

**A STUDY ON THE REPRESENTATION OF INDIAN TRANS
WOMEN THROUGH TEXT, MEDIA AND ORAL
NARRATIVES: IDENTITY, CHALLENGES AND
DEVELOPMENTS**

Ph.D. Thesis

By
Kavitha K



**DISCIPLINE OF ENGLISH
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY INDORE
JULY 2025**

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A THESIS

*Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree
of*
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by
Kavitha K



**DISCIPLINE OF ENGLISH
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY INDORE
JUNE 2025**



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY INDORE

I hereby certify that the work which is being presented in the thesis entitled **A STUDY ON THE REPRESENTATION OF INDIAN TRANS WOMEN THROUGH TEXT, MEDIA AND ORAL NARRATIVES: IDENTITY, CHALLENGES AND DEVELOPMENTS** in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** and submitted in the **SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, Indian Institute of Technology Indore**, is an authentic record of my own work carried out during the time period from January 2020 to July 2025 under the supervision of Prof. Nirmala Menon, Professor, Indian Institute of Technology Indore.

The matter presented in this thesis has not been submitted by me for the award of any other degree of this or any other institute.

(Kavitha K)

This is to certify that the above statement made by the candidate is correct to the best of my/our knowledge.

(PROF. NIRMALA MENON)

KAVITHA K has successfully given his/her Ph.D. Oral Examination held on 29.10.2022.

(PROF. NIRMALA MENON)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I must acknowledge my deepest debt of gratitude to my research guide and supervisor, Prof. Nirmala Menon, for her expert guidance and invaluable help throughout the study. Mere words would not be sufficient to express her encouragement, motivation, advice and help extended to me to complete this research. It is a great pleasure and an excellent experience to work under her guidance. My colossal thanks to PSPC members Dr. Ananya Ghoshal and Dr. Shomik Dasgupta for their encouragement and valuable suggestions to improve this thesis. I extend my thanks to IIT Indore and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences for offering the necessary research environment and financial assistance. I immensely thank all faculty members and non-teaching staff of the School of HSS, and the head of the department, Prof. Ruchi Sharma, for their support over the years. I would also like to sincerely thank the staff at the Central Library, IIT Indore, for providing the books and articles for my research.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Mahalaxmi Raghavan (trans women activist), Priya Babu (trans women), Saranya (trans women), Jeeva (trans women) for helping me to gain a deeper understanding and for sharing their invaluable contributions, willingness, and experiences of the trans women's community. I sincerely thank all the trans women who have contributed to this work by sharing their data in the surveys, choosing to remain anonymous. Their courage, efforts, time and willingness have been crucial to the success of my research, and I fully respect and acknowledge their anonymity. I would also like to thank Jaison Joshua, Mani (late), Sai Parajan, Manokar, Santhosh, and Kavinram, trans men who helped to collect data from the trans women, and trans activist Mahalakshmi Ragavan, who has been instrumental in connecting with the transgender community and supporting my entire data collection and research efforts. Without her support and the efforts of trans men, collecting data from trans women would not have been possible. I thank Ravi Ranjan Kumar for his invaluable

assistance in collecting metadata of trans women's creative outputs and contributing to the construction of the Indian trans women's e-lit metadata archive. I also thank the language experts for their crucial contribution, respecting their choice to remain anonymous.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my senior, Shanmugapriya, and her husband, Naveen Kumar, who have been a source of my inspiration, confidence, and strength throughout my research period. Without her support, this work couldn't be so grand. I thank her for her valuable time and insightful research discussions, and my colleagues at the DH lab, especially Ramesh, Jyothi, Vandana, Sonal, Anima, Justy and all Digital Humanities Lab members at IIT Indore. I extend my gratitude to the JPN Centre for their financial support.

I sincerely thank the comforting spaces of Tea Post and Juicilious, which offered moments of rest, peace, and energy that sustained me. My sincere thanks to the academic environments: the Digital Humanities lab, the Library, and the Study Zone, which accompanied my research journey and shaped this work.

Words cannot be found in the dictionary to say thanks to my mother, who sacrificed her health, sleep, and her entire life for my progress and happiness. My deep thanks to my daughter for her understanding, to whom I couldn't give my support and love in this PhD life. I thank all the situations, visible and invisible souls, who are shining on me every day and preparing me for a successful life.

Once again, thank you, everyone, for your invaluable contributions to my life and for making this thesis successful.

Kavitha K

14th July, 2025

**I dedicate this to my mom, my friends and
my daughter, whose love and support have
been a constant source of my inspiration.**

Synopsis

Introduction

In Indian society, trans women are considered auspicious people with special spiritual powers (Srinivasan and Chandrasekaran, 2020; Goldman, 2017). Despite their cultural significance, they face social exclusion and systemic discrimination from family, school, college, and workplace daily (More, 2021; Srivastava, 2023; Badgett, 2014). Many of them are abandoned by their families at a young age due to the social taboos for gender non-conformity (More, 2021). However, in some regions, trans women's presence is considered sacred (Revathi, 2010), and the result does not translate into social or economic inclusion. As a result of being denied education, formal employment and healthcare, many of their choices are being beggars and sex workers (Chakrapani et al., 2018; Vijayakumar et al., 2019). This exclusion is compounded by a lack of understanding of society, which prevents access to rights that other genders enjoy, such as housing, legal protection from abuse, etc. It often leads trans women to face verbal, emotional, sexual, physical, and financial abuse and discrimination (Bhattacharya, 2022; Puri and Sandhu, 2024). This complex dynamic of rejection shapes and reshapes trans women's representations and identities in various narratives such as literature, cinema, digital media, archives, and so on.

These narratives influence and impact people's values, ideologies, notions, culture, postures and comportments, and their perception of authenticity (Gamson et al., 1992; Albrecht, 1954; Nair et al., 2024). Such narratives are the best way of communication through literature and audio-visual narratives, and they engender a good bond with the people and build public opinion based on their own imagination. Following the representation in autobiographies, and misrepresentations in cinema (Nair et al., 2024), digital narrative platforms also represent and misrepresent the trans

women's community in society (Manjumdar et al., 2022; Pauri and Halder, 2023). However, in recent years, trans women/ individuals have been shaping and reshaping trans women's narratives on various platforms, such as literature, digital media platforms, and electronic literature sources (discussed broadly in the following chapters).

A few trans women (Adan Harry, Maya Sree, Mayasri, Trinetra Halder Gummaraju, K. Prithika Yashini, Padma Lakshmi, Narthaki Nataraj, A. Revathi, etc.) have begun to actively fight their marginalization by securing jobs in different fields, such as pilots, doctors, police, advocates, dancers, writers, business trans women, auto drivers, social media influencers, etc., within the public and private sectors. By doing so, they directly influence individuals about their community's progress. Among these professions, writing and literature are unique, as they emphasize the transformative power of ideas, storytelling, and communication to educate, inspire, and provoke thought. Trans women work across various genres, including poetry, novels, autobiographies, and memoirs, contributing to the socio-cultural discourse and offering a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. It creates a significant societal impact by raising awareness and challenging conventional norms (Bose, 2020). Through trans women's literature, writers articulate, publish, and preserve thoughts, experiences, and emotions to expand cultural boundaries and redefine cultural understandings through their narratives. In addition, writers use their work to influence future generations and to represent and shape socio-cultural realities.

The content created by trans writers requires significant effort, time, and resources to publish and share. Additionally, cinema, as a medium of mass communication, engages a large audience, interacts with diverse cultures and identities, and has a significant impact on society. It is now closely connected with digital platforms, and often reflects the one-sided perspectives of directors. In contrast, despite the risk of spreading

misinformation (Aimeur et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2019), digital platforms offer a vast repository of information centralized in one place. These platforms enable global connectivity. They allow trans women and individuals to share information, communicate in real-time, and access resources with great ease. While trans women's literature mainly targets literate individuals, cinema and social media transcend this limitation, reaching both literate and illiterate populations.

It offers many benefits, including access to educational resources, knowledge sharing, news dissemination, awareness raising, entertainment, promotion of social change, creative expression, and the fostering of innovation (Househ et al., 2014; Ojomo and Sodeinde, 2021). Compared to literature by trans women, cinema and social media can significantly increase awareness. They help build supportive communities, affirm identities, and share vital information about the experiences of trans women. Furthermore, visual stories increase awareness, correct misunderstandings, and educate wider audiences about transgender identities (Ciszek et al., 2023; Jenzen, 2017). This broad reach and inclusivity make visual media essential for supporting and empowering marginalized groups. While literature by trans women generally has positive effects, visual media can produce both positive and negative outcomes. Therefore, it is important to examine how digital media platforms like cinema and YouTube are shaping and reshaping the identities of trans women.

In the era of digital change, trans women's literature is evolving in several ways: e-books, audiobooks, and online platforms are making literary works easier to access for global audiences. Despite these changes, its roots are closely tied to trans women's literature and the integration of technology, which forms the basis of electronic literature. This connection promotes ongoing innovation in the digital space and broadens the ways stories are told and experienced (Koskimaa, 2000; Electronic Literature Organization, 2015). Additionally, digital humanities projects and transgender archives

are crucial in preserving and democratizing literary heritage. These efforts empower and enlighten, shaping human experiences in enduring ways and addressing various social issues (see Shanmugapriya and Sutton, 2022; Roy, 2025). On social media platforms like YouTube, trans women's creative works, such as poems, novels, and songs, are widely available, offering a dynamic extension of literary expression. As trans women's literature evolves, it aligns with the definition encompassing all mediums where stories are shared through movies, books, or other forms of digital engagement. The research argues that such trans women's creative outputs constitute electronic literature. These mediums challenge societal norms, amplify marginalized voices, and introduce new ways of thinking. Addressing marginalization and societal issues makes these narratives more accessible to the general public, promoting greater societal respect and understanding. Furthermore, through the close reading of trans women's representations, identity, challenges, healthcare, education, and financial support, as depicted in the autobiographies and visual narratives, the study analyzed contemporary Indian trans women's lived experiences to understand the impact of the state and central government schemes on their community.

Researchers (see Srinivasan and Chandrasekaran, 2020; Chakrapani et al., 2022; More, 2021; Bhattacharya, 2022; Househ et al., 2014; Koskimaa, 2000; Ciszek et al., 2023) constantly challenge the Indian phenomenon of trans women, addressing both historical depictions and contemporary society. Their scholarly scrutiny extends to identifying distortions and stereotypical representations to shape societal perceptions, with a more precise and nuanced comprehension of the experiences, identities, and representations of trans women in Indian societies.

Research gaps and justification of the selected narratives

By examining the existing scholarship on trans women, this study finds the four narrative gaps that represent trans women in Indian society: **autobiographies, Film, YouTube, electronic literature, interviews and surveys**. It allows for gaining insight into the contemporary society of trans women's representation, survival, marginalization, stigma, development, identity, gender, social change, and power dynamics. By engaging with these narratives, this thesis explores how these mediums collectively contribute to understanding trans women's identity, empowerment and community development in India. The study seeks to bridge the gap between literary and digital, as well as interviews and surveys.

1. there is a notable lack of attention given to Indian trans women, particularly in addressing the multiple forms of discrimination and abuses they face in areas such as representation, identity, gender, healthcare, education, and financial inclusion, both in autobiographies and visual media platforms. Exploring these areas is crucial to understanding how structural inequalities and social prejudices continue to shape trans women's lived realities and cultural participation.
2. there is insufficient focus on comparative analyses of autobiographies and movies to uncover patterns and unique aspects that shape trans women's identities and communities. Such comparative approaches can enrich interdisciplinary dialogues and reveal how different media forms negotiate gender, authenticity, and empowerment.
3. there is a lack of scholarship discussing the impact of YouTube and electronic literature on trans women's representations, identity, and the advancements of the trans women's community. Studying these digital narratives can reveal how online spaces foster empowerment, community building, and activism beyond mere visibility.

4. there is limited research on healthcare, financial, educational, and migration challenges faced by trans women, as well as the reach and utilization of government-provided facilities by their community. Examining these aspects contributes to policy-relevant scholarship that can inform inclusive frameworks and better address social justice concerns.
5. there is a lack of public digital humanities support platforms dedicated to the Indian trans women's community. Developing such platforms would not only preserve and amplify their narratives but also promote collaborative knowledge-building and visibility through academic engagement.
6. there is a lack of scholarly exploration and focus on Indian trans women's electronic literature and archives. Academic attention to these materials can expand the digital humanities discourse to include marginalized voices and redefine the relationship between technology, gender, and cultural memory.

These omissions highlight the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to studying trans women's autobiographies, cinema, YouTube narratives, electronic literature, and interviews and surveys, ensuring their voices are fully represented and understood in all their complexity. The study explores the narratives of trans women from multiple angles, such as personal/reflective accounts through autobiographies, immediate and interactive storytelling through cinema and YouTube, and grounded insights through personal interviews and surveys.

Research questions and objectives

A thorough examination of these gaps in existing scholarship leads to the following central research questions.

1. How do personal and visual narratives contribute to the empowerment, representation, and community development of trans women in India while addressing structural oppression?
2. In what ways do digital platforms and electronic literature enhance awareness, promote creative expression, and strengthen community participation among trans women?
3. What educational, healthcare, social, and policy interventions can effectively reduce discrimination and improve mobility and institutional inclusion for trans women in India?

Based on the identified research gaps and framed questions above, this thesis aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. to determine how autobiographical and cinematic narratives of trans women shape public understanding, contribute to community formation, and influence discourses on empowerment and social inclusion in India.
2. to assess the impact of video content produced by individual and trans women YouTubers in fostering digital solidarity, enhancing visibility, and reshaping societal perceptions of trans identities.
3. to evaluate how the formal and aesthetic qualities of YouTube-based creative works by trans women expand the definitions and boundaries of Indian trans women's electronic literature, contributing to new frameworks of digital storytelling and representation.
4. to investigate how healthcare and migration experiences intersect in the lives of trans women, producing insights into structural inequities and informing the effectiveness and inclusivity of existing governmental welfare schemes.

Methodology and Field Research

The research method in the thesis is primarily based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis, focusing on the marginalization, identity, representation, and developments in literature, cinema, YouTube, electronic literature, and interviews and surveys. To achieve this, the study applied Python and Microsoft Excel to visualize data findings closely. Tools like Airtable, GitHub, and Omeka were also used to organize unstructured files into structured data collections. These tools are invaluable for humanities scholars and the public, as they provide visual representations of the findings, offering readers a clear and accessible overview of the content. This thesis is contextualized within the broad area of trans women's studies, employing various approaches and methodologies from literature, cinema, social media studies (specifically YouTube), electronic literature and interviews and surveys. By integrating these methods, the thesis adopts a holistic thematic approach to understanding the lived experiences and representations of trans women.

