IJCRT.ORG ISSN : 2320-2882

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

"Global Legal Landscapes For Transgender Rights: A Comparative Review Of Legal Frameworks In India, Argentina, And The United Kingdom"

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Abstract

This review paper provides a comparative analysis of transgender legal protections in India, Argentina, and the United Kingdom, examining the evolution, structure, and effectiveness of their legislative and policy responses. Using a doctrinal review methodology, this study synthesises legal provisions, case law, and scholarly commentary to understand the extent to which these jurisdictions uphold the rights and dignity of transgender individuals. The paper explores the scope of legal recognition, anti-discrimination measures, healthcare rights, and socio-legal integration of transgender persons. It highlights progressive practices, such as Argentina's self-identification model and comprehensive health provisions, contrasts them with the challenges of enforcement and awareness in India post the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, and analyses the UK Gender Recognition Act 2004 and Equality Act 2010. The analysis concludes with recommendations for harmonising international human rights standards with national legislation.

Keywords: Transgender rights, comparative law, gender identity, anti-discrimination, self-identification, legal recognition, healthcare access.

1. INTRODUCTION.

Transgender individuals have historically faced legal invisibility, systemic discrimination, and social exclusion across many jurisdictions. In recent years, however, various countries have introduced legislative frameworks aiming to recognise and protect the rights of transgender persons. This review paper seeks to provide a comparative legal analysis of transgender-specific laws in India, Argentina, and the United Kingdom. The goal is to identify both best practices and shortcomings in each legal system with respect to gender identity recognition, healthcare access, anti-discrimination protections, and overall legal empowerment.

The transgender community consist of Hijras, eunuchs, kothis, caravans, jogappas, shiv-shakti etc. Since the 9th century BC eunuchs have existed. The term Transgender has roots in Greek which means 'keeper of the bed', castrated men were always in popular demand to protect women's quarters of royal households. Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism- and it can be inferred that Vedic culture recognised three genders. The Vedas (1500 BC - 500 BC) define individuals as belonging to one of three separate categories, according to one's nature or Prakriti[1]. During pre-modern India, third-sex individuals were well known and they

[1] 'historical evolution of transgender community in India' (2015) Asian Review of Social Sciences, 4(1), pp. 17-19

included male-bodied or female-bodied people as well as intersexuals, also they could often be recognised from childhood. In ancient Hindu law, the third sex is discussed in medicine, linguistics and astrology. The Manu Smriti (200 BC - 200 AD) describes the biological origins of three sexes, which is a Male Child, who is produced by a greater quantity of the male seed; The second is Female Child who is produced by a greater quantity of the female seed; And in case where both seeds are equal then a third sex is produced; if either are weak then the failure in conception results. The Tolkappiyam (3rd century BC) which is the earliest Tamil grammar, also refers to Hermaphrodites as the third neuter gender[2].

2. METHODOLOGY.

This study adopts a doctrinal research approach, reviewing primary legal texts, landmark judicial decisions, and secondary literature including scholarly articles, NGO reports, and international human rights instruments. The selected countries reflect diverse legal traditions: India (South Asian, postcolonial, mixed legal system), Argentina (Latin American, civil law), and the United Kingdom (common law, early mover on gender recognition legislation).

3. DEFINITION.

The term 'Transgender 'has a wide scope and it recognises people who do not confirm the gender identity that was assigned to them during their birth. For example, a transgender person might identify as a female despite being born with male organs. Being transgender is not a disease and hence it cannot be cured with any sort of treatment. There is a term as 'Gender Dysphoria 'which results in causing pain and stress in their lives. There is always a constant disconnect between the assigned sex and internal self for the Transgenders[3]

4. PROBLEMS FACED BY TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY.

In India, the Transgender Community faces a lot of challenges which eventually deny the transgender community to enjoy their rights and freedom along with excluding them from society and isolating them.

A. SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND DISCONNECT FROM THE FAMILY.

The Transgender Community faces Racism, and poverty and is discriminated against at various levels of society which directly leads to a major negative impact on their mental health. Due to the social stigma of their sexual orientation, they are forced to the fringe of society as it differs from the non-transgender norm. The said oppression results in excluding the transgender people from the society and also from their own families and they are refrained from the basic amenities of society like health care, education, legal assistance etc.

B. HOMELESSNESS.

The transgender community majorly faces the problem of lack of housing and other related services and is thus unable to meet their needs. They get evicted from places on account of their being a transgender. The community is being continuously harassed and are victims of abuse in shelter homes. In fact, there are many shelters which refuse to accommodate them. They are also not allowed to pick which shelter to live in as per their gender preference.

C. HARASSMENT AT EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

In the area of education, the transgender community lags very significantly as they are excessively oppressed and harassed. They are unable to participate in any sort of activities such as social, economic or political, because they are either illiterate or undereducated. The community suffers from limited livelihood and employment due to the factors revolving around social exclusion and lack of education.

[2] Stryker, S. (2017) Transgender History: The roots of today's revolution. New York seal press.

[3] Wintemute, R. (2011). "From "Gender Identity Disorder" to "Gender Dysphoria": A Legal Perspective on Diagnosis and Reform." *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 13(1).

The factors responsible for such deprivations are as follows:

1. They are treated differently from society and family.
2. Harassment at workplace.
3. Limited opportunities.
4. No or zero awareness regarding vocational training skills.

D. VICTIMS OF HATE CRIME AND TRANSPHOBIA.

The transgender community is more prone to the problems of intolerance, violence and harassment, because of the sexual orientation they possess. This concept results in transphobia. Because of the fear of transphobia, many transgender people tend to hide or conceal their identities and are unable to come out with their sexual orientation for fear of rejection by society and their own families. This directly negatively impacts their mental health. They become more vulnerable to bullying, and physical and verbal abuse at schools and professional institutions.

For example:

1. Rejection from society and family,
2. Bullying and threat of violence,
3. Negative comments on their sexual orientation,
4. No encouragement from educational or professional institutions,
5. Discrimination at work.

4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN INDIA.

4.1 Historical Context and NALSA Judgment.

India's legal recognition of transgender persons was significantly influenced by the landmark 2014 National Legal Service Authority v. Union of India judgment[4], where the Supreme Court affirmed the right to self-identify one's gender. The Apex Court gave direction to the government for providing legal recognition, protection against discrimination and social welfare schemes.

4.2 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019[5].

The Act, while seen as a progressive step, has faced criticism for its ambiguous definitions and cumbersome certification process for gender identity. It mandates a district magistrate-led procedure for legal recognition, which arguably violates the principle of self-identification established by the Supreme Court.

4.3 Strengths and Gaps[6].

Strengths include a statutory anti-discrimination clause, welfare provisions, and rights to education and healthcare. However, lack of implementation mechanisms, absence of punitive measures for violations, and inadequate health access (especially for gender-affirming surgeries) remain major issues.

5. LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN ARGENTINA.

5.1 Gender Identity Law 2012[7].

Argentina's Gender Identity Law is considered among the most progressive globally. It allows individuals to change their gender on official documents through a simple administrative process based on self-perception, without requiring medical or psychological evaluations.

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[4] NALSA v. Union of India, AIR 2014 SC 1863.

[5] The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 (India).

[6] Puri, J. (2020). "Legal Rights of Transgender Persons in India: A Critical Overview." *NUJS Law Review*, 13(2).

[7] Gender Identity Law, No. 26.743, 2012 (Argentina).

5.2 Healthcare Provisions.

The law guarantees access to comprehensive healthcare, including hormone therapy and gender-affirming surgeries, under public and private healthcare systems. Argentina has also incorporated gender identity issues into public health policies.

5.3 Implementation and Social Impact.

While implementation challenges persist, the law has significantly enhanced social inclusion, reduced stigma, and improved access to services for transgender persons. It is a model of rights-based, non-pathologising legal recognition.

6. LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN UNITED KINGDOM.

6.1 Gender Recognition Act 2004[8].

The UK was among the first to legislate gender identity rights. The Act allows individuals to obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) to change their legal gender, subject to criteria including a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria and evidence of living in the acquired gender for two years.

