

Transgender's Trauma : A reaction & recovery in Lakshmi Perumal's short story "Umankottai"

B. Mary Suba. M.A., M.Phil., B. Ed, SET.,

Assistant Professor Of English,

Jayaraj Annapackiam College for Women(Autonomous), Periyakulam. Theni. 625601

E. Mail. ID: bmarysuba@ gmail.com

Transgender is a phenomenon in the history of mankind. They are glorified in Indian mythology, Vedas, and other sacred books such as Ramayana and Mahabharatha. The term, "Transgender" is the result of such proactive approach towards these people which has resulted in multi-faceted academic studies. The process of thinking and rethinking makes man to be very much creative in bringing out this bitter social reality into literature. As literatures in English deal with the social realistic themes such as untouchability, male domination, and want of freedom, never fails to deal with the social realistic theme- Transgender Issues. The pains and pangs experienced by the transgender people are common all over the world. Their trauma can also well contextualized through literature for an understanding of their psyche. There are number of novels, poetry, dramas, and short stories that project the theme of oppression experienced by the transgender. In this milieu, it is necessary to study the pathetic conditions of the transgender people of the west and the East to create awareness among the mass of the world. The core result would be the one which says that the treatment meted on them causes a lot of mental agony in them.

"Umankottai" ("Silence") by Lakshmi Perumal tells the story of the protagonist, Ponrasu who is a transgender. The story takes place in a village. When the story opens the important persons of the village with the village president are found in a common place of the village at where important matters of the village are taken shape through discussions and consequent decisions are generally made by these important people (Village panchayat). One day, Ponrasu is asked to present himself in the meeting organized in the common place of the village. But he is not found there. Instead his wife Thangakili is present there who is so beautiful even though she has dark complexion. She is standing there and is sobbing also. Now she commemorates her wedding day.

A transsexual is a person who changes his or her sex physically, legally or both. While most transsexuals undergo sex-reassignment surgery and hormone therapy, not all choose to have medical treatment. People who habitually wear the clothing, accessories, and cosmetics of the opposite sex are known as cross-dressers. People with gender identity disorder act and

present themselves as members of the opposite sex. The disorder occur in children or adults in rare.

Ponrasu was not ready to marry any girl in his life. Whenever his mother searched a suitable bride for him, he escaped from marriage by saying that he was not interested in marriage. But the mother did not take the words of Ponrasu very seriously. So she decided to marry him to a girl of her own choice, probably it was Thanga Kili. However on the wedding eve he confined himself in a separate room in the terrace of the house and tried to all sorts of female make-up on him. He put “Mehanti” on his hands. He smeared turmeric powder on his face. Instead of wearing Dothi and shirt, He wore a blouse and saree. Moreover he was very much excited on seeing his face on the mirror which exactly reflected his figure. His mother after searching him for a long time, at last came to the terrace and founded that his son, Ponrasu in female attire. She cried like anything on seeing him. Hearing the cry of his mother, his uncle came to the terrace and advised his mother to change his costume into a male costume and fetch him to the wedding hall. His mother compelled him to wear dhoti and shirt in order to hide the matter from others knowledge.

Violence and discrimination against transgender people persist in daily life though many movements and organizations are fighting for the rights of transgender people. The legal status of trans people in many countries is equally precarious. One particular area of tension is the inclusion of intersex people in the definition of transgender.

It is a clear fact that the legal system and medical system dealing with transgender individuals differ in their points of view. Transgender individuals do not fit conveniently into binary systems. They cannot easily be categorized as either males or females. Many legal institutions have imposed their need to maintain clear distinctions between the sexes on persons who do not fit neatly into distinct groups. Until recently, the medical community also recommended that intersex persons be surgically or hormonally altered at an early age so that they have the physical appearance of only one sex. This recommendation is based on the questionable assumption that obviously intersex individuals would be so scorned by society that they would be so scorned by society that they would suffer severe humiliation and psychological trauma. This assumption ignores a substantial body of case histories, compiled primarily between 1930 and 1960, before surgical intervention because the norm, that describe well-adjusted intersex persons. Early surgical intervention to alter intersex persons so that they appear to be clearly male or female is currently being seriously questioned by some intersex individuals and by some medical experts

The wedding was also over. Ponrasu was bitter and moody throughout the wedding ceremony. The bride thangakili was eagerly waiting on the nuptial bed for Ponrasu. But Ponrasu could not behave like a man which ultimately disappointed Thangakili. Ponrasu could love Thangakili very much but he could not perform the role of man during conjugal relationship. Hence Thangakili decided to tell the truth before the panchayat meeting and wanted to break the

marriage- bond between Ponrasu and herself. Thangakili makes a plea petition in the panchayat for her separation from ponrasu. Now the president and other important people of the Panchayat decide to break the marriage bond between Ponrasu and Thangakili.

It is heard that after a year later, now, now Thangakili is the mother of a male baby through her second marriage. However ponrasu also often visits Thangakili's house and help her in the household works like a female friend to Thangakili. One day during such time, The baby of Thangakili in the cradle cries because of hunger. Thangakili feeds the baby with milk from her breast. On seeing this Ponrasu experiences the female in him and caresses his breast with his hands. Now Thangakili sheds tears seeing Ponrasu's condition who behaves like her best female friend understanding her very well. Certainly this short story brings out the mental and physical trauma experienced by transgender people and the ill treatment meted on them by a society.

Violence and discrimination against transgender people persist in daily life though many movements and organizations are fighting for the rights of transgender people. The legal status of trans people in many countries is equally precarious. One particular area of tension is the inclusion of intersex people in the definition of transgender.

Works Cited

Das, Bijay Kumar. *Form and Meaning in Mahesh Dattani's Plays*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors PVT. Ltd., 2008. Print

Transgender People: At Issue. San Francisco: Greenhaven Press, 2011. Print

Kennedy, John. "The Transgender Movement". *Christianity Today*. Feb. 2008: 43- 53. Print.

Leslie Feinberg website: www.transgenderwarrior.org.

Northern, Erin. "Identity Intersection in Stone Butch Blues". 2006. [www. Unm.edu](http://www.Unm.edu)

Transgender Rights. Memphis, USA: Books LLC, Wiki Series, 2011. Print