Additionally, the study conducted interviews with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that work closely with and for the trans women community, such as the Transgender Resource Center (Madurai), Transgender Welfare Organization (Salem), and Transgender Rights Association (Chennai). The interviewees included trans women writers, a translator, activists, scholars, and a few trans women individuals to discuss the role of social media in uplifting the trans women community in India. Furthermore, the study focused on a purposive sample of 53 trans women who participated in a survey and 4 semi-structured interviews regarding the utilization and challenges of government initiatives from the Tamil Nadu state government. The study gradually adjusted the interview questions to avoid sensitive topics. Participants were recruited from Transgender Resource Centre to examine the challenges trans women face in migration and access to healthcare schemes in Madurai Metropolitan City, Tamil

Nadu. Before the data collection, the questionnaire was shared with the Transgender Resource Centre (TRC) to meet ethical standards. The ethical review board reviewed it before the study commenced. During the interview, the researcher discussed with participants' experiences, interests in gender-related surgeries, details of accessed hospitals, benefits of state and central government healthcare and migration schemes, awareness and unawareness of these schemes, sources of awareness, employment and economic status, and savings from the state government's public transportation scheme.

Overview of the Chapter

Introduction.

The Introduction chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the background literature review, research gaps, research question, objectives, methodology, and key arguments and analysis presented in the thesis. It began summarizing the marginalization of trans women in various spheres of society, including family structures and educational and professional settings. It briefly mentions the visibility and shape of narratives in literature, cinema, social media, and electronic literature. Moreover, it traces trans women's identity, representation, developments, challenges, and how financial, medical, and educational support are significant to their community development. Further, the introduction highlights the overview of the thesis chapters.

Chapter 1: Voices Unveiled: Trans Women's Autobiographies, Films, and the Evolution of Transgender Narratives in India.

This chapter focuses on trans women's autobiographies as a literary genre that will allow a better understanding of their identities, representations, developments and issues. The study selected the following primary texts into account for the analysis: A. Revathi's *The Truth About Me: A Hijra*

Life Story (2010), Living Smile Vidya's *I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* (2007), and Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* (2015). These autobiographical narratives are compared with the selected movies, such as *Super Deluxe* (2019), *Kanchana* (2011), and *Arikandi*(2023), based on representations of trans women. This comparative approach aims to explore how trans women's self-narrated experiences are mediated, reframed and how individuals are represented in mainstream cinema, significantly after those autobiographies gain visibility.

Moreover, this chapter captures the verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuses and the unique lived experiences of the trans women writers. In exploring the challenges and successes faced by trans women, autobiographies become powerful tools for promoting understanding and awareness. They offer a platform for trans women's voices to be heard, to remove stereotypes and to contribute to a more compassionate and enlightened societal discourse. Furthermore, it discusses the use of self-empowerment and how trans women writers shape their identities and develop their communities, considering factors such as identity and social stigma. The focus is on creating a comprehensive understanding of these issues.

Chapter 2: Digital Narratives and Implications: Analysis of the Trans Women Community from India on the YouTube Platform.

This chapter discusses the representations of trans women in India who have been marginalized and oppressed in digital cultures, particularly on social media (YouTube). Social media is used as a platform to engage in various social activities, such as connecting with people and sharing our day-to-day activities and events. When it comes to the trans women's community, social media is primarily harnessed to portray the harassment against/by transgender individuals. However, in recent years, trans women/ other

individuals have been bringing attention through social media platforms, such as YouTube.

Using manually scraped video content and the metadata such as likes and views from individual YouTubers about trans women and trans women YouTubers helped gain a clearer picture of the representation of the trans women community in Indian digital society. Video content offers an idea about the video, which is a significant part of YouTube. The selected YouTube video content analysis lets us perceive valuable insights into interaction, engagement, and overall video performance. By identifying various metrics, this approach helps to understand the content that resonates most effectively with the audience.

This metadata summarizes integrated notions about the content and context. Based on the YouTube results, the study examined what kinds of content are available on YouTube and how these videos impact the trans women community. It also defines videos created by trans women on YouTube as a form of digital autobiography. Furthermore, the research highlights the potential of social media as a powerful tool for developing the trans community and advocating for the upliftment and inclusion of trans women in Indian society. These analyses are imperative to study the representation of the trans women's community in the Indian digital society. The latter helps determine the various content topics shared on YouTube to see a clear picture of trans women. This chapter also examines the main issues of trans women, such as education, medical, and financial issues, offering a nuanced perspective on the lived experiences of trans women. Social media, often celebrated for its potential to connect and empower, can simultaneously perpetuate stereotypes and marginalization. This study is significant in shaping the digital narratives and experiences of trans women in India. It highlights the current challenges and contributes to gender studies and societal activism, as well as a call to utilize these platforms for positive change and representation.

Chapter 3: Digital Archives and Amplified Voices: Trans Women's Creative Outputs on YouTube as Indian Trans Women Electronic Literature.

The study identified the gap in Indian trans women's electronic literature, which creates barriers to accessibility, recognition, and academic legitimacy, limiting opportunities for a broader and more diverse group of writers, scholars, and readers. The lack of academic institutional support, limited archiving efforts, and minimal integration into mainstream literary and cultural discourse further hinder the expansion and visibility of Indian electronic literature (e-lit). The study identified and examined YouTube literature on Indian trans women as trans women e-lit, with defining characteristics such as hypertext fiction, digital poetry, interactive narratives, and multimedia works that blend text, image, sound, and video. It explores new forms of storytelling and addresses various cultural and societal issues and the intersection of trans women's creative works and Indian trans women's electronic literature.

Additionally, considering the scarcity of trans women's electronic literature in India, the study archived the metadata of trans women-related creative outputs using the Omeka tool for dissemination and scholarly research, which is crucial to bridging the gap between digital storytelling and academic study, recognizing these narratives as valuable cultural and literary artefacts. This living documentation of pride and inspiration can motivate other trans women and individuals to share their creative works, strengthening their representations and encouraging mutual respect between transgender and other genders in Indian society to ensure their voices remain visible in cultural and social discourse, preventing their erasure.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of documenting trans women's narratives within the framework of Indian trans women's electronic literature and contributes to societal awareness. In addition, this

chapter discusses the ways to enhance Indian trans women's presence in electronic literature, along with the challenges and opportunities they encounter. This study expands the genre of electronic literature in India to amplify marginalized voices, particularly trans women, and promote societal transformation. Furthermore, by situating the digital narratives, this chapter underscores the importance of recognizing trans women's creative expressions.

Chapter 4: Migration and Healthcare Challenges: The Lived Experiences of South Indian Trans Women and the Utilization of Government Schemes.

This chapter identifies and analyzes the specific challenges faced by South Indian trans women, focusing particularly on their access to healthcare and migration facilities. The study identified systemic barriers and social stigmas in the historically marginalized trans women's community in India, including limited access to gender-affirming healthcare, socio-economic hardship, and migration difficulties. The chapter highlights the pivotal role and significant disparities in the reach and utilization of government welfare schemes of the state's "Transgender Welfare Board" and central's "Ayushman Bharat Scheme". Similarly, "Vidiyal Payanam Schemes" offers free bus fare for short distances, bringing an important step toward inclusivity. However, some issues and restrictions reduce its effectiveness in addressing the broader needs of trans women.

This chapter includes the experiences of trans women in accessing healthcare services, the perceived effectiveness of government schemes in facilitating medical care, and the impact of the free fare scheme on the mobility of trans women for healthcare access. Additionally, the study seeks to highlight both the challenges and positive outcomes experienced by participants in navigating these systems. Additionally, it examined how trans community networks emerge as both a support system and a limiting

factor. These networks provide information about health options and government schemes, encouraging trust and emotional support. However, reliance on informal networks can also lead to misinformation and restrict access to comprehensive resources. This chapter emphasizes the need for reliable, accessible information about healthcare and welfare schemes, particularly through digital platforms.

Furthermore, the chapter underscores how the lack of awareness of healthcare and migration facilities leads to socio-economic hardships and mental healthcare. Finally, the study also emphasizes the potential of public digital humanities to disseminate critical information about healthcare and welfare schemes. Increased promotion, awareness, and advancements in these schemes will help reach those in need. By bridging gaps in awareness and accessibility using the digital humanities tool, the study envisions a future where trans women can attain social inclusion and remove marginalizations. Such research is significant in enhancing awareness to improve healthcare infrastructure, economic empowerment initiatives, and policy reforms to promote societal inclusion and reduce marginalization to ensure a more equal and supportive environment for trans women in India.

Conclusion

The concluding chapter of this thesis briefly summarises and reflects upon the key findings, the issues it addresses, its limitations, and future scope. Additionally, it highlights the value of the research to academia, society, and the trans community, aiming to inspire advocacy and positive change for the trans community in India.

Appendix A

The interview conducted as part of the research with Priya Babu provided critical insights that significantly influenced this study's thesis selection of primary texts, digital platforms, electronic literature, interviews, and

surveys. As a trans woman, Priya Babu illuminated the nuanced narratives, representation, identity, and cultural significance of the trans women community within Tamil classical language and literature. Her perspectives offered a foundational understanding of how trans women are portrayed in Tamil literature, including their societal roles, challenges, and the cultural impact of these representations. This interview also highlighted the importance of texts such as *Edaiyenam (Transgenderism in India)*, translated by Mahalakshmi Raghavan, as a pivotal work for analyzing the social dynamics of trans women in Indian society. The detailed discussions on gender diversity, linguistic framework, and cultural implications guided the researcher to choose this text as a primary reference for understanding the broader narratives around trans women.

Furthermore, the insights gained during the interview emphasized the need to explore beyond trans women's literature, encouraging the inclusion of digital media, interviews and surveys in this thesis. By linking the portrayal of trans women in Tamil literature to their representation on YouTube and electronic literature, the interview underscored the interconnectedness of these media in shaping and preserving trans women's narratives. The interview with Priya Babu not only deepened the knowledge of Tamil literature's engagement with trans narratives but also provided a lens through which to examine digital representations. It inspired a more comprehensive analysis of how these media encourage people's understanding, acceptance, and positive societal change for the trans women's community.

Appendix B

The section contains the interview questions discussed in Chapter 3, which were posed to trans activists, scholars, writers and a translator from non-government organizations in Madurai and Chennai to examine the perspectives of trans women on social media. Understanding trans women's

lived experiences is critical to exploring how social media shapes their identities, empowers, and also contributes to marginalization. Including the voices of trans women directly ensures authenticity and aligns the study with their unique perspectives.

Appendix C

This section presents the interviews and survey questions from Chapter 5, which were posed to 53 trans women community members of the Transgender Resource Center in Madurai, focusing on South Indian Trans women's experiences with migration, healthcare access, and government schemes.

Appendix A and B sections provide transparency regarding the research methodology and offer context for the analysis presented in Chapters 3 and 5. Including these interviewed questions helps readers understand the study's structure and ensures ethical clarity and a smooth narrative flow in the main discussion.

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Published Papers

K., Kavitha and Menon, N. (2022). “Transwomen in Tamil Cinema: Representation and Identity.” *Women’s Link Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 68-75.

Kavitha, K., & Menon, Prof. N. (2025). “Migration, healthcare access, and the role of government schemes: Insights from South Indian trans women”. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2025.2478092>

Kavitha, K., & Menon, N. (2025). Book Review: *Transgenders in India: An Introduction* by Veerendra Mishra. *Sexualities*, 0(0).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/13634607251327061>

Papers Under Review

Kavitha, K, and Nirmala Menon. “Multimodal Narratives: Trans Women’s Creative Outputs on YouTube as Indian Trans Women Electronic Literature”. (New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia)

Abstract Acceptance

Kavitha, K, and Nirmala Menon. “Failures, Labour and Re-Learning: A Case Study of First Digital Humanities Scholars from India”. (Digital Research in the Arts and Humanities)

Fellowship Awarded

Bursary Award 2025 by the International Conference on Digital Humanities and AI—Intersections, Innovations, and Implications for contribution to scholarship in the Trans Women studies and Digital Humanities.

DLS (Digital Literary Studies) Infra Fellowship Award 2025 by ADHO

Registration sponsorship awarded by JPN National Centre for Excellence in the Humanities, IIT Indore, for presenting at the ADHO Digital Humanities Conference 2025, Lisbon, Portugal.

PRESENTATIONS AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

1. Presented the paper entitled, “Public Digital Humanities and Trans Women’s Healthcare: Exploring Migration, Government Schemes, and Social Advocacy in South Indian” at the International Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations held at the Universidade NOVA de Lisboa (NOVA FCSH), Lisbon, Portugal, July 14-18, 2025.
2. Presented the paper entitled, “Migration and Healthcare Challenges: The Lived Experiences of South Indian Trans Women and the Utilization of Government Schemes” at the International Conference on Digital Humanities and AI- Intersections, Innovations, and Implications held at the IIT Dhanbad, India, from January 31 to February 1, 2025.
3. Presented the paper entitled, “Unveiling Digital Narratives: A Comprehensive Analysis of Trans Women on YouTube in India” at the International Conference on Social Media & Society, held at the London College of Communication, University of the Arts London, from July 16 to 18, 2024. The offline event was organized by UAL: London College of Communication and SocialMedialab.ca.
4. Presented the paper entitled, “First-generation Indian Digital Humanities Scholar and Minimal Computing” at the DHSI International Conference held at the University of Victoria, Canada, from September 12 to 16, 2023.
5. Presented the paper entitled, “An Analysis of Social Media Narratives of the Indian Transgender Community on YouTube” at the RC14 International Conference on 'Gender and Media:

Representations, Discourses, and Practices' in Melbourne, Australia, held on June 23–24, 2023.

6. Presented the paper entitled, “A Critical Analysis of Digital Storytelling on/of the South Indian Transgender Community on YouTube” at the CDHI International Conference at the University of Toronto, Canada, on September 30, 2022.
7. Presented the paper entitled, “Digital Labour in Social Media: A Study of Indian Academic Content on YouTube” at the Dharthi International Conference on February 23, India.
8. Presented the paper entitled, “Transgender and Representation: An Understanding of Misunderstanding in Digital Culture” at the Digital Heritage Workshops sponsored by SPARC and UKIERI, held at Lancaster University, UK, on March 19, 2021.

Workshops and conferences

1. Attended a workshop organised by the Oral History Association of India, on “Starting Your Oral History Project”, held on 17th and 18th October, 2020.
2. Attended a Digital Humanities (DH) Workshop offered by Jamia Millia University, on “Mapping Digital Humanities Practices in/on India, held on 16th and 18th October, 2020.
3. Attended the DH Workshop offered by Lancaster University and IIT Indore, on “Digital Heritage Workshop”, held on March 19, 2021.
4. Attended an international workshop offered by Jamia Millia University and IIT Indore on “DH: Theory and Praxis”, held on 12 to 18th December, 2020.
5. Attended 3 days online international workshop on “Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI) 2022” on the topic “Queer Digital Humanities” held on January 6-8, 2022.

6. Attended 2 days workshop “Mining and Meaning: A Hands-on AntConc Workshop”, offered by IIT Dhanbad and JPN Centre, held on 31st Jan and 1st Feb, 2025.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS – Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

CGN – Childhood gender nonconformity

COVID-19 – CoronaVirus Disease of 2019

CSV – Comma-Separated Values

ELO – Electronic Literature Organisation

e-lit – Electronic literature

GAS – Gender-Affirming Surgeries

GNC – Gender non-conforming children

HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Viruses

IRCTC – Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation

ITC – Indian transwomen community

LGBTIQ+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer with +sign representing all other diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and sex characteristics not explicitly covered by other letters

MDACS – Mumbai District AIDS Control Society

NGO – Non-Government Organization

SNS – Social media networking sites

SPARC – Strategic Partnerships in Research and Collaboration

STD – Subscriber Trunk Dialing

TRC – Transgender Resource Centre

UKIERI – United Kingdom - India Education and Research Initiative

URL – Uniform Resource Locator

LIST OF GLOSSARY

Nirvana - A traditional sex-reaffirming surgery (castration and removal of male genitals) practiced by *hijra* communities as part of their ritual initiation.

