



Design Research Seminar on

Life & Culture Of The Eunuchs in India

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Approval

Industrial Design Special Project (DRS)

‘Life and Culture of the Eunuchs in India.’

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is approved as partial fulfilment of requirement of post-graduate degree in Industrial Design.

Prof Nina Sabnani
(Project Guide)

Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all the principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/ data/ fact/source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

Signature:

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Date: 23rd May 2015

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Introduction

Eunuchs- who are they?

The oxford English defines the word eunuch as: A man who has been castrated, especially (in the past) one employed to guard the women's living areas at an orient court [1] . The process of castration is known as "Nirvana" in the eunuch community. They are very much like other people but even now, they are not considered as human beings, because of their unclear biological sex and gender identity.

They are commonly known as 'hijras' in the Indian society. They are also known as kinnar, Chhakka, khusra, kojja, alis, aravanis, napunsak, jogappa (depending upon the region) in Hindi and transgender, transsexual, eunuch in English. They are not accepted in our society, hence they have their own customs and rituals. They dress as women and most of them consider themselves women but are male in the eyes of the law but for the common people they are neither male or female.

History

Western world

The word eunuch is an English word that has been used to signify castrated adult males who identify with females [1]. In the western world the physical act of castration is given more emphasis. In the earlier days this was done to safeguard the harems of kings and protect queens in the absence of the kings. Thus eunuchs were made not born and this has been the concept of being a eunuch in the western world.



Image 1
<http://monkeyabroad.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/ladybovs.jpg>



Image 2
<http://www.collegemagazine.com/wpcontent/uploads/2013/05/Transgender.jpg>

In India

The concept of eunuch is different in India, a eunuch is born & not made. The only true eunuchs in India are those who are born with an unclear sex organ. This sets them apart from normal males and females. Even if they have a male organ, they can never get an erection and hence they are eunuchs. In order to become a eunuch, they have to undergo voluntary castration which is called as Nirvana, it is done to remove traces of the male gender in the person.

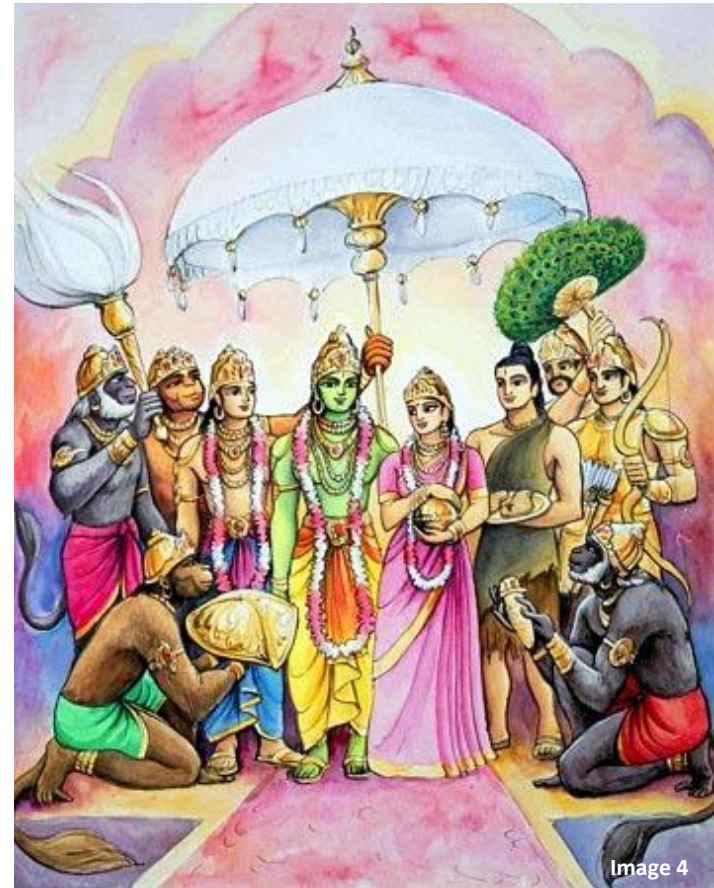


Image 3
http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/images/resized_images/706x410q70477ce7de932446a1921f44ce2c666d57.jpg

Eunuchs in Indian mythology

Ramayana

In the legend of Ramayana when lord Rama was banished from the kingdom of Ayodhya by his father King Dasharath, all the residents of Ayodhya accompanied him to the border of the kingdom to see him off. Many wanted to accompany him during his exile. At the border, Lord Rama faced the assembled crowd and said all men and women of Ayodhya may return to their homes, since he alone was meant to go into exile. Everyone went back to their respective homes but the eunuchs stayed on the border since Lord Rama had only requested 'men' and 'women' to go back. Hence the eunuchs stayed on the border for a period of 14 years homeless, bearing heat, cold, rain, thunder and lightning. After returning back from exile lord Rama was shocked to see the eunuchs waiting at the border. He apologized for forgetting about them and rewarded their loyalty with a boon that their blessings would be sought on every auspicious occasion.



http://farm3.staticflickr.com/2464/3798303526_9bec585fe1.jpg

Eunuchs in Indian mythology

Shiva Mythology

In shiva mythology lord shiva's form as Ardhanarshvara, in which the left half of his body is female. This form of God existed even in the earliest times. Lord Vishnu's incarnation as Mohini, a beautiful woman, is a unique example of the same. Shiva-Ardhanarishvara represents the divine hermaphrodite and Vishnu-Mohini the divine transsexual.



