

# Trans Community: Breaking the Barriers of Perception?

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**Abstract**—This article explores the transgender community's struggles and triumphs in breaking societal barriers of gender perception, with a focus on Karnataka, India. Challenging binary categorizations of 'male' and 'female,' it examines the fluidity of gender identity through cultural, psychological, and legal lenses. Drawing on fieldwork, mythological narratives, and traditions like Jogathi and Jogappa, the paper critiques linguistic hierarchies, colonial stigmatization, and patriarchal norms that marginalize trans individuals. It highlights the 2014 Supreme Court ruling as a pivotal shift, affirming self-determined gender and enabling rights to education, employment, and welfare. However, persistent challenges such as social compulsion, violence, and economic exclusion are addressed, alongside development programs like Garima Greh and scholarships. Personal stories of activists like Akkai Padmashali and Manjamma Jogathi illustrate resilience and advocacy. The article calls for expanded scholarly discourse in Kannada literature to foster inclusive human rights, deconstructing conformity and envisioning gender as a continuum of choice and self-realization. Ultimately, it advocates for ethical recognition of diverse embodiments to transform societal attitudes and policies.

**Index Terms**—Transgender community, Gender identity, Gender Binary, Kannada Cultural discourse, Feminist Theory, Supreme Court ruling, Jogathi/Jogappa.

It is limiting—and even perilous—to conceptualize the human community strictly within the binary categories of 'female' and 'male'. Some women have internalized the social constructs of femininity; some individuals are born female but later transition into men; others are born male but later transition into women. Thus, within women, there exists both the 'female' and the 'male', and within men too, there exists both the 'male' and the 'female'. This fluidity extends further to bisexual individuals, who exist in a state of duality—both sexually and emotionally.

There are people whose bodies defy conventional definitions: for instance, some possess features culturally associated with femininity, such as breasts, but are not recognized as women because they lack a uterus and are therefore dismissed as boddi. Similarly, there are men with beards, mustaches, and penises who, despite their outward masculinity, are incapable of producing sperm, or whose sexual organs no longer function due to health conditions.

Every human body—whether female or male—is as unique as a fingerprint. Moreover, hormonal changes, emotional states, health conditions, and gender choices continually reshape each person's bodily composition.

The diversity of the human body is often overlooked by societal norms and academic disciplines that confine human identity within rigid binaries of 'female' and 'male'. Although our systems of knowledge arise from society itself, they frequently fail to recognize the immense diversity that exists within both men and women. Whether in academic inquiry or social structures, there persists a relentless pursuit of perfection and certainty. This quest for uniformity reinforces the use of gender binaries in both scholarly discourse and everyday social norms.

### I. 'WOMAN', 'MAN', 'THIRD GENDER': ARE THEY FORMS OR IDEALS?

The terms 'woman' and 'man' refer not only to physiological forms but also to the social ideals attached to those forms—expectations of how individuals should behave or appear. Those who do not conform to these rigid categories are often labeled as the 'third gender', a term now recognized by law. These classifications originate from a biologically determined hierarchy of the so-called 'first gender' and 'second gender'. Although such distinctions have lost much of their validity, society continues to define and assign meanings to who a 'woman' or a 'man' is, and what social status each holds. The concept of the 'third gender', though legally acknowledged, continues to exist under the shadow of constitutional ideals it ostensibly seeks to affirm.

"Changeable, deceptive games... who is left to play such a game?"—this line captures the inner turmoil of those who are perceived as men but identify as women, and vice versa. When someone who outwardly appears as a 'man' is addressed as such, despite having internalized a woman's identity, they often respond with a faint laugh that hides their eyes—unaware, perhaps, of the deeper conflict within. Likewise, when someone appears outwardly as a 'woman' and is called one, their latent masculinity—an expression of their inner sexual identity—often meets with social denial or rejection.

Though we are all human beings, we cannot neatly divide ourselves into the rigid binary of 'woman' and 'man'. Each individual's biological and emotional distinctiveness challenges this simplistic categorization and reveals the vast complexity of human identity.

