



## Globalization: Shifting the paradigm to the Transgenders in the Society

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### Abstract-

Globalization has proved to be a means of development for the transgender people in the society. This paper aims to explore the effect of globalization in the life of the transgender people. The process of globalization has evolved the mindset of the people and it provides distinct ideas of innovative working opportunities to the transgender persons. With the advent of globalization, a new beam of ideas and thoughts emerged, as a result of this, new writers, theorists and activists came forward to raise awareness and realization about the miserable condition of this community. In this paper, we will analyse the theme of migration in the literary works of Living Smile Vidya and A. Revathi after the emergence of globalization across the world. Also, it will explore the importance

of translation in the global world for better communication of thoughts and it will discuss the laws implemented by the other countries for the welfare of the transgender community.

**Keywords-** Globalization, Transgender, Trans-feminists, Disjuncture, Homosexuality.

### **Introduction-**

Globalization is the process of free flow of goods and services, technology, thoughts and ideas, capitals and resources from one place to another across the globe. With the emergence of globalization in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many theorists and writers came up with different kinds of theories, policies, and ideas to run the world together with a unified idea. As rightly said by Branko Milanovic, 'Globalisation means free movement of capitals, goods, technology, ideas and people. Any globalisation that omits the last one is partial and not sustainable' (Sundharam, 272). It enables faster transmission of knowledge and thus, developing countries can raise their standard of knowledge productivity to reach international standards. Therefore, globalization promotes growth in capital, technical advancement, reduction in poverty, modernized thoughts and ideas and increase in employment. We can observe the contribution of globalization in the literary works and theories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some of the theories which emerged after the emergence of globalization are post-colonialism, post-modernism, feminism, queer theory, eco-criticism, etc. Also, some prominent writers and theorists at the time of emergence of globalization are Edward Said, Virginia Woolf, Adrienne Rich, Judith Butler, Chinua Achebe, Mahesh Dattani, Arundhati Roy, Kate Millett, Christina Rossetti, Michel Foucault, Arjun Appadurai, etc, through their literary work they tried to bring revolutionary ideas in the society. For instance, Edward Said's work *Orientalism* (1978) which analyses cultural imperialism by means of the control of discourse not only in the orient but anywhere in the world. Also, Adrienne Rich's essay "Compulsive Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980) challenges the heterosexual norms of the society and inspires the structure of lesbian sexuality and same-sex relationships in the society. These theorists has tried to introduce some ground-breaking changes in the system of the society and tried to implement them into this new globalised world.

Globalization helps in broadening the idea of new writers and theorists to reach out to the global audience. But still some countries which are traditional and have conservative mindset, they do not sustain the idea of globalization. We will going to analyse the development of globalization through the lens of literature, as literature depicts the society and its people. The emergence of globalization has changed the scenario of the transgender community in the whole world. For instance, when the Stonewall Riots took place in New York in 1969, it gave birth to the Gay liberation movement and we can state that it was the starting point of the LGBT movement across the world. Additionally, it got spread out to the whole world and the people of the LGBT community came forward for the recognition of their rights and identity. They want acceptance of their gender identity, as they are not accepted as a part of the mainstream society and considered as 'unnatural'. Theorists like Eve Sedgwick and Judith Butler questions the notion of unnatural and marginalization of homosexuality, they stressed upon the fact of normality of homosexuals. Butler in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990)*, explains the category of gender and sexuality as performative. A major development, was to recognize in the works of the writers who presented homoerotic subject in their literary works, some prominent writers were William Shakespeare, Virginia Woolf, Adrienne Rich, Mahesh Dattani, Arundhati Roy, Julia Serano, Christina Rossetti, Judith Butler, Amruta Patil, A.Revathi, Devdutt Pattanaik, R.Raj.Rao, etc.