Image 5

http://www.dollsofindia.com/images/products/hindu-posters/ardhanarishvara-DR30_1.jpg

Eunuchs in Indian mythology

Mahabharata

In the epic Mahabharata at the end of exile of twelve years, the Pandava princes had to stay for a period of one year without revealing their identity. During this period, Arjuna was turned into a eunuch, according to a curse given earlier by urvashi, which he passes as Brihannala. In another episode , during the epic war, Bhishma, acted as the senapati (commander-in-chief of army) of the kauravas. The Pandavas could not win the war until the mighty warrior was defeated. This was achieved through Shikhandi, a transgender man.



http://www.talkativeman.com/img/Mahabharat_Title_Song.jpg



<http://www.cgtrantra.com/forums/picture.php?albumid=509&pictureid=2439>

Eunuchs in Indian mythology

This community is mysterious and has customs and traditions that are even more mysterious for the common man. Eunuchs participate in all the festivals, whether Hindu, Muslim or Christian, like Holi, Diwali, Eid, Christmas etc.

There are some festivals which are celebrated by one and all, but are very important for the eunuchs eg. The nine day Urs festival at Khwaja Garib Nawaz's Dargah, eighteen day long festival celebrating Aravan's sacrifice also known as Kuttantavar festival, kalash ceremonies, festivals celebrated for goddess yellamma etc are examples of some festivals that are celebrated by eunuchs with much more passion & faith than common people.

Eunuchs celebrating holi



Image 8

http://static.indianexpress.com/pic/uploadedImages/bigImages/B_Id_369768_holi_celebrations.jpg

Eunuchs celebrating Diwali



Image 9

<http://cdn.itslife.in/wp-content/gallery/festivals/festival-diwali-crackers4.jpg>

Eunuchs celebrating Eid

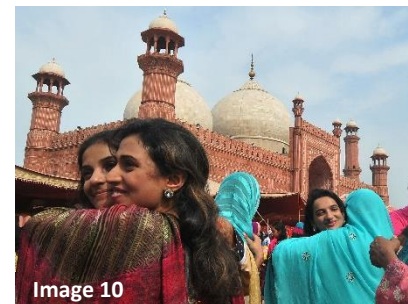


Image 10

http://media2.popsugar-assets.com/files/2013/08/09/920/n/1922398/9e6fae0bf99b7a4a_175855873.xxxlarge_2x/i/Pakistani-eunuchs-greeted-each-other-after-Eid-al-Fitr-celebrations.jpg

Eunuchs seeking blessings in the church



Image 11

<http://www.shalommumbai.in/new-images/Images/Page/Photos%20for%20site/19.Eunuchs%20New%20Year%202010-Elders%20honouring.jpg>

Important festivals

1. Urs festival at Khwaja Garib Nawaz's (KGN) Dargah

The reason for the huge participation of eunuchs in the Urs of KGN is a thanksgiving for their wishes being granted by him. It is believed that in the 12th century, the Khwaja had blessed the eunuchs and one of them got pregnant after being blessed by him. This eunuch used to do his daily chores. Pleased by the devotion, KGN blessed her with a son. Since then eunuchs from all over India and abroad gather at the Khwaja's Dargah in Ajmer, Rajasthan during the Urs festival and offer the kalash, so that they may also be blessed like their ancient counterpart.



Image 12

http://d2yhexj5rb8c94.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/mediainages/gallery/2014/May/urs_flowers.jpg

Important festivals

2) Kuttantavar Festival

Aravan is known as Kuttantavar in the south of India. In this festival, the marriage of Aravan and Mohini- female form of Lord Krishna, her widowhood and mourning, form the central theme of an eighteen days long festival which is celebrated in the month of 'chittirai' (around April/may) every year. The Kuttantavar festival sees eunuchs, who call themselves aravanis, as they re-enact the marriage of Aravan and Mohini.



Image 13

<http://cdn.c.photoshelter.com/img-get2/I0000IiUWurMuaXg/fit=1000x750/ARAVANI-FESTIVAL-003.jpg>

Eunuchs re-enacting the mourning scene after the sacrifice of Aravan



Image 14

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d9/Sri_Aravan.jpg



Image 15

http://www.thomasiskellyphotos.com/REPORTAGE/The-Weird-Widows-of-Aravan/i-Xizh6Jlb/1/XL/India_WWA_TK56-XL.jpg

Eunuchs re-enacting the wedding with local farmers

Important festivals

3) Kalash Ceremonies

A Kalash (vessel normally made of polished copper or brass) is filled with coins and in some cases, gold and silver ornaments. Many groups of eunuchs take part in the procession on important festivals. This kalash is either carried by the guru of the group or a new comer.



Image 16

<http://www.khwajamoinuddinchishti.com/Hazrat%20Khwaja%20Gareeb%20Nawaz%20History.jpg>

Khwaja Garib Nawaz Dargah, Ajmer



Image 17

<http://www.ziaratekhwaja.com/kinner%20urs%20801%20copy.jpg>

Important festivals

4) Yellamma Devi Festival

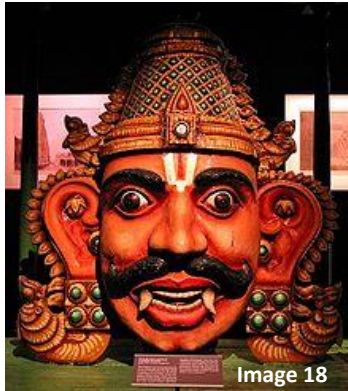
In the southern part of India goddess Yellamma is known for her strength and also known as Renuka. On this occasion the Yellamma Devi procession is taken out and hundreds of eunuchs with orange tikkas on their forehead and wearing ornaments participate to seek her blessings. It is believed that Yellamma was a very beautiful girl who married a sage who was very short tempered. They had 5 sons. On one occasion Yellamma returned home very late this made her husband angry and he suspected her, hence he ordered his sons one by one to kill her. The 1st four sons refused as they could not kill their own mother. The sage cursed the 1st four sons to become eunuchs and got Yellamma beheaded by the 5th son who was equally short tempered. Eunuchs consider themselves to be the favorite sons of Yellamma and every year take part in the procession to seek her blessings.