Devadasis - Historically, women dedicated to a temple deity, who performed ritual dances and were often marginalized due to exploitative practices.

Pottai - A derogatory Tamil slang used against trans women.

Kothis - Feminine-presenting, effeminate men or trans feminine people who often take a receptive role in sexual relationships with men; may or may not live openly as trans women.

Ayah - A respectful term meaning of grandmother or an elder/female caretaker.

Guru - A respectful meaning, Mother, the senior transgender leader who mentors and supports their chosen family in the *hijra* community.

Chela - A respectful meaning, Daughter, a transgender person who is a disciple or junior member under a guru's guidance.

Jamaat - The community council or governing body of *hijra* households that settles disputes and organizes communal affairs.

Kinner, Hijra, Chandran, Maasi ba, Mangalamukhi, Kothi, Napumsak, Mumbal, Thirunangai, Chakka, Tritiyarakriti - Diverse terms across India that refer to trans women.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Sex is what you are born with, gender is what you recognise and sexuality is what you discover (A. Chettiar, 2015, p.1)

1.1 Trans women in India

In Indian society, trans women are considered auspicious people with special spiritual powers (Srinivasan & Chandrasekaran, 2020; Goldman, 2017). Despite their cultural significance, they face social exclusion and systemic discrimination from family, school, college, and workplace daily (More, 2021; Srivastava, 2023; Badgett, 2014). Many of them are abandoned by their families at a young age due to the social taboos for gender non-conformity (More, 2021). However, in some regions, trans women's presence is considered sacred (Revathi, 2010), and the result does not translate into social or economic inclusion. As a result of being denied education, formal employment and healthcare, many of their choices are being beggars and sex workers (Chakrapani et al., 2018; Vijayakumar et al., 2019). This exclusion is compounded by a lack of understanding of society, which prevents access to rights that other genders enjoy, such as housing, legal protection from abuse, etc. It often leads trans women to face verbal, emotional, sexual, physical, and financial abuse and discrimination (Bhattacharya, 2022; Puri & Sandhu, 2024). This complex dynamic of rejection shapes and reshapes trans women's representations and identities in various narratives such as literature, cinema, digital media, archives, and so on.

These narratives influence and impact people's values, ideologies, notions, culture, postures and comportments, and their perception of authenticity (Gamson et al., 1992; Albrecht, 1954; Nair et al., 2024). Such narratives are the best way of communication through literature and audio-

visual narratives, and they engender a good bond with the people and build public opinion based on their own imagination. Following the representation in autobiographies and misrepresentations in cinema (Nair et al., 2024), digital narrative platforms also represent and misrepresent the trans women's community in society (Manjumdar et al., 2022; Pauri & Halder, 2023). However, in recent years, trans women/ individuals have been shaping and reshaping trans women's narratives on various platforms, such as literature, digital media platforms, and electronic literature sources (discussed broadly in the following chapters).

A few trans women (Adan Harry, Maya Sree, Mayasri, Trinetra Haldar Gummaraju, K. Prithika Yashini, Padma Lakshmi, Narthaki Nataraj, A. Revathi, etc.) have begun to actively fight their marginalization by securing jobs in different fields, such as pilots, doctors, police, advocates, dancers, writers, business trans women, auto drivers, social media influencers, etc., within the public and private sectors. By doing so, they directly influence individuals about their community's progress. Among these professions, writing and literature are unique, as they emphasize the transformative power of ideas, storytelling, and communication to educate, inspire, and provoke thought. Trans women work across various genres, including poetry, novels, autobiographies, and memoirs, contributing to the socio-cultural discourse and offering a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. It creates a significant societal impact by raising awareness and challenging conventional norms (Bose, 2020). Through trans women's literature, writers articulate, publish, and preserve thoughts, experiences, and emotions to expand cultural boundaries and redefine cultural understandings through their narratives. In addition, writers use their work to influence future generations and to represent and shape socio-cultural realities.

However, as a medium of mass communication, cinema addresses various social issues, including different cultures and identities. When it

comes to trans women, cinema is the first visual screen media to misrepresent their identities, cultures, and ideological set-ups as antagonists, the fun of objective, beggars, sex workers, child kidnappers, and dancers (Bryant & Schilt, 2008; Mangayarkkarasi, 2019; Ravindar, 2018). For example, the movie *Kattabomman* (1993) depicts a scene where Pazhani arranges an interview at the Rice Mile factory. Subramani, responsible for selecting the works, prioritizes physical appearance over skill. He chooses younger candidates who exhibit sexually appealing features, while older individuals are dismissed. During the selection process, a few trans women also attend the interview. However, Subramani sarcastically mocks them, claiming their work would be unpleasant, and denies them the job. The director further reinforces this discrimination by portraying trans women as sex workers. In the following scene, when older candidates approach the factory owner, *Kattabomman*, he instructs Subramani to hire them based on their skills and experience. However, the script deliberately overlooks trans women, excluding them entirely from the job opportunity. This portrayal implies that trans women are deemed unfit for professional employment.

Over the decades, cinema has evolved, refining the roles and representations of many characters. However, the portrayal of trans women has largely remained stagnant. They continue to be depicted either as comic relief or as sinister figures harmful to society. Many prominent comedy actors have taken on the role of trans women, reinforcing negative stereotypes and contributing to the erasure of authentic transgender narratives in cinema. Examples include Vaiyapuri in *Thulladha Manamum Thullum* (1999), Prakash Raj in *Appu* (2000), and Suruli Rajan in *Kaalam Badhil Sollum* (1980) (Ravindar, 2018; Mangayarkkarasi, 2019; Shanmugavel, 2018).

The content created by trans writers requires significant effort, time, and resources to publish and share. Additionally, cinema, as a medium of

mass communication, engages a large audience, interacts with diverse cultures and identities, and has a significant impact on society. It is now closely connected with digital platforms, and often reflects the one-sided perspectives of directors and creators. In contrast, despite the risk of spreading misinformation (Aimeur et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2019), digital platforms offer a vast repository of information centralized in one place. These platforms enable global connectivity. They allow trans women and individuals to share information, communicate in real-time, and access resources with great ease. While trans women's literature mainly targets literate individuals, cinema and social media transcend this limitation, reaching both literate and illiterate populations.

It offers many benefits, including access to educational resources, knowledge sharing, news dissemination, awareness raising, entertainment, promotion of social change, creative expression, and the fostering of innovation (Househ et al., 2014; Ojomo & Sodeinde, 2021). Compared to literature by trans women, cinema and social media can significantly increase awareness. They help build supportive communities, affirm identities, and share vital information about the experiences of trans women. Furthermore, visual stories increase awareness, correct misunderstandings, and educate wider audiences about transgender identities (Ciszek et al., 2023; Jenzen, 2017). This broad reach and inclusivity make visual media essential for supporting and empowering marginalized groups. While literature by trans women generally has positive effects, visual media can produce both positive and negative outcomes. Therefore, it is important to examine how digital media platforms like cinema and YouTube are shaping and reshaping the identities of trans women.

In the era of digital change, trans women's literature is evolving in several ways: e-books, audiobooks, and online platforms are making literary works easier to access for global audiences. Despite these changes, its roots are closely tied to trans women's literature and the integration of

technology, which forms the basis of electronic literature. This connection promotes ongoing innovation in the digital space and broadens the ways stories are told and experienced (Lius, 2003; Koskimaa, 2000; Electronic Literature Organization, 2015). Additionally, digital humanities projects and transgender archives are crucial in preserving and democratizing literary heritage. These efforts empower and enlighten, shaping human experiences in enduring ways and addressing various social issues (see Shanmugapriya & Sutton, 2022; Mukherjee, 2017; Roy, 2025; Joseph & Menon, 2022). On social media platforms like YouTube, trans women's creative works, such as poems, novels, and songs, are widely available, offering a dynamic extension of literary expression. As trans women's literature evolves, it aligns with the definition encompassing all mediums where stories are shared through movies, books, or other forms of digital engagement. The research argues that such trans women's creative outputs constitute electronic literature. These mediums challenge conventional writings, amplify marginalized voices, and introduce new ways of thinking. Addressing marginalization and societal issues makes these narratives more accessible to the general public, promoting greater societal respect and understanding. Furthermore, through the close reading of trans women's representations, identity, challenges, healthcare, education, and financial support, as depicted in the autobiographies and visual narratives, the study analyzed contemporary Indian trans women's lived experiences to understand the impact of the state and central government schemes on their community.

1.2 Defining trans identity in this study

The definition of transgender in the Oxford English Dictionary designates a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond to that person's sex at birth or who does not otherwise conform to the conventional notions of sex and gender. Transgender has two variations; "Trans man", a transgender who identifies as a woman at birth

and then realizes themselves as a man, is called “trans man”. “Trans woman” is born as a man and then realizes themselves as a woman. In framing of the thesis, the study adopts the Oxford definition of a trans woman. The study focuses predominantly on the Indian trans women Community (ITC) as I define a group of people assigned as male at birth but who live and identify as women in India. The transgender term indicates various gender/sexual identities. However, in the thesis, the term is used specifically to refer to trans women. Significantly, the study chose the ITC because they struggle with a lack of legal protection, poverty, stigma, harassment, discrimination, violence, a lack of healthcare coverage and identity crises (Chettiar, 2015; Ming et al., 2016).

1.3 Background of the literature review

The trans women’s representations, identity, marginalizations, and cultural aspect spans multiple disciplines, including gender studies, sociology, literature, media studies, cultural studies, etc. Over time, trans-women scholarship has evolved to document their identity, struggles, achievement, systemic exclusion and lived realities while critically examining the socio-political structures. Scholarships (Rosati et al., 2021; Eiseler et al., 2023; Brumer et al., 2023; Carpenter, 2022; Bal, 2020; Pandey, 2020; Anusha & Hunnur, 2019; Singh et al., 2014; Dixit et al., 2023; Chakrapani et al., 2022; Garai, 2023; Raghuram et al., 2024, etc.) highlight the importance of examining trans women’s experiences through global and local lenses. Global studies underscore the challenges, transphobia, systemic exclusion, and socio-cultural context. For instance, Cerezo et al. (2010), Rosati et al. (2021), Eiseler et al. (2023), Safer (2017), and McCauley (2018) explore the intersection of gender identity and immigration experiences. They highlight how trans women are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, feelings of isolation, and violence due to racial prejudice and transphobia. These studies emphasize the importance of mental health professionals being aware of these challenges and providing

culturally appropriate services. Following that, Fontenot et al. (2020) and McCauley et al. (2018) reveal that young trans individuals need more support and services regarding sexual health education from parents, healthcare providers, and schools. They voiced concerns about safety and low advocacy in dating and sexual activities, which increased their HIV risk. Additionally, Carpenter (2022) exemplifies transgender adults' experiences of economic and healthcare hardship compared to cisgender adults. Moreover, Brumer et al. (2023) underscore that transgender individuals and women, including before, during, and post-intranational migration trajectories, are associated with health vulnerabilities.

Similarly, Indian studies have been focused on the focal point of scholarly work, exploring their historical and cultural significance alongside the contemporary struggles for recognition and rights. In the Indian context, researchers have conducted many studies such as Natatraj (2022), Chettiar (2015), Singh et al. (2014), Shaikh et al. (2016), Raj and Dubey (2024), Bhattacharya and Ghosh (2020), and Ganju and Saggurti (2017) (see also: Shaikh et al., 2016; Chettiar, 2015; Diehl et al., 2017; Singh et al., 2014; Dixit et al., 2023; Chakrapani et al., 2022; Garai, 2023; Raghuram et al., 2024; etc.) elaborate significantly on the experiences of trans women's identity, social protection movements, education, employment, and social integration. They highlight issues such as stigma, violence, social inequalities, criminal punishment, torture, denial of human rights (including economic and housing insecurity, employment discrimination, and poverty), and HIV vulnerability in India.

According to Chakrapani et al. (2004), Aneesh (2016), and Chakrapani (2010), sexual minorities like trans women are neglected in social and political spectrums, lack economic participation, have limited access to education, employment, and livelihood opportunities, and social security. Similarly, Bal (2020), Pandey (2020), and Anusha and Hunnur (2019) have investigated discrimination against trans women in various

government policies and documents concerning legal rights, social stigma, public healthcare, employment, and educational opportunities. They have emphasised the challenges of trans women's exclusion and discrimination in various contexts, which are crucial for the development of transgender people. Following that, Lee (2000), Briones (2011), Mani and Joseph (2013), and Barik and Sharma (2020) point out poor education and constrained opportunities as major challenges in employment. The study advocates that trans education is essential for trans individuals to lead a comfortable and safe life, as discrimination begins first in school (Rajdev, 2020; Biswas & Soora, 2021). On the other hand, Karunanithi (2015) highlights that transgender people in India encounter issues such as housing, jobs, property rights, and medical care. He also claims that the trans community must become economically self-sufficient to eliminate discrimination and exclusion. His arguments accentuate the lack of awareness of the existence of transgender individuals in mainstream Indian society, leading to various socioeconomic problems. To overcome such economic deprivations, the intervention of the government is vital, as Kurian and Manoj (2021) discuss that economic independence would be the way for them to overcome such deprivations. They discuss four welfare schemes for transgenders initiated by State government Kerala, such as the Kotchi metro rail limited project, education program under the Kerala literacy mission, health clinics, and old-age pensions amidst recent developments, possibilities, and challenges. Their study points out the loopholes in the policies that only benefit the transgender community 'if they transform into reality' (Kurian & Manoj, 2021, p. 17).

Scholars across global and Indian contexts have emphasized that studying trans women's autobiographies is essential not only for understanding individual experiences but also for examining broader cultural and political discourses surrounding gender, caste, class, and sexuality. Globally, transgender autobiographies have been analyzed as critical cultural texts that document identity struggles, resist normative

gender expectations, and intervene in socio-political structures that enforce marginalization.

O'Rear (2020) underscores that the relationship between transgender communities and the autobiographical form is historically and contemporarily complex. His research identifies an “autobiographical imperative”, the persistent demand from medical institutions, legal systems, and the media that trans individuals must continually narrate and justify their identities. Through performance analysis of works such as Shakina Nayfack's *One Woman Show* (2013), D'Lo's *To T or Not to T* (2019), and Sean Dorsey's *Uncovered: The Diary Project* (2009), O'Rear demonstrates how performance-based autobiographical narratives expose, challenge, and reimagine the oppressive frameworks that govern trans storytelling. His analysis reveals that trans autobiographical acts, whether written or performed, are rarely voluntary confessions but rather strategic interventions against systems that regulate authenticity and belonging. Snorton (2012) contributes a critical reading of James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* as a transgender narrative, showing how racial and gender passing intersect as processes of self-fashioning. By tracing the protagonist's negotiation of racial and gendered identities, Snorton reveals that autobiography can illuminate the social logics of difference more broadly, particularly the intersections of race, gender, and class. This reading expands the framework of trans autobiography beyond medical or personal transition to include cultural and historical negotiations of identity, thus linking trans self-representation to wider discourses of mobility and transformation.

