

Miss. India Contest for Transgender 2009

At Chennai, 19th December 2009



First of its kind in whole of India at the National Level conducted by Indian Community Welfare Organization (ICWO) supported by TANSACS, UNAIDS & ACTIONAID



UNAIDS

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Indian Community Welfare Organisation works on special focus on prevention of HIV/AIDS. Their target groups are gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender, female sex workers and the children of Sex Workers and they are functional with the aid of several dedicated volunteers and support of the government.

As part of their many innovative efforts, ICWO organized Miss India Contest at Chennai for the transgender Community. The event created an opportunity to discuss about stigma, discrimination, violence, marginalization, ill treatment, denial of treatment, privacy, quality of life, access to the medical facilities for the Transgender Community.

About Transgender (TG) and why for this contest?

Transgender (Aravani a term used in Tamil for a belief of having married to God Aravan God) are born as biological/anatomical males who reject their 'masculine' identity in due course of time to identify either as women, or not-men, or in-between man and woman, or neither man nor woman. Many transgender people live part-time or full-time as members of the other gender. However, not everyone whose appearance or behaviour is gender-atypical will identify as a transgender person. It is inappropriate and incorrect to use the terms "Eunuchs" or "Ali". The ARAVANIS are of two types. Among them, those who had Undergone emasculation are called as NIRVAN and those, who have not yet undergone emasculation, are called ACKWA.

Transgender people experience their transgender feelings in a variety of ways. Some can trace their transgender identities or gender-atypical attitudes and behaviours back to their earliest memories. Others become aware of their transgender identities or begin to experience gender-atypical attitudes and behaviours much later in life. Some transgender people accept or embrace their transgender feelings, while others struggle with feelings of shame or confusion. Some transgender people, transsexuals in

particular, experience intense dissatisfaction with their gender at birth or with the gender role associated with that sex.

These individuals often seek sex reassignment. Parents may be concerned about a child who appears to be gender-atypical for a variety of reasons. Some children express a great deal of distress about their assigned gender roles or the sex of their bodies. Some children experience difficult social interactions with peers and adults because of their gender expression. Parents may become concerned when what they believed to be a "phase" does not seem to pass.

Transitioning from one gender to another is a complex process. People who transition often start by expressing their preferred gender in situations where they feel safe. They typically work up to living full-time as members of their preferred gender, by making many changes a little at a time. Gender transition typically involves adopting the appearance of the desired sex through changes in clothing and grooming, adoption of a name typical of the desired sex, change of sex designation on identity documents, treatment with cross-sex hormones, surgical alteration of secondary sex characteristics to approximate those of the desired sex, and in biological males, removal of facial hair with electrolysis or laser treatments.

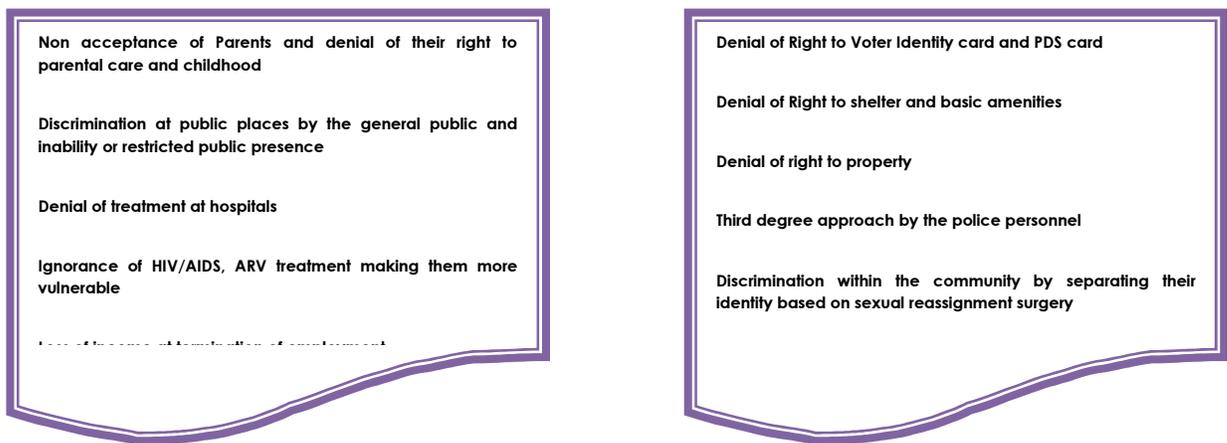
In addition, the stigma, discrimination, and internal conflict that many transgender people experience may place them at increased risk for certain mental health problems. The medical system only recognizes the existence of males and females. This creates problems for many transgender people whose bodies do not fit the standard male/female model. For instance, health insurance companies require that everyone identify himself or herself as either male or female.