http://www.tarangarts.com/images/large/Embossed_Yellamma_Devi_918.jpg

Deities that eunuchs follow

1) Aravan known as Kuttantavar



http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/d2/Aravan_head.jpg/220px-Aravan_head.jpg

2) Goddess Yellamma



<http://www.merineews.com/upload/imageGallery/bigImage/1248285039112-goddess.jpg>

3) Khwaia Garib Nawaz, Aimer



http://www.ircctourism.com/ttrs/railtourism/images/AJMER%20DARGAH%20DARSHAN_EHR024_1.jpg

4) Bahuchara Mata



<http://www.qualiafolk.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/bahuchara-mata.jpg>

Deities that eunuchs follow

5) Kali Mata Mandir, Mumbai (also known as kinnar samaj mandir)- visited this temple personally

I visited this temple personally. This temple is devoted to Kali Mata on Sion-Koliwada road, Sion, Mumbai. All the priest of this temple are eunuchs. Believer from all over India offer prayers at this temple, to be blessed with children. All the pictures show how the temple looks from outside. Though people of any caste or religion are welcome inside the temple to offer their prayers, photography inside the temple is strictly prohibited because they do not wish to expose their culture and tradition. The priest of the temple were very helpful, they gave me invaluable information about their history, gods, traditions and religion.



Religion of eunuchs

Eunuchs are free to believe or have faith in the Gods of the religion that they were born with i.e. those of their parents, but most of them adopt the faith of their gurus. Most eunuchs believe that since they were born without proper genitals, God's actual plan was to make them to be Muslims, as the ritual of circumcision is practiced by the Muslims where they remove the foreskin of the penis. Hence many eunuchs later in their lives tend to follow Islam after moving out of their parental home or right after Nirvana. Their females names are given to the eunuchs by their gurus or is decided collectively among the group members. Like the religious differences seen in the common people of the Indian society, the eunuch community not only respects but also celebrates festivals of all religions with equal devotion, faith and enthusiasm.

Eunuchs in India

Eunuchs can be easily identified by their looks. Eunuch are not accepted and respected in the Indian society hence they have formed a community of their own and live in those groups. 1 out of 1000 people is a eunuch by birth deformity others are castrated. Since they are different from the common people they are often disowned by their families, they cannot seek education along with the normal people, hence they do not get jobs which leads them to roam and beg on busy streets, market places, traffic signals.

Types of eunuchs

Eunuchs of India can be defined as people who are neither male nor female. They can be classified into 3 types, depending on their looks:-

1) Neutral eunuch - they are eunuchs who look neither like males or females. They have hoarse voices and are sometimes flat chested.



Image 24

<http://www.worldnextdoor.org/wpcontent/uploads/2009/05/hijra.jpg>

Eunuchs in India

2) Male eunuchs- they tend to look like males. Their body and structure is more like the males but they do not have the male genitals.



http://farm5.static.flickr.com/4026/4684980386_2438fe5100_m.jpg

3) Female eunuchs- they look like females. They have fully or partially developed breasts. However they do not have proper female genitals. They do not menstruate. They do not have hair on their chest, hands, legs or thigh.



http://static2.demotix.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/a_scale_large/2000-9/photos/1368977637-eunuchs-present-a-holy-chadar-in-801-urs-fair_2068539.jpg

Famous transgender & transsexual celebrities in India

Ms Laxmi Narayan Tripathi



Image 27

<http://img1.gomolo.com/images/gallery/L/GL140326631.jpg>

Begum Nawazish Ali

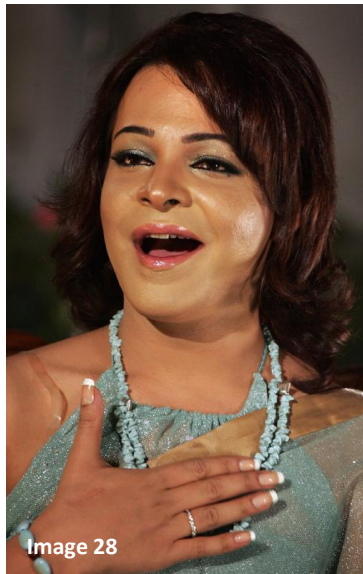


Image 28

<http://im.rediff.com/movies/2007/dec/03look3.jpg>

Bobby Darling



Image 29

<http://malikatv.blogspot.in/2006/07/i-tryed-to-kill-myselfbobby-darling.html>

Rohit Varma

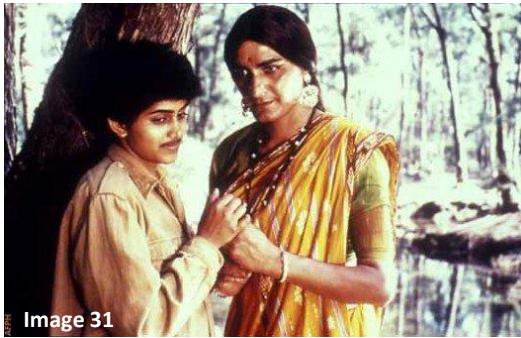


Image 30

http://www.bharatstudent.com/ng7uvideo/b/s/gallery/normal/events/bw/2010/nov/rohit-verma-birthday-bash/rohit-verma-birthday-bash_107.jpg

Portrayal of eunuchs in Bollywood

- 1) Late actor Nirmal Pandey played a role of a eunuch in the movie 'Daayra'



<http://www.missmalini.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/ho3-530x337.jpg>

- 3) Actor Ravi Jhankal played a role of a eunuch in the movie 'Welcome to Sajjanpur'