6.2 Equality Act 2010[9].

This Act prohibits discrimination based on gender reassignment and provides broad protections in employment, education, and access to goods and services. It recognises "gender reassignment" as a protected characteristic.

6.3 Critiques and Reforms.

The GRA has been critiqued for being overly medicalised and bureaucratic. Efforts to reform the law to adopt a self-identification model have faced political resistance. However, the UK maintains strong anti-discrimination frameworks and public awareness campaigns.[10]

7. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS.

Criteria	India	Argentina	United Kingdom
Self-identification	Partial (limited by certification process)	Full	No (medicalization required)
Legal recognition	Requires certification from DM	Administrative process	Requires GRC via tribunal
Healthcare access	Mentioned, but limited in practice	Guaranteed under law	NHS coverage but no legal mandate for surgeries
Anti-discrimination	Yes (but weak enforcement)	Yes	Yes (comprehensive under Equality Act)
Social Inclusion Policies	Limited	Strong	Moderate to strong

[8] Gender Recognition Act 2004 (UK).

[9] Equality Act 2010 (UK).

[10] United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2021). "Standards of Conduct for Business: Tackling Discrimination against LGBTI People."

The comparison reveals that **Argentina** provides the most inclusive and rights-affirming legal structure, followed by the **UK** with its strong anti-discrimination regime, and **India**, which has made notable strides but suffers from poor implementation and procedural hurdles[11].

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.

This comparative review illustrates that while legislative progress has been made globally, the quality and inclusiveness of transgender rights laws vary significantly. India must align its certification and healthcare mechanisms with the principles of self-identification and informed consent. Argentina's model showcases how legal dignity and healthcare inclusion can transform societal attitudes. The UK, despite being an early mover, must address the procedural and medical barriers that restrict self-identification.

Recommendations:

- Adopt a universal self-identification model without medical or bureaucratic barriers.
- Ensure guaranteed access to gender-affirming healthcare services.
- Strengthen anti-discrimination enforcement mechanisms.
- Foster public education to reduce stigma and promote inclusion.

Legal systems must shift from a medicalised and bureaucratic view of gender to a human rights-based model that affirms the autonomy and dignity of all gender identities[12].

In recent times, even after the acknowledgement of the fact that, Gender Diversity was accepted in the colonial era, and that the proof of its existence could be traced in temples, sculptures and religious treaties, our country is still not able to overcome the social stigma against transgender people. To eliminate this discrimination, the government is required to take affirmative action for this community. Following are the actions which may help to improve the current situation:

1. To protect transgender adolescents in educational institutions, the awareness of gender variety needs to be introduced. There is a critical need to address the issues and concerns related to transgender people.
2. The state must include the transgender community in their pension programmes.
3. The law must be followed whenever there is any event of harassment or abuse against them. The police must be informed about the issues faced by them.
4. The masses should be made aware of the problems faced by transgender people. To promote acceptance of children with gender differences, schools, families and policymakers need to be educated.
5. Transgender human rights should be given importance to promote their rights and to make them feel like a part of society. This will help them to realise their position as an individual and also it will improve their ability to understand the rights that are given to them.
6. The media must take steps to highlight the issues of the transgender community. And should avoid the stigmatisation in their reports. The media is a powerful means to create awareness in the public and therefore it can help in overcoming the issues faced by transgenders.
7. The profession involving the fiduciary relationship such as doctors and advocates, must take steps to make the access easier for transgenders. They must try to meet the specific needs of the transgenders and these professional activities must be carried out with utmost precaution.

[11] Human Rights Watch (2022). "Recognition and Rights: Global Legal Progress for Transgender People."

[12] Winter, S. et al. (2016). "Transgender people: health at the margins of society." *The Lancet*, 388(10042), 390–400.

8. It should be the duty of the parents to pay attention to their child, in the case of gender non-confirmation. They must provide appropriate support to their child and should not treat them differently. They must be made aware of the stress that a transgender goes through upon attaining puberty and should be supportive of them.

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