The stigma and discrimination towards Aravanis (Transgender) starts right from the adolescence stage when they are in their parental care. The society neglects the community not considering them as a human being. Most of them leave their house and join their community (known as Jamath). They are forced to lead a miserable life by earning their living by begging, dancing, prostitution thus becoming more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. As they lack distinct gender identity, they are discriminated and stigmatized in the society.

Currently, the transgender community lacks societal support and are subjected to violence by police machineries. Transgender today are beginning to emerge from the severe stigma to which they have been experiencing to collectively demand for their rights. They believe that to raise the status of this marginalized group of people, emphasis must be on getting basic rights and facilities. Only if they enjoy basic human rights - social and political - can their self-esteem grow.

Although the Chennai High Court has issued directions in favour of transgender to get their voter identity card, in reality the Aravanis are still in the process of getting voter identity cards as well as PDS card. After physically thrown out of their parental home, housing and basic facilities remain a very serious issue for Aravanis. They are denied rental houses. Because of this situation, they discontinue their studies and are denied of their right to education.

The denial of transgender rights could be categorized as



Now the Tamil Nadu government has begun to address the various practical issues the Aravani community is facing such as basic education, health and legal rights, and space for creative expression.

In Tamil Nadu, it is mandatory now for the district administration to assign one day in every three months as a Grievance Day for Aravanis where they express their difficulties in accessing entitlements. Despite all these, the status of transgender has not improved.

Objectives of Miss. India Contest for Transgender 2009

1. To create an opportunity for the Transgender Community to showcase their talent and skills.
2. To create a platform to address the issues related to transgender.
3. To address the stigma, discrimination, marginalization and misconception related to Transgender community through the event with the support of Media.
4. Develop and disseminate positive messages regarding transgender.
5. Disseminate information on STI/HIV/AIDS information among Transgender.
6. Disseminate information vulnerability and risk of HIV infection among Transgender community

Details of the contest

The contest was inaugurated by **Mr. M. Ravi, Additional Commissioner of Police, Chennai, Mr. Alex Parimalam, Joint Director – IEC, Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control society – TANSACS, Mr.A.Sathiyanaaraayanan, Consultant, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Retd) and Ms. Esther Mariaselvam, Program Manager and Actionaid India, Chennai Region.**

Competitions were organized for **Miss Beautiful Hair, Miss Beautiful Walk, Miss Beautiful Eyes, and Miss Best Skin. The MISS INDIA** Contest for Transgender 2009 title was awarded to the best Transgender. Contest rules and regulations were addressed to the contestant. The Miss Beautiful Eyes Title was awarded by **Ms. Yogini and Ms. Sanya, Cine Artists.** Miss Beautiful Hair Title was awarded by

Ms.Malaika, Miss Chennai TG and Ms. Jeyalakshmi, Cine Artist. Miss Beautiful Skin Title was awarded by **Ms. Lavanya, Cine Artists.** The Miss Beautiful Walk Title was awarded by **Mr. Kolangal Sreedhar and Mr. Kovai Babu, Cine Artists.** The Miss India Title was awarded by **Ms. G. Jayalakshmi, Deputy Director, Women Welfare, Directorate of Social Welfare.**

Extracts of Inauguration Speech

During the inauguration **Mr.A.J.Hariharan, Founder Secretary, ICWO, said** the Contest would create an opportunity for the Transgender Community to showcase their talent and skills, create a platform to address the issues related to transgender, address the stigma, discrimination, marginalization and misconception related to Transgender community through the event with the support of Media.

Mr.A.J.Hariharan, Founder Secretary, ICWO, said that the event has created a platform for Transgender to showcase their skills and talents. Positive messages have been disseminated through the Media about Transgender. Information to the general public has been reached about the living status of Transgender and Educated on transgender issues. **Mr.A.J.Hariharan, Founder Secretary, ICWO,** told that Awareness has been created with regards to attitudes concerning people with gender-atypical appearance or behaviour also Assumptions about transgender people's sexual orientation, desire for surgical or hormonal treatment, or other aspects of their identity or transition plans awareness has been created. The lines of communication have been open with the transgender person among the general public.