<http://files.prokerala.com/movies/pics/1920x1080/ravi-jhankal-in-welcome-to-sajjanpur-1308.jpg>

- 2) Actor Ashutosh Rana played a role of a eunuch in the movie 'Shabnam Mausi'



<http://archive.tehelka.com/channels/TheHub/2008/Nov/29/images/alternative.gif>

- 4) Actor Vineeth, Actress Seema Biswas and eunuch Laxmi Narayan Tripathi played a role of a eunuch in the movie 'Queens! Destiny of Dance'



<http://files.prokerala.com/movies/pics/1920x1080/ravi-jhankal-in-welcome-to-sajjanpur-1308.jpg>

Life of the Eunuchs

Note: To know more about the life and culture of the eunuchs, I referred to Dr. Piyush Saxena's research papers and I also visited Humsafar trust in Vakola, Santacruz East, Mumbai. This trust helps and deals with the issues faced by the transgender and also provides them shelter. There I met more than 10 transgender (the eunuch of the Humsafar trust preferred to be addressed as 'Transgender' and not 'Eunuchs') out of which Gaurav aka Swamini and her other transgender friends commonly sat down and gave me information on all the below topics. I interviewed them and asked them questions that are not usually known to the common people. I asked them about their language, Education, Habitat, Clothes, Toilet Practices, Dancing & singing, Typical style clapping, Health Issues, Status in the eunuch community, marriage, Eunuch children & adoption, Means of livelihood, Death in the eunuch community. (during my interaction with the transgender from the Humsafar Trust, photography and video recordings were strictly prohibited. Hence images are taken from the internet for a better understanding of the situation and scenarios and the image references are posted below the image. The images with no references have been clicked by me)



Image 35

Homosexual & Transgender rally in Andheri



Image 36

https://pbs.twimg.com/profile_images/590152677763350528/PkfszdEd.jpg

Life of the Eunuchs

1) **Language** - Most of the eunuch in India speak Hindi and other languages like Tamil, Marathi, Bengali, Punjabi etc. They have a secret language among their community which is called 'gupti' or 'ulti bhasha'. The eunuch community does not acknowledge the existence of this language in front of strangers or people outside their community., but incase they want to communicate among themselves they use their secret language. The pupose of using this language is to protect their community secrets from outsiders.

2) **Education** - The education level of eunuchs is very less. Many of the eunuchs belonged to educated families and had their initial education in English before they left or were thrown out of their family home for their new life hence they can speak broken or basic english.(when asked - if they like talking in english? They replied that they like talking in english & it makes them feel sophisticated) During early childhood people are unable to differentiate whether the child is a eunuch or a normal child. Hence eunuch children can freely go to schools with other children but as they grow older their behavior starts to change and by the time they reach puberty the difference between normal children and eunuch children can be easily spotted. Due to the apparent change in behavior many eunuch children are either thrown out of school or they drop out because of social pressure on them and their families.



Image 37

http://www.aljazeera.com/mritems/imagecache/mbdxxlarge/mritems/Images/2013/12/12//201312129407397734_20.jpg

Life of the Eunuchs

3) **Health Issues** – they have different hormonal issues than normal men & women because of their unclear gender. They also have some of the common health issues faced by normal people like heart problems, TB, blood pressure issues. Many of them also practice unsafe sex with multiple partners and some get into prostitution to earn more money this leads to various sexually transmitted disease (STD's), HIV and other such infections.

4) **Habitat** – most of the eunuchs have left their parental home or were thrown out and now live with their gurus, very few still live with their families but are not very happy as they have to live two lives for the happiness of their families. The families know the truth about them but still want them to act and dress like boys so that they do not face criticism from the society. This makes them sad sometimes because they have to live a lie but they are happy with the fact that they get to live with their parents. Apart from those who live with family the others mostly live in the slums as they do not get houses in good colonies in buildings normal people consider eunuch to be inferior. According to the eunuchs the untouchables are better off than them, they are at least treated as human beings “we are treated worst than animals”. A eunuch named laxmi said in Hindi “ We are worst than animals, people fight for animal rights but no one cares about us.



http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/images/eunuchs.gif

Life of the Eunuchs

5) **Clothes** – Eunuchs are like wearing new and pretty looking female clothes just like any other girl or women because they consider themselves to be women. They like wearing jewelry and applying makeup. Most of the eunuchs cannot afford new clothes hence they depend on the gurus to give them money to buy clothes and other things for themselves or wear old clothes of their gurus. They also share clothes and other accessories among themselves.

The eunuchs usually dress up in Indian suits and saris, the reason behind this is that the gurus of the eunuchs do not approve of them wearing western clothes. However some of them wear western clothes if they go out or live in parental homes but never in front of the gurus.

6) **Toilet Practices** – Eunuchs mostly do not urinate in the open like other people especially men who are seen urinating on the side of the roads. The main reason behind this is that eunuchs think that they are treated the way they are treated is only because of their unclear gender. They are neither considered to be men nor women, however they consider themselves to be women thus they do not want others to see their genitals. In case they need to use the loo when they are outside their homes they use the ladies side of the public toilet or sometimes go to the loo in the nearby mall.



Image 39

<https://mannaismayaadventure.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/indianeunuchs.jpg?w=427&h=288>

Life of the Eunuchs

7) **Dancing & Singing** – Eunuchs are neither good singers nor dancers. They tend to dress up, dance and sing like women but their voices are not soft or melodious as women's. They have stiff body movements while dancing and have a rough, male-like voice while singing. Even though they are not very good with dancing and singing, they enjoy and engage in such acts during functions and important occasions



Image 41

http://static4.demotix.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/a_scale_large/2000-3/photos/1367997048-all-india-eunuchs-conference-at-ajmer-in-raajasthan_2032353.jpg



Image 40

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2006/20060228/jal.jpg>

Life of the Eunuchs

8) **Clapping** – Eunuchs have their own unique way of clapping, they open palms hitting each other in crossed manner and resulting in a loud clap. They say that this unique way of clapping is believed to be natural and a God's gift to them. However in reality they are taught this art by their guru's. It is their different way of clapping through which one can recognize that they are not normal gendered people.



