

# Transgenders Community in India Socioeconomic Health and Psychological Conditions

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## Abstract

The transgender community in India has historically been marginalised and discriminated against socially, economically, and politically. Many people view trans people as abnormal or deviant, and they frequently experience abuse and violence on both a physical and emotional level, including sexual assault. Many incidents go unreported due to fear of retribution or a lack of legal recognition. Education is often the primary barrier for transgender individuals, with many dropping out of school due to bullying and a lack of support. Employment is often tricky, with many forced into low-paying jobs or engaging in sex work. Healthcare access is also challenging, with hormone therapy, gender-affirming surgeries, and mental health support often not easily accessible. This paper examined the demographic, socioeconomic, employment, health, psychological conditions, and transgender people's rights protection acts in India.

**Keywords:** population, employment, health, transgenders, India

## 1. Introduction

Transgender people, often called the Hijras in the Indian subcontinent, are an officially recognised third gender in the country and consider themselves neither male nor female. As per the latest census in 2011, India recorded over 487 thousand people who identified as the third gender, most of whom came from the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. **Definition:** Transgender is a general term that describes people whose gender identity, or their internal sense of being male, female, or something else, does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. By contrast, cisgender describes people whose gender

identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Hijras are associated with several terms, depending on culture and linguistics. In various Indian languages, Hijras are called Napunsakudu (Telugu), Thiru Nangai (Tamil), Khwaja Sara (Urdu), Khusra (Punjabi) and Mangalamukhi (Kannada) among others. The third gender is inherent to Indian mythology. Socio-economically, Hijras live in well-defined communities led by a Guru or teacher. They consist of generations of the third gender who were rejected by or fled from their birth families. Apart from sex work, performing at auspicious

social gatherings or plain extortion was how most survived. This was due to the lack of education and employment due to their low status in their society hierarchy.

## 2. Review of Literature

Human rights are fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed to a human by him being a human, which can neither be created nor abrogated by any government. It includes the right to life, liberty, equality, dignity and freedom of thought and expression. The right to choose one's gender identity is essential to leading a life with dignity (Rajkumar, 2016). A transgender or trans-identified individual is one whose gender identity, outward appearance or gender expression transcends culturally defined categories of gender. Transgender fall under the LGBT group (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) (Athreye, 2015).

Transgender people are individuals of any age or sex whose appearance, personal characteristics, or behaviours differ from stereotypes about how men and women are "supposed" to be (Satashivam, 2012). Indeed, during the Mughal Empire (1526-1857), hijras were known for positions held in Royal Courts as political advisors, administrators, generals, and guardians of the harems. They even occupied high positions in the Islamic religious institutions and were also able to influence state decisions. Later, these benefits were through legislation in the British period (Raj, 2015).

To improve the situation, certain rights were guaranteed to them, but the implementation of the same was fraught with insurmountable hurdles due to the dominating binary gender concept of male or female. For example, in 1994, transgender persons got voting rights, but the task of issuing them voter identity cards caught up in the male or female question. Several of them were denied cards with the sexual category of their choice (Jha, 2016). In India, it is observed after further consideration that neither the Hindu Marriage Act nor the Special Marriage Act includes transgender people under their umbrella. Eunuchs are not protected under the National Commission for Women since they do not form a part of fairer sex. Section 2(c) of the National Commission for minorities, which defines minority communities as Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and Buddhists, does not cover transgender persons either (Indrani, 2005).

Eighty of the transgenders are not aware of the

schemes and facilities provided by the government for them. Ninety of transgender stated that they are forced to leave the house once their parents come to know about their gender problems. More than 80% of transgender people accept that they are involved in begging and sex-related work for their daily living expenses. Many transgender people feel that the general public is not ready to accept them as the third gender and often reject them if they ask job for any other help from the common public. The majority of transgender feel that they are viewed as a curse and sexual object in society and are often poorly treated by the common public (Arunagiri, 2018).

Transgender people face discrimination and harassment by family at home, school, and community, forcing them to move elsewhere. The nature of the harassment includes verbal, physical and sexual abuse, which has a profound impact on mental health. They are not part of any welfare scheme. The Indian Constitution provides equal opportunity to every citizen to grow and attain their potential, irrespective of caste, religion or gender. Transgender people were respected earlier in society, but the situation has changed, and they now face discrimination and harassment (Bal, 2020).

