A Brief Report of the

ICSSR Sponsored

National Seminar

On

Transgender People: Stigma, Violence, and Discrimination

29-30 October 2015

Organised By

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, TAGORE ARTS COLLEGE
GOVT OF PUDUCHERRY

In collaboration with

Institute of Social Sciences
Regional Centre Puducherry
Seminar Background

Transgender have a recorded history of more than 4,000 years. Asian countries have centuries-old histories of existence of gender-variant males who in the modern times are labelled as 'transgender women'. India has a history of people with a wide range of transgender related identities, cultures, and experiences. People with such identities include Hijras, Aravanis, Kothis, Jogtas/Jogappas, and Shiv-Shakthis. Ancient myths bestow them with special powers to bring luck and fertility. Kama Sutra provides vivid description of sexual life of people with 'third nature' (Tritiya Prakriti). These identities have always been part of the broader culture and were treated with great respect in the past though only some are accorded such respect in the present. Despite this supposedly sanctioned place in Indian culture, transgender face severe discrimination and harassment in all respects in contemporary India and they are subjected to unfair treatments like verbal abuse, physical and sexual violence; false arrests; denial of share in their ancestral property, services, and admission to educational institutions; and victimization in multiple settings like family, educational institutions, workplace, health care settings, public spaces. The perpetrators of violence and discrimination against transgender include their own parents and siblings, friends, neighbours, their community members, school and college authorities, employers, house owners, health service providers, police, clients and many others because of their effeminate behaviour, physical appearance, trans status, real or perceived association with sex work, real or perceived HIV status, dress code, and so on. Although the efforts by some state governments in India particularly the state of Tamil Nadu in terms of protecting the rights of transgender and introducing welfare policies and the Supreme Court of India’s recent declaration of transgender as ‘socially and economically backward class’ with entitlement to reservation in education and job are remarkable steps towards transgender equality and social justice, the transgender continue to face multiple forms of discrimination.

Further, in India there has not been much academic interest in studying, understanding, and debating the transgender issues, legal provisions and the role of state in protecting the rights of transgender from an historical perspective. In this context, a ICSSR-Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi-sponsored two days national seminar was organised by the Department of History, Tagore Arts College, Government of Puducherry in collaboration with the Regional Centre Puducherry, Institute of Social Sciences during 29-30 October 2015 at the Convention-cum-Cultural Centre, Pondicherry University, Puducherry in order to bring together
the scholars of transgender studies to draw insights into the issues transgender face and to bring to the fore their socio, economic and political status in contemporary Indian society.

**Participation**

The seminar witnessed more than hundred participants including distinguished academicians, scholars on transgender studies, university and college teachers, researchers, research students, post & undergraduate students, transgender activists, civil society members, and media personnel from different parts of the country.

**Major issues that were deliberated upon during the seminar**

In addition to critically looking at various issues such as the human rights of transgender; social and political space including the voting rights the transgender enjoy; and the role of state, political parties, various government agencies including the police, civil society, and the public in protecting the rights of transgender, the following issues were deliberated upon during the seminar:

- Persistence of stigma, violence and discrimination of transgender people in India.
- Gender identity crisis and sexuality of transgender.
- Multiple discrimination and marginalization of transgender at all levels in the Indian Society.
- Alienation from family and society.
- Absence of sensitivity towards transgender people.
- Insecure life that transgenders face.
- Forced sex work and begging.
- Issues transgender children face at home, schools, and in society.
- Psychological problems the transgender children face when they become adolescents particularly when they start experiencing the physiological changes within.
- Absence of sex-education in the school curriculum.
The sensitive issue of reservation to transgender population in education and employment.

Lack of reliable data on transgender population in India.

Lack of government intervention and necessary policy measures to protect the life and enhance the welfare of transgender people.

**Major concerns and suggestions/recommendations of the seminar**

In view of the dismal status of transgender people in India, the following important concerns and suggestions were raised during the deliberations of the seminar:

- Need for identification and unification of transgenders and their sympathizers for a collective democratic fight against injustice.