Image 43

http://images.indiatvnews.com/mainnational/IndiaTv1a3531_transgenders-clap.jpg

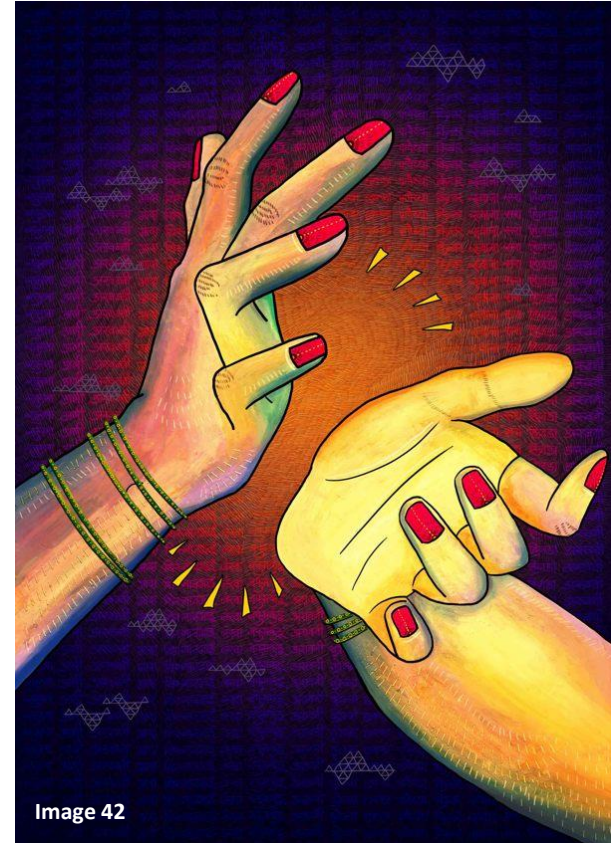


Image 42

<https://m1.behance.net/rendition/modules/105791557/disp/6ff0b71a5a8db7b463048b3c2f77e738.jpg>

Life of the Eunuchs

9) **Status in the Eunuch Community**– Eunuch can be classified into 3 levels in their community:

Level 1- consists of those eunuchs who are in the top positions such as the community leaders, district head gurus and Nayaks. They are richer than the eunuchs of the other 2 levels. Every eunuch has to give a portion of their income to their guru.

Level 2- Eunuch of this level are the local gurus that manage the eunuch of the level 3. The eunuchs of each group give a portion of their income to their individual gurus, as these gurus took them in and maintained and provided them shelter and other basic necessities of life.

Level 3- this level consists of the majority of the eunuchs in their community. Eunuchs of this group earn money through begging, prostitution, singing and dancing in functions and occasions or in the trains.

10) **Eunuch Children & Adoption** 1 out of 1000 children is born with a birth deformity, hence is a eunuch by birth. In most of the cases otherwise the difference between a normal child and a eunuch child can be recognized only when the child reaches puberty. Most of the parents with a eunuch child feel extremely shameful to face the society. These children are often cursed and tortured regularly by family members and others because of which

some are thrown out of the house whereas some leave the house voluntarily. Eunuch gurus are eager to adopt such children for two main reasons. Firstly because they have gone through the same pain and do not wish the child to go through this and secondly because each guru wants to make some amount of money everyday and adding one more member means generation of more income.



<http://c8.alamy.com/comp/DYHERA/epa04168109-surraiya-naik-2-r-the-head-of-a-eunuch-family-and-her-DYHERA.jpg>

Life of the Eunuchs

11) **Marriage** – nobody wants to marry eunuchs firstly because they cannot have children and secondly because transgender marriages are illegal India. However they do have live-in relationships with men, women and other eunuch of their own community as per their preference and convenience. Like normal people even the eunuchs wish to lead a life with a partner who loves, respects, cares and supports them. It has been noted that some eunuchs do get married to men who loves them for who they really are. Their husbands get everything from them except natural sex and children in which case they adopt children.



Image 46

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2002/20020925/pb4.jpg>



Image 45

http://media.newindianexpress.com/tnFest_ap2.jpg/2014/05/14/article2224323.ece/alternates/w620/tnFest_ap2.jpg

Life of the Eunuchs

12) Means of livelihood – No one gives eunuch a job and when asked if people give them a job will they take it, reply was a straight no, reason being that they make more money in a year that any job can possibly offer them with their qualifications. The kind of ways they use to earn money does not need a qualification. The eunuch earn by:-

- Begging- on the road, traffic signal etc
- Begging in trains- They sing and dance in the trains while begging for money and in return for the money the eunuchs give them their blessings.
- Prostitution- Eunuchs do not generate a lot of money through begging alone, this makes it all the more difficult to survive. Hence they get into prostitution where they are able to earn more by sexually satisfying their customers. Eunuchs are more than welcomed in the prostitution world because they are flexible and willingly sell their bodies to men, homosexuals, bisexuals and even women in some cases. Apart from the red light areas they stand near dhaba's on the highways, railway stations, bus depots etc. to search and attract customers.