## 3. Objectives

- 1) To study demographic and socioeconomic conditions of transgenders
- 2) To examine the health and psychological conditions of transgender people and
- 3) To analyse problems of transgender people and protection measures in India

## 4. Methods and Materials

This study is based on secondary data collected from various sources like documents, published articles, reports, census of India data, and websites. The study analysed the data with lines markers, stacked bars, frequency, and percentage tables.

## 5. Importance of the Study

The issue of transgender is unique. Moreover, it cannot be brought under the general category of gender issues. Further, there are specific concerns in transgender issues that do not fall within the common fold. In India, the awareness of transgender issues has only now been brought under the preview of the judicial and

executive framework, with few judgments and orders being put forward. The Supreme Court of India has recently dealt with this subject and the socioeconomic and psychological problems faced by transgender people.

## 6. Results and Discussion

This paper focussed on various issues and problems that are closely related to transgender people in India such as demographic conditions including SCs and STs, socioeconomic conditions, employment, health conditions, psychological conditions, and transgender people rights protection acts in India.

### 6.1 Demographic Conditions

According to the 2011 Census of India, the first census in its history to incorporate the number of the 'trans' population, an estimated 4.8 million Indians identified as transgender. However, this number is not inclusive of those with non-binary identities. As per a 2023 report by World Population Review, the percentage of

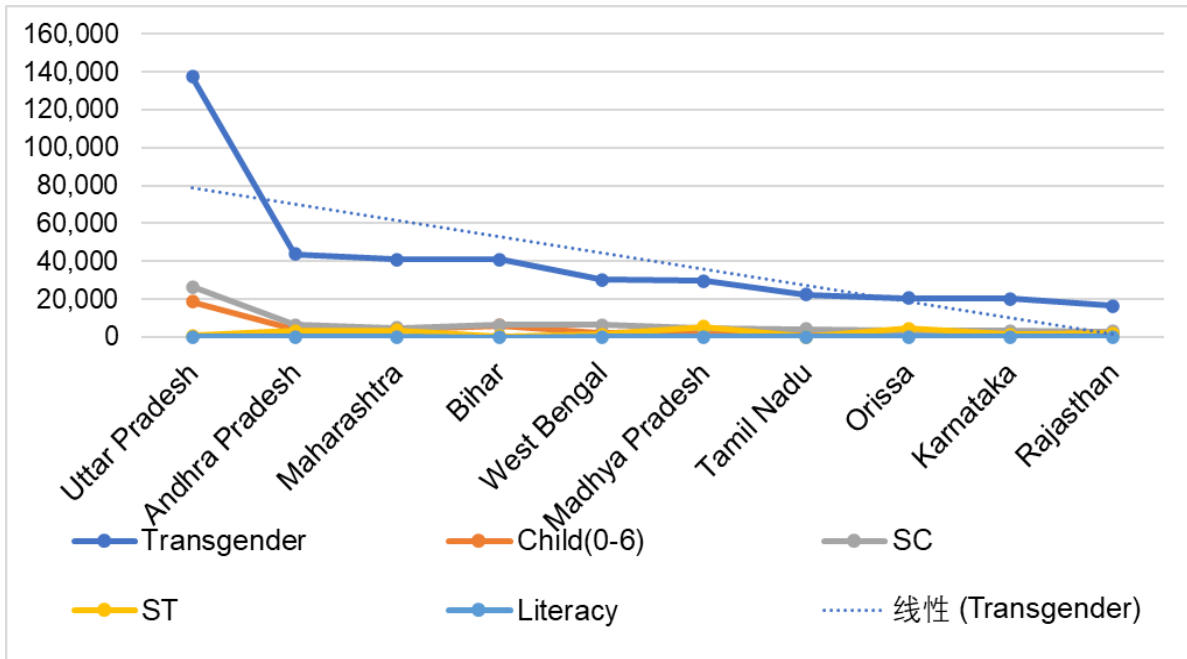
the transgender population in India is two per cent (Anuj, 2021).

