

Poetic Expression of Third Gender Poets As A Tool For Gender Sensitization: A Study of Three Poems By Gender Queer Poets.

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ABSTRACT-Equality is a crucial right that needs to be inculcated in the society to promote an all-round social progress and social justice. For ensuring social equality, gender sensitivity as a value that needs to be enshrined in the society. In our society there is a 'HE', there is a 'SHE' and there are the 'OTHERS'. The discussion on these 'OTHER', so called Third gender is still considered a taboo. Many of these individuals are still living marginalized and socially excluded lives. Gender sensitization can invoke awareness that each individual should be treated with equal respect regardless of their sex. In contemporary society third gender poets have started to voice the chatter of their minds through their poetry. Poetry plays a crucial role in mirroring the overall tenor of the society and it can influence and rectify the total social thought process too. This research plans to explore the reflected thought process of the third gender poets in their poetry .It tries to study how their subjective experiences ,emotion, thoughts lead us to understand the plight and pain experienced by the third gender individuals universally. The present study undertakes to analyze three different poems of the same title 'The Third Gender' by different poets Jacks McNamara, Moses Samandar and Sharen Raphael. Hope this research would provide an empathetic attitude towards the third gender creating the awareness by changing the pattern of the belief system of the society.

Index Terms-Gender Sensitization, Third gender, Gender Identity Crisis, Culture, poetry

1. Introduction

The preamble to the constitution of India proclaims that Equality is one of the fundamental rights of each citizen. One of the foremost rights that the constitution confers on citizens is the right to Equality of status and opportunity, irrespective of their religion, caste, race or gender. In our society there is a 'HE', there is a 'SHE' and there are the 'OTHERS'. The discussion on these 'OTHER', so called Third gender is still considered a taboo. Many of these individuals are still living marginalized and socially excluded lives. For ensuring social equality, gender sensitivity is a value that needs to be enshrined in the society.

Third gender or third sex or 'other' is the concept in which individuals are categorized either by themselves or by society as neither man nor woman. Whether the individual is male, female or third gender is determined by the biology, however society identifies the same individual being man, woman or the other.

2. Gender sensitization

Gender sensitization theories claim that modification of behavior of teachers and parents towards children can have a casual effect on gender equality. Gender sensitization is not just about pitting the marginalized individual but gender awareness .It warrants intellectual effort, empathy and open-mindedness. Gender sensitization aims at understanding the social and cultural facets of genders that shapes the experiences of individuals in the society. It tries to garner awareness in regards to equality in all the spheres of life.

In contemporary society identity crises of the third gender individuals is a social concern of essence. Third gender and its sensitization has been the matter of debate I n both social and cultural context. In the modern society where gender equality of male and female is a still an exigent issue, acceptance of the equality of third gender is in contention. Third gender individuals still face prejudice in the perspective of social acceptance. Many a times, these individuals are shunned or abandoned by their families and the society. They are criticized, ridiculed, taunted and face mental or physical harassment. They are deprecated to an extent that they withdraw from the mainstream society and form their own community. There is a necessity to change the mindset of society towards the gender equality of not just His and Her but of 'Other's as well.

3. Poetry as a means for Gender sensitization

Poetry as always stated is the mirror held on to the society. The end of poetry is not to just delight but to precept or to teach. Poetry very smoothly rectifies the society by picturing its flaws. Poetry contemplates on every issue concerning the society. Poetry gives expression to the individual's voice, so how could third gender be avert from using it.

The present research tries to identify the voices of third gender poets expressed in there poetry .It will try to penetrate deep into the heart and understand their social ,psychological state of mind through their poetic expressions with the goal that this insight would help the process of gender sensitization. The three poems of the same title 'Third Gender' by three different gender writers Jacks McNamara, Moses Samandar and Sharen Raphel will be under discussion.

4. Reflection of Third Gender Thought Process in Poetry:

‘Third gender’the poem by Jacks McNamara begins with the gender dysphoria when he wishes to be a boy and then again his thought changes and he wishes to be a girl

*“I remember when I turned my last skirt into a tablecloth
because I only wanted to be one gender now
and it was not girl. I remember when everything changed–
I turned the tablecloth back into a skirt.”*