In recent years, scholars such as Mozer (2025) have explored how trans autobiographers queer the conventions of the genre itself. Mozer argues that trans autobiographies have historically been constrained by social and medical frameworks that emphasize stability, surgery, and linear transformation. Drawing on Paul Preciado's *Testo Junkie*, he illustrates how

trans authors increasingly destabilize these conventions by employing nonlinear temporalities, fragmented narration, and experimental forms of writing that privilege authenticity and multiplicity over conformity. Similarly, Rondot (2016) examines how contemporary autobiographers like Jennifer Finney Boylan and Alex Drummond move away from “wrong-body” narratives to articulate continuous, self-defined identities that resist closure and medical validation. Jacques (2019) further demonstrates that trans writers use memoir, theory, and fiction to resist prescriptive models of self-narration. These creative interventions reflect the emergence of a post-transsexual discourse that refuses to be confined by the traditional expectations of the transition memoir.

The question of temporality, as Ellis (2019) argues, is central to understanding trans autobiographies. She shows how linear narrative structures reinforce the notion of a “before” and “after” self, thereby reproducing binary logic. By contrast, nonlinear and fragmented temporalities in trans narratives allow writers to represent the ongoing, processual nature of gender identity. Autobiography thus becomes a site of temporal negotiation, where past, present, and future selves coexist and challenge fixed notions of transition. Other studies expand the scope of autobiography by integrating sociolinguistic and psychological perspectives. Zottola et al. (2021) examine 32 autobiographical free-text narratives written by trans patients awaiting treatment at a health clinic in England. Their corpus analysis identifies recurring coping strategies and discursive patterns shaped by institutional expectations, revealing that even self-narratives intended for empowerment are influenced by what patients believe clinicians wish to hear. Likewise, Nourkova and Ivanova (2017) explore autobiographical memory among individuals who have undergone gender-affirming surgery, finding that trans participants recall childhood memories vividly but often with negative emotional valence. They interpret these recollections as a way to reconcile past and present selves, reinforcing

self-continuity despite discontinuity in gender experience. These findings affirm that autobiographical memory and writing are deeply intertwined in shaping identity, offering both therapeutic and performative value.

Morris (2019) provides an historical dimension by examining the Chevalière d'Eon, an eighteenth-century figure who lived both as a man and as a woman, and whose self-writing, *The Great Historical Epistle*, demonstrates how language and cultural context shape gender identity. This historical case underscores that the relationship between autobiography, truth, and identity has long been mediated by cultural expectations. Similarly, Zabus and Coad (2014) emphasize that transgender life writing must be understood in relation to place and ethnicity. Their work situates trans autobiographies within the larger matrix of cultural histories, suggesting that the genre's meanings shift across regional and linguistic contexts.

Recent transnational studies have further diversified understandings of trans autobiographical practices. Hoang, Nguyen, and Bui (2024) analyze the autobiography of Vietnamese singer and celebrity Nguyen Huong Giang, revealing how her narrative of transition intertwines with Vietnamese ideals of womanhood and family. Their study illustrates how trans women navigate societal norms of femininity while redefining their own identities, highlighting the local specificities of trans subjectivity in Southeast Asia. Adams (2022) extends this comparative approach by analyzing autobiographies by autistic-trans authors, identifying overlapping themes of self-expression, neurodiversity, and gender nonconformity. His work highlights how intersectional identities generate distinctive autobiographical forms that differ markedly from mainstream trans narratives.

Rondot (2016), Jacques (2019), Mozer (2025), and Ellis (2019) collectively argue that trans autobiographies increasingly resist linearity and

closure. These narratives present identity not as a completed project but as a continuous negotiation, intertwining with community, activism, and performance. Lodge's research on digital storytelling expands this understanding by tracing how autobiographical expression shifts from print to online platforms, allowing trans people to narrate their lives in multimodal, interactive, and communal spaces. O'Rear (2020) similarly situates performance as an extension of autobiographical practice, where storytelling becomes embodied and collective rather than purely textual. Across these varied studies, certain common threads emerge. First, autobiography is both demanded and contested as a means of survival, resistance, and solidarity. Second, form itself becomes political: by fragmenting, queering, and performing autobiography, trans authors challenge the boundaries of genre and gender alike. Third, trans autobiographies are deeply shaped by culture, history, and place, reflecting localized struggles over identity and visibility. Finally, memory and narrative function as tools for reconciling multiple selves, offering cognitive and emotional coherence amidst transformation.

While global scholarship has provided rich frameworks for understanding trans autobiographies, there remains limited attention to the South Asian and particularly Indian context. Works by Indian trans women such as A. Revathi's *The Truth About Me* (2010), Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* (2015), and Living Smile Vidya's *I Am Vidya* (2007) present distinct articulations of selfhood shaped by caste, kinship, and socio-economic marginalization. Their narratives move beyond individual transition stories to highlight collective struggles, ritual practices, and cultural identities that differ significantly from Western trans experiences. Building on the global debates discussed above, this thesis examines how Indian trans women employ autobiography as a space of negotiation between imposed narratives and self-authored truths, between visibility and vulnerability, and between personal memory and social transformation.

Through this analysis, the study contributes to an inclusive understanding of trans autobiographical writing as a global yet locally inflected form of resistance, agency, and cultural expression.

There are many researchers (Ramos, 2018; Kaur, 2024; Baruah, 2025; Tanupriya, 2025; Muthukrishnan & Sunitha, 2025; Gupta, 2024; Jain, 2024; Rath, 2019; etc.) who have explored trans women's representation, identity, marginalization, cultural experiences, resistance, identity formation, and political expression in autobiographical writing. For example, scholars like Ramos (2018) and Kaur (2024) discuss how trans women use life narratives to respond to medical and gender discourses. They argue for the development of a trans-specific discourse that challenges binary gender norms and offers space for representations. Building on this, Baruah (2025) and Tanupriya (2025) emphasize the political and social power of autobiographical narratives. They show how trans women like A. Revathi, Living Smile Vidya, and Laxmi Narayan Tripathi use writing to push back against systems of caste, class, gender, and colonial erasure. These narratives become acts of political struggle and self-assertion, highlighting the intersectionality of trans identities. Similarly, Muthukrishnan and Sunitha (2025) foreground the intersectionality, focusing particularly on violence and social rejection. Their study reveals how performing heteronormative femininity heightens vulnerability to transphobic violence, especially in familial and institutional spaces. Turning to bodily transformation, Gupta (2024) and Baruah (2016) examine body politics and medical transition. They highlight how gender reassignment surgeries and bodily changes are narrated not just as physical alterations but as deeply personal and political acts of identity. In a comparative approach, Jain (2024) analyzes trans autobiographies from both India and the West, noting a global shift from understanding trans identities as psychological disorders to recognizing them as self-defined subjectivities. From a cultural perspective, Rath (2019) explores how trans autobiographies and folklore

create a new narrative tradition. He connects contemporary life writing with mythological and community-based storytelling, showing their role in shaping queer and feminist discourses. Together, these studies show that trans women's autobiographies in India are not only personal narratives but also serve as powerful tools for challenging social norms, asserting identity, and demanding recognition. These texts reveal how gender, caste, class, the body, and culture shape trans experiences, pushing for broader cultural, legal, and social transformation.

Although portrayals of transgender characters in Indian literature have become more visible in recent years, academic research in this area is still quite limited. However, some scholars (Hussain, 2020; Sanyal & Maiti, 2018; Lertlakksanaporn, 2020; Carbajal, 2022; Singh) have begun to critically engage with these narratives and their intersections with power, politics, and representation. Hussain (2020) examines *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) and questions whether it genuinely challenges dominant ideologies or ultimately reinforces them. Lertlakksanaporn (2020) offers a comparative reading of Roy's novel alongside Trace Peterson's poetry to explore how each text addresses trans desire and the quest for freedom. Sanyal and Maiti (2018) map the development of queer representation, moving from indirect references in early modern literature to more outspoken and visible depictions in recent works such as *The Boyfriend* (2003). Carbajal (2022) analyzes *Delhi: A Novel* (1990) as a bold reinterpretation of Partition literature, placing a *hijra* character at the center to symbolize the fragmentation of national identity. Singh (2022) argues for the inclusion of texts like *Kari* (2008), *Talking of Muskaan* (2014), and *The Quilt* (1942) within a broader queer literary canon. These works challenge fixed categories and highlight diverse, politically engaged expressions of queerness.

The global scholarship on trans cinema reveals an evolving and multifaceted engagement with questions of representation, temporality,

identity politics, and the aesthetics of visibility. Across the past two decades, critics have increasingly emphasized that cinema is not simply a medium of representation but a constitutive site where trans subjectivities are produced, negotiated, and, at times, erased. The field of trans cinematic studies, while relatively young, has emerged through critical dialogues with queer film theory, feminist aesthetics, and postcolonial studies, all of which examine how bodies marked as trans are rendered intelligible through visual culture.

Cáel M. Keegan's (2025) essay "*Why Trans Cinema Doesn't Exist*" argues that queer cinema studies have grown by leaving out trans experiences. He says that queer film theory has focused on same-sex desire and ignored the ways trans identities challenge binary ideas of male and female. Keegan shows that this exclusion has shaped how queer cinema has developed and calls for a rethinking of how trans stories are seen in film, not as a small part of queer cinema but as something that can completely change how we understand cinema itself. Building on Keegan's concern about exclusion, Akkadia Ford (2019) explores how time works in trans cinema. She studies films like *Change Over Time* (2013), *52 Tuesdays* (2013), and *Predestination* (2014) to show how editing and storytelling compress or expand time to represent gender transition. Ford explains that these techniques help audiences feel the passage of transformation but sometimes distort the truth of trans lives. Her analysis highlights how cinematic time shapes how we see trans bodies on screen.

While Ford focuses on time and aesthetics, Gurminder Kalra (2013) looks at how cinema can be used for education. He explains how films about trans lives can help train mental health students to understand issues like discrimination, identity, and family rejection. Kalra argues that using film as a teaching tool makes learning more emotional and personal, though he also warns that such films sometimes simplify complex realities. Extending

this idea of emotional depth, Lili Pickett-Palmer (2021) discusses how trans experiences are often turned into metaphors for change in cinema. She studies films like *In a Year of 13 Moons*, *Bambi*, and *Tomboy* to show that cinema can sometimes abstract or misuse trans experiences. Yet, she argues that when films allow moments of mystery or “opacity,” they open space for more authentic and complex representations of trans lives that resist simplification. Similarly, Natasha Seymour (2019) critiques the popular TV show *Transparent*. She argues that while the series helped bring trans stories into mainstream culture, it also limits them by turning transition into a family story about acceptance and belonging. Seymour believes this “transition narrative” is safe and marketable but hides the daily struggles and discrimination faced by trans people in real life.

A very different context is presented by Roshanak Kheshti (2009), who studies Iranian cinema. She explains that, under censorship, many Iranian filmmakers use cross-dressing and disguise as forms of protest. In films like *Baran* and *Dokhtaraneh Khorshid*, she identifies what she calls the “transgender move,” a creative space where gender crossing becomes an act of resistance. Her work shows how trans themes appear differently outside Western contexts, shaped by local politics and cultural limits. Adding to these global insights, Keegan (2016) in his earlier essay “History, Disrupted” examines how Hollywood films such as *The Danish Girl* and *Dallas Buyers Club* turn queer and trans histories into polished entertainment for mainstream audiences. He calls this process “aesthetic gentrification,” where radical stories are softened for wider appeal, erasing the experiences of poor and nonwhite trans communities.

Keeley Saunders (2014) offers a contrasting view from Europe. She studies *Tomboy* and *Romeos*, two independent films that move away from Hollywood stereotypes. Saunders explains how these films use private and everyday spaces like bedrooms and bathrooms to show the emotional and social realities of trans life. This approach, she says, makes trans people

visible as real individuals, not just symbols. Hongwei Bao (2018) then takes the discussion to Asia, studying the documentary *Extravaganza* about drag performers in Shanghai. He introduces the idea of “becoming trans,” which means understanding gender as a process that crosses cultures and borders. Bao’s study shows how trans and queer cinema in China creates new global connections and challenges fixed ideas of identity and nationality.

Adding historical depth, Laura Horak (2017) traces the long history of trans and gender-variant filmmakers. She shows that trans people have always been part of film history, from early performers in silent cinema to modern digital creators. Horak’s work reminds readers that trans cinema is not new but has deep, often forgotten roots in film culture. Finally, Sharon Cowan (2009) connects law and film by examining *Cabaret*, *Transamerica*, and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. She explores how these films reflect debates about legal identity and citizenship, questioning who counts as a “real” man or woman. Cowan argues that cinema not only mirrors these debates but also shapes how society understands trans rights and belonging.

Together, these studies reveal that trans cinema is not one single story but a network of global conversations. Western scholars like Keegan, Ford, and Seymour analyze how trans visibility is controlled or commercialized, while others like Kheshti, Bao, and Saunders explore how trans identities are expressed across cultures. Horak and Cowan connect these cultural images to history and law, showing that trans cinema is both artistic and political. Overall, this body of research presents trans cinema as a global dialogue, one that challenges old binaries, expands visibility, and redefines how stories about gender are told around the world.

Several research studies (Ezhilarasi, 2019; Kuriakose, 2020; Shanmugavel, 2018; Nanditha, 2018; Mangayarkkarasi, 2019, etc.) have explored how Indian cinema portrays transgender characters, particularly trans women, and how these portrayals influence social attitudes. Ezhilarasi

(2019) points out the inappropriate and insensitive representation of trans women in Tamil cinema in terms of characterization, dialogue, costumes, and the limited time given to their roles. Similarly, Kuriakose (2020) examines trans representation in Malayalam cinema, critically analysing how trans women are often victimized and marginalized through dominant social and gender norms. Shanmugavel (2018) traces the representation of trans women in forty years of Tamil cinema and exposes recurring stereotypes and social exclusion within filmic, legal, and institutional contexts. Nanditha (2018) and Mangayarkkarasi (2019) both highlight how these visual narratives perpetuate gender and sexual discrimination, contributing to negative social perceptions of trans women in Indian culture.

Expanding upon these earlier regional studies, recent scholarship has started re-evaluating transgender visibility and agency in Indian cinema through the lens of social change, neoliberalism, and policy reform. Pragnya Parimita Chayani and Ajaya K. Sahoo (2025) investigate how trans representation has evolved since the 1990s in their study. They argue that with the onset of neoliberalism, Indian cinema has shifted from showing trans people as comic relief to portraying them as autonomous and powerful characters. Their study highlights the influence of government policies and market forces in shaping cinematic narratives, particularly emphasizing how costumes and visual aesthetics become markers of social discrimination. This work provides an important understanding of how the politics of visibility has evolved in Indian film culture over the last three decades.