Transgender population is very high in the states like Uttar Pradesh (28.18%), Andhra Pradesh (8.97%), Bihar (8.37%), West Bengal (6.22%) and Tamil Nadu (4.58%). A high percentage of the Transgender population aged 0-6 has been observed in the states of Uttar Pradesh (34.15%), Bihar (10.89%), Maharashtra (7.48%), Andhra Pradesh (7.44%) and Madhya Pradesh (6.21%). States like Uttar Pradesh (33.50%), West Bengal (8.21%), Bihar (7.99%), and Andhra Pradesh (7.90%) are highly populated by Scheduled Caste transgender. And percentage of the Scheduled Tribe transgender population, Madhya Pradesh (15.80%), Orissa (13.68%), Jharkhand (11.22%), Maharashtra (10.60%) and Andhra Pradesh (9.69%). Table 1 and Figure 1 reveal that the top ten states in India have a transgender population including children 0-6 years of age, literacy, and Scheduled Caste and Tribes.

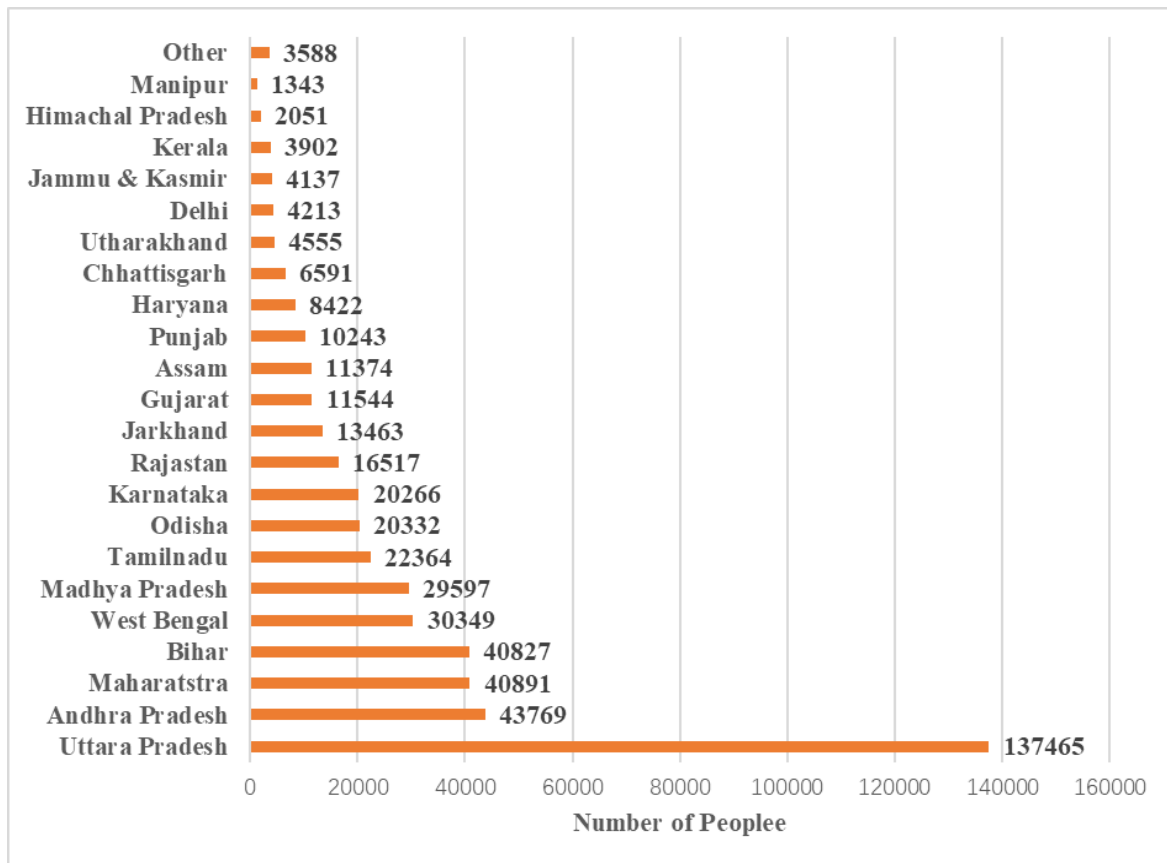
**Table 1.** Top 10 States in India Having Transgender Population (Census- 2011)

