

CHAPTER-I

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1.1 INTRODUCTION :

Sex formation is a biological phenomenon. It is effected through certain specific mechanisms. In normal situation the human population is biologically divided into two groups, male and female. However, there are occasions when the biological mechanisms work in a different way and as a necessary consequence it gives rise to a very hazardous situation, the sex of the individual concerned cannot be distinguished. Creation is a continuous process in living world and it is maintained by the active roles played by the males and females. Owing to certain genetical irregularities, it is seen that a human child may take its birth with incomplete genital organ. This deficiency in sexual development is the root cause of an unfortunate situation in human society.

1.2 NATURE OF HIJRAS :

The persons with incomplete genital development are known as hijras, in local term. Hijaras are termed differently in different regions. That is to say, they are known as Chhaka, Khusars, Pavaneath, Handaga or Dalaga. In Bombay province they are known as Pavaya or Pathada. In Gujarat area, also Pavayas are found. In the State of Rajasthan we come across Khoje (the name given to Hijras). The Khojes are mainly engaged in the services of wealthy womenfolk.

Hijras are seen throughout the country. Most of the time males are seen in the female garb. But none of these sexes are distinguished in hijras. It is observed that, excepting the sex disorder these people are normal in other aspects of life. It is seen that, the biological

irregularities create psychological set-back in them, and they try to keep themselves away from the general social milieu. The capacity to reproduce is regarded as the best and essential quality of persons, and, thus, those who lack it are very naturally looked upon in a different way. The very physical appearance of the hijras conditioned by some physiological abnormalities together with their mode of outward expression are the causes of public ridicule. They talk in a male voice but dress and behave in a feminine way.

The hijra is not accepted as a woman because of 'her' sterility and as a man because she negates virility. Hijra is a unique and extraordinary group. The members of this group do not have specific role in the social life, in the sense that role allotment is made to male and female members of the society. The member of hijra group may not be a third sex in all the cases. The hijra by birth, due to biological deficiency as far as genetical structure is concerned are a different group, and all such impotent persons may not be the members of the group. They may not be known to other members and family members may try to hide such persons. Eventhough their physical appearance is conditioned by some physiological abnormalities they may get social protection from members of the family.

1.3 CLASSIFICATION OF HIJRAS :

Hijras can be classified into three major types.

1) Those born with genetical disorder. The persons with incomplete genital development are from this group. They are also known as eunuchs who are castrated males.

2) Second type of hijras are not eunuchs or born with genital disorder, but are man made hijras, victims of the blind faith and fear of religion. To attain the fullfledged status of a hijra a male has to go through ritual initiation ceremony performed under the supervision of senior Guru, hijras at Saundati, a religious place in Karnataka.

In the northern part of the country a male person has to undergo a ritual surgical operation after period of apprenticeship under a senior hijra.

Man made hijras are found all over the country.

3) Third type of hijras consists of those male and female members of the society who by an accident lose their own sex identity and either become eunuchs or loose facundity. This might be because of sudden physical or psychological depression in one's life. This type of hijras are not visible and may not be included in the group.

The above mentioned broad classification is done on the basis of information received from folk tales and other unwritten sources along with the biological sciences knowledge.

1.4 THE PROBLEM :

Hijras, though lives in the family at the early stage of their lives have to leave the family when become clear about their exact

position of sexual nature for fear of being molested. The third sex, as popularly called, do have a problem regarding their socialization and role identity in the society.

However, when hijras are seen in female dress and behave as agents of the Renuka or Yallamma goddess in this part of the country a question arises in the minds of sociology students that what exactly is the position of hijras in society? How they lead a life bestowed upon them by religion? What is the future of this neglected community? To find answers to such questions the study of hijras in the Kolhapur district has been undertaken.

It is seen that, the institution of hijra has emerged due to the devotion to, faith in, fear of the deity, and a desire to be subservient to the deity voluntarily or under compulsion.

The institution of hijra is built around the legendary episodes in the life of Renuka who is known as Yallamma by common man. She is known as the mother of all.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

Hijras, live in the outskirts of the village especially in the area where scheduled castes and tribes reside away from the centre of the village. They do not have any landed property and any traditional occupation for their livelihood. They heavily depend upon their religious activities. This economically backward community is not integrated one and we find one or two hijras in a village or in the group of two or more villages serving the Renuka followers religiously. Since this is

the present day situation of hijras the major objectives of the present study are summarised below :

- 1) To understand the social, religious and economic position of hijra in social set-up.
- 2) To study the problems they face as a member of the society and
- 3) To find out the solutions if any to eradicate their difficulties and suggest measures to help them to come out of the present day situation.

1.6 AREA OF THE STUDY :

The area selected for the present study is Kolhapur district. In the Kolhapur city and in the adjoining area we find the influence of the goddess Reuka or Yallamma on the masses. The influence of the mother goddess is more on the backward and illiterate people. The Renuka shrine is at Saundati in Karnataka and is supposed to be the most important and main shrine. Another shrine is at Alate (in the Kolhapur district) and at both these places the hijras perform ritual ceremonies throughout the year. There are ritual performances at local level also. We find number of hijras performing rituals at Kolhapur. This is one of the reasons for selecting the area for the present study.

Another reason is that, Kolhapur is the adjoining district to Karnataka, especially the district Belgaum of Karnataka, where the Renuka shrine is found at Saundati. The number of followers of the mother goddess Renuka are thus more in number in Belgaum and the adjoining Kolhapur district.



A/ WITH THE RESPONDENTS.



B/ WITH THE RESPONDENTS.

1.7 SAMPLE :

Though the number of hijras are more in Kolhapur district, it is very difficult to find them settled in bulk in a single or two villages. They gather at Saundati and Alate for ritual ceremonies and one has to contact them at those places only. For the purpose of this study we have adopted accidental sample and have contacted 45 hijras coming from Kolhapur district at the time of rituals at Alate from Kolhapur district and at Saundati from Belgaum district.

1.8 DATA COLLECTION :

To collect the data for the present study an interview schedule was prepared which included questions regarding religious, social and economic aspects alongwith the demographic and other details.

Tabulation is done to present the data in a comprehensive manner and a qualitative analysis is done along with this quantification of data.

1.9 PLAN OF THE REPORT :

Chapter-I introduces the nature of hijras, the problem under study and the methodology adopted for the collection of data in regard with the problem.

Chapter-II deals with the reviewe of the existing literature on the problem.

Chapter-III is devoted to socio-economic and demographic details about the hijras under study.

Chapter-IV analyses the position and problems of hijras under study and

Chapter-V is devoted for concluding remarks.

Appendix-I gives the interview schedule utilized for data collection.

Appendix-II is concerned with the Bibliography of books and journals used for the preparation of present study report.