

Transgender Literature: Gender Inclusive Trend in Higher Education

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Abstract- This research paper is an attempt to explore the National Education Policy-2020 and its emphasis on inclusive and holistic approach to learning in future with reference to transgender literature. Education Policy-2020 introduced the Gender Inclusive Approach in India. This Approach emphasizes the integration of LGBTIQ community. National Education policy views education as a reformative tool which helps to access margins of society. Transgender literature is considered new branch for learning. Teaching of transgender literature will portray the current state of transgender individual in India. Transgender literature will redefine the concept of gender. It will sensitize educator and learner to the need of transgender individual. Curriculum enriched with transgender literature helps to minimize the gender-based discrimination. National Education Policy-2020 is a harbinger to equitable learning for gender non-conforming children which paves a way for Transgender literature at the secondary and tertiary levels of National Educational Curriculum.

Key words: Transgender literature, Gender Inclusion, Education, Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the key role of transgender literature to construct gender inclusive sphere. Literature is an essential mode for the inclusive society. The development of pedagogical attitude for transgender literature will locate the transgender community in social strata. The government policies exercised resources to implement inclusive education in countries worldwide which introduced LGBT themed literature as an academic course in various universities. In India, the previous education policies focused more on women empowerment through education. But inclusive education indicates an opportunity to mainstream the marginalized community. The presence of transgender literature in classroom bridges the gap between transgender community and normative structure.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRANSGENDER LITERATURE IN INDIA

Education is an essential for the advancement of human race. It boosts up the affirmative dimensions of Culture, Society, Economy, Science and Technology. Education must transform its policy to cope up the demands of current situation. National Education Policy-2020 is a visionary step to education system. It is divided in four parts named “School Education,” “Higher Education”, “Other Key Areas of Focus” and “Making It Happen” (p. 1-2). The policy discusses the holistic development of learner and educator. School and Higher Education indicates the chapter named “Equitable and Inclusive Education.” Higher education is a tool of progressive dialogue with the society in general. UNESCO (1998) defined it as “all types of studies, training or training for research at the post-secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent State authorities” (p. 19).

“Equitable and Inclusive Education” chapter aims at equal learning opportunities to the learner and denies the class, caste, colour and gender-based discrimination. The historical judgement of National Legal Services Authority made the framework for the equal rights of Indian transgender community. This is also reflected in National Education Policy-2020 as it extends its vision to transgender students by forming “Gender Inclusion Fund.” National Education Policy (2020) referred transgenders under “Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups” (p. 24). It is concerned about the need of transgender students. But funds, infrastructure, facilities and environment will attain worth through inclusive curriculum. Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (2019) defines the meaning of “Inclusive Education” as “a system of education wherein transgender students learn together with other students without fear of

discrimination, neglect, harassment or intimidation and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of such students” (p. 03).

Every transgender student experienced the harassment and torture during their academic period. The education of transgender literature can be seen as a campaign against their physical and mental distress. Transgender literature works as a mirror to identify self for gender non-conforming students and it develops understanding of LGBT community among heterosexual structure. Abbie E. Goldberg (2018) stated that,

College curricula should address gender identity, and specifically trans identities and experiences. Trans-inclusive content is beneficial to both trans and cisgender students and should be incorporated across disciplines and in some depth. Colleges and universities should encourage faculty to develop appropriate trans-inclusive curricular content, possibly providing seed money or other incentives to faculty so that they have the time and resources to develop such content (p.12).

This report emphasized the need of gender inclusive curriculum. Recently, India introduced National Education Policy 2020 which indicates the visionary step for gender inclusion. Higher education in National Education Policy (2020) envisions the Gender Inclusive Curriculum to accommodate the need of gender variant students.

The school curriculum will include, early on, material on human values such for all persons, empathy, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, non-violence, global citizenship, inclusion, and equity. It would also include more detailed knowledge of various cultures, religions, languages, gender identities, etc. to sensitize and develop respect for diversity (p. 28).

Gender Inclusive Curriculum includes different components like environment of school, interrelations of teacher and student, projects, amenities and mode of assessment. The module regarding Inclusion of Transgender Children in School Education defines Gender Inclusive Curriculum (2020) as

A gender inclusive curriculum is one in which academic, social, physical and psychological environment takes into account the specific needs of transgender children along with those of girls and boys; and where critical dialogue as a pedagogy

assumes significance because it empowers students and teachers to engage on issues that continue to confront us, namely, gender norms, gender identities, deep rooted societal practices, etc (p. 63).

It clearly indicates the reformative aspect of gender inclusion as it is not confined to the heteronormative structure and especially feminine empowerment aspects.