The transgender community no longer needs to identify themselves as male, female, or third gender, nor to seek validation for these identities, following the historic Supreme Court ruling of April 15, 2014. This landmark decision broadened the social imagination, creating new spaces for transgender narratives and self-expression. In its wake, various platforms have emerged to foster more meaningful and sustained dialogues on the concept of 'gender'.

In Kannada discourse, discussions on sexuality and sexual behavior have remained limited, often overshadowed by conservative perspectives. Existing debates around the ‘woman–man’ binary tend to emphasize physical form and social conditioning rather than the deeper dimensions of identity. However, gender should be defined by personal choice, not by biological identity at birth. Such an interpretation foregrounds the right to choose—to become male or female—as a fundamental human right.

Yet within the intellectual sphere, deep-rooted moral hesitation and conservative attitudes have created invisible barriers that restrict open inquiry into sexuality and sexual behavior. Because of this hesitation, seminal works such as Alfred C. Kinsey’s *A Study of Sexuality and Sexual Behavior* have failed to find resonance or serious engagement within Kannada academic thought. The neglect of translating and discussing key global works on sexuality reflects a pervasive intellectual prudery (*maḍivantikeyadhōraṇe*) that continues to shape the contours of Kannada scholarship.

## II. TRANS COMMUNITY: AN ENQUIRY INTO CONCEPT

In Kannada cultural discourse, gender-diverse communities have long existed, though they have often been recognized through fragmented and stigmatizing labels such as *hijada*, *kinnara*, *napuṃsaka*, *khoja*, *kocchi*, *khojja*, *kanchuki*, *śaṇḍa*, *śikhaṇḍi*, *yanaka*, and many others. While these terms acknowledge the social awareness of gender diversity, they also reveal the linguistic hierarchies and exclusions embedded within cultural perception.

From a psychological perspective, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), released in 2013, introduced the term “Gender Dysphoria.” It refers to individuals who experience profound discomfort with their biological sex and possess a strong conviction regarding the gender with which they truly identify. Prior to this revision, psychology had categorized such experiences under “gender identity disorder,” a term that pathologized what is now understood as a matter of identity rather than illness.

Although government reports frequently use terms such as “*ṭṛtīyaliṅga*” (third gender) or “*maṅgalamukhi*” (auspicious-faced), many within the transgender community reject these labels, arguing that they fail to capture the complexities of their lived experiences. Classical and mythological narratives often cite figures like *Śikhaṇḍi* as examples of gender diversity, yet even *Śikhaṇḍi* remains linguistically associated with the term “*napuṃsaka*” (neither male nor female). In this way, language itself becomes a mirror of societal confusion and prejudice, reflecting the limitations of cultural understanding.

The landmark Supreme Court verdict of April 15, 2014, redefined the term “transgender” by affirming that it includes all individuals who are “not exclusively male or female.” The judgment recognized those born female who transition into male, those born male who transition into female, and intersex persons—all as integral to the broader understanding of gender. This ruling marked a historic shift: from pathologizing gender diversity to upholding it as a constitutional right.

Yet, the challenge that remains is linguistic, cultural, and ethical. Kannada society still grapples with how to speak of sexuality—how to name it, describe it, and accept it—without resorting to embarrassment or euphemism. To speak openly of sexuality in Kannada continues to demand courage. The conversation on gender cannot remain confined to the boundaries of biological form; it must evolve into a dialogue on human experience, identity, and the inalienable right to self-definition.

Members of the transgender community often resist being labeled as “trans woman” or “trans man.” They assert their right to identify within the already accepted categories of “woman” and “man.” Activists such as AkkaiPadmashali, along with others who share similar conviction, have affirmed this stance by recording their gender simply as “woman” in official documents.

Society has long equated “womanhood” with biological features—the womb, the breast, the vagina, and sexuality. Yet, as Shamba suggests through the symbol of Āditi, womanhood must be understood in a far deeper and more expansive sense. Etymologically, Āditi derives from a-diti—the unfragmented, undivided, self-born whole; an existence that cannot be confined or analyzed. To apply this meaning to “woman” is to transcend the patriarchal tendency to reduce her to mere biology.

