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Transgender In Thirukkural

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ABSTRACT

History always helps us in finding the most vital and fascinating part of our ancestry and their period. In History, we find that there is documented evidence that apart from men and women there existed the third gender which has different activities despite his/her sex. 'Transgender' has been mentioned in most of the ancient and classical Tamil Grammar texts and other important literature books.

The meaning that the dictionary gives for 'Transgender' denotes or relates to a person whose sense or personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex. It is an umbrella term for any individual who makes a gender transition due to a personal identity or expression. This paper is dealing with the perception of Thiruvalluvar about Transgender.

KEYWORDS: Ali – Pedi – Peduaravani – Thirunangaiyar – Adhigaaram – Avai Anjaamai – Aalvinai Udaimai – Kallaamai

INTRODUCTION

Transgender are mentioned with so many adjectives and terms in the classical Tamil literature. The most commonly used terms are "Ali, Pedi, Peduaravani, Thirunangaiyar". Each of these terms was used according to the era and the dialect of the people. This paper aims to study and compare the lives and the conditions of transgender with reference to the ancient Sangam Literature 'Thirukkural'.

Thirukkural

Thirukkural is the oldest surviving vernacular literature in the Dravidian language, Tamil. Thirukkural was written by Thiruvalluvar who is a multifaceted personality dealing with many subjects where Thirukkural is a work of intrinsic excellence and it's a treasure house of worldly knowledge

There are 1330 verses in Thirukkural each of which contains two couplets of seven words. All these verses are considered to be sacred as many people use Thirukkural as a sacred text. This text has been divided into three parts which includes virtue (Aram), wealth (Porul) and love (Inbam). It has also been considered as greatest works on ethics and morality to lead a normal life with happiness and secular nature. These sacred verses were written by Valluvar during 300 BCE to 5th Century CE.

Gender comparison in Thirukkural

The strength of a worthy Nation depends not only on its Geographical Locations, Resource of Land, Water, Minerals, Flora and Fauna, but primarily on the skills, Gender and Characters of its people, inefficiently utilizing them. Transgender is one of its types under Gender which has their personal identity and gender not corresponding with their birth sex.

I.

“Pagaiyagathu Pedigai Olvaal Avaiyagathu

Anchu Mavankatra Nool”

(Adhigaaram 73 – Avai Anjaamai, Thirukkural – 727)

Here Valluvar compares the man who has supreme knowledge but fails to use it at the right time i.e., with the man who has sharp sword but does not use it in the battle out of fear. The learning of him who is different before an assembly is like the shining sword of a hermaphrodite in the presence of his foes⁵. The knowledge in the former and the sword in the latter go without any use and therefore, the person who possesses them is considered to be ‘Pedi’.

II.

**“Thaalaanmai Illaathan Velaanmai Pedikai
Vaalaanmai Pola Kedum”**

(Adhigaaram 62 – Aalvinai Udaimai, Thirukkural – 614)

A man without any courage in the battle field is considered to be a ‘Pedi’ as he is full of fear even though he possesses the weapon uselessly. The liberality of him, who does not labour, with fail, like the manliness of a hermaphrodite, who has a sword in hand⁵. Thus, Thiruvalluvar has brought the comparison between a coward man in the battle field and a ‘Pedi’.

During Sangam times, courage and love have been considered as the two eyes of a man. A man under a king has to be courageous and knowledgeable so that the king can lead and rule his people. But the above mentioned Thirukkural says that a person with female characteristic will be considered as impotent.

III.

“Kallaathan Sorkaa Muruthal Mulairandum

Illaathan Penkaamur Ratu”

(Adhigaaram 41– Kallaamai, Thirukkural- 402)

The one who has no knowledge about the subject being spoken among the scholars but still tries to blabber in front of them in vain is compared to the who tries to become a female though he does not possess the fertile nature by birth. The desire of the unlearned to speak (in an assembly), is like a woman without breasts desiring the enjoyment of woman – hood⁵. Through this, the discrimination that is done between the transgender and the normal or rather the others are seen.

CONCLUSION

As Thirukkural discussed and compared the characteristics of different genders that are similar to the third gender. In this paper, I have brought out and highlighted some aspects about Transgender. Transgender have found places in different forms in Thirukkural and have been compared and mentioned not just in a positive way but also in a negative way. Thus, this proves beyond doubt and confirms that Transgender are described to be disgraceful in Thirukkural in Thiruvalluvar's view.

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