OBJECTIVES OF TRANSGENDER LITERATURE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS

- To sensitize the need of Gender Variant students.
- To establish gender inclusive learning.
- To create gender inclusive curriculum.
- To provide equal opportunity of learning irrespective of gender.
- To minimize the gender-based discrimination.
- To introduce the textual material that empowers gender fluidity.

The curriculum must satisfy the need of gender variant individual. Curriculum must introduce textual material for the awareness. Gender Inclusive Curriculum helps mainstreaming of gender variant students. The textual material will help them to understand gender as a culture-based term. The success story of transgender individual, fact box, achievement notes, knowledge bank and gender role chart can be used as a supportive material for text. These initiatives can be implemented in secondary education.

THE ROLE OF TRANSGENDER LITERATURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Transgender literature is emerging as a literary genre which magnifies the diverse gender identity. Transgender literature included textual and non textual material that portrays gender variant themes. Transgender autobiographical narratives received critical notes by scholars. It is interpreted by gender and queer theories. Robin Orner (2016) quoted Cart with reference to the need of transgender literature.

Nonfiction gives us information for our minds. But we need good (GLBTQ) fiction, too, because novels give us information for our hearts. It is not enough to comprehend the homosexual experience on a cognitive level; we must develop an empathetic understanding as well. Don't forget: the heart has its reasons that the

mind cannot know. And if we are to insure that love—not ignorance and its evil twin hatred—wins, then it is imperative that good books on the homosexual experience be read not only by gay and lesbian teens but also by their heterosexual peers. Ignorance demonizes those who are different (p. 18).

Transgender literature also helps to revisit the loopholes of gendered society as it redefines the gender. It deals with the themes like diverse gender identity, marginalization, identity crisis, transphobia and trauma. The theme of gender identity development reflects the journey of transformation that educates readers with their psychological issues. It depicts a constant quest of self identity that carries a conflict with society. This conflict leads towards marginalization which has transphobia as its root. The continuous state of marginalization causes long lasting trauma.

English literature universalized the pain of transgender community that was confined at regional level. It introduced works like *Stone Butch Blues*, *Gender Outlaw*, *Transgender History* and many life narratives. *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*, *I am Vidya*, *A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi* and *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* received a remarkable note in Indian Transgender Literature. Transgender literature provides an authenticity through autobiographical narrative. It depicts a tale of narrator that established gender identity against the odds of normative structure.

The role of education is visible in many transgender autobiographical narratives, interviews and research. The autobiographical narratives of A. Revathi and Manobi Bandyopadhyay are instances that narrate impact of school in individual's life. A. Revathi (2016) discussed traumatic events of school days.

My teachers punished me because I spoke like a girl and my body language was feminine. They even caned me because they said I was not brave like boys should be. And because I did not play boys' games, the PT (physical training) master pushed me. He once said to me, 'Are you a girl or what? Pull your trousers down! Let me check!' He mock stripped me and I began to cry. (p. 4-5).

This inhuman behaviour of school teacher disturbed her psychological state. She avoided school and education. The callous behaviour of education system deprived her of formal education. Manobi (2017) depicted her school days with a different dimension. "I was known as good student, something even the

teachers at school could not deny. So, they tried their best to ignore this bit as an aberration and egged me to study harder and harder, as if that was the only way I could find emancipation" (p. 32). Manobi's teachers encouraged her towards learning. This endeavour of school made her first transgender principal of India. These two examples expressed the need of systematic gender inclusive curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Transgender narratives can be viewed as an opportunity to study the marginalized community. It is not limited to Gender Studies as it is related to multiple disciplines. Transgender literature needs a critical attention in order to empower the society. There are possibilities to include it as a part of curriculum in Psychology, Philosophy, Theology, Medical Science and Law along with Literature. This endeavour can open multiple resources for academic research in various branches of learning. Transgender autobiographical narratives made readers and critics aware of their crisis. Their literary writings attained theoretical approaches through scholars.

National Education Policy-2020 can be viewed as an accumulative step towards inclusive society in India. Gender inclusive curriculum attained a pivotal role at global level. It focused on transgender empowerment along with women empowerment. Transgender literature equips the equitable learning. It unveils the dark sides of normative structure. It bridges society to stigma, rejection, identity crisis of transgender community. It also demands great exercise to develop a curriculum with a view to queer literature. It is a mammoth task for an educator to convey gender variant theme. It is an endeavour to transform social sphere from transphobic to trans friendly. Higher education can implement reformative view of inclusive learning through gender variant theme-based curriculum at secondary and tertiary level as adolescence is considered a pivotal span for the holistic development of an individual.

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