State	Transgender	Child (0-6)	SC	ST	Literacy
Uttar Pradesh	1,37,465	18,734	26,404	639	55.80%
Andhra Pradesh	43,769	4,082	6,226	3,225	53.33%
Maharashtra	40,891	4,101	4,691	3,529	67.57%
Bihar	40,827	5,971	6,295	506	44.35%
West Bengal	30,349	2,376	6,474	1,474	58.83%
Madhya Pradesh	29,597	3,409	4,361	5,260	53.01%
Tamil Nadu	22,364	1,289	4,203	180	57.78%
Orissa	20,332	2,125	3,236	4,553	54.35%
Karnataka	20,266	1,771	3,275	1,324	58.82%
Rajasthan	16,517	2,012	2,961	1,805	48.34%
Total	4,02,377	45,870	68,126	22495	

Source: Census of India- 2011.



**Figure 1.** Top 10 States in India having Transgender Population, including their literacy (Census- 2011)



**Figure 2.** States-wise Transgender Population in India (Census- 2011)

## 6.2 Socioeconomic Conditions of Transgenders

The socioeconomic status of transgender individuals in India has historically been characterised by marginalisation and

discrimination. Transgender people in India often face significant challenges in various aspects of their lives, including education, employment, healthcare, and social acceptance.

It is important to note that the situation for transgender individuals can vary widely depending on factors such as region, urban or rural settings, and personal circumstances.

#### 6.2.1 Education

Transgender individuals in India have often faced discrimination and harassment in educational institutions. Many drop out of school due to the bullying and lack of support they experience. This lack of education can limit their future employment opportunities and socioeconomic mobility.

#### 6.2.2 Employment

Transgender individuals often struggle to find and maintain stable employment due to discrimination in the workplace. Many are forced into low-paying jobs or engage in sex work to survive. The Indian government has tried to promote transgender employment through policies and affirmative action, but challenges persist.

#### 6.2.3 Healthcare

Transgender people often face barriers in accessing healthcare services, affecting their overall health and well-being. Hormone therapy, gender-affirming surgeries, and mental health support may not be easily accessible or affordable.

#### 6.2.4 Legal Recognition

The Indian government has taken steps to improve the legal recognition of transgender individuals. In 2014, the Supreme Court of India recognised transgender people as a third gender. However, implementing policies to protect their rights and promote their inclusion in society could be faster.

#### 6.2.5 Social Stigma

Social stigma and discrimination against transgender individuals persist in many parts of India. This discrimination can lead to social isolation, mental health issues, and a lack of familial and community support.

#### 6.2.6 Hijra Community

The Hijra community, a traditional transgender community in South Asia, has a unique socioeconomic status. They have a long history in India but have often been marginalised and relegated to begging or sex work for income.

#### 6.2.7 Legal Protections

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights)

Act was passed in 2019 to protect the rights of transgender individuals. It includes provisions for reservations in education and employment and protection against discrimination. However, there have been criticisms that the act needs to be revised in various aspects, and its implementation remains a challenge. It is important to note that organisations and activists are working to improve the socioeconomic status and overall well-being of transgender individuals in India.

#### 6.3 Transgender's Employment Conditions

Transgender individuals often face various challenges and discrimination in employment due to their gender identity.

##### 6.3.1 Discrimination

Transgender individuals face discrimination during job applications, at the workplace, or when seeking promotions. This can include biases in hiring, unequal pay, lack of job security, and being passed over for advancement opportunities.

##### 6.3.2 Unemployment and Underemployment

Many transgender individuals struggle to find stable employment or are forced into low-paying jobs or the informal economy due to discrimination in traditional workplaces. This can lead to economic instability and financial insecurity.

##### 6.3.3 Harassment

Transgender individuals may experience workplace harassment, including verbal abuse, bullying, and physical violence. This can create a hostile work environment and lead to stress and mental health issues.

##### 6.3.4 Inadequate Health Benefits

Access to gender-affirming healthcare is essential for many transgender individuals, and the lack of inclusive health benefits can be a significant issue. Many health insurance plans do not cover gender-affirming treatments and surgeries.