The patriarchal system has long defined women as “hole,” “yoni,” or “uterus”—symbols of lack, dependence, and reproductive function. To challenge this reduction, it is necessary to dismantle the entire symbolic order that constructs power through such interpretations. The only philosophical way forward is to expand the meaning of gender to include those born female who later become male; those born male who become female; those dismissed as “boddiiyaru” (barren women) for lacking a womb; men with beards and penises who cannot produce sperm; men rendered impotent by illness; and intersex or dual-sex individuals. All of them must be conceptually embraced within the broader idea of “men of different embodiments” and “women of different embodiments.”

To invert terminology, therefore, is not a mere linguistic exercise—it is an act of political resistance, one that disrupts entrenched hierarchies of power and meaning.

### III. BIOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS: CULTURAL POSSIBILITIES

In tribal and folk literatures, numerous narratives depict individuals identified as “men” who undergo gender transitions—either due to biological circumstances or through the conscious choice of gender identity. These stories, preserved within the oral traditions of indigenous communities, reveal the deep influence of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava belief systems as well as the intricate interplay between state culture and tribal cosmology. When the state gradually absorbed tribal practices into its religious framework, it reinterpreted them through the lens of dominant social and moral codes, thereby reshaping their original meanings.

Consequently, both Sanskrit and Kannada literary traditions contain several Purāṇic narratives of transformation—stories in which a he becomes she, or a she becomes he. One such striking

example appears in Darōjīrāmma's folk ballad of Yellamma, where Paraśurāma, in his search for his mother who resides in Hulagī, undergoes a moment of transformation and becomes a woman.

“I became a male jogamma,  
I became a woman, leaving manhood behind.”

This verse signifies more than a mere physical transformation; it represents a conscious act of acceptance, an embrace of another gender identity as a sacred transition. Among deities such as Ellamma, Paraśurāma, and Ekavīra of Maharashtra, there exists a ritual tradition in which male devotees renounce their masculinity to serve the goddess as jogammas—ritual women dedicated to divine service.

While Indian mythology contains numerous stories of women transforming into men—such as Śikhaṇḍī—literary references to the reverse transformation, in which men choose to become women, are far more common. Yet when men adopt feminine identities, society tends to categorize them under labels such as hijra, maṅgalamukhi, or jogamma. In contrast, when women choose to become men, no recognized term or social category exists to describe their identity, leaving their experiences largely invisible within cultural and social discourse.

This linguistic absence highlights the deep-rooted gender asymmetry in Indian society, where the male body is granted the symbolic freedom to transform, while the female body remains constrained by restrictive norms. There are no folk epics or Purāṇas that narrate or validate the lives of women who transition to male identities. This silence points to a cultural denial—an unspoken rule that men may choose their gender, but women may not.

Despite this imbalance, women who choose to live as men—defying social expectations and biological determinism—have found faith and belonging in the worship of Santoṣimā, a goddess also revered by the hijra community. These women, along with individuals who outwardly retain a male form but identify as female in sexual or emotional terms (and vice versa), all consider themselves devotees of Santoṣimā, finding spiritual recognition and community beyond rigid gender norms.

This shared devotion serves as a cultural bridge, uniting the many fluid forms of human existence within a single spiritual framework. In doing so, it challenges the patriarchal division of body and identity, offering instead a vision of gender as a lived continuum—one defined by transformation, faith, and self-realization.

#### IV. JOGATHI TRADITION AND THE TRANS COMMUNITY

The Jogathi tradition provided a spiritual and familial space for those born male but desiring to live as women. Through the ritual of muttukattisuvudu (tying of beads), these individuals were symbolically initiated and integrated into the family structure, gaining recognition as Jogathis. In this context, the Jogathi identity also encompasses trans women who have not undergone nirvāṇa (surgical transition). Similarly, for those born female but seeking to live as men, the Ellamma

tradition offered a parallel refuge, affirming their gender identity within a culturally sanctioned spiritual framework.

