

Tammana  
[Desire]

Yes, the desire of all human heart is to have a family, to be loved to be wanted and to belong to someone and the community at large, not just a small secluded community.

Yes I am talking of a special secluded community of people called the “Transgender Community” or the Eunuchs or Hijras [in Hindi]. 99.8% of them are not born but made. Even Jesus knew these facts for He said in Matthew 19:12 “For there are eunuchs who have been born incapable of marriage; and there are eunuchs who have been made so by men; and there are eunuchs who have made themselves in capable of marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let him who is able to accept this accept it.”

Eunuchs in India are an age-old tradition and may be very unique to this part of the world. In ancient India, eunuchs were emasculated men, used as advisers to royal courts. Eunuchs often guarded the harems of India’s princes, and some became highly powerful figures.

Other eunuchs worked like a man and yet had no sexual desires, which protected the women. They had no interest in life and so were a good source of entertainment and ridicule. Over and above the men seeking alternative sexual fulfillment used them.

It is a wrong notion that eunuchs are born with sexual defects.

Only a very small number of babies are born with sexual defects. These babies may have some qualities of both sexes and one may dominate, especially the external sexual features.

There is always a leader of a group who is called “Guru”.

The Guru is older and much respected. New eunuchs are taken into the “fold” only after the approval of the Guru. If a eunuch wishes to change her group, she has to take permission from her Guru.

The Guru will talk to her compatriot of the other group. There is usually some transaction of money. As part of the handing over ceremony, the clothes of the previous group is laid at the feet of the guru and the new guru will give new clothes to wear.

Eunuchs are a much disciplined lot. They will never raise their hand on any one. When provoked they will use the foulest abuses. It is surprising that people are afraid of them. They're ostracized, but thought to have Special Powers. They have a network of neighborhood informants who tell them about upcoming celebrations. They show up uninvited and demand money to dance and bless the proceedings like weddings or birth of a child, especially a male child.

No one seems able to refuse her monetary demands.

There are four sects of Eunuchs.

- The very rich ones. They lend out money on high interest. They are very proficient in business tactics. They also may be involved in some business or the other. Many of them are used in the Mumbai film industry (Bollywood). They may or may not be castrated. However they are sex workers, may be for the elite gay.
- The second group is the ones who dance and sing at weddings and childbirth and have enough money. Men who have sex with men {MSM} use them.
- The third group is beggars or is employed in homes as cooks and housemaids. Eunuchs are good cooks. Their MSM employers may use them.
- They live in the red-light district and are sex workers. 70% of them are infected with HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

All the eunuchs respect women.

The method of emasculation differs in different groups.

They may be as follows:

- Those who can afford get it done surgically, with no infection.

- There are some who are castrated by the proficient older eunuchs or Dai or traditional midwife. No one talks about what and how it is done.
- The guru emasculates some with a sharp knife dabbed with turmeric. Alcohol is used as an antiseptic. Just enough of the part is left for urination.
- Some are by emasculated by pouring hot oil, followed by hot and ice-cold water in that order. Turmeric or alcohol is used as antiseptic.
- Some cases are known who have done it themselves.

If there were any other methods, I wouldn't know. Usually the eunuchs don't talk about these issues openly. This process is called "Nirvana" or rebirth.

Times have changed for the eunuchs also. They have made great strides in their development. Many eunuchs are now entering the Indian politics. Being fearless and outspoken they have no inhibitions of talking about the corrupt politicians. They say that since they have no families therefore they serve both men and women. Shabnam Mausi [mausi means aunt, mother's sister], the country's only eunuch legislator, who won election to the state's assembly last March from Madhya Pradesh.

There are thought to be about 500,000 eunuchs, or 'hijras', as they are known in India. Their presence is said to protect one from evil, yet they are shunned and no one wants to touch them or be seen in their company. There is still a lot of mystery surrounding the eunuchs. They do not disclose any thing about death and burial. They don't talk about any of their functions or celebrations. Each group has a yearly celebration and eunuchs from all over the country from their group get-together. However they do have all the cravings of human beings.

A film has been made based on true-life story of a eunuch who always wanted to have a daughter. She adopted a girl and called her Tammana [desire]. She sent her to one of the prestigious school in a hill station. Tammana loved this person who she thought was her father. However she was soon disillusioned when some one told her that her father was a '*Hijra*'. The end is rather sad and very predictable.

However the way we treat them is very sad. We are afraid of them. Afraid to touch them, they are after all created by the same God who created us. It is we who have made them different and then we ridicule them and call them by names like "Chakka", "Bhand" "Sixers" etc. We are afraid to touch them or even talk to them, no wonder they curse and abuse. Does religion play a role?