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Esther Mariaselvam, Program Manager, Action aid India, Chennai Region in her speech mentioned that Transgender have their rights for their housing, shelter and many other rights. From December 2007, there has been change related to your behaviour therefore there are welfare schemes and government policies, provision of voter ID card, Ration card. The status of Transgender has changed to an extent. There are many Millennium Development Goals like 50% of poverty, reduce maternal mortality rate, asking for our rights, so the transgender should work for their own welfare by proving their capacities. In Bangladesh, the political commitment, in Rwanda, the parliament itself represent and empower women are empowered to achieve better. This program is happening today to create a National platform for discussing the issues and rights of the Transgender. After 2007, SRS has lobbied, there were 600+ Transgender who had undergone surgeries. Like you there others who are deprived of the basic needs in the transgender community. She concluded by saying Unity among Transgender is one energy. She requested that the rights of Transgender should not be deprived of in the society and we all need to work towards it.

Mr.Alex Parimalavan, Joint Director – IEC, Tamilnadu State AIDS Control society – TNSACS He started by saying that he was personally Anti-beauty contest because of two reasons. Firstly, it focuses on colour, stature of the person which is considered as beauty only on the contrary there is more points added to it. Secondly, they are conducted for commercial reasons .The beauty contest is also justified in two ways - Change in culture, Transgender can have beauty within and outside. Secondly, this is not commercial, Sexual minorities also has equal rights. Specifically Mr.Hariharan is one person full of creative thoughts and therefore we always consult them. Like crazy Mohan we call Mr.Hariharan, Crazy Hariharan, because of his innovative thoughts and for his sense of humor.

Mr.A.Sathiyanaaraayanan, Consultant, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Retd). He addressed on how this society, cinema, media discriminates Transgender. There are Self help groups for all so Transgender can also get involved in it. Then financial help can be sought. If there is no growth, it is to be asked. This is not the end of everything but a beginning. Police department – Transgender were treated badly. So there is change. Police people are support agents for you.

Mr.M.Ravi, Additional Commissioner of Police, Chennai In 1998 in Villupuram, Transgender Beauty contest, I had attended. TGs are abused and have been discriminated. In Mahabaratha war, a son is to be sacrificed. There were three, Krishnar, Arjunar, his son, arawan. The first two cannot be sacrificed, arawan agreed. His last wish was to get married to a beautiful woman to be married for the day before his sacrifice. So they searched, Krishnan transformed to be an woman . So he was considered a TGs avatar. In Ulunthupettai, Villupuram, TGs were Alligal were retermed as aravaanigal, then Dr.Manorama, CHES, Chairperson also participated. When Name changes so the heart changes. There is Step by step growth. Natural complications have taken you

Transgender to this shape which cannot be blamed. As Ms. Esther spoke about Freedom and Mr. Sathyanarayan spoke about struggle; both Struggle and fight against you first is encouraged and then change occurs. Especially discipline among yourselves would speak for you. Before asking for anything you need to analyse if there is justice in what you ask. If we have to champion the cause, the name aravani in 1998 changed from Eunuchs to Transgender, Thirunangai is another terminology. TGs should not create problems among police people. There are one day TGs for the Koothandavar temple who are well educated scholars which is a good thing just to mingle with the TGs. I am very proud of participating in this program. In mughal period, TGs were guards in that period – faith. There are 5 TGs in my friends place who help them in every aspect. So TGs are good people with potentials.

Contest Participation of Transgender

Around **120 transgender** contested in the Miss India Contest. The contestants were from different states - Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur. Around **1040 transgender** community members and representatives working for transgender community across the country participated in the program. **15 judges** assessed their talents and marked them under criteria.

Miss. India Contest for Transgender 2009 featured KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT ON HIV / AIDS

Winners

- D.Geetha
- Karthick
- Sundar
- Karthick
- Kalai
- Mohan
- Prabavathy
- Sudha
- Bakiaraj
- Sneha
- Priya
- Deepika
- Prema
- Ramyra
- Vasugi
- Mohana

Questions for the Quiz

What is the total number of ART centres in Tamil Nadu?

*

What is the new term used for VCTC?

*

How does HIV spread? What is the CD4 count level to start ART?

*

Name two diseases which spread through mosquito bite?

*

What is the name for TANSACS interventions?

*

What is other name for PPCTC?

*

How many ICTCs are there in Tamil Nadu?

*

There were appropriate materials related to HIV, Prevention, care and support, reduction in stigma and reduction in specific focus on HIV / AIDS. Leaflets and brochures were exhibited in the vents. There were two counselors available to provide counseling services for those who are in need and help them in risk reduction techniques. Handouts were made available for participants to take away to their intervention sites. A short film on HIV/AIDS was screened whenever there were small gatherings.