During fieldwork, several women initiated through Jogathidīkṣa were observed wearing men's attire—dhoti, jubba, or pyjama—signifying a gender-fluid embodiment. The Jogathi initiation does not require nirvāṇa; it allows individuals to express a feminine identity while retaining a male body, or a masculine identity while inhabiting a female body. This flexibility reflects an indigenous understanding of gender that predates and transcends modern biomedical categories, privileging expression over anatomy and devotion over identity.

However, with colonial interventions, these inclusive traditions were delegitimized. In colonial and postcolonial India, the trans community—once integrated within religious and caste systems—was expelled and stigmatized as criminal and immoral. Consequently, trans individuals developed their own faith structures, belief systems, and ritual practices, asserting spiritual self-determination outside mainstream religion.

## V. DEPICTIONS OF THE TRANS COMMUNITY IN COLONIAL INDIA

Before colonial rule, trans communities lived with dignity and cultural significance, often occupying sacred roles in temples and royal rituals. However, colonial modernity, with its rigid moral and racial hierarchies, pathologized these communities. The British government's Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 declared entire communities of Hijras and gender-nonconforming people as hereditary criminals. This law systematically dismantled their religious legitimacy, erased their traditional occupations, and subjected them to constant police surveillance. Furthermore, the colonial legal framework labeled same-sex relationships as “unnatural lust,” thereby criminalizing both intimacy and identity.

## VI. DOES EMBRACING GENDER IDENTITY DECONSTRUCT CONFORMITY?

“I reject the masculinity imposed by society. I have always sought a clear distinction between socialized manliness and the ‘manness’ I desire. I have consciously resisted the urge, driven by the male ego, to be called a good man,” says Rumi Harish. These words advocate for a gender-sensitive environment that challenges the socialized male ego.

Rumi Harish's autobiography *JonkuriKhayal* offers a novel perspective on deconstructing the concept of manhood and exploring the inner conflict of a person born female who transitions into a man. Conversely, those born male who transition into women may appear to break free from conventional notions of womanhood, yet they often embrace and uphold traditional ideals of femininity. They enact behaviors dictated by societal expectations for women, thereby reinforcing socialization rooted in biology.

A troubling social compulsion exists for trans women: they are expected to engage in sexual intercourse with a man using their genitalia as proof of their womanhood—a requirement not mirrored for those transitioning from woman to man. This dynamic often results in the punishment

and humiliation of the trans women community. The prevailing notion suggests that a woman truly becomes a woman only after her *prasta* (the first night), a concept echoed even in the Devadasi system, where *prasta* signifies ‘making the woman.’ Thus, even if one possesses the physiological features of a woman, full recognition as a woman is granted only after entering a sexual relationship with a man. This compulsion undermines both the willful choice of gender and the conventional physiological determinants of gender itself.

Feminist theory posits that gender is constructed through socialization based on physiology. “Gender should not be determined by birth but by the individual’s choice,” asserts the trans community. Both frameworks aim to deconstruct the conventional ego in order to forge new identities. However, in practice, men and women within the trans community often enact the socially prescribed roles of masculinity and femininity. This demonstrates that mere biological transition alone is insufficient to bring about meaningful change in a conservative society.

## VII. JOGAPPAS: WOMEN BY GENDER CHOICE OR BY SOCIAL COMPULSION?

In popular imagination, Jogappas—those born male but living in women’s attire—are often perceived as individuals who have “chosen” femininity. Yet this perception conceals more than it reveals. The Jogappa identity, upon closer examination, is not always the result of free gender choice; it often emerges from a complex web of social pressure, poverty, superstition, and patriarchal coercion. Because researchers and policymakers have tended to approach Jogappas primarily through the lens of gender difference, the stories of those compelled into femininity remain largely unheard. Excluded from state welfare schemes and legal protection, Jogappas occupy a precarious space—recognized neither fully as women nor as men, and marginalized by both law and society.