- Call for a change in the mindset of the people.

- Need for acceptance and rehabilitation of the transgender by the society.

- Immediate changes in the curriculum at the school level to create awareness among the children and the youth.

- Establishment of Government sponsored counseling centres at the Gram Panchayat, Block and District levels throughout the country for transgender children and adults to deal with their physiological and psychological problems.

- Provision of education, skill development, employment opportunities, and nutrition & health facilities in order to ensure secured and dignified life to transgender people.

- Classification of Transgenders as “other sex”, not as ‘third gender’.

**Report By**

Sandeep Kumar Dasari  
Head and Associate Professor  
Seminar Convenor and Coordinator  
Tagore Arts College, Puducherry

V. Selvam  
Regional Director  
Regional Centre Puducherry  
Institute of Social Sciences
A few Photos of the Seminar

Prayer at the beginning of the Seminar
Inaugural Session (from left to right): Mr. Sandeep Kumar Dasari, Head & Associate Professor, Dept of History, Tagore Arts College and Convenor & Coordinator of the seminar; Ms. A. Revathy, Transgender Activist; Ms. Olga Arran, Transgender Activist; Mr. V. Selvam, Regional Director, Regional Centre Puducherry, Institute of Social Sciences; Dr. V. Rammassamy, Principal, Tagore Arts College; Dr. Fr. Rajanayagam SJ, Dean, School of Media Studies, Layola College, Chennai; Ms. Kalki Subramanian, Transgender Activist and Founder of Sahodari Organisation; and Ms. Sandya, Transgender Activist.

Dr. Fr. Rajanayagam SJ, Dean, School of Media Studies, Layola College, Chennai releasing the Seminar Proceedings.
Mr. Sandeep Kumar Dasari, Head & Associate Professor, Dept of History, Tagore Arts College and Convenor & Coordinator of the seminar delivering the Welcome Address.

Mr. V. Selvam, Regional Director, Regional Centre Puducherry, Institute of Social Sciences delivering the Collaborator’s Address.
Mr. V. Selvam, Regional Director, Regional Centre Puducherry, Institute of Social Sciences, delivering the Collaborator’s Address.

Dr. V. Rammassamy, Principal, Tagore Arts College, the President of the Seminar, delivering the Presidential Address.
Dr. Fr. Rajanayagam SJ, Dean, School of Media Studies, Layola College, Chennai, delivering the Key Note Address.

Ms. Kalki Subramanian, Transgender Activist and Founder of Sahodari Organisation, Guest of Honour at the Seminar delivering the Special Address
Panel Discussion on Transgenders Rights: Law, Society, and Workplace. Panellists (from left to right): Dr. Ashok, E.M., Sexologist & Adolescent Health Counsellor, Erode, Tamil Nadu; Dr. Fr. Rajanayagam SJ, Dean, School of Media Studies, Layola College, Chennai; Prof. Swarupa Rani (Chairing the Discussion), Dept of History, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad; Ms. A. Revathy, Transgender Activist; and Ms. Olga Arran, Transgender Activist.

One of the Technical Sessions is on: Dr. S. Babu, Head, Dept of History, KM Centre for Post Graduate Studies, Puducherry, looks on (seated extreme right).
One of the Technical Sessions Chaired by Distinguished Historian Prof N. Rajendran (seated extreme left), Chair, School of Social Sciences and Director of Nehru Studies, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu.