Panel of experts posing questions to beauty pageants

What should society do for you? What Transgender should not do?

To gather and mobilize Transgender, what is your idea? After that, what would be the purpose of gathering them?

Who is the first MLA TG, which state in India?

Any one person whom you adore in TG community and why?

For the problems of TG what should be done?

If you are a cinema director, what would be the theme of your film?

In a general gathering, if a TG dresses exposingly? What is your opinion on it?

In a village there are 12 TGs living together, there are young men who misuse them?

If there is community problem between two TG groups, as TG what would you do?

If you get 1 lakh rupee prize money, truly what would you do?

For transgender sisters, on priority, tell me three vocational occupations that you as a group may fair well?

If you get a smart husband, how should they behave with you?

If you are the Chennai Mayor, what is the behavior change that you would opt for?

If someone murders and comes for rescue to you, what is your reaction?

If you are going to the U.S, between the donor and you, there is an amount of 10 lakh rupees for doing social service in India, what would you do?

If TG becomes a big Cinema Star, what would you do?

TGs have certain habits like alcoholism, your friend gifts foreign alcohol, what will you do during the weekend after work?

With 5 lakh rupees, you are starting a business, who will you employ?

What are the two achievements you wish to accomplish?

If you are invited by the Prime Minister the week before you were harassed by the police and you had gone to represent your TG community, what would you address on behalf of them?

What is the year and month of the commencement of TG welfare Board?

You had entered into Delhi for the first time, not knowing their language, what is your safety measure, who will you approach?

How to integrate Tamilnadu and other state TGs on a national basis. What would be the main reason?

If not for this program, what are the other programs that you as TG prefer?

Contestant' Feedback

Tanushree from Karanataka expressed her thought that **"It was an unique opportunity"**

Lakshaya from Kerala said that **"It is the first ever time I feel happy and good about being a transgender"**

In her joy, S. Thenmozhi from Pune gladly said that **"These kind of contests should be conducted once in every week"**

Rubina from Mumbai complimented ICWO that **"Arrangement was really good"**

S. Sadna from Tamil Nadu told that **"This is the first time ever, I am seeing this large gathering of Transgender"**

Support of Sponsors

Rotarian M.MYTHILI, President, Rotary Club of Chennai, Gemini

Ms.D.KAMAKSHI, General Secretary, State Women Wing, Chennai

Mr.A.PRABHU, Managing Director, Latha Roadlines, Anna Nagar, Chennai

LAKSHMI ENTERPRISES, MMDA, Chennai

SRESHTA COMMUNICATIONS, Chennai

Outcome of the contest

- ✓ A platform created for Transgender to showcase their skills and talents
- ✓ Positive messages will be disseminated through the Media about Transgender
- ✓ The general public will be reached with information about the living status of Transgender and Educated about transgender issues.
- ✓ Awareness created with regards to attitudes concerning people with gender-atypical appearance or behaviour.
- ✓ Assumptions about transgender people's sexual orientation, desire for surgical or hormonal treatment, or other aspects of their identity or transition plans awareness would be created.
- ✓ The lines of communication would be open with the transgender person among the general public.
- ✓ Support groups for family, friends, and significant others of transgender people would be ensured.

Winners of competitions

Miss Beautiful Eyes

I	Ms. Lakshya	Kerala
II	Ms. Priya	Tamil Nadu
III	Ms. Tanushree	Karnataka

Miss Beautiful Hair

I	Ms. Olga	Tamil Nadu
II	Ms. Monal	Tamil Nadu
III	Ms. Ashwini	Tamil Nadu

Miss Beautiful Skin

I	Ms.Nandini	Karnataka
II	Ms.Ragasya	Tamil Nadu
III	Ms.Priyanka	Tamil Nadu

Miss Beautiful Walk

I	Ms. Kareena	Mumbai
II	Ms. Reema	Karnataka
III	Ms. S.Sudha	Tamil Nadu

“This is just a beginning and not the end to support TGs”

Miss India Contest for Transgender 2009



[Left] Ms.Romi, Ms.Kareena Shaline [Middle]. Ms.Padmini[Right]

I	Ms. Kareena <i>Darban Foundation, interested doing films, modeling, movies and dance shows</i>	Mumbai
II	Ms. Romi <i>Like to enhance her personality and prefers to do higher education</i>	Manipur
III	Ms. Padmini <i>Work for the betterment of HIV positive people and create awareness on HIV / AIDS</i>	Coimbatore, TN

[Miss. India Contest for Transgender 2009]

*****End of the Report*****