During fieldwork in Teradala, Karnataka (2018), I encountered a young boy wearing a sari, sitting silently. When approached gently, he suddenly hurled a large stone in anger. The outburst was not personal; it was symbolic, reflecting the collective rage, humiliation, and distrust endured by a community repeatedly misunderstood and marginalized. Through persistent effort, trust was eventually established, granting access to a network of Jogappas. Their life stories provided a haunting window into the underside of rural gender politics, revealing how violence, superstition, and economic helplessness often impose “femininity” as a form of punishment rather than as an act of self-affirmation.

In the villages of northern Karnataka, Jogappas are often men who once dreamed of marriage and fatherhood but were drawn into the Jogamma tradition through fear, coercion, or superstition. Many experienced sexual abuses in their youth or were forced into temple service under the guise of spiritual offering. What society often perceives as “voluntary gender transformation” is, in many cases, the outcome of sustained sexual violence and economic exclusion. These Jogappas endure daily exploitation—social, sexual, and economic—while the state and religious institutions maintain a studied silence. Their existence occupies the fraught intersection of devotion and destitution, ritual and rejection.

Much of contemporary academic and activist attention focuses on trans women who proudly embrace transformation as a self-determined identity. Yet the tragic lives of Jogappas—those for whom “becoming a woman” was not a choice but a survival strategy—remain largely invisible. To engage ethically with trans discourse, scholarship must extend its empathy beyond celebratory narratives of visibility, reaching communities still enmeshed in caste, poverty, and faith-based subjugation. The Jogappas compel us to ask: what does it truly mean to become a woman when womanhood itself can be a condition of captivity?

## VIII. LAW AND THE TRANS COMMUNITY

The landmark legal ruling of April 15, 2014, established that individuals, regardless of the sex assigned at birth, have the right to determine their own gender identity. This legal recognition extends to the trans community the same constitutional rights enjoyed by all Indian citizens. The judgment affirms that individuals may self-identify their gender, and that the law must honor this self-chosen identity. It grants the trans community rights in accordance with their chosen gender—including access to education, employment, healthcare, property, and residence—on equal footing with any other citizen of India.

Prior to this ruling, sex was determined solely at birth, and deviation from this biological assignment often resulted in social ostracism. Trans individuals who chose to live according to their gender identity were systematically marginalized by their families and communities, frequently facing severe violations of their human rights. This social exclusion led to widespread economic and educational disenfranchisement within the trans community. The Supreme Court’s decision countered these injustices by extending constitutional protections, ensuring that trans individuals could live with dignity and access public welfare on equal terms.

By legally recognizing an individual’s right to choose their gender identity, the law enables the creation of programs specifically tailored to the needs of the trans community. The ruling mandates that the government take concrete steps to provide health care, educational opportunities, employment, and residential rights, ensuring that trans individuals are fully included within India’s social framework. Furthermore, it guarantees that trans children have the legal right to live with their parents or guardians, laying the foundation for specialized welfare initiatives that address their unique needs.

The significance of this decision was further reinforced on September 29, 2020, when the first regulations for the protection of the rights of transgender persons were officially published in India’s Gazette.

## IX. DO HUMAN RIGHTS INCLUDE THE RIGHTS OF THE TRANS COMMUNITY?

The legal recognition of trans people’s rights raises a crucial question: do human rights inherently encompass the rights of the trans community? The Supreme Court ruling aligns human rights with the constitutional guarantee of equality, extending protection and access to fundamental freedoms



to trans individuals. However, the full realization of these rights requires far-reaching societal change—moving beyond legal recognition toward genuine cultural and institutional acceptance. In the discourse of human rights, just as the rights of women were historically marginalized, the rights of the trans community have also been largely overlooked. Similar to women’s struggle for recognition, the trans community is now asserting its claim to equal rights. Historically, acts of violence against trans individuals were often not recognized as criminal offenses. Until the Indian Penal Code Section 377 was amended to decriminalize consensual same-sex relationships, marriage for many trans persons was also considered legally impermissible. Despite the incomplete legal recognition of trans marriage rights, some individuals, such as AkkaiPadmashali, have legally registered their marriages and, in certain cases, even obtained legal divorces under the prevailing laws.