In a similar direction, Kaur and Singh (2024) connect film studies with legal discourse. Their research examines the intersection of cinematic portrayals with legal developments, such as the NALSA judgment (2014) and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (2019). By examining films that move from stereotypical depictions to more empowering ones, they argue that cinema not only reflects social change

but can also influence public perception and legal reforms. Their multidisciplinary approach underscores the crucial role of films in shaping attitudes towards transgender rights and inclusion in contemporary India. Similarly, Bhola and Mehta (2025), examine the biographical series based on the life of trans activist Shreegaury Sawant. They argue that *Taali* marks a shift toward “resistance cinema,” presenting a realistic and emotional portrayal of transgender struggles and achievements. The study emphasizes the importance of inclusive storytelling and the potential of cinema to inspire empathy and social change by representing trans people with dignity and authenticity.

Adding another layer of critique, Subramanian (2024) explores how post-millennial Indian cinema and OTT media reflect the cultural dominance of the urban, upper-caste Hindu middle class. She examines how spatial and social hierarchies regulate the visibility and movement of marginalized communities, including trans people. She argues that middle-class respectability politics influence cinematic portrayals, limiting how trans lives are imagined in media narratives. This spatial analysis reveals how class and caste continue to shape the possibilities for authentic transgender representation in India’s digital and cinematic spaces.

From a broader queer perspective, Bandana Meher (2023) analyses Bollywood films from 2000 to 2023. She finds that queer and trans characters are often reduced to their sexuality or gender expression and are depicted as villains or comedic figures. However, she notes a positive shift with recent films like *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* (2020), which feature empathetic portrayals and promote acceptance. Meher’s study shows that although Indian cinema is slowly becoming more inclusive, deep-seated stereotypes persist. In continuation, Das and Sreena (2023), in their paper *Love and Affection Beyond the Binary*, use Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity to analyze how Indian films portray love, affection, and emotional bonds among trans characters. They argue that Indian cinema has

long objectified or marginalized trans people, but recent films have begun to humanize them by focusing on personal relationships and emotional depth. Their research highlights the gradual transformation of trans representation from ridicule to recognition, reflecting broader societal change.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate a steady progression in the way Indian cinema represents transgender lives from invisibility and mockery to acknowledgement and empathy. While earlier works expose stereotypes and exclusion, recent research points toward emerging trends of empowerment, realism, and resistance in film narratives. Yet, despite these changes, significant gaps remain in connecting trans-authored autobiographical writings with their influence on mainstream cinematic portrayals. Future research can therefore explore how trans women's self-narratives contribute to reshaping the broader cinematic imagination and promoting community empowerment and inclusivity within Indian visual culture.

YouTube, the next visual narrative social media platform under discussion, has a larger number of online users in India, where the 5-54 age demographic uses internet sources across diverse platforms, according to a survey by Simon Kemp (2023). There are a lot of chances to influence young individuals in India through social media visualized platforms (Sokolova & Perez, 2021; Rasmussen, 2018; Kurtin et al., 2018; Yuan & Lou, 2020; Chung & Cho, 2017; Yuan et al., 2016; Zhao, 2016). Scholars have argued that the internet can offer safe spaces, particularly for people of counter-narrative sexualities to construct an identity, forge connections and articulate voices (Lucero, 2017; Austin et al., 2020; Duff, 2023; Truong, 2016; Agarwal, 2022; Nazir, 2022). YouTube is not only widely available but also popular among internet users in India. It documents various experiences among individuals, including sexual minorities like transgender, bisexual, gay, lesbian, etc., from different age groups.

Considering this background for the literature review, the study focused on social media platforms, particularly YouTube.

In modern society, the construction and representation of diverse elements of India have become closely intertwined with digital technology, proliferating across various digital platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, etc., (Digital India: Technology to transform a connected nation, 2019). YouTube, in particular, play a pivotal role as a value-creating representative, connecting people, facilitating power dynamics, enabling high-value exchanges, supporting innovation with online producers and consumers, and nurturing relationships within the community. It became the primary site where communities are established, examined, and critiqued (Pain, 2022). The portrayal of the trans community, much like the diverse individuals within it, is ingrained in digital technologies, establishing a connection with people (Robards et al., 2019; Irudayaraj, 2020). It influences social change through mechanisms like visibility, support, community building, advocacy, education, policy awareness, etc. It is instrumental in addressing demographic variables, socioeconomic and cultural processes, as well as power dynamics with everyday realities. The connectivity facilitated by internet technologies allows the rapid exchanges of queer ideologies and networks, transcending geographical boundaries.

There are many studies in the literature that discuss trans representation on social media and how it affects and transforms the lives of their community across different parts of the world. In examining the landscape of social media dynamics, platforms have evolved to address online harassment through a multifaceted process (Pater et al., 2016). Instances of individuals who violate community guidelines face various measures such as removal, warnings, or outright expulsion (Matias et al., 2015; Bradford et al., 2019; Schoenebeck et al., 2020). However, a notable contrast arises in the United States criminal justice system, which tends to prioritize the punishment of offenders rather than the restoration of justice

to victims (Cole, 2012; Bobo and Thompson, 2006; Wenzel et al., 2008). Transitioning to the exploration of advocacy and community building among trans women on social media (Miller & Bond, 2022), extends to discussions about the histories of misrepresentation, marginalization, and violence. It actively curates an intersectional networked counter public, legitimizing and supporting trans identities and advocating for autonomy (Jackson et al., 2017; Raun, 2016). Trans individuals use YouTube to share life stories, provide support, build trust, connect, raise awareness, offer entertainment, engage activism, and move away from pathologization (Kusumawardani & Trijayanto, 2020; Austin et al., 2020; Craig et al., 2021; Schier & Linsenmeyer, 2019). The significance of LGBTQ interpersonal connections is heightened through social media (Gray, 2009; Bond & Miller, 2021). “Beyond serving as education for transgender individuals, the [i]nternet may be able to function as a tool for decreasing transphobia in society” (Miller, 2017, p. 1, 2). In an analysis of conversations among trans YouTubers, Miller explores the trans-specific issues that enhance mainstream audiences' understanding of trans individuals, and challenges (2017). Additionally, Pitts-Taylor explores personal narratives related to waitlists, setbacks, and other delays encountered by trans patients (2019).

Considerable research has been conducted on the experiences of non-binary trans vloggers, the physical aspects of medical transition, and challenges in accessing healthcare from providers. Faced with difficulties, individuals often turn to online sources to seek health information (Miller, 2018; Augustaitis, 2021; Raun, 2010). This highlights the use of online platforms by trans individuals as a potential tool for community development (Raun, 2016; Kusumawardani & Trijayanto, 2020; Augustaitis, 2021). In the United States, a historical deficiency in providing medically accurate sexual health information has led young people to seek answers on YouTube (Johnson, 2017), revealing how internet fame contributes to creating a brand of sex education. Redefining conventional notions of ‘good’ sexual health content may yield innovative strategies for

engaging with digital sexual cultures (Albury & Hendry, 2023). However, it is crucial to note that online platforms may not adequately support trans health information seeking, and the information found online may be limited in accuracy. Despite improvements in access to transition-related medical care, trans individuals still encounter barriers such as misinformation and hate speech, including financial challenges, stigma, discrimination, violence, and health concerns (Barcelos, 2019; Xavier et al., 2013; Cicero et al., 2017; Augustaitis, 2021). In response to the continuous obstacles, community support systems and healthcare advocates have played a vital role in mitigating a number of those demanding situations. School nurses and crowdfunding encourage a welcoming environment and address transition-related healthcare expenses (Barcelos, 2019; Cicero et al., 2017). Economic vulnerability leads some individuals, both Male to Female and Female to Male, to turn to sex work for income, raising concerns about confidentiality in HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) testing and potential additional discrimination, particularly for Male to Female (Xavier et al., 2013). Transgender adolescents face elevated risks of negative mental health outcomes, and social media emerges as a potentially effective platform to address these disparities (Selkie et al., 2020; Riggs & Bartholomaeusa, 2017).

When it comes to the Indian context, the studies have focused on investigating the current circumstances of the trans women's community (see Chakrapani et al., 2004; Aneesh, 2016; Chakrapani, 2010; Lee, 2000; Briones, 2011; Mani & Joseph, 2013; Barik & Sharma, 2020; Bal, 2020; Pandey, 2020; Anusha & Hunnur, 2019, etc.) and research on how digital platforms such as YouTube represent trans women has received scant attention. Srinivasacharlu (2020) posits that YouTube has been a preferred tool for education in the classroom and outside the classroom. He examines how YouTube has been functioning as an effective education platform in distinct ways and its multiple advantages for educators and learners. In this context, Social media is a powerful platform that connects with stakeholders

and viewers for sharing, listening, helping, and guiding. Some scholars who have engaged this issue in their works are the following: Nanditha (2021) underscores the lack of discussion on sexual harassment and abuse within marginalized gender minority groups' personal narratives, creating unsafe spaces under certain hashtags, Twitter. Sharma et al., argue for a more active role of the media in advancing a human rights culture and educating society on gender rights and responsibilities (2023).

Dimri's (2019) research highlights the positive shifts in visibility and enhanced acceptance within the LGBTQ community in India, attributing these changes to the rise of social media. Chinnappan (2020) study emphasizes trans women Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and leaders actively employ Facebook and various social media platforms to advance their community initiatives, build representations of trans identity, communicate health information, raise awareness, and advocate for the rights and equal opportunities of the trans community. Chakravarthi et al. (2021) studied homophobic/transphobic speech against the LGBT community on YouTube. They describe how social media platforms like YouTube are used to propagate online homophobia and transphobia, thereby undermining diversity and equality, as evidenced by the multilingual comments on the platform. They state, 'the increased proliferation of abusive content on social media platforms has a negative impact on online users. The dread, dislike, discomfort, or mistrust of lesbian, gay, transgender or bisexual persons is defined as homophobia/transphobia' (Chakravarthi et al., 2021, p. 1). While studying transphobia and homophobia on digital media is crucial, there is a notable absence of research on how YouTube specifically contributes to the development and representation of minority communities.

The digital space provides a unique opportunity for trans women individuals and groups to gain advice and information on a diverse range of queer discussions (Fraser, 2009). Through its role as a knowledge-creating

platform, digital media brings about constructive changes and challenges in the lives of every population and trans individuals (Kellner, 2004; Greenhow & Lewin, 2015). Moreover, access to digital technology proves pivotal in solving national issues, addressing marginalized sectors of society, influencing policy development, and tackling publicly recognized issues, to achieve greater social equity and empowerment (Mehra, 2004).

Electronic literature (e-lit) has emerged as one of the most transformative developments in the digital humanities, redefining how literature is produced, read, and interpreted. The following review synthesizes major contributions that have shaped the field, tracing its institutional formation, theoretical evolution, translation and curation practices, rhetorical dimensions, and global and pedagogical extensions. Collectively, the scholars' (Scott Rettberg, 2012; Mencia et al., 2018; Dene Grigar, 2014; Talan Memmott, 2011; Urszula Pawlicka, 2014; Jessica Pressman, 2017; Janez Strehovec, 2014; Miller, 2019; Scott Rettberg, 2020) works illustrate how e-lit has evolved into a dynamic intersection of technology, art, and literary study.

Scott Rettberg (2012) provides a foundational account of how the field of electronic literature took shape institutionally. He traces the evolution of the Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) from an artist-led collective in the late 1990s to an academically grounded institution. Rettberg emphasizes how the ELO helped establish electronic literature's disciplinary identity, professional legitimacy, and archival practices, underscoring the importance of collaboration in shaping e-lit as a recognized field of study. Expanding on the theoretical and creative dimensions of the field, Mencia et al. (2018) redefine translation beyond the language itself. They argue that translation in electronic literature involves negotiating across codes, media, and interfaces. Their model introduces four forms: translanguistic, transcoding, transmedial, and transcreational framing, which translate translation as both a creative and technical act. This

perspective positions translation as a form of digital authorship and artistic reinterpretation rather than a purely linguistic task.

Building upon Rettberg's foundational discussion of institutional identity, Dene Grigar (2014), examines e-lit through the lens of exhibition and preservation. She identifies challenges related to accessibility and presentation, showing how displaying digital works in libraries, galleries, and online spaces extends their cultural and scholarly relevance. Grigar's work frames curation as both a creative and critical process that preserves the performative and material dimensions of e-lit within public and academic contexts.

Talan Memmott (2011) examines how sound, image, animation, and code interplay to create meaning. He argues that electronic literature demands new rhetorical and poetic models capable of addressing multimodal and procedural forms of expression. Memmott's analysis challenges traditional ideas of authorship and reading, suggesting that digital media require alternative interpretive frameworks to account for their dynamic nature. Similarly, Matthew F. Miller (2019) situates electronic literature within broader debates about technology and culture. By examining novels such as *I Hate the Internet* and *Surveys*, he shows how digital culture reshapes authorship, identity, and reader engagement. Miller's work highlights the affective and political tensions surrounding networked communication, revealing how literature mirrors anxieties about technology and authorship in the twenty-first century.

Urszula Pawlicka (2014), provides a historical and theoretical overview of the field's development. She outlines three phases in e-lit's evolution: from text to technotext, from interpretation to experience, and from close reading to hyperreading. She situates e-lit within digital humanities and media studies, emphasizing its interdisciplinary nature and its shift toward collaborative programming and new media literacy.

Jessica Pressman (2017) argues that electronic literature naturally lends itself to comparative study across languages, media, technologies, and sensory modes. She suggests that e-lit bridges human and machinic languages, expanding comparative literature's scope by integrating digital and cultural analysis. Pressman positions electronic literature as a key site for rethinking intermediality, translation, and global literary exchange.

Janez Strehovec (2014) links e-lit to new media art, showing how both challenge aesthetic conventions and expand artistic boundaries. He examines projects like *Mass Ornament* and *Transborder Immigrant Tool* to illustrate how e-lit engages with social critique and reimagines the political function of digital art. Building on this, Berens (2019) identifies a "third generation" of e-lit characterized by artisanal interfaces and material resistance, suggesting that design and interface themselves have become sites of aesthetic and political meaning.

In a related cultural discussion, Miller (2019) examines contemporary fiction and social media culture, analyzing how digital platforms reshape authorship, creativity, and public identity. Although not limited to e-lit, Miller's work reveals the broader anxieties surrounding digital authorship and the commodification of online expression, situating e-lit within larger debates about digital culture and affective politics.

Scott Rettberg's later work (2020) turns toward pedagogy, proposing experiential learning as a way to teach e-lit. Drawing from his experiences in teaching and writing, Rettberg advocates for integrating creative practice with critical analysis to cultivate digital literacy and interdisciplinary engagement. He argues that e-lit education bridges literary studies, creative writing, and digital humanities, preparing students to think critically about media and technology.

Together, these scholars trace the development of e-lit from an experimental artistic movement to an institutionalized, global, and interdisciplinary academic field. Their works reveal how e-lit reconfigures the relationships between author, reader, and text by integrating technological processes into creative expression. Through its focus on translation, curation, archiving, rhetoric, and pedagogy, electronic literature demonstrates the expanding scope of digital humanities. Ultimately, e-lit emerges not as a replacement for traditional literature but as its reimagining, a hybrid art form that merges language, code, and interactivity to redefine how stories are told and experienced in the digital age.