Literature uses language to connect to the global world, globalization helps in bridging the gap between the borders and it reaches out to the audience internationally and widen the idea of queerness. 'In the words of a scholar, Nihar Ranjan Ray, literature is absolutely language-based, and language itself is shaped by its locale and the socio-historical forces that have operated on it through the years' (Deshpande, 5). Translation is one of the major characteristics of globalization as it promotes the idea and thought of a person to a large number of people, it does not confined to a limited number of people, as a result, language cannot be a barrier in the mode of development. The novel *I Am Vidya* written by Living Smile Vidya and translated by V. Ramnarayan, this novel was originally written in Tamil, but later it got translated into seven different languages of India

including English, Malyalam, Marathi, Kannada, and three more languages. Also, the novel *The Truth About Me* written by A. Revathi in Tamil and it was translated by V. Geetha into English. Therefore, these translation works enables to propagate the idea of a writer to a large number of people across the nation.

A.Revathi in her work *The Truth About Me* boldly speaks about being in a wrong body, issues faced by the transsexuals in the society and pointed out on some instances when she was constantly bullied for her effeminate manners while growing up. She fought the ridicule and brutality both within her home and the society with utmost dignity and courage. Moreover, the novel *I Am Vidya* traces the journey of a transgender Vidya, who has a bachelor's degree in Computer Science and master's degree in Linguistics but at a certain point in her life she decided to become a 'tiranangai' or a transgender, to get rid of the double life as she wanted to embrace her womanliness. These novels have thrown light on the pitiable conditions of the transgender community and how transgenders have evolved in these recent times. Both Revathi and Vidya ran away from their home to start living with the transgender community and they moved from one place to other in search of better livelihood. An Indian - American anthropologists, Arjun Appadurai, who is a major theorist of globalization studies, gave a theory of Disjuncture. The theory is composed of five interrelated components- ethnoscaapes, mediascaapes, technoscaapes, finanscaapes and ideoscaapes. We can apply the component of ethnoscaapes and ideoscaapes in both the novels *I Am Vidya* and *The Truth About Me*, as ethnoscape means migration of people from one place to another in search of a better livelihood and ideoscape means flow of ideas and thoughts globally without any barrier.

In the work of Revathi we witness her escape to Delhi to join the transgender community as she couldn't able to bear the atrocities of being in a wrong body. She became a transgender and started earning by doing begging in the streets, she vividly explains the scenario of being a part of the transgender community and facing difficulty in earning money for their living. She writes, 'Every morning, the pottais would leave to ask for money from shopkeepers. They went in a group to different areas called bazaars... 'In this Hindi country, we hijras are meant to do this and not other things. We ask money from shops, collect *badaai*'...' ( Chapter 5). After sometime, Revathi moved to Mumbai and explains that in transgender community there is no

discrimination on the grounds of caste, race, and religion. She asserts, 'Marginalised by mainstream society, denied a legal existence and dispossessed of their rights... In the hijra community there is no high or low- hijras do not observe caste or religious difference and there are hijras from both poor and rich homes' (Chapter 7). This shows the globalized thought process of the transgenders as they do not believe in disintegrating rather uniting with each other to show their unity and harmony. But still the mindset of the society is not evolved that much, Revathi's family had never accepted her femaleness completely. They always felt ashamed of her being a transwoman, Revathi's mother says :

Is it not enough that all of us born as women suffer? Many in this world long for and are willing to do penance for a son! And here you are, born a man, who has decided to become a woman halfway through his life! What'll the world say? Will anyone accept you? Do you think we can walk with our heads held high in the village any more? (Chapter 13).

This thought process of a woman could be matched with the ideologies of the radical feminists. An American author Janice Raymond, who belongs to the group of radical feminists, has published a book in 1979 *The Transsexual Empire* argued that transwoman are raping the bodies of females, as a transwoman would never understand what it feels to be a woman wholly. She states, 'All transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artefact, appropriating this body for themselves.... Transsexuals merely cut off the most obvious means of invading women, so that they seem non-invasive' (Raymond, 104). Also, another radical feminists Sheila Jeffreys in her book *Gender Hurts* (2014) argued that trans feminism means men defining what it means to be a woman. Jeffreys supported a movement called 'Womyn-born-Womyn', this movement opposed sex-change operation in US and appeals that it should be declared illegal by the law. Even after so many decades, there exists a radical thought in some women opposing trans-inclusive feminisms across the world.