Image 47
http://brangledminds.weebly.com/uploads/2/7/0/5/2/7059765/8339903_orig.jpg



Image 48
http://www.oxygenflow.net/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/23503616_3fc66025aa.jpg



Image 49
<http://www.matatraders.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/eunuchs.jpg>



Image 50
<http://www.nagpurtoday.in/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/081211044643-1323319800-iphone-photo-424x400.jpg>

Life of the Eunuchs

- Blessings – People have a fear that if a eunuch curses them then the curse comes true. This is not true and pure superstition confirms the eunuchs of the Humsafar Trust but they also accept the fact that the fear in normal people makes it easy for them to earn from them.
- Blessing at Weddings- Occasionally people invite eunuchs to give their blessings during the weddings of their sons and daughters. On such occasions the eunuchs not only bless the bride or groom but also sing and dance to show their happiness. In return of their blessings they are rewarded by cash, clothes and sweets.
- Blessing Newborns - Eunuch get the news of a newborn from the neighborhood of the baby, hospitals, chemists etc. they visit their houses to bless the children and take money from the parents of the newborn as their present.
- Blessing of Hotels, shops etc. - on the inauguration ceremony of shops, restaurants, hotels, etc. the owner invite them or they come on their own to offer their blessings so that the business runs well. In return of their blessings they are rewarded by cash and sweets.



Image 51

http://www.scratchmysoul.com/images/blogimage/26244_1.jpg

Life of the Eunuchs

14) Death in the Eunuch – when a eunuch dies the way of disposal of the body is the same as the normal people. Hindu eunuchs are cremated by burning the body (Agni Samadhi). Muslim & Christian eunuch are buried under the ground after their death. The group members inform the crematorium authorities and requests them not to disclose the death of a eunuch. Apart from the regular cremation practices there are some uncommon practices that are followed on the death of a eunuch:-

- Two eunuchs tie ropes, so that one leg of each person is tied to one of the dead eunuch in standing position. Then they hold the hand of dead eunuch's body firmly on their shoulder and then they walk with the dead body of the dead eunuch to the crematorium then the ropes are removed and they lay the body to be burnt or buried depending upon the religion they belong.
- The body of a dead eunuch is beaten with sandals and slippers and are cursed by other eunuchs. This ritual lasts for about 5 mins. This practice is done because some eunuch communities consider this life as a curse because of their unclear gender so they beat up the body so that she is not born as a eunuch again. After this ritual the body is buried or burnt depending upon the religion they belong

Interview True Life Stories : Story 1

Name - Gaurav aka Swamini

Age – 24 yrs

This story is about a eunuch who leads two lives. One life for the happiness of her parents and the other for the happiness of herself. Swamini was born a boy named Gaurav born in a Maharashtrian family. As she was growing up she realized that even though she's born a boy she feels like a girl and hates being trapped in a male body. By the time she reached puberty she started behaving, dressing up and talking like her girl. Her family was not supportive at first they cursed her everyday kept her locked in the house, she was not allowed to talk or meet anyone from outside the house because he parents were scared of the humiliations they would have to face by the society. Tired of the everyday humiliation and torture at home she decided to leave the house and met a eunuch on the street named Madhuri who introduced Swamini to her guru, where she was named Swamini. For a few days Swamini lived in the gurus house with other eunuchs. After a few days Swamini got a news that her mother was very ill and admitted in the hospital, hearing this Swamini rushed to meet her mother. The mother was happy to see her and made Swamini swear that she would not leave the parental house and go away. Seeing the mother's condition Swamini had no choice but to agree. After she moved back with her family, her parents requested her to dress up and behave like a boy in front of their relatives and known people. She was free to dress up like a girl outside the house. Swamini agreed to this condition kept by her parents, but she feels trapped and depressed as she has to hide her real self from the world and from the people who she loves the most.



Image 52

Swamini as 'Gaurav'