In India, the engagement with electronic literature emerged much later but developed in distinctive and contextually rich ways. Scholars such as Shanmugapriya & Menon (2019), Menon et al. (2023), Mukherjee (2017), Ensslin & Roy (2023), Joseph & Menon (2022), and John (2024) have played a central role in introducing and shaping digital literary studies within the Indian academic landscape.

Shanmugapriya and Menon (2019) bridge digital poetics, environmental humanities, and literary computing by proposing computational modeling and geospatial analysis as new frameworks for reading and archiving literary narratives. Their projects, including *Lost Water! Remainscape?* and *Thanner Kuhai (The Water Cave)*, illustrate how digital poetics can represent environmental memory, local geography, and sensory experience. Their work emphasizes that Indian digital literature must connect technology with social meaning, ecological awareness, and linguistic diversity.

The *Indian Electronic Literature Anthology, Volume I*, edited by Menon et al. (2023), represents a milestone in documenting India's digital literary practices. The collection highlights multilingual creativity through works in English, Tamil, and Bengali, addressing South Asia's absence

from global e-lit archives. It challenges the notion of digital literature as merely digitized text and presents born-digital works that experiment with sound, visuals, and interactivity. By publishing it as open access through IIT Indore's KSHIP platform, the anthology promotes inclusivity, pedagogy, and linguistic diversity, situating India firmly within global e-lit discourse.

Mukherjee (2017) critiques India's "Digital India" initiative for emphasizing technological progress while neglecting digital culture and the digital humanities. Although electronic literature remains limited, emerging digital forms such as video games and online storytelling have adopted non-linear narratives to address social issues. Online poetry and viral media have transformed the internet into a space for creativity and activism, reflecting older traditions of non-linear storytelling like *Katha* and *dastangoi*. Mukherjee argues that while e-lit is still developing, its cultural roots are already visible and should be integrated into educational and cultural discourses.

Ensslin and Roy (2023) conceptualize electronic literature as a pluralist and postcomparative media form that challenges Western frameworks. They focus on platform diversity, materiality, and intersectional community practices, showing how Indian e-lit evolves amid infrastructural challenges, gendered intent, and decolonial thinking. Communities such as Electronic Literature India use accessible platforms like WhatsApp to foster inclusivity and bypass institutional barriers, reinforcing the need for localized approaches in global e-lit studies.

Roy's research explores gendered motivations in online writing in India, using qualitative surveys to understand how different groups engage with digital platforms. Female and non-binary authors often use digital writing for empowerment and community-building, while male writers focus on self-expression and improvement. Despite the expansion of digital

media, Indian online writing remains influenced by print culture. Roy emphasizes the need for stronger digital literacy to help e-lit move beyond print replication and explore the full creative potential of digital platforms.

Joseph and Menon (2022) examine how the COVID-19 lockdown transformed India's literary and publishing ecosystem when books were declared non-essential. The shift toward digital platforms led to an increased interest in e-publications across English and regional languages. Their study highlights both opportunities and challenges, including outdated government policies and infrastructural gaps, while revealing the growing potential of digital publishing in India's literary sphere.

John (2024) studies the influence of digital platforms on education and cultural learning among youth in South India. Surveying students across Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka, the research shows that social media and electronic literature enhance communication, creativity, and cultural understanding. Digital tools make learning more participatory and interactive, promoting intercultural awareness and reshaping the educational landscape in the region.

Together, these studies examine the emergence of Indian electronic literature through diverse lenses, such as environmental, cultural, pedagogical, and technological, revealing how digital practices are reshaping creativity, scholarship, and communication in the country. The study also identified that there is insufficient research on Indian based LGBTIQ+ electronic literature. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this thesis is the first to define trans women's creative outputs on YouTube as Indian trans women's electronic literature.

The thorough background of the literature review led to an examination of trans women's struggles with healthcare, migration, education, financial support, male-to-female transitions and gender

affirming surgeries. There are many studies in literature outside India, such as Cerezo et al., (2010), Foner (2008), Padilla et al., (2016), Fontenot et al., (2020), etc. (See also Rosati et al., (2021), Eiseler et al., (2023), Safer (2017), and McCauley (2018)) highlight the migration experiences and challenges of transgender individuals, the need for adequate access of gender-affirming resources and services, the importance of developing policy, education, mental health, and social acceptance to transform the lives of trans communities across different parts of the world.

Shaikh et al. (2016), Raj and Dubey (2024), and Bhattacharya and Ghosh (2020) further support this by pointing out the lack of sexual health considerations in medical status evaluations. Ravindran et al.'s (2023) study revealed insufficient access to dermatological services, with transgender individuals acquiring similar dermatologic conditions as the general population, underscoring the need for enhanced dermatology residency training programs. Furthermore, Raghuram et al. (2023) investigated the increased risk of COVID-19 challenges faced by transgender communities, including continuing livelihood uncertainties and pandemic-related anxiety, exacerbating pre-existing social discrimination and exclusion. Raza and Karthikeyan (n.d) exemplify the dual nature of LGBTQ migration, emphasising both compulsion and choice in moving from small urban cities or rural areas to major centres. Their argument posits that individuals may resolve their identity issues out of compulsion, yet choose to migrate willingly to pursue improved life opportunities.

Shaikh et al. (2016) and Singh et al. (2014) underscore the need to provide free or affordable medical services in public hospitals, develop national guidelines on gender transition, and equip healthcare providers to offer technically and culturally competent gender transition services. Additionally, studies by Chettiar (2015), Diehl et al. (2017), Shaikh et al. (2016), and Dixit et al. (2023) indicate poor health status and welfare issues in the trans population of India, highlighting the demand for and access to

HIV, health, psychological, social, and legal services among transgender individuals. Furthermore, Garai (2023) indicates that despite legal recognition and policy support from the government, such as issuing Transgender Certificates and ID cards, various schemes for community development remain inconsistent. (can add in the analysis)

Following studies by Ganju and Saggurti (2017) and Bhattacharya and Ghosh (2020), Chakrapani et al. (2022) emphasize that experiences of discrimination in diverse settings, such as family, work, and social places, lead to mental distress. Chakrapani et al. (2022) and Raghuram et al. (2023) emphasize the necessity of interventions at social-structural, institutional, family, and individual levels to reduce stigma and discrimination, thereby promoting transgender mental healthcare and general healthcare, even during emergencies and disaster situations. Dixit et al. (2023) point out that most studies on healthcare access for transgender persons in India focus only on HIV-related care, mental healthcare, gender-affirmative services, ethnocultural communities or trans women.

However, only a few academic studies are available about Indian trans women's migration. Nataraj (2022) and Acharya et al. (2023) address the migration and healthcare access of the marginalized community. Their studies highlight how various forms of migration, such as economic, linguistic, medical, and kinship, intersect with gender transition and shape trans women's experiences. Acharya et al. (2023) further emphasize that mental stress and the COVID-19 pandemic have severely impacted migrant trans women, reducing their livelihood opportunities. However, while migration can provide access to better resources, supportive communities, and safer environments, trans individuals still face challenges and barriers in different social, economic, and cultural contexts (Nataraj, 2022; Acharya et al., 2023). As Nataraj suggests, these migrations can provide access to better resources, supportive communities, and safer environments.

However, trans individuals face challenges and barriers in different social, economic, and cultural contexts (Nataraj, 2022; Acharya et al., 2023).

The abovementioned scholarly works (see Srinivasan and Chandrasekaran, 2020; Chakrapani et al., 2022; More, 2021; Bhattacharya, 2022; Househ et al., 2014; Koskimaa, 2000; Ciszek et al., 2023, etc.) constantly challenge the Indian phenomenon of trans women, addressing both historical depictions and contemporary society. Their scholarly scrutiny extends to identifying distortions and stereotypical representations to shape societal perceptions, with a more precise and nuanced comprehension of the experiences, identities, and representations of trans women in Indian societies.

1.4 Identified research gaps and justification of the selected narratives

By examining the existing scholarship on trans women, this study finds the four narrative gaps that represent trans women in Indian society: autobiographies, YouTube, electronic literature, interviews and surveys. It allows for gaining insight into the contemporary society of trans women's representation, survival, marginalization, stigma, development, identity, gender, social change, and power dynamics. By engaging with these narratives, this thesis explores how these mediums collectively contribute to understanding trans women's identity, empowerment and community development in India. The study seeks to bridge the gap between literary and digital, as well as interviews and surveys. The thesis consciously chooses the contemporary narratives of trans women in India for the following reasons, having identified the following gaps:

1. there is a notable lack of attention given to Indian trans women, particularly in addressing the multiple forms of discrimination and abuses they face in areas such as representation, identity, gender, healthcare, education, and financial inclusion, both in autobiographies and visual media platforms. Exploring these

- areas is crucial to understanding how structural inequalities and social prejudices continue to shape trans women's lived realities and cultural participation.
2. there is insufficient focus on comparative analyses of autobiographies and movies to uncover patterns and unique aspects that shape trans women's identities and communities. Such comparative approaches can enrich interdisciplinary dialogues and reveal how different media forms negotiate gender, authenticity, and empowerment.
 3. there is a lack of scholarship discussing the impact of YouTube and electronic literature on trans women's representations, identity, and the advancements of the trans women's community. Studying these digital narratives can reveal how online spaces foster empowerment, community building, and activism beyond mere visibility.
 4. there is limited research on healthcare, financial, educational, and migration challenges faced by trans women, as well as the reach and utilization of government-provided facilities by their community. Examining these aspects contributes to policy-relevant scholarship that can inform inclusive frameworks and better address social justice concerns.
 5. there is a lack of public digital humanities support platforms dedicated to the Indian trans women's community. Developing such platforms would not only preserve and amplify their narratives but also promote collaborative knowledge-building and visibility through academic engagement.
 6. there is a lack of scholarly exploration and focus on Indian trans women's electronic literature and archives. Academic attention to these materials can expand the digital humanities discourse to include marginalized voices and redefine the relationship between technology, gender, and cultural memory.

These omissions highlight the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to studying trans women's autobiographies, cinema, YouTube narratives, electronic literature, and interviews and surveys, ensuring their voices are fully represented and understood in all their complexity. The thesis selected these four platforms—literature, YouTube, electronic literature and interviews and surveys—because together, they offer a holistic and nuanced approach to studying trans women's lives, each addressing different but interrelated aspects of their identities, histories, culture, marginalizations and representations. The study explores the narratives of trans women from multiple angles, such as personal/reflective accounts through autobiographies, immediate and interactive storytelling through cinema and YouTube, and grounded insights through personal interviews and surveys.

1.5 Research Questions and Objectives

A thorough examination of these gaps in existing scholarship leads to the following central research questions.

1. How do personal and visual narratives contribute to the empowerment, representation, and community development of trans women in India while addressing structural oppression?
2. In what ways do digital platforms and electronic literature enhance awareness, promote creative expression, and strengthen community participation among trans women?
3. What educational, healthcare, social, and policy interventions can effectively reduce discrimination and improve mobility and institutional inclusion for trans women in India?

Based on the identified research gaps and framed questions above, this thesis aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. to determine how autobiographical and cinematic narratives of trans women shape public understanding, contribute to community formation, and influence discourses on empowerment and social inclusion in India.
2. to assess the impact of video content produced by individual and trans women YouTubers in fostering digital solidarity, enhancing visibility, and reshaping societal perceptions of trans identities.
3. to evaluate how the formal and aesthetic qualities of YouTube-based creative works by trans women expand the definitions and boundaries of Indian trans women's electronic literature, contributing to new frameworks of digital storytelling and representation.
4. to investigate how healthcare and migration experiences intersect in the lives of trans women, producing insights into structural inequities and informing the effectiveness and inclusivity of existing governmental welfare schemes.

1.6 Methodology and Field Research

The research method in the thesis is primarily based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis, focusing on the marginalization, identity, representation, and developments in literature, cinema, YouTube, electronic literature, and interviews and surveys. To achieve this, the study applied Python and Microsoft Excel to visualize data findings closely. Tools like Airtable, GitHub, and Omeka were also used to organize unstructured files into structured data collections. These tools are invaluable for humanities scholars and the public, as they provide visual representations of the findings, offering readers a clear and accessible overview of the content. This thesis is contextualized within the broad area of trans women's studies, employing various approaches and methodologies from literature, cinema, social media studies (specifically

YouTube), electronic literature and interviews and surveys. By integrating these methods, the thesis adopts a holistic thematic approach to understanding the lived experiences and representations of trans women.

Additionally, the study conducted interviews with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that work closely with and for the trans women community, such as the Transgender Resource Center (Madurai), Transgender Welfare Organization (Salem), and Transgender Rights Association (Chennai). The interviewees included trans women writers, a translator, activists, scholars, and a few trans women individuals to discuss the role of social media in uplifting the trans women community in India. Furthermore, the study focused on a purposive sample of 53 trans women who participated in a survey and 4 semi-structured interviews regarding the utilization and challenges of government initiatives from the Tamil Nadu state government. The study gradually adjusted the interview questions to avoid sensitive topics. Participants were recruited from Transgender Resource Centre to examine the challenges trans women face in migration and access to healthcare schemes in Madurai Metropolitan City, Tamil Nadu. Before the data collection, the questionnaire was shared with the Transgender Resource Centre (TRC) to meet ethical standards. The ethical review board reviewed it before the study commenced. During the interview, the researcher discussed with participants' experiences, interests in gender-related surgeries, details of accessed hospitals, benefits of state and central government healthcare and migration schemes, awareness and unawareness of these schemes, sources of awareness, employment and economic status, and savings from the state government's public transportation scheme.

1.7 Periodization and rationale for selection

The study selects a diverse range of narratives and divides time for autobiographies (2007-2015), cinema (2011-2019), YouTube (2016-2021 for YouTube Phase 1 and 2024 for Phase 2), electronic literature (2012-

2025), interviews and surveys (2025) to analyze trans women's narratives, challenges and developments more effectively.

The selected autobiographies of A. Revathi (2010), Living Smile Vidya (2007), and Laxmi Narayan Tripathi (2015) are pivotal for understanding the early autobiographical expressions by trans women in India. Following the progressive representation in literature, it is also significant to examine how cinematic visual narratives' representations have evolved. Therefore, films such as *Kanchana* (2011) and *Super Deluxe* (2019) were selected, as they were released after the publication of these autobiographies.

Considering YouTube as the next prominent visual narrative platform with a high number of online users, the study initiated a comprehensive investigation in 2021 that involved collecting data from the previous six years. The specific time period from 2016 to 2021 was intentionally chosen, as it enables a thorough examination of the evolution and dynamics of trans women's representation by individual creators on YouTube. Realizing the significance and the role of trans women YouTubers in community development, the study focuses on 2024 to explore their nuanced narratives and visibility within the socio-broader context.

Following the identification of creative outputs on YouTube, the study recognizes that the poems, songs, and animated stories were chosen to archive and consider Indian trans women's electronic literature. Furthermore, the study does not define a specific timeline for collecting additional video content; however, the research includes videos from the period between 2012 and 2025.