Yet another Technical Session chaired by the Seminar Convenor Mr. Sandeep Kumar Dasari.
Section of the Audience at the Seminar

Valedictory Session: (from left to right): Mr. Sandeep Kumar Dasari, Head & Associate Professor, Dept of History, Tagore Arts College and Convenor & Coordinator of the seminar; Seminar President Dr. V. Rammassamy, Principal, Tagore Arts College, Government of Puducherry; Distinguished Historian Prof N. Rajendran, Chair, School of Social Sciences and Director of Nehru Studies, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu; Dr. Santhanam Prabhakar, Joint Director (Reporting), Loksabha, New Delhi; and Mr. V. Selvam, Regional Director, Regional Centre Puducherry, Institute of Social Sciences summing up the proceedings of the two days seminar.
Mr. V. Selvam, Regional Director, Regional Centre Puducherry, Institute of Social Sciences summing up the proceedings of the two days seminar at the Valedictory Session.

Prof. N. Rajendran, Chair, School of Social Sciences and Director of Nehru Studies, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, delivering the Valedictory Address.
Seminar President Dr. V. Rammassamy (standing second from left), Principal, Tagore Arts College, distributing certificates to Participants at the Seminar in the presence of Prof N. Rajendran, Chair, School of Social Sciences and Director of Nehru Studies, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Sandeep Kumar Dasari, Head & Associate Professor, Dept of History, Tagore Arts College and Convenor & Coordinator of the seminar, proposing Vote of Thanks at the Valedictory Session.
Mr. V. Selvam and Mr. Sandeep Kumar Dasari with the Distinguished Speaker Prof N. Rajendran, Chair, School of Social Sciences and Director of Nehru Studies, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu after the Valedictory Session.

Group Photo: Section of the Participants at the Seminar.

End of the Report
Tagore Arts College

Tagore Arts College was established in the year 1961 and has over the years emerged as a premier institution for collegiate education in the Union Territory of Puducherry. Former Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundation stone for the new campus on the centenary of our patron Shri Ravindranath Tagore. In a span of 50 years, it has blossomed into a full-fledged institution offering courses in a wide range of disciplines at graduate level. The College earned the honour of being recognised as a quality institution by the Madras University. From the academic year 1986-87 onwards, the college has been affiliated to Pondicherry University.

The Department of History which is hosting the national seminar on ‘Transgender: Stigma, Discrimination, and Violence’ is one of the oldest departments of the college. Mr. Sandeep Kumar, Associate Professor, is currently heading the department. Sandeep received his academic training in history in the esteemed University of Hyderabad. The other distinguished faculty members of the department include Ms. Rouccoumany, Assistant Professor; Mr. N. Sivaraman, Assistant Professor; Mr. P. Ravichandiranne, Assistant Professor; and Dr. Velu, Assistant Professor.

Institute of Social Sciences, Regional Centre Puducherry

The Institute of Social Sciences (ISS), New Delhi was founded in 1985 seeking primarily to build a community of concerned scholars and activists for ushering in a humane and just society. Its stated objective was to study contemporary social, political, and economic issues and problems from an interdisciplinary perspective and to make available its findings and recommendations to government bodies, social scientists, policy makers, people’s and worker’s organisations so as to widen their options for action. The evolution of an informed and action-oriented public opinion is the primary aim of the Institute. As an independent think tank and a resource centre on local democracy, democratic decentralization, human rights and women’s political empowerment at grassroots level, ISS has, over the past 30 years, undertaken research projects covering a wide range of subjects in the areas of local governance, women’s studies, environment, and contemporary socio-economic-political issues. The Institute, right from its inception, has been organising a large number of seminars, workshops, discussions, public lectures by eminent scholars, thinkers, and public persons as well as training programmes not only in Delhi but also in various parts of the country for the exchange of ideas and dissemination of its research findings.

To meet the strongly felt need for an institution of excellence for social science research, advocacy, and outreach programmes in the Union Territory of Puducherry, the Regional Centre Puducherry of Institute of Social Sciences was established in October 2012 and was inaugurated in November 2014 in Puducherry. Mr. V. Selvam, the Founder-Regional Director of Regional Centre Puducherry, is coordinating the various activities of the Centre. Selvam received his academic training in economics with an interdisciplinary approach in esteemed Central Universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, and Pondicherry University, Puducherry. [http://www.issin.org/](http://www.issin.org/)

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