##### 6.3.5 Name and Gender Marker Changes

The process of changing one's name and gender marker on official documents can be complicated and time-consuming. This can lead to situations where a transgender individual's legal identity does not match their gender identity, causing confusion and potential discrimination.



#### 6.3.6 Microaggressions

Transgender individuals may experience microaggressions in the workplace, which are subtle, often unintentional, acts or comments that convey discrimination or bias. These can create a hostile and unwelcoming work environment.

#### 6.3.7 Outing and Privacy Concerns

Transgender individuals may be concerned about their privacy and whether their transgender status will be disclosed without consent. This can be particularly problematic in work environments that do not prioritise privacy and confidentiality.

#### 6.3.8 Employment Gaps

Some transgender individuals may experience employment gaps as they undergo gender transition or face discrimination, leading to job loss. These gaps can affect their long-term career prospects.

#### 6.3.9 Supportive Workplaces

On a positive note, some employers and workplaces actively promote diversity and inclusion and create supportive environments for transgender employees. These companies often have non-discrimination policies and offer gender-affirming benefits.

### 6.4 Transgender Health Conditions

Transgender individuals can face unique health conditions and challenges associated with their gender identity, gender transition, and interactions with the healthcare system.

#### 6.4.1 Gender Dysphoria

Gender dysphoria is a psychological condition that occurs when an individual's gender identity does not align with their assigned sex at birth. It can lead to significant distress and is often why many transgender individuals seek medical and psychological support.

#### 6.4.2 Hormone Therapy

Many transgender individuals pursue hormone therapy as part of their gender transition. This may involve taking hormones to develop secondary sex characteristics that align with their gender identity. However, hormone therapy can have side effects and requires careful monitoring by healthcare providers.

#### 6.4.3 Gender-Affirming Surgeries

Some transgender individuals undergo gender-affirming surgeries (e.g., chest or breast

surgeries, genital reconstruction) as part of their transition. These procedures carry the usual risks associated with surgery and require specialised care.

#### 6.4.4 Mental Health

Transgender individuals may be at a higher risk for mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and suicide ideation due to the stress, discrimination, and stigma they often face. Access to mental health support and culturally competent care is crucial.

#### 6.4.5 Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Transgender individuals, particularly those engaging in high-risk behaviours, may be at a higher risk for STIs. Access to sexual health education and preventive measures, such as safer sex practices, is essential.

#### 6.4.6 Substance Abuse

Some transgender individuals may turn to substance abuse to cope with the stress and discrimination they experience, which can lead to addiction and associated health issues.

#### 6.4.7 Cancer Screening

Transgender individuals may face specific healthcare needs related to cancer screening, depending on their medical history and gender-affirming interventions. Healthcare providers should be aware of these unique needs.

#### 6.4.8 Cardiovascular Health

Hormone therapy can impact cardiovascular health, mainly if underlying health conditions exist. Monitoring for potential risks, such as blood pressure and lipid profile, is essential.

#### 6.4.9 Bone Health

Hormone therapy can affect bone density, and transgender individuals may be at risk for bone-related conditions, such as osteoporosis. Monitoring and appropriate interventions may be necessary.

#### 6.4.10 Reproductive Health

Transgender individuals who have not undergone surgery or have not preserved their reproductive potential may have unique reproductive health needs and concerns.

#### 6.4.11 Access to Care

Barriers to healthcare access, such as discrimination, lack of culturally competent care, and cost, can prevent transgender individuals from receiving the necessary medical care.

Moreover, it is essential to emphasise that providing transgender individuals with respectful, culturally competent, and inclusive healthcare is crucial. Healthcare providers who are knowledgeable about transgender health issues and offer gender-affirming care can significantly improve the health and well-being of transgender patients.

#### *6.5 Transgender's Psychological Conditions*

Transgender individuals can experience a range of psychological conditions, primarily due to the stress, discrimination, and societal challenges they face.

##### *6.5.1 Gender Dysphoria*

Gender dysphoria is a psychological condition affecting many transgender individuals. It involves distress or discomfort experienced when one's gender identity does not align with one's assigned sex at birth. Access to gender-affirming care, such as hormone therapy and gender-confirming surgeries, can help alleviate gender dysphoria.

##### *6.5.2 Depression*

Transgender individuals may be at a higher risk for depression due to the stigma, discrimination, and social rejection they often face. The experience of gender dysphoria and the challenges associated with coming out can also contribute to depressive symptoms.