But there are some trans-inclusive feminists who support the idea of transfeminism, this has been made possible by the approach of globalization, as it empowered people to be authentic in their ideas and thoughts. In 2015 in an interview, radical feminist Catherine MacKinnon says :

male dominant society has defined women as a discrete biological group forever. If this was going to produce liberation, we'd be free ... To me, women is a political group. I never had much occasion to say that, or work with it, until the last few years when there has been a lot of discussion about whether trans women are women ... I always thought I don't care how someone becomes a woman or a man; it does not matter to me. It is just part of their specificity, their uniqueness, like everyone else's. Anybody who identifies as a woman, wants to be a woman, is going around being a woman, as far as I'm concerned, is a woman.

Also Krista Scott Dixon, a feminist scholar, in her important work *Trans/Forming Feminism: Trans-Feminist Voices Speak Out* shows how the transgender community and feminists have grown together and evolved in the past few decades and her wish to express that both the movements work together to fight against gender discrimination. So gradually, the society and the family of Revathi has accepted her and started addressing her as Revathi instead of 'Dai'. Still, most of the people looked at her with a peculiar and strange look due to her gender identity. Finally she started working in a NGO called Sangama as an office assistant, she collected information of LGBT people and maintained a record of their cases.

If we mark out the plight of Vidya in her novel *I Am Vidya*, we observe that she starts her journey by moving to Chennai in search of a job from her hometown and try to earn a decent livelihood as she wanted to enjoy her femininity and does not want to conceal it from the society. As Vidya (earlier Saravanan) was not satisfied with the dual life which she was living, so she moved to Pune to give recognition to her gender identity which she was concealing from the society for so long. In Pune, she finally became a 'tirunangai' to enjoy her femaleness which lies within her. She asserts, 'Some go to Mumbai, and some to Delhi or Kolkata. I went to Pune, because Arunamma, who adopted me, had connections there. Her 'amma' lived there. Following that tradition, I went to Pune to be nurtured by my 'grandmother'.' This shows that the transgenders has to move from one place to other in search of job opportunity, so as to earn their livelihood they had to do begging or sex work or they opt to do traditional *badhai* system in different cities, which is not possible if they live in their native place. The transgenders had to do begging in trains, markets, roads

and traffic signal, begging is the only source of income for them; otherwise they have to be involved in sex-work.

Vidya, a transwoman tried to opt different occupation to earn a livelihood with self-respect, so she went to Surat for following her idea of becoming an entrepreneur. She plans to bought saris from Surat and sell them on the train. She tried her best to sell her material but it did not work for her. Later, she had moved to Madurai and started working in a self-help group bank as an EDP assistant. She simply quoted in the text, 'The managing director, Mr Udayakumar, interviewed me. He was a very simple man, and treated me not as a tirunangai, but as a fellow human. To his question about my education, habits, typing speed and related matters, I answered truthfully.' This shows that the perceptions of the people are evolving slowly but steadily towards the transgender people, they are started accepting their gender identity and treated them with respect. Vidya writes, 'I was not overly enthused by magazine articles on me, but I was happy that a women's magazine was interested in me as a woman. It was an acknowledgment of my womanhood.' We are now witnessing dramatic shift in the perception of the society, with ideas moving across the borders, the people have started understanding the social issues and gender issues due to the process of globalization. Emi Koyama, a famous trans-feminists scholar published 'The Transfeminist Manifesto', 2001 in which she writes :

Transfeminism is primarily a movement by and for trans women who view their liberation to be intrinsically linked to the liberation of all women and beyond. It is also open to other queers, intersex people, trans men, non-trans women, non-trans men and others who are sympathetic toward needs of trans women and consider their alliance with trans women to be essential for their own liberation. Historically, trans men have made greater contribution to feminism than trans women. We believe that it is imperative that more trans women start participating in the feminist movement alongside others for our liberation.