Further the speaker says that her mother gave her a red purse which she hides under the bed. She says even her neighbors liked her with long hair and how her purse looked on her but further she admits that it was easy to look like a girl but then being a girl is not an easy task. As she states that at seventeen she wrote a short story about drunken men who assaulted her, swerved directly at her at 2 am, they threw cards at her. She notices Queen of Hearts and Ace of Spades. Even the cards reflect The Third Gender Dysphoria as in Cardology Queen of Hearts stands for the loving mother, sweetheart or adorable daughter which she is whereas Ace of Spades symbolizes the transformation which she passes through. She cuts off all her hair to feel victorious, but then this transformation is not accepted by the family. As the speaker describe her mothers reaction on her shaven head:

*“When I cut
all my hair off...
no one screaming now but my mom.”*

Non acceptance in the society is yet another theme that reflects through these poems. The speaker illustrates that the society trapped in the gender identity as ‘They’ from the society called her ‘crazy’ and even ‘sir’. The children questioned her whether she is a boy or a girl, men enquired about her shaven head and why was she not married. Such an experience reflected in the poetry makes us realize that the gender sensitization is the need of hour. The mindset of society needs amendment and the start should be from the attitude of family of The Third Gender individual. The insecurities and guilt of the family members reflect when the speaker illustrates an incident of a celebration at restaurant where outwardly everything looked perfect, they drank wine and celebrated. As they reached home, her mother burst into tears and hoped that everyone thought that the speaker had had chemotherapy and that was why she had no hair. Such are the harrowing experiences of the third gender individuals.

The speaker then mentions that she felt like an alien, so she puts on a black dress to look beautiful. Further she states how for her ‘He Lover’ she is handsome and for her ‘She Lover’ she is pretty. The imagery of her wearing black tuxedo vest while her lover wearing a short skirts and a flower in her hair reflects the thought process of third gender individual. The speaker says her beloved calls her ex-boyfriend. She names her Zebra. As the zebra stripes here symbolizes the

balance of light and darkness, the balance of yin and yang. Zebra stands for peace and harmony and even fair judgment. So the poem ends with the positive thought that whatever the attitude of the society might be the speaker has peace and harmony at heart for whoever she is.

Secondly the poem Third Gender by Moses Samandar describes how the third gender is the creation of mankind when he says:

*Who makes this third gender?
Human kind*

People forget that even if the person belongs to the third gender kind, he is still is a human and has the right to equality. In this poem the poet asserts three types of gender but third gender for him is not the confusion but 'The Perfect Gender'

*Not manly
Not feminine
Just the perfect being
Not god of course
But the third gender
Not a confusion or a mix of both
But the Perfect Gender*

The metaphor of carton of sulphuric acid for a calm third gender justifies that just as sulphuric acid is the combination of three different gases but still has its own characteristics, just like the third gender has the infinite abilities.

Thirdly when the poem 'The Third Gender' by Sharen Raphael begins, the speaker is tired of the precepts and nagging and says

*I will truly listen to you
But help me with an answer to this
– am I a human?*

Above lines set forth the identity crises faced by the speaker. As she doubts if she is a human being. According to the poet even though she shares the same language and same world, she must be too complex to be the part of 'patchwork quilt'. Her seclusion is reflected when she says that she has the ability to be a 'great physician', 'a soulful singer' or 'an artist', but is not allowed to be a part of this 'Unison world'. She says that she can see the sun rising as others do

but the sun doesn't rise for her. The air that gives breath to others, kills her when she is gazed at in 'disperse', 'desdain' and with 'scornful sight' that belittles her. She mourns that she doesn't belong to the binary world.

*My world falls apart when I am frequent reminded
That I must not be made to belong in a world of two's for I am the third.*

Just like the other two poems this poem also ends with the plea for the freedom from the labels and thus from the shame she experiences.

The technique of free verse employed by these gender queers poet makes it clear that they wish to disregard traditional binary mindset and wish to create the free form of new culture where they would have their own space without any judgement and understanding without any subjugation. The diction employed like 'Castrating Cucumber', 'Queen of Hearts', 'screams', 'Vemonous', 'eerie' reflect the darker side of the experiences whereas 'Ace of Spades', 'Zebra', 'Calm Third Gender', 'Perfect Gender' reflect the brighter side of their psyche.

5. Conclusion:

Thus the undertaken poems are the illustrations of the various internal and external, biological and sociocultural problems like fear assault, molestation, denial of education, undue disapprobation in the families. The poem also renders their conflict to discern their own identity, freedom and space in the binary world. These poems have definitely brought into light the archetypes of the third gender community. The understanding of this conflict would definitely help the society to transform the attitude towards the third gender into positive one in order to create peaceful and harmonized gender sensitized world. This research would like to suggest that the poems by the gender queer writers could be included in the curriculum so that the campaign of gender sensitization would be expedited.

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