Image 53

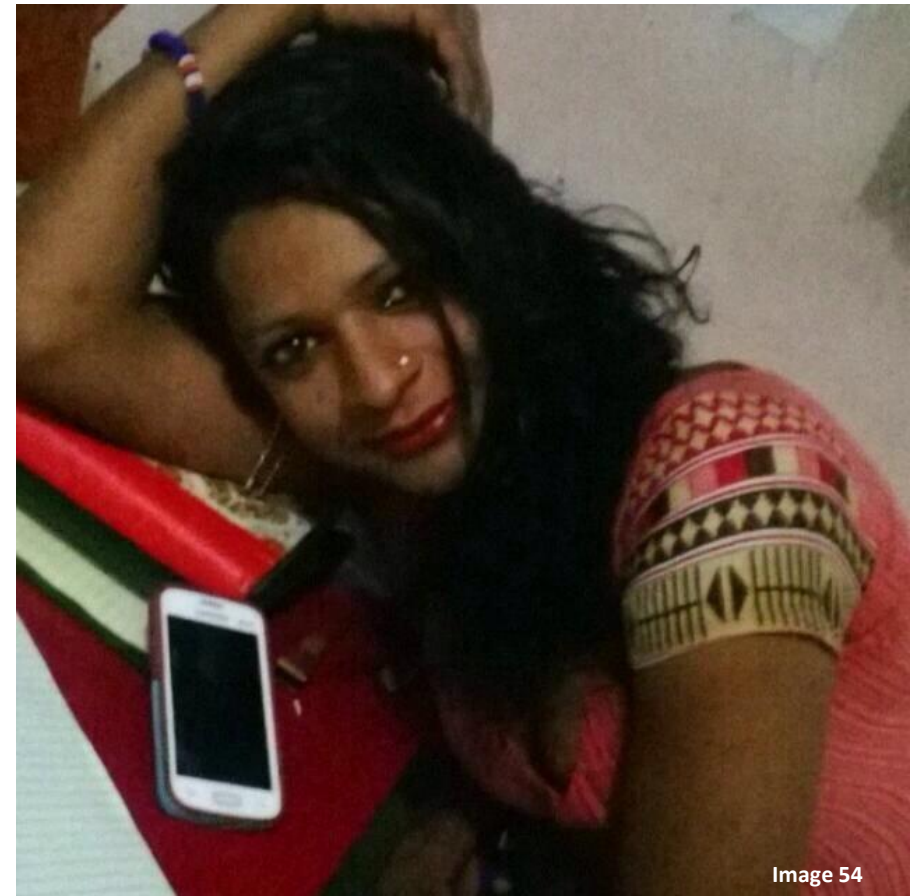
Swamini

Interview True Life Stories : Story 2

Name - Rakhi

Age- 27 yrs

Rakhi was among the few rare cases of birth deformity. Rakhi was a eunach by birth for the first 5 years of her life she does not remember much. But as she was growing older she started to understand that there is difference in her and her younger brother and she's been treated differently. Rakhi was beaten almost everyday by her father. She was treated like a servant in her own house by her own parents. She was given left over food to eat, was given old clothes to wear was never allowed to go out of the house as she brought shame to the family. Rakhi's grandmother called her a 'chudail'. She was not allowed to talk, play or even touch her younger brother. One day when no one was at home and rakhi was locked alone inside the house, she tried her mothers makeup and chunni and was looking out of the window. When her family got back they saw her standing at the window dressed like a girl with makeup. This made her parents very angry and they cursed her and hit her then threw her out of the house. Rakhi was only 12 when she was thrown out of the house. For several days rakhi lived on the streets and survived by begging. Then she was adopted by the eunuchs and their guru. She is 27 yrs old and is happy in her eunuch life with her eunuch family and gurus. But some part of her feels very sad that in so many years her parents never tried to look for her or contact her. They could have found her had they tried but they never wanted her in their life. Her question was "was is my fault that I was born this way?" Rakhi still misses her family and wishes the best for them.



Interview True Life Stories : Story 3

Name – Heena

Age 25

Heena was born in a Hindu family but joined the eunuch group of Muslims where she was named Heena but the guru. While Heena was growing up she and the people around her realized that she's different. Even after being born and brought up like a boy, henna behaved and dressed like a girls. Due to this reason many of her classmates in school called her names like “chakka”, “baila” etc. she was also expelled from school as other parents were not comfortable with their children studying with a eunuch. Her mother was very loving but her father never behaved well with her. One day she was alone at home and her fathers friend came over. In the absence of Heena’s parents the uncle tried to molest her. When her patents came back, Heena was injured when asked by the mother what had happened she cried out loud and told her about what the uncle had done. The father however never believed her instead thought she had a bad character and was lying about his friend. After this episode Heena didn't feel safe at home. She eloped from home and joined the eunuch group where everyone felt her pain and cared and loved her. Heena is still in touch with her mother but never wants to go back home. She is happy in whatever life she's living now.



Image 55

Interview True Life Stories : Story 4

Name – Laxmi

Age – 33 yrs

Laxmi is a Kinnar Samaj Activist. Recently Laxmi wanted to rent a house in a building in Walada, Mumbai. She was denied the privilege of living in a good housing society because she is a eunuch. She says the flat owner had agreed to give the flat on rent but the building secretary with the approval of all the other members in the building refuse to give permission to live there. Laxmi says that if a Muslim is not given a flat on rent a big issue is made of the situation. They can go lodge a complaint for their rights, but if a eunuch goes to complaint no one will even listen to her leave alone lodging a complaint. Laxmi says she's been house hunting for almost 3 yrs now and still has not found a house for herself to live. She say animals are better than eunuch atleast people willingly accept them in their homes, in their lives and the society. Eunuch have no existence in the eye of the normal public. Laxmi says she's disappointed with the Indian law and the behavior of normal people towards her and her eunuch community.



Conclusion

It is sad that there is a discrimination of the eunuch from the general public in our so called 'Democratic Country'. Our civilized societies have terms like 'differently abled' for the handicapped, 'commercial sex worker' for the prostitutes etc. in order to make them feel like a part of our Indian society, but the feelings and behavior towards eunuchs are in no way civilized. Eunuchs are treated like a non-existing creature, instead of showing the same level of understanding towards eunuchs, we call them names like chakka, hijra etc, although they are born with an unclear gender or have deformed genitals than that of men and women that does not give the society the right to treat them badly or look upon them like they are some sort of sinners in this world. Eunuchs should be given equal rights to do things and participate in things done by normal people eg. Right to education. Indian government and Indian law should make provisions for the eunuch in the system so that they are also treated equally with full justice and are able to live a respectful and a happy life.

Photo Dairies

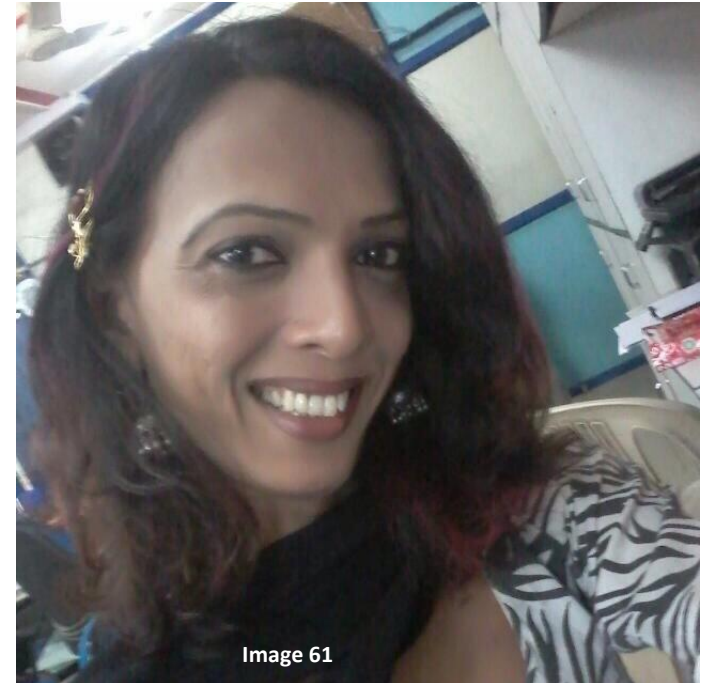
Note: All the pictures in this photo dairies have been clicked and collected by me after my interaction with the eunuch of Humsafar Trust. I also got a chance to see “Utsav” a programme of dance and entertainment organized by Humsafar Trust for the eunuch. In this programme eunuch dress up like characters, dance, sing, eat and has fun.