After understanding of trans women's struggles with migration, healthcare, education, financial support, and transitions through autobiographies and visual narratives, the study intentionally framed the

2024 timeline to collect the data of South trans women's lived experiences. This data aims to explore the impact of state and central government schemes on their community, particularly in relation to healthcare and migration.

1.8 Overview of the Chapter

1.8.1 Introduction.

The Introduction chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the background literature review, research gaps, research question, objectives, methodology, and key arguments and analysis presented in the thesis. It began summarizing the marginalization of trans women in various spheres of society, including family structures and educational and professional settings. It briefly mentions the visibility and shape of narratives in literature, cinema, social media, and electronic literature. Moreover, it traces trans women's identity, representation, developments, challenges, and how financial, medical, and educational support are significant to their community development. Further, the introduction highlights the overview of the thesis chapters.

1.8.2 Chapter 1: Voices Unveiled: Trans Women's Autobiographies, Films, and the Evolution of Transgender Narratives in India.

This chapter focuses on trans women's autobiographies as a literary genre that will allow a better understanding of their identities, representations, developments and issues. The study selected the following primary texts into account for the analysis: A. Revathi's *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010), Living Smile Vidya's *I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* (2007), and Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* (2015). These autobiographical narratives are compared with the selected movies, such as *Super Deluxe* (2019), *Kanchana* (2011), and *Arikandi*(2023), based on representations of trans women. This comparative approach aims to explore how trans women's self-narrated experiences are

mediated, reframed and how individuals are represented in mainstream cinema, significantly after those autobiographies gain visibility.

Moreover, this chapter captures the verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuses and the unique lived experiences of the trans women writers. In exploring the challenges and successes faced by trans women, autobiographies become powerful tools for promoting understanding and awareness. They offer a platform for trans women's voices to be heard, to remove stereotypes and to contribute to a more compassionate and enlightened societal discourse. Furthermore, it discusses the use of self-empowerment and how trans women writers shape their identities and develop their communities, considering factors such as identity and social stigma. The focus is on creating a comprehensive understanding of these issues.

1.8.3 Chapter 2: Digital Narratives and Implications: Analysis of the Trans Women Community from India on the YouTube Platform.

This chapter discusses the representations of trans women in India who have been marginalized and oppressed in digital cultures, particularly on social media (YouTube). Social media is used as a platform to engage in various social activities, such as connecting with people and sharing our day-to-day activities and events. When it comes to the trans women's community, social media is primarily harnessed to portray the harassment against/by transgender individuals. However, in recent years, trans women/other individuals have been bringing attention through social media platforms, such as YouTube.

Using manually scraped video content and the metadata such as likes and views from individual YouTubers about trans women and trans women YouTubers helped gain a clearer picture of the representation of the trans women community in Indian digital society. Video content offers an idea about the video, which is a significant part of YouTube. The selected

YouTube video content analysis lets us perceive valuable insights into interaction, engagement, and overall video performance. By identifying various metrics, this approach helps to understand the content that resonates most effectively with the audience.

This metadata summarizes integrated notions about the content and context. Based on the YouTube results, the study examined what kinds of content are available on YouTube and how these videos impact the trans women community. It also defines videos created by trans women on YouTube as a form of digital autobiography. Furthermore, the research highlights the potential of social media as a powerful tool for developing the trans community and advocating for the upliftment and inclusion of trans women in Indian society. These analyses are imperative to study the representation of the trans women's community in the Indian digital society. The latter helps determine the various content topics shared on YouTube to see a clear picture of trans women. This chapter also examines the main issues of trans women, such as education, medical, and financial issues, offering a nuanced perspective on the lived experiences of trans women. Social media, often celebrated for its potential to connect and empower, can simultaneously perpetuate stereotypes and marginalization. This study is significant in shaping the digital narratives and experiences of trans women in India. It highlights the current challenges and contributes to gender studies and societal activism, as well as a call to utilize these platforms for positive change and representation.

1.8.4 Chapter 3: Digital Archives and Amplified Voices: Trans Women's Creative Outputs on YouTube as Indian Trans Women Electronic Literature.

The study identified the gap in Indian trans women's electronic literature, which creates barriers to accessibility, recognition, and academic legitimacy, limiting opportunities for a broader and more diverse group of

writers, scholars, and readers. The lack of academic institutional support, limited archiving efforts, and minimal integration into mainstream literary and cultural discourse further hinder the expansion and visibility of Indian electronic literature (e-lit). The study identified and examined YouTube literature on Indian trans women as trans women e-lit, with defining characteristics such as hypertext fiction, digital poetry, interactive narratives, and multimedia works that blend text, image, sound, and video. Additionally, it highlights new forms of storytelling and considering the scarcity of trans women's electronic literature in India, the study archived the metadata of trans women-related creative outputs using the Omeka tool for dissemination and scholarly research, which is crucial to bridging the gap between digital storytelling and academic study, recognizing these narratives as valuable cultural and literary artefacts. This living documentation of pride and inspiration can motivate other trans women and individuals to share their creative works, strengthening their representations and encouraging mutual respect between transgender and other genders in Indian society to ensure their voices remain visible in cultural and social discourse, preventing their erasure.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of documenting trans women's narratives within the framework of Indian trans women's electronic literature and contributes to societal awareness. In addition, this chapter discusses the ways to enhance Indian trans women's presence in electronic literature, along with the challenges and opportunities they can encounter. This study expands the genre of electronic literature in India to amplify marginalized voices, particularly trans women, and promote societal transformation. Furthermore, by situating the digital narratives, this chapter underscores the importance of recognizing trans women's creative expressions.

1.8.5 Chapter 4: Migration and Healthcare Challenges: The Lived Experiences of South Indian Trans Women and the Utilization of Government Schemes.

This chapter identifies and analyzes the specific challenges faced by South Indian trans women, focusing particularly on their access to healthcare and migration facilities. The study identified systemic barriers and social stigmas in the historically marginalized trans women's community in India, including limited access to gender-affirming healthcare, socio-economic hardship, and migration difficulties. The chapter highlights the pivotal role and significant disparities in the reach and utilization of government welfare schemes of the state's "Transgender Welfare Board" and central's "Ayushman Bharat Scheme". Similarly, "Vidyal Payanam Schemes" offers free bus fare for short distances, bringing an important step toward inclusivity. However, some issues and restrictions reduce its effectiveness in addressing the broader needs of trans women.

This chapter includes the experiences of trans women in accessing healthcare services, the perceived effectiveness of government schemes in facilitating medical care, and the impact of the free fare scheme on the mobility of trans women for healthcare access. Additionally, the study seeks to highlight both the challenges and positive outcomes experienced by participants in navigating these systems. Additionally, it examined how trans community networks emerge as both a support system and a limiting factor. These networks provide information about health options and government schemes, encouraging trust and emotional support. However, reliance on informal networks can also lead to misinformation and restrict access to comprehensive resources. This chapter emphasizes the need for reliable, accessible information about healthcare and welfare schemes, particularly through digital platforms.

Furthermore, the chapter underscores how the lack of awareness of healthcare and migration facilities leads to socio-economic hardships and mental healthcare. Finally, the study also emphasizes the potential of public digital humanities to disseminate critical information about healthcare and welfare schemes. Increased promotion, awareness, and advancements in these schemes will help reach those in need. By bridging gaps in awareness and accessibility using the digital humanities tool, the study envisions a future where trans women can attain social inclusion and remove marginalizations. Such research is significant in enhancing awareness to improve healthcare infrastructure, economic empowerment initiatives, and policy reforms to promote societal inclusion and reduce marginalization to ensure a more equal and supportive environment for trans women in India.

1.8.6 Conclusion

The concluding chapter of this thesis briefly summarises and reflects upon the key findings, the issues it addresses, its limitations, and future scope. Additionally, it highlights the value of the research to academia, society, and the trans community, aiming to inspire advocacy and positive change for the trans community in India.

1.8.7 Appendix A

The interview conducted as part of the research with Priya Babu provided critical insights that significantly influenced this study's thesis selection of primary texts, digital platforms, electronic literature, interviews, and surveys. As a trans woman, Priya Babu illuminated the nuanced narratives, representation, identity, and cultural significance of the trans women community within Tamil classical language and literature. Her perspectives offered a foundational understanding of how trans women are portrayed in Tamil literature, including their societal roles, challenges, and the cultural impact of these representations. This interview also highlighted the importance of texts such as *Edaiyenam (Transgenderism in India)*,

translated by Mahalakshmi Raghavan, as a pivotal work for analyzing the social dynamics of trans women in Indian society. The detailed discussions on gender diversity, linguistic framework, and cultural implications guided the researcher to choose this text as a primary reference for understanding the broader narratives around trans women.

Furthermore, the insights gained during the interview emphasized the need to explore beyond trans women's literature, encouraging the inclusion of digital media, interviews and surveys in this thesis. By linking the portrayal of trans women in Tamil literature to their representation on YouTube and electronic literature, the interview underscored the interconnectedness of these media in shaping and preserving trans women's narratives. The interview with Priya Babu not only deepened the knowledge of Tamil literature's engagement with trans narratives but also provided a lens through which to examine digital representations. It inspired a more comprehensive analysis of how these media encourage people's understanding, acceptance, and positive societal change for the trans women's community.

1.8.8 Appendix B

The section contains the interview questions discussed in Chapter 3, which were posed to trans activists, scholars, writers and a translator from non-government organizations in Madurai and Chennai to examine the perspectives of trans women on social media. Understanding trans women's lived experiences is critical to exploring how social media shapes their identities, empowers, and also contributes to marginalization. Including the voices of trans women directly ensures authenticity and aligns the study with their unique perspectives.

1.8.9 Appendix C

This section presents the interviews and survey questions from Chapter 5, which were posed to 53 trans women community members of

the Transgender Resource Centre in Madurai, focusing on South Indian Trans women's experiences with migration, healthcare access, and government schemes.

Appendix A and B sections provide transparency regarding the research methodology and offer context for the analysis presented in Chapters 3 and 5. Including these interviewed questions helps readers understand the study's structure and ensures ethical clarity and a smooth narrative flow in the main discussion.

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Chapter 2

Voices Unveiled: Trans Women's Autobiographies, Films, and the Evolution of Transgender Narratives in India

I speak because we need to be heard,

I write because we need to be understood,

I dare because we need to survive.

Kalki Subramaniam (WE ARE NOT THE OTHERS, 2021)

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Representation of Transgender in Indian Literature

Transgender has been represented in Indian culture and literature in varied forms from ancient mythology to contemporary literary and media narratives (Ayyappan, 2012; Munish, 2010; Shanmugavel, 2018). These depictions often come with unique cultural terms that reflect local understandings of gender diversity. For example, the ancient Tamil grammar text *Tolkappiyam* refers to trans women as “Aanmai thirinthavargal,” which translates to “effeminate boy”, arguably one of the earliest recorded gendered terms in Indian literature. Similarly, classical Tamil texts like *Ettuttokai*, *Akananuru*, and *Silappatikaram* use the word ‘Pedi,’ while Bhakti-era texts use the term ‘Ali.’ While transgender characters are rarely central to the narrative, their appearances, especially in spiritual or mystical settings, reflect a profound cultural recognition of gender diversity. Indian mythology, too, offers fluid and complex portrayals of gender and sexuality. Sanyal discusses how a few mythological characters represent gender fluidity as a divine intervention. One well-known example is the story of Vishnu taking the form of Mohini, a beautiful enchantress. In the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Puranas*, to deceive demons and retrieve the divine nectar, *Amrita*. Enchanted by Mohini, Shiva unites with

her, leading to the birth of the god Ayyappa. Devdutt Pattanaik notes that Ayyappa is not born through a conventional womb but emerges from Shiva's spilled semen during his embrace of Mohini, thus described as *ayoni jata* (not born from a vagina) and later known as *Hariharaputra* (son of Vishnu and Shiva). In another version of the myth, the Pandyan king Rajasekhara adopts Ayyappa. Despite involving a same-sex divine union, the story is accepted within the sacred realm. Likewise, the *Krittivasa Ramayana* from Bengali tradition tells the story of Bhagirath's miraculous birth through the union of two women, made possible by the blessings of Lord Sankara. These mythological accounts highlight how ancient Indian narratives often imagined gender and reproduction in ways that moved beyond binary norms, especially when framed through divine or heroic lenses (Sanyal, 2018).

In recent years, Indian literature across genres such as novels, short stories, drama, non-fiction, and poetry has become more inclusive of transgender narratives. Early representations of gender nonconformity can be seen in Rabindranath Tagore's *The Editor* (1893) and *The Housewife* (1891), Ismat Chughtai's *Lihaaf* (1941), and Khushwant Singh's *Delhi: A Novel* (1990). A major turning point in Indian English fiction is Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), which offers one of the most thoughtful portrayals of a *hijra* woman named Anjum. Living in a graveyard in Delhi, Anjum's life becomes a powerful example of being excluded, staying strong, and building a family of her own choice. Roy avoids superficial representation by developing Anjum as a richly complex character who seeks love, motherhood, and dignity while confronting systemic marginalization.

Mythological retellings by Devdutt Pattanaik, a non-trans women writer, have contributed to reimagining and reclaiming trans-inclusive narratives. In *Shikhandi and Other Queer Tales They Don't Tell You* (2017), Pattanaik presents characters like Shikhandi as gender-variant individuals,

portrayed with dignity and strength. His novel *The Pregnant King* (2008) tells the story of King Yuvanashva, who unexpectedly becomes pregnant. This narrative challenges rigid ideas of gender and dharma, revealing a more fluid worldview rooted in Indian mythology. Vasudhendra's *Mohanaswamy* (2016), initially written in Kannada and later translated into English, follows a gay man as he navigates issues of caste and patriarchy in South India. Although the focus is not on trans women, the book broadens the scope of queer representation in regional literature. Similarly, Tabish Khair's *The Bus Stopped* (2004) includes an appearance of a *hijra* character, Farhana Begum, reflecting how trans figures are gradually becoming part of wider urban narratives.

In addition to novels, Indian drama has played a significant role in bringing transgender experiences to the stage. Mahesh Dattani's *Seven Steps Around the Fire* (1998) brings *hijra* characters like Anarkali and Kamla to the forefront, portraying their social exclusion with both empathy and political insight. Satish Alekar's *Begum Barve* (1979), written in Marathi, tells the story of a male actor who specializes in female roles and longs to live as a woman, delving into the connection between gender identity and theatrical performance. Vijay Tendulkar's *Mitrachi Goshta*, also known as *A Friend's Story* (1982), introduces a gender-nonconforming character named Mitra, often viewed through a trans masculine perspective. These plays challenge conventional gender norms and offer nuanced portrayals of trans and gender-fluid individuals. In contrast, Indian poetry written by non-trans authors has offered limited attention to transgender lives. One powerful exception is Kamala Das's poem "*The Dance of the Eunuchs*" (1965), which remains one of the earliest literary depictions of *hijras* in Indian poetry. The poem shows their pain, how they are treated unfairly, and how people stare at them, giving a rare and powerful moment where they are truly seen in poetry.

