

SPREAD THE WORD! A historic moment for Indian trans masculine persons! 74 Indian trans masculine persons put their names on an appeal to the Indian Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

THE APPEAL

Dear members of the expert committee on transgender issues set up by the MSJE,

We would like to first of all thank the Ministry of Social Justice Empowerment for taking up the issue of trans people in the country. We would also like to appreciate the steps taken by the ministry to address the concerns of our trans communities. As you all know, in India, because of the large numbers of our trans sisters and the remarkable way in which they have come together and organised politically and supported each other, everyone thinks trans people means only hijras. But trans men also exist. This is a fact that the government also overlooks when making policies and programmes for trans people. A case in point being the Aravani Welfare Board in Tamil Nadu which provides services to only aravanis and not trans men.

If trans people are a minority with almost no rights in this country, transmen are a minority within that minority. It is hence, we feel, important to give special considerations and additional support to a minority group. Because we were mistakenly identified as women by parents, doctors, the state and society at large, it has been very difficult for us to come out of our homes. For years we were guarded behind closed doors, not allowed to move freely, forcibly married, teased in schools and colleges, had to drop out of educational institutions, physically attacked, verbally abused etc. A lot of these problems our brave Hijra sisters have also faced. But because they were mistakenly seen as boys, they were free to roam around and find other trans people. Because their Hijra mothers made space for them, they were able to leave their homes and live with their trans sisters and mothers. We don't have that. We struggle for years alone before we find another trans man. We struggle for years before we can find a job, independent housing, find health facilities including Sex Reassignment Surgery[S.R.S] and overall Trans and General Healthcare. We are sure our trans sisters will also agree that sometimes words fail to explain how difficult it is for us to just survive in a society that is so patriarchal and transphobic.

We, as trans men admire and respect the courage of our trans sisters who have led the way for LGBTI rights in India. We are learning to organise ourselves from them and are in the process of doing that. Just like there are hijras, kinnars, mangalamukhis, aravanis, kothis, jogappas, shiv shaktis among trans women as identities, there is a wide range of trans masculine expressions. Some of us have had surgery, some of us haven't, some of us are more masculine, others are more fluid in their gender expression. We have many names to identify ourselves like bhैया, thirunambi, gandabasaka, babu, ftm, trans man etc. For an umbrella term, to refer to us in all our diversity, we would like the use of the term, trans masculine. We do not identify with PAGFB[Persons Assigned Gender Female at Birth] which is what is being used in reports and meetings here to describe our identities. We strongly urge you to refer to us by identities that we assume, not ones that are imposed on us without due democratic discussions and consent.

We would like to be included in the consultations to formulate progressive policies

for trans people and for trans men, gender non conformists and people who identify as intersex to be given an opportunity to put forward our demands. Since the issues and identities involve such a broad range, we would like to make a direct submission in front of the committee and put forward our recommendations. We urge the MSJE to give us some more time to do larger consultations with the trans masculine community members and come up with recommendations that would truly reflect the needs of the community.

[names withheld here for purposes of safety].

Satya

Sampoorna [For Trans* Indians - By Trans* Indians - Across the Globe]

Member, India Task Force,

South Asian Human Rights Association for Marginalised Sexualities and Genders