridicule in the name of being different. For being the odd one out among my peer groups in schools, I was isolated from other students by the teachers. From a tender age, I nurtured the ambition to become a pilot. But as we were members of a small low income family with a lot of debt and problems, I never expected to be able to achieve this dream. After having revealed my identity at school counseling, the school teachers reported this issue to my parents. Again I had to face many restrictions; they even thought it was disobedience from my part. I did not even have the right to go out wearing jeans. This issue had caused a lot of problems in my family which was very orthodox in nature. When they learned that there was no



change in me even after being beaten up and disciplined, my relatives advised my parents to take me to the hospital regularly and to permanently admit me there and treat me as if I was mentally ill. I had an intense fear that my dreams would be shattered. Then I started hiding everything inside and began acting in front of my parents and relatives. When others were away from home and when I was all alone, my identity slowly crept out. I drew a mustache in front of the mirror with eyelashes, pulled out a long shawl and put on big coats which my father used to wear. Soon after having passed my Plus Two, I enquired about an education loan in the banks. My parents reluctantly agreed to send me for my studies in a flying academy. The natives and my family kept on talking against my going to the flying academy. So at the age of seventeen, with a huge liability, I flew to South Africa and there I had the opportunity to return to myself. I was able to put on clothes that suited my mind and I was free to reveal my identity and all the friends there were very happy to accept it, except the children from our country. I opened up about my gender on social media and my parents and relatives came to know about it. They even started making fun of my family and me. My younger brother's madrassa teacher asked him when he was going to become a girl. So my parents put a lot of pressure on me. They blamed my mother for


not having brought me up in the right way. I thought I would never return to my home again and started working in a restaurant there. It was very difficult to serve there in the restaurant as it was not a safe country at all.

As I had no accommodation fee to pay I had to spend days and nights in the Cosmo Street.

The days I spent on the Cosmo Street was so scary... It was so notorious that even the police were reluctant to visit the place if at all some untoward incident had taken place. However, I would sit in the public library and in the classroom and study for as long as I could. I worked for eight hours but still managed to get 90 per cent marks in the exams. After completing my studies as a private pilot, I had to return to my home due to lack of money to pay up my fees and on my return to my home, I was locked up for more than a year without being allowed to complete my studies. After being locked up at home for more than a year and after undergoing several counseling sessions, I was forced to get married.

There were situations when I was locked up in the bathroom in order to avoid my relatives from seeing me. So for the first time I had to flee from my home, but my first attempt ended up in a failure, and they burned all my belongings including my clothes. I was brutalized a lot.


When I left home for the second time, I had nothing on my



own. I even had to sit on the road, at the train stations and on the dock for hours on end. Later I got jobs in juice shops and aviation academies. In some places I was not even paid. Finally a piece of news on me appeared in the Mathrubhumi Daily. Later Mrs. Meena who belonged to the Child Welfare Department asked me to meet Mr. Biju Prabhakar who was then the Secretary in the Social Welfare Department. At first I thought that I could apply for a Juice shop through a self-employment scheme, but later I informed Mr. Biju Prabhakar that I belonged to the third gender and he asked me why I could not continue my studies. However, he was determined to make me continue my studies. The Department of Social Justice had

paid up my full fees amount from the transgender welfare scheme. Hon. Minister for Health Mrs. K.K. Shailaja, Mr. Mohammad Rashid and Smt. Sheeba George (Director of Social Justice) have been very supportive. The deeds of kindness of Hon. Minister Mrs.K.K. Shailaja Teacher and Mr.Biju Prabhakar need to be highlighted.

Many of the schemes especially the 'Mazhavil Scheme' newly introduced by the Government of Kerala to promote transgenders are laudable. It is an example for other states in India. The state government has done so well that many transgenders are able to boldly express their identities and march forward to the forefront of the society.








# FROM BITTER EXPERIENCES TO SUCCESS IN LIFE...



**Smt. Sreemayi .S.L.**  
Activist

**W**hat I have missed more than my vibrant youth was my colourful childhood.

The neglect that society has shown towards my identity denied the steps to my youth. Being a transgender, the paths I have traversed and the places I have lived in, have never been the one worth for the survival of a transgender. If at all any change has come about in this regard, it is due to the collective intervention of the transgenders and because of the collective support of the gender and sexual minority organizations that fight for gender justice. I am Sreemayi from Kattakada, Thiruvananthapuram. I'm entering my thirties this year. I have been living in a trans personality for the past eight years. Despite innumerable adverse circumstances, I managed to graduate in Economics from Government Arts College, Thycaud and secured a postgraduate degree in demography from the



Karyavattom Campus, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, which is viewed as a great achievement in my life. But it shall not be forgotten that how hard my education was when I was told that I would be able to achieve it through the bitter experiences of ridicule and neglect. I strongly do believe that it was only through this educational achievement that I was credited with being the first person in Kerala to get a job as a trans person in a mainstream educational institution like the Center for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram without facing the neglect of a trans. I am working in CDS with utmost dignity. I have been working as the Secretary of the 'Oasis' Cultural Society, an organizations working for the welfare of gender and sexual minorities in the capital for the past seven years.

A number of initiatives have been taken for the welfare of the people, including the trans community in collaboration with various organizations and the government.

In addition to it, I am working as a member of the Transgender District Justice Board, Thiruvananthapuram. I am also assisting inW the implementation of various government schemes among the transgenders in the community.

As a trans representative, I earn to work for the welfare of my community in our society and guide my next generation . The movies picturizing the life of

transgenders represent the big changes which have come about in the society.

But it is also important to note that if we agree with the terms and conditions of the society and if we accept to live caged in the frame created by the society, if we accept to lead a 'decent life', only then would the society heed to the hidden beliefs to accept the transgenders. We need a society that recognizes all sections.

The government has started organizing events to create opportunities for the trans in the society. New initiatives have begun in this regard. Another point to be noted is the huge intervention of the state government. Attacks still prevail regardless of whether the trans are a real living body other than a human. I still do hope that a day will come when all will be accepted as humans irrespective of their genders, even when those sitting close to you on the train and in the bus get up and leave and threaten repeatedly that you are unfit to live in this society.