In 2018, the Supreme Court of India decriminalized homosexuality by declaring Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code unconstitutional in respect to consensual homosexual sex between adults. In 2014, the Supreme Court of India gave recognition to transgenders as a 'third gender' legally in the government documents. The



transgenders of India are also allowed to undergo Sex Reassignment Surgery and they have a constitutional right to register themselves under a third gender category. Both Revathi and Vidya had undergone Sex Reassignment Surgery, as they wanted to be get freed from their male genitals. Recently, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019 was passed in India by both the houses of the Parliament. This Act bans unjust discrimination against transgenders in educational and employment services, healthcare services, they have the right to own, purchase or rent any property, etc. Also, Article 15 of the Indian Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, caste, class, creed, sex, race or place of birth. Likewise in 2012, Argentina passed 'Gender Identity Law' to make sex-change operation a legal right of every transgender and made sure that the public and private health care services would cover the cost of surgery. Similarly in 2014, Denmark allowed every individual above 18 to express their gender identity and to legally change their sex in government document. In 2015, U.S. has legalized same-sex marriage and gave recognition to the LGBT persons. Thus, globalization includes diffusion of thoughts and knowledge to people associated with incorporated intellectual identities. Hence, globalization is defined as the process of free movement of goods and services, ideas, technology, and information with no barrier in between borders worldwide.

### **Conclusion –**

This paper has substantiated the significance of translation and migration as one of the major characteristics of globalization. It throws light on the difficulties of the transwomen- Revathi and Vidya to earn their livelihood in this conservative modern society and simultaneously, it throws light on the laws and policies framed by different nations for giving recognition to the transgender community. It gives an insight to the miserable working opportunity of the transgenders by giving special reference of the transwomen, Vidya and Revathi. Subsequently, they suffer so much of discrimination, harrasment and violence in the society, the government has introduced some reforms and welfare schemes for the transgenders in the country. Therefore, Vidya is currently working for an organization, which is engaged in serving impoverished people in Chennai, India. Also, she is a very successful actor and acted in several short films and documentary films like *500 & 5*, *Kandal Pookkal*, *Butterfly*, etc. On the other hand, Revathi's aim is to



challenge the stereotypical mindset of the people of the society. She uses public platforms to deliver lecture on the rich ancient hijra culture, their way of living and the discrimination they faced in the society. Also the Internet has provided a helpful channel of communication in this modern era so that it could reach to a greater number of people globally. So there are many prominent Indian transgender people who have come out with their powerful voice and they have achieved success in their own fields, some of them are-

1. Manobi Bandopadhyay- India's first transwoman college principal
2. Padmini Prakash – India's first television actor
3. Kalki Subramaniam – First transgender entrepreneur
4. Lakshminarayan Tripathi – Transgender right activist
5. Shabnam Mausi – First eunuch to become a MLA
6. Sudha Tai – First transgender to receive Honorary Doctrate in 2014

Thus, the advent of globalization has facilitated the LGBT movement all over the world. Also, the UN Human Rights Council in 2011 has passed a resolution for the universal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people, which focuses specifically on sexual orientation and gender identity. The resolution also commissions a study on anti-gay discrimination and violence and establishes a panel to look after these issues. To express sexual preference freely and proudly, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been set to protect every individual's right to express them liberally. In India, the Ministry of Social Justice and Welfare has circulated the Draft Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020. This rule will specify the process by which transgenders can apply for Certificate of Identity; it will be issued by a District Magistrate within 60 days after its application. It will protect the interests and rights of the transgenders and provide them access to all the social welfare schemes introduced by the state. So gradually, the process of globalization has extensively influenced the acceptance of transgenders and other queer persons in the society.

## Research Methodology –

Primary and secondary are used to study the issues faced by the transgender community and the effects of globalization on this community. Primary data used in this research work are the novels – *The Truth About Me* and *I Am Vidya*. Secondary data includes research papers, interviews, articles, websites, columns, and journals.

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