Read on:

**Yellamma** (Shri Renuka devi), is the Goddess of the Fallen, in the Hindu pantheon. Yellamma, or Renuka is a patron goddess of many down-trodden people such as Harijans [or the lowest caste] scheduled caste and scheduled tribes people, eunuchs, gays, lesbians, transsexuals and even upper-caste Brahmins. For many thousands of years, people of all castes and creeds have revered her as the "Mother of the Universe" or Jagdamba. Every year, there is a gathering of many of her devotees at Savadatti Yallamma Gudda. As many as 200,000 people gather for the ceremony. She loves all people equally, with no discrimination whatsoever.

Renuka raja (father of Renuka) performed an yagna [elaborate worship ceremony] — a ritual performed to maintain peace and good health. He was blessed with a daughter, who originated from the fire of this yajna. Renuka was a bright and active child and became the most beloved child of her parents.

When she was eight, saint Agastya, who was the guru of the Renuka Raja advised him to have his daughter Renuka married to Jamadagni when she reached maturity. He was the son of Ruchik Muni and Satyavathi. He had obtained the blessings of the gods by performing severe penance. Renuka and Jamdagni Muni lived in the ramshrung mountains, which is near the present day Savadatti area of Belgaum district. Renuka helped the Jamdagni Muni in all of his tasks of performing various rituals and pooja. Gradually she became close and dear to Jamdagni.

Renuka would wake up early in the morning to bathe in the malaprabha river with complete concentration and devotion. Her devotion was so powerful that she was able to create a pot to hold water only made of sand, one fresh pot every day. She would fill this pot, on the bank of the river and would use a snake which was nearby and turn it into a rope-like convolution and place it on her head so that it supported the pot. Thus, she brought the water to Jamdagni for his rituals of oblation.

She gave birth to five sons Vasu, Viswa Vasu, Brihudyanu, Brutwakanwa and Rambhadra. Rambhadra was the youngest and most beloved son. He gained the favour of Shiva and Parvati and hence he was called Parashurama— this is one of the incarnations (6th), of Vishnu.

One day when Renuka went to the river, she saw Gandharva spirits playing. These were young couples carelessly frolicking in the water with abandon. For a moment, she lost her concentration and devotion and fantasized about playing in the river with her husband. She wished she and her husband had such fun sometimes too, living so close to such a beautiful place. After some time, Renuka came to her senses and cursed herself for her indiscretion. She hurriedly bathed as she had lost precious time and tried to create the pot but was unable to as she had lost her concentration. She even tried to catch the snake but it disappeared. Disappointed

by this, she returned to the ashram in shame. Seeing Renuka returning empty handed, Jamdagni became furious. He angrily ordered her to go away.

After being cursed by her husband, Renuka went east and sat in the forest to meditate. In her penance, she met with the saints Eknath and Joginath; she prayed to them and asked to gain the mercy of her husband. They first consoled her. They instructed her to follow their advice exactly as told, for three days. They told her to purify herself, first bathing in a nearby lake, and worship a Shivalinga [Shiva's external genitals], which they had given to her. Then she would go to the nearby town and beg for rice from the houses for alms — this ritual is still carried out by women during a particular month in Karnataka; it is called "Joga Bedodu". After collecting the rice, they told her to give half the rice to the saints and cook the remaining half, adding jagriey, and to partake of the cooked rice with full devotion. They said that if she performed this ritual for three days, she would be able to visit her husband on the fourth day. Knowing the anger of Jamadagni, they warned her that she may not be fully pardoned by him, and that she would have to experience the most difficult time of her life for few minutes. "After that," they said, "you will be eternally revered and will be blessed with your husband. You will be worshiped by all the people henceforth." After blessing her this way, they disappeared. Renuka followed their instructions with devotion and worshipped the Shivalinga with full care and reverence. On the fourth day, she went to see her husband.

Jamadagni was still furiously angry with her. He ordered his sons to punish their mother. One by one, four of them refused flatly. Jamadagni had the power to burn anyone to ashes with his one look, and he was so angry that he went berserk, and turned four of his sons into four piles of ashes. Parashurama was not there when this happened. When arrived shortly thereafter, he saw his mother weeping by the piles of ashes. His father was still raging mad.

Jamadagni told him what happened and ordered him to behead his mother for her infidelity. Parushurama had to think quickly. Knowing his father's powers and the extent of his anger, Parashurama immediately obeyed his father. His father then offered a boon to Pashuram, who asked for his mother and brothers to be brought back to life. To everybody's astonishment, Renuka's spirit multiplied and moved to different regions. Renuka was back as a whole too, and her four sons became four eunuchs. This miracle inspired her sons and others to become her followers, and worship her. This tradition is practiced even today throughout north Karnataka and part of Maharashtra.

Is there any hope?

Only in Jesus. In the area where I work among them there are about 35 who have accepted the Gospel and some even baptized.

Think about it.