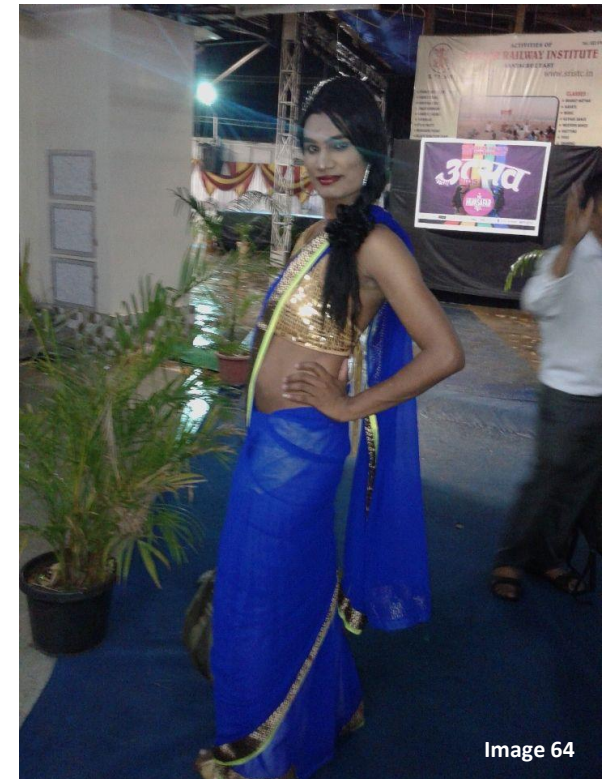
Eunuch Outing with Friends



Photo Dairies



Humsafar Trust Programme- “Utsav”



Humsafar Trust Programme- “Utsav”



Image 65

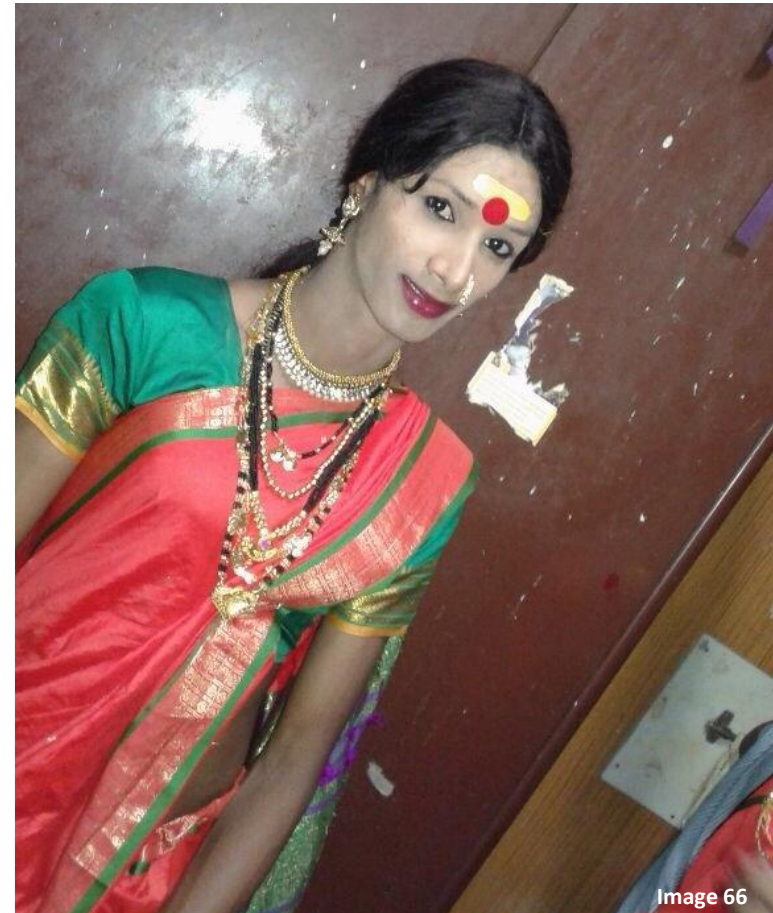
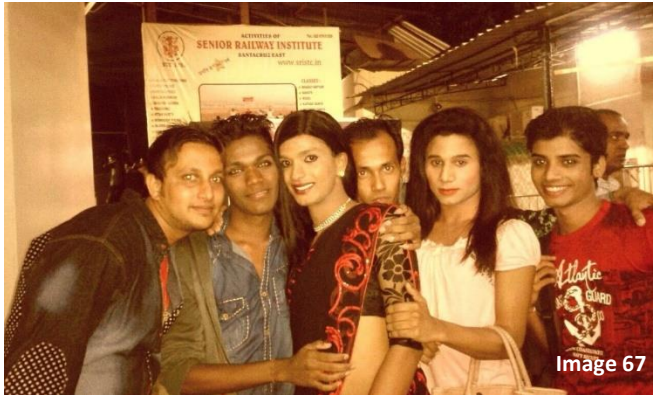


Image 66

Dance Groups and Performances by the Eunuchs



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