In Karnataka, municipalities have specifically employed trans individuals—particularly those who have transitioned from male to female—in sanitation work. Historically assigned to certain castes, this role has now been extended to trans women as part of their integration into formal labor markets. Many trans women from the Jogappa tradition, working within these municipal structures, have overcome social stigma and secured stable employment.

Thanks to the tireless advocacy of the trans community, many individuals have secured employment in both government and private sectors, while others have established businesses and participated in social service initiatives. The Supreme Court ruling of 2014, which recognized the freedom to choose one’s gender identity, granted not only legal autonomy but also access to fundamental human rights for trans individuals. This historic decision affirmed the dignity of trans people by acknowledging their right to self-determined gender identity and securing their rightful place within the broader human rights framework.

The district administration’s provision of land to trans individuals, along with government financial support for opening bank accounts, marked a historic step toward their social and economic inclusion. Access to government grants for business and social welfare programs has profoundly impacted the lives of trans individuals, transformed not only their livelihoods but also gradually shifted societal attitudes toward them.

The once-prevailing notion that trans people were destined for begging or sex work has been challenged by these developments. With the introduction of legal protections and social integration policies, the trans community is gradually moving from the margins of society toward greater acceptance and visibility. Trans individuals are no longer confined to traditional roles defined by exclusion; they can now pursue dignified employment and live with enhanced autonomy.

This legal and social transformation represents a significant milestone, not only for the trans community but for society at large, as it challenges and redefines longstanding notions of gender and social inclusion.

## X. TRANS COMMUNITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

As a result of the evolving legal and social recognition of the trans community, several significant initiatives have been launched to support their empowerment. On February 12, 2022, the government introduced a program titled “Support for Individuals at the Margins for Livelihood and Employment,” specifically targeting the trans community. Various state governments, local bodies, and community-based organizations have also shifted their focus toward providing housing, education, and skill-development programs, as well as financial assistance for trans students pursuing higher education.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of the Indian government has also fostered a supportive environment for transgender students in schools, aiming to reduce dropout rates caused by societal stigma and discrimination. The initiative seeks to cultivate an inclusive mindset that welcomes all genders, ensuring that transgender children receive the financial support necessary to continue their education. Notably, scholarships have been introduced for transgender students at the secondary and higher secondary levels, with these benefits now extending to post-graduate studies as well.

Furthermore, the government has committed to establishing GarimaGreh (Shelters of Dignity) for homeless or orphaned transgender individuals across various states. These shelters are designed to provide a safe and supportive environment for the most vulnerable members of the community, offering not only basic necessities but also psychological and legal assistance. As part of this initiative, Protection Cells for transgender individuals are being set up to address crimes against them. The budget allocated for these programs, planned for 2021–2026, is a significant ₹3,000 crore.

Under the STYL initiative, medical institutions are providing essential health services, including gender-affirming surgeries and hormone therapies, for transgender individuals. On November 25, 2020, the national portal for transgender identification certificates was launched, enabling transgender people to amend their gender markers on official documents, such as birth certificates, in accordance with their self-identified gender. This initiative represents a significant step toward legal recognition, granting the trans community greater autonomy over their gender identity within the formal legal system.

The National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) has also played a pivotal role in securing economic support for transgender individuals. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a financial grant of ₹1,500 was provided to each transgender person through the ministry, alongside food rations distributed by local authorities.

Moreover, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has ensured that transgender individuals have access to economic development programs such as the Prime Minister’s Skill Development Program (PMKVY), the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), and other short-term skill training initiatives. These programs aim to promote the economic self-sufficiency of transgender individuals, integrating them into mainstream workforces and providing long-term career development opportunities.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced provisions allowing transgender students to access special reservations in higher education. Karnataka's state policy on transgender individuals, implemented in 2017, established a framework for the social and educational inclusion of the community. This progressive policy has made significant strides in improving the social and economic conditions of transgender people in the state, serving as a model for potential national-level reforms.

