

Woman Trapped In a Male Body

You could spot Anjali, walking through the busy streets of Mumbai. You might stare at her, be confused, be disgusted or feel anything at all but you will not see her get shamed by your glares, as she knows her self-worth. But this confident trans woman has a lot to her than seen to the eye, her story would help us realize the potential of self-love and self-acceptance. Anjali was born as a male in an orthodox Marwari family, her parents had named her Ajay but that never felt right FOR HER. As a kid she always liked playing dress up with her girlfriends, even though the society expects boys to play the games that are labeled as masculine with other boys and they found her behavior as rather odd. But the best thing about kids is that they do what they want with absolute no care. Little Anjali did as she felt like because she was unaware of the societal set of rules for being a female or a male. During her schooling she had to face a lot of hatred for just being herself. She was bullied by the kids and was left alone, on the other hand she was introduced to sex at a young age, this was absolutely because of the hypocrisy that she could be treated in any which way because she wasn't exactly a woman according to them. Teasing and harassing her seemed much easier because she was alone. Amidst all of this she was forced out of the closet by an acquaintance. Anjali always was herself, but her parents were in shock when they got to know about her. She tried telling them that she was meant to be a woman and is unhappy in her current body. Nothing she said mattered because her family's reaction was abysmal. Surviving all this for a teen was very difficult as it seemed like she was punished just for being herself. When everything at home went array Anjali decided that she could no longer take it, she could no longer



become her brother's outlet for expressing his anger, her mother and father showing disappointment in her and blaming her for everything. But when her brother Slapped her because of something his friend said Anjali decided that there was nothing she could do that would make her family understand. She wanted to move out of her house so she packed her bags left a note. When she had moved out, her mother's condition had deteriorated and she begged Anjali to come back home. Anjali came back for her and asked her mother that she would only stay if she was allowed to be herself. Her mother agreed and today she stays with her family though she does not have great relationships with her brother or father, they steer out of her sight. She has been a survivor of mental emotional and physical abuse throughout her life. All she seeks for is a normal life, all she seeks is love and acceptance. Anjali has been termed as not normal her whole life, but the question is who decides what is normal?

Anjali, like many others, still under the closet is a trans sexual women. i.e. A woman trapped inside a male body. In easier words a woman who is assigned male at birth. The term transgender woman is not always interchangeable with transsexual women, all those the term is used inter changeably. Transgender in an umbrella term that includes different type of gender variant people. Transwomen face a vast amount of discrimination in employment and access to housing and face physical and sexual violence and hate crime for the majority part of their life.

-Samiksha Shetty(FYBMM)

I feel liberated, I feel myself



Hijra is a term which includes intersex and transgender people. They are pretty evident with their smashing glittery saris, faces coated with heavy cheap makeup as they sashay through the crowds in trains and at traffic signals. They crash ceremonies singing bawdy songs and leave with fistfuls of money. Coins are exchanged in return of goodwill as Indians believe that they have the power to bless and curse. behind all of these theatrics are often sad stories of sex trade, violence of being cast out and neglected by the society, of being victims of dangerous castration processes and hence they share a secretive subculture of their own. When we, the students of BMM department went to meet Amma, as she is lovingly called, on 2nd September, 2018 at her house, we had our own biases but within minutes of us entering her house she made us completely feel at home. Amma was born as a boy in a small village in Kerala. At the age of 7 her reproductive organs stopped developing normally as it should and was later castrated, she remembers with horror till date the anguish and pain she went throughout the process of cauterization and after. Amma always wished to dress up like and copy the mannerisms of a girl. She loved dressing up in her younger sister's clothing. When her parents seemed to notice they put up a lot of restrictions on her and locked her up. She was beaten up by her father black and blue. Tired of hiding her identity anymore she

ran away from home. But living on her own was not easy, at the beginning she stayed in a hut and worked as a daily wage laborer, struggled and later came to Mumbai. It was her escape where she was herself finally. As she figured out the means of living in mumbai she was taken under the hijra community. She had to work as a bar dancer, something which she enjoys immensely, "*I feel liberated, I feel myself*", she says. She talks about the hijra community with love and on the other hand seems relieved to get out of the system. She explains their culture and tells us that there is a guru who has several others under her. She takes care of them but in return they have to give her all their earnings. the castration she describes is done by the guru itself and her description makes me realize how dangerously it takes place. They were never allowed to take any money for themselves and were punished if they did so. When asked about sex work she scraps it by saying '*yeh toh hamare waha krna hi padhta hai*' like it is a duty. At 55 now she talks about her social work very animatedly and also about her dream of becoming a Nagar Sevak, her joy in helping others astonishes me. She does not have everything but still dares to give out from the something she has. I heard her pour her heart out with a warm smile on her face and that got me thinking, Amma was not different, abnormal or cursed as people perceive a hijra to be, well I for once think, she is more humane than most people are.

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