##### *6.5.3 Anxiety*

Transgender people may experience anxiety related to the fear of discrimination, harassment, or violence. Coming out, transitioning, and dealing with societal expectations can lead to anxiety disorders.

##### *6.5.4 Suicidal Ideation and Self-Harm*

Transgender individuals are at a heightened risk for suicidal ideation and self-harm. Experiences of discrimination, bullying, and social isolation can contribute to these risks. Supportive environments and access to mental health services are crucial in addressing these concerns.

##### *6.5.5 Eating Disorders*

Some transgender individuals may develop eating disorders to cope with body image issues associated with gender dysphoria. This can involve unhealthy eating habits or excessive exercise to change one's body to match one's gender identity.

##### *6.5.6 Substance Abuse*

Transgender individuals may turn to substance abuse to cope with the stress and discrimination they face. It is a way to self-medicate and escape from the emotional pain associated with their experiences.

##### *6.5.7 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*

Some transgender individuals may experience PTSD as a result of experiencing violence or trauma related to their gender identity. This can occur due to hate crimes, harassment, or discrimination.

##### *6.5.8 Social Isolation*

The feeling of social isolation is common among transgender individuals, particularly if they lack a supportive network of friends and family. Isolation can contribute to feelings of depression and anxiety.

It is important to stress that transgender individuals are resilient; not all will experience these psychological conditions. Supportive family, friends, healthcare providers, and communities can play a vital role in mitigating the adverse effects of the societal challenges transgender individuals face.

#### *6.6 Transgender People Rights Protection Acts in India*

In India, transgender rights and legal protections have significantly developed in recent years. The primary piece of legislation aimed at protecting the rights of transgender individuals in the country is the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. This act was passed to address the social and economic marginalisation, discrimination, and violence faced by transgender persons.

**Recognition of Identity:** The act recognises transgender individuals as a third gender, allowing them to self-identify as such, irrespective of their physical appearance or medical interventions. **Non-Discrimination:** It prohibits discrimination against transgender individuals in education, employment, healthcare, and access to public spaces. **Discrimination based on gender identity or expression is illegal under this act.** **Reservations:** The act calls for affirmative action measures, including reservations in education and employment, to uplift the transgender community and improve their socioeconomic status. **Right to Residence:** It grants transgender individuals the right to reside with their chosen family and offers protection against eviction.

**Legal Aid:** The act provides legal aid to transgender individuals who face discrimination or violence. **Recognition of Identity Documents:** It allows transgender individuals to change their name and gender marker on official documents like birth certificates, driving licenses, and passports. However, the process for such changes can be complex and varies by state. **Education and Awareness:** The act encourages the government to take measures to create awareness about transgender issues and promote inclusive education. **Protection Against Hate Crimes:** It criminalises hate speech and hate crimes against transgender individuals. Perpetrators can face imprisonment and fines for such offences.

While the Transgender Persons Act represents a significant step forward in recognising and protecting the rights of transgender individuals in India, it has faced criticism from activists and advocates. Some argue that the act falls short in various aspects, such as the complexity of the gender recognition process and the need for better enforcement and implementation of its provisions.

In addition to the Transgender Persons Act, transgender rights are also influenced by various Supreme Court judgments, particularly the landmark 2014 National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)—Union of India case. The NALSA judgment recognised transgender individuals' right to self-identify their gender and called for legal recognition and protection of their rights.

## 7. Conclusion and Suggestions

Transgender individuals in India face numerous challenges, including education, employment, healthcare access, and social stigma. The Indian government has attempted to improve legal recognition, but implementation remains slow. Discrimination in the workplace, a lack of job security, and inadequate health benefits further exacerbate these issues. Transgender individuals also face unique health conditions like gender dysphoria, hormone therapy, and mental health issues. Healthcare access is also hindered by discrimination, a lack of culturally competent care, and cost. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019 protects transgender rights by recognizing them as a third gender, prohibiting discrimination in education, employment, healthcare, and public spaces, and granting them the right to reside

with their chosen family. Our responsibility as civilians is to treat them equally and give them equal respect as any other gender, and we should have a humanitarian outlook towards third genders.

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