The legal, social, and economic advancements highlighted here represent a critical shift for the transgender community. From government-provided shelters to educational scholarships, and from healthcare access to skill-development programs, these initiatives empower transgender individuals to lead dignified lives. The Indian government's vision aims to ensure socio-economic inclusion for all genders, marking a decisive break from the past and offering the trans community a renewed sense of hope and opportunity.

### Turmoil and Triumph

AkkaiPadmashali, a recipient of the Rajyotsava Award, is widely recognized for her resilience and courage. She has fought tirelessly for her rights and dignity as a trans woman and became the first trans woman in India to obtain a driving license after officially registering her sex as female. Beyond advocacy, AkkaiPadmashali is an active participant in politics. In January 2017, she married V. Vasudev, and I had the honor of attending their wedding. Their marriage was legally registered in 2018. They adopted a son through legal channels in 2011 and envisioned a fulfilling family life. However, due to domestic violence, AkkaiPadmashali filed for divorce in 2022, which was legally finalized by 2024. She continues to champion the rights of the trans community while raising her adopted son.

### ManjammaJogathi;

A celebrated Jogathi dancer, was honored with the Padma Shri by the Government of India and received the State Award from the Government of Karnataka. In 2021, she became the first trans woman to be appointed President of the Karnataka Janapada Academy, a highly prestigious institution. In a significant step forward, the academy incorporated her life story into the curriculum for degree students, marking a milestone in the educational recognition and engagement of the trans community.

Another prominent figure, NeethuVanajakshi from Karnataka, became the first trans woman to represent India at Miss International Queen in 2020. A BBA graduate, Neethu also pursued studies in animation at the Ken School of Arts and completed a diploma in animation. She is recognized as one of the first trans women to successfully complete her education, crediting her achievement to the support she received from her family. In 2019, Neethu was crowned Miss Trans Queen, further establishing her success as an entrepreneur and role model.

The voices of trans women who have transitioned from male to female, both in Karnataka and across India, have only recently begun to gain widespread recognition. Sumathi, who transitioned

to Rumi Harish, has emerged as a symbol of social acceptance, offering a renewed perspective on masculinity and challenging traditional gender norms.

In Kerala, VihanPithambar has been actively working to support trans men. In 2020, he was appointed as a member of the National Expert Committee for transgender issues, contributing to the welfare of his community. Additionally, in 2016, he founded MATA, a community-based organization for trans men, marking a significant step in advocating for their rights and visibility in India.

Through their achievements, these individuals have paved the way for greater visibility and empowerment of the trans community. They exemplify resilience in the face of adversity and demonstrate the transformative impact of social, legal, and familial support. Their stories are not only personal triumphs but also integral to the broader movement for trans rights in India, challenging conventional gender norms and redefining notions of success and identity in profound ways.

## XI. IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ROAD BECOMING A PATH

The transgender community, long labeled as criminals under colonial law (1831), struggled for 143 years to free themselves from this oppression. Colonial legal interpretations denied them the right to live with dignity and exist as full human beings. Through efforts by the National Legal Commission, transgender individuals were formally recognized as human beings, granted rights, and acknowledged as part of the nation's human resources. Organizations such as Sangam, MangalaGrama, and Steer Compass continue to work actively to support those who have transitioned from male to female.

Just as the definition of "human" historically excluded women, the definition of "woman" often excluded the transgender community. Organizations founded by transgender women have advocated for those born female who transitioned to male. However, it was through the work of Rumi Harish those meaningful conversations and recognition of rights emerged for those born male and who transitioned to female.

Despite their rich cultural and spiritual heritage, Jogappas remain largely invisible in Kannada literature. Although RajanGavas' novel BhandaraBhoga was translated into Kannada by ChandrakantaPokale, serious scholarly and literary discussions on the community are still lacking. Jogappas, a marginalized group, have yet to establish formal organizations in Karnataka. It is imperative that feminists, transgender activists, and human rights defenders turn their attention to this issue and advocate for inclusive principles that recognize and uphold the rights and dignity of the Jogappa community.

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