Overall, these literary works, most of which are written by non-trans authors, show a growing but uneven engagement with transgender lives. They show that stories about trans lives can be told with care and understanding, yet also highlight the difficulty of capturing these experiences authentically when the writer is not from the trans community. In many cases, trans characters are placed in supporting roles and only occasionally appear as protagonists or antagonists. This kind of marginalization reflects similar patterns in Indian cinema, where trans characters are often confined to stereotypical or background roles. Although transgender identity may not always be the main focus of these texts, its presence helps to highlight the connections between gender diversity and social exclusion. In regional literatures, where cultural and linguistic contexts vary across different parts of India, such narratives have started to reflect local realities more vividly. However, these narratives remain largely overlooked by academic researchers. The following section will shift attention to visual media, with a focus on Indian cinema, to explore how trans identities are shaped, portrayed, and circulated through film.

2.1.2 Trans Women Characters in Indian Cinema and Their Roles and Representation

Like literature, cinema plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of transgender lives. As a powerful form of mass communication, it not only reflects existing social values but also actively shapes norms related to identity, morality, and deviance (Shanmugavel, 2018; Ravindar, 2018; Gamson et al., 1992; Albrecht, 1954; Considine, 1985). However, Indian cinema has historically portrayed trans women through a narrow and often negative lens. These characters are frequently used to reinforce dominant ideas about gender and sexuality, rather than being presented as complex individuals. Many films have shown trans women only as stereotypes like sex workers, beggars, criminals, or dancers, taking away their respect and ignoring their real-life experiences (Bryant &

Schilt, 2008; Ravindar, 2018; Mangayarkkarasi, 2019; Shanmugavel, 2018). This pattern can be seen in films like *Thulladha Manamum Thullum* (1999), *Appu* (2000), *Kaalam Badhil Sollum* (1980), *Sadak* (1991), *Darmiyaan: In Between* (1997), *Guddu Rangeela* (2015), and *Mardaani 2* (2019), etc, where trans women are not developed as complex characters but are used to serve the narrative. As Ravindar notes, “the media is telling what to think about and sometimes end up telling them how to think of it as well” (2018, p. 258). These portrayals reflect a broader cultural mindset in which trans women are not seen as people but as objects used to support moral, comedic, or criminal storylines within heteronormative frameworks. Prominent comedy actors such as Vaiyapuri in *Thulladha Manamum Thullum* (1999), Prakash Raj in *Appu* (2000), and Suruli Rajan in *Kaalam Badhil Sollum* (1980) have portrayed trans women in ways that reduce their identities to objects of mockery. These performances reflect two key issues. First, male actors often mimic feminine mannerisms in a way that ridicules and invalidates trans women's expressions of gender. Second, trans women are rarely given the chance to represent themselves on screen. The continued exclusion of trans actors from the film industry points to ongoing patterns of systemic discrimination and erasure. Even as some parts of Indian society show signs of progress in terms of awareness and inclusion, trans women continue to face significant marginalization within the film world. They have limited access to employment and remain vulnerable to both economic hardship and social exclusion (Pattnaik & Mohanty, 2014). While debates around nepotism dominate public conversations about the entertainment industry, the near-total absence of trans individuals in acting, writing, and production roles reveals much deeper structural inequalities.

Some films have attempted more nuanced portrayals of trans women. *Narthagi* (2011) is a notable example where trans women played lead roles. Vidya, a trans woman actor and writer, has been vocal about the hypocrisy of audiences who show concern for trans women only when they are depicted as victims or dying in cinematic narratives. As Vidya argues,

sympathy without systemic support or visibility is hollow. There is an urgent need for inclusive hiring, diverse casting, and authentic storytelling. Most films with trans women protagonists remain confined to the realm of art cinema. If commercial films featured trans women in iconic roles, they could shift public attitudes and dismantle prevailing misconceptions. Unfortunately, the opposite often happens: trans characters are played by non trans women, reinforcing mockery through exaggerated makeup, stylized gestures, and poor dialogue delivery (Movies, 2015; Shanmugavel, 2018). Even in the 21st century, trans women remain marginalized on-screen and off-screen, excluded from the cinematic imagination that claims to represent all of society.

2.2 Transgender voices framed by *Others*

Based on the discussion above (subsections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2), in both Indian literature and cinema, the narratives of trans women are often shaped through the perspective of non trans authors and directors. While it is a positive step that non-trans individuals are writing about trans women's identities, their portrayals often position trans characters in secondary roles. Even when trans women are presented as central figures in literature and films, as in the case of Anjum in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Farhana Begum in *The Bus Stopped*, Maharani in *Appu*, and Shilpa in *Super Deluxe*, such representations are still rare. These portrayals, although sometimes sympathetic, often carry the limitations and misunderstandings of people outside the trans community. As a result, trans women are frequently shown as victims, criminals, or unusual characters, instead of being represented as real individuals with depth and agency. In an interview, Living Smile Vidya reflected on how transgender people have been portrayed in the media. She said,

In the very beginning, in print media, we were portrayed as criminals, kidnappers, and sexual perverts. In the early 2000s, things were a little different, and we were portrayed somewhat like in

Discovery Channel stories. Like, hmmm... “They are also human, we should accept them, we should love them, and blah blah...” In films, it was all about men in awkward women’s dresses, with awkward voices, and longing for sex. So annoying! But it reached the audience and prejudiced people against trans women, though we did not deserve to be treated like shit... But now, things are starting to change, though I don’t like that feeling of “sorry for us,” you know..?! (The Heroines of My Life, 2014)

It is also important to highlight that trans woman director such as Priya Babu is beginning to gain visibility in the film industry. However, Vidya points out that recognition remains difficult. As she explained, “[a]s a trans woman, you need to put in ten times the hard work, and at the end of the day, you’re still not sure you’ll be recognized.” Her words reflect the ongoing struggle for trans creators to gain the same respect and acknowledgement that other individuals receive more easily.

2.3 Indian Transgender Literature

Research scholars have largely overlooked the field of Indian transgender literature. Hence, this chapter contributes to defining and recognizing Indian transgender literature as an important area of academic inquiry. But why is this necessary? Identifying it as a distinct field ensures visibility, recognition, and critical engagement with the voices and narratives of trans individuals in India. Until around 2007, there were no widely published transgender literary works written by trans individuals in India. However, since the early 2000s, positive shifts have occurred in government and non-governmental organizations. These changes have also opened up new spaces for trans visibility and expression. In recent years, several trans women have authored autobiographical and literary texts, including A. Revathi’s *The Truth About Me* (2010) and *A Life in Trans Activism* (2016); Living Smile Vidya’s *I Am Vidya: A Transgender’s Journey* (written in Tamil 2007, English translation 2013); Laxmi Narayan

Tripathi's *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* (2015); Kalki Subramaniam's *We Are Not the Others* (2021); Manabi Bandyopadhyay's *A Gift of Goddess Laxmi* (2017); Akkai Padmashali's *One Life, Many Struggles* (2022); Santa Khurai's *The Yellow Sparrow: Memoir of a Transgender Woman* (2023), etc. These contributions mark the emergence and growth of Indian transgender literature as a distinct field that deserves scholarly attention and sustained critical engagement. This dissertation is one such effort to contribute to that recognition.

In addition to traditional forms of literature, trans individuals have also embraced digital platforms to produce and circulate creative works. For instance, Kalki Subramaniam's digital poems such as "*Fate, I Wrote*" (2018) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqhY8al7HiM>), and "*Phallus, I Cut*" (2018) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqBDPXsMP_g), as well as Akkai Padmashali's "*FEMININE Transgender Album Song|| Journey of Akkai Padmashali|| Voice of Transgender Community||*" (2024) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGNFIFwCbxE>) and many more exemplify how digital media is being used as a space for storytelling and self-representation. This thesis broadly defines such works in Chapter 4 as 'Indian Trans Women Electronic Literature.' This Indian transgender literature allows trans women authors to share their personal journeys of gender identity, male-to-female transition, etc. These narratives often highlight challenges and their unique to their lived experiences. I define and study more Indian digital transgender literature in the subsequent chapter.

Through such writing, trans women not only document their histories, emotions, and struggles but also reshape cultural narratives and push the boundaries of mainstream literary discourse in India. These works also foster greater awareness, empathy, and solidarity with the trans community. By sharing their lives and insights, these authors influence readers and contribute to larger socio-cultural movements aimed at the empowerment of their community.

2.4 Selected genre and works for the study

Trans women's autobiographies embody a growing consciousness around human rights, equality, and identity. In particular, autobiographies written by trans women draw deeply from lived experiences, making them a distinctive subgenre within transgender literature. These narratives not only document personal journeys but also envision the possibility of a more inclusive and enlightened society. The emergence of such literature in India reflects broader shifts in both government and non-government approaches to gender inclusivity and representation. As Mary Evans notes: “[w]hen individuals write autobiographies, they locate themselves as people who have had a battle or battling against a particular culture or society (37)”. In the Indian context, writing life stories extends beyond personal recollection and it becomes a radical act of self-definition and resistance against marginalization.

Considering that this chapter explores the landscape of trans women's literature in India, with a specific focus on autobiographical narratives written by trans women. It examines three prominent works: *The Truth About Me* by A. Revathi (2010), translated from Tamil by V. Geetha; *I Am Vidya* by Living Smile Vidya (2007); and *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* by Lakshmi Narayan Tripathi (2015), translated from Marathi by R. Raj Rao and P.G. Joshi. These autobiographies have not only challenged dominant societal norms but have also given voice to marginalized communities by addressing issues of identity, gender, embodiment, and exclusion. Through these autobiographies, the authors confront hegemonic discourses of marginalization, identity and gender, while foregrounding the intersectional realities of trans women in contemporary India. The selected autobiographies reflect a deliberate effort to embrace diversity, intersectionality, self-representation, advocacy, identity, personal insights into larger social issues, and unique journeys of the authors. In the context of exploring the challenges and successes faced by trans women, these

autobiographies serve as powerful tools for encouraging understanding, cultivating empathy, and raising awareness.

Trans women's narratives offer a meaningful platform to express their voices to be heard, challenge stereotypes and contribute to a more compassionate and enlightened societal discourse. This chapter selected autobiographies due to their thorough documentation of the challenges and struggles associated with Family, education, healthcare, financial and educational. Nevertheless, these autobiographies have received limited attention in both literary and sociological scholarship. Studying such first-hand experience will help to understand and trace the issues related to trans women in India. As Susan Stryker points out, 'it is a field that documents the "subjugated knowledge" of and about transgender persons, the knowledge that has buried, devalued, or erased' (12-13). Moreover, this chapter captures the verbal, physical, emotional, and economic abuses and the unique lived experiences of the trans women writers. Furthermore, it discusses self-empowerment and how trans women writers develop their communities.

In contrast to these stereotypical portrayals, autobiographies allow trans women to narrate their own lives. This chapter, therefore, compares trans women's autobiographies with selected films to examine how trans women's self-narrated experiences are mediated, reframed and how individuals are represented in mainstream cinema, significantly after those autobiographies gain visibility. This study selected films such as *Super Deluxe* (2019), *Kanchana* (2011), and *Arikandi* (2023) based on trans women's representations. While it is true that several films featuring trans women have been released in India after the publication of the autobiographies by trans women writers, such as *Kanchana* (2011), *Narthagi* (2011), *Super Deluxe* (2019), *Peranbu* (2018), *Paava Kadhaigal* (2020), *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* (2021), *Haddi* (2023), *Ek Jagah Apni* (2022), *Arikandi* (2023), etc. The study specifically selected these three

films because they were originally produced in Tamil and are also available in Hindi/English versions. Notably, *Kanchana* was remade in Hindi as *Laxmi* (2020), which helped the narrative reach a wider audience in the contemporary period. The choice of Tamil and Hindi films is also informed by Living Smile Vidya's observation that "[m]ost of the tirunangais from South India migrate to the north, to cities like Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata and Delhi" An important reason for this is that, in these parts, people see them as avatars of Krishna (81). Therefore, it becomes significant to examine how trans women are represented in both Tamil and Hindi cinema.

Additionally, the researcher's familiarity with the Tamil language allows for a more nuanced understanding and analysis of films. Since the chapter primarily explores the themes of representation, identity, and marginalization in trans women's autobiographies, only two films (*Super Deluxe*, 2019; and *Kanchana*, 2011) directed by individuals have been selected to examine whether autobiographical narratives have influenced the representation of trans women in Indian cinema. One film (*Arikandi* (2023) directed by a trans woman has been selected to examine how she portrays trans women's identity and representation. In total, the study analyzes three films. The aim is not to provide a broad overview of all representations of trans women in Indian cinema, but rather to offer a focused, in-depth, and qualitative analysis. This approach allows for a meaningful comparison between autobiographical narratives and cinematic portrayals of trans women. These films were culturally significant and offered a multilayered depiction. Limiting the scope to three films enables a close, detailed analysis that aligns with sharper insights into how trans lives are represented and receive attention in cinema.

The chapter structures its content into five sections, following the introduction, which delves into a comprehensive overview of the representation of trans women in Indian literature and cinema. The second section delineates the methodology employed in the study, encompassing a

qualitative analysis of a chosen Indian trans woman's autobiography and film. Subsequently, the third section critically examines the lived experiences and surrounding challenges as depicted in Revathi, Living Smile Vidya, and Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's autobiographies. Additionally, the fourth section explores how these autobiographies have shaped and been reflected in Indian visual representations, particularly cinema, in portraying their identities. The last section presents the conclusion of this chapter.

2.5 Research questions and Aim

1. How do trans women use autobiographical writing to translate and deploy their trauma as a tool to transform their own lives and their community for transformative/progressive development?
2. How have autobiographical narratives influenced the visual representation of trans identities in Indian cinema?

The aim of this chapter is to critically examine the self-representation, identity, and lived experiences of trans women in India through selected autobiographical narratives and to explore how these narratives have influenced the representations of trans women in Indian cinema after 2010. It also aims to highlight the role of autobiographies and film in shaping and reshaping societal perceptions of gender, identity, and marginalization in the Indian context.

2.6 Methods

This study employs close reading as its primary methodological approach to critically engage with the autobiographical narratives of trans women in India. Close reading, rooted in literary analysis, involves a careful reading and rereading, and sustained interpretation, allowing an in-depth understanding of identity, gender, marginalization, representation, development, resistance, and embodiment to be articulated through trans women's narratives.

By examining the autobiographies, *The Truth About Me* by A. Revathi, *I am Vidya* by Living Smile Vidya, and *Me Hijra and Me Laxmi* by Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, the analysis focuses on thematic elements such as gender identity, representation, and social exclusion. Through this lens, the autobiographical genre becomes not only a mode of self-expression but also a site of counter-hegemonic discourse, allowing trans women to narrate their own identities and histories in the face of systemic marginalization.

In addition to literary analysis, the selected films, *Super Deluxe*, *Kanchana*, and *Arikandi* are analyzed through the lens of character representations. By combining close reading of autobiographies with character analysis in film, the study adopts a comparative approach that not only deepens the understanding of trans women's narratives but also reveals how literature and cinema interact to shape public perceptions of gender and identity in contemporary India.

2.7 Discussion

2.7.1 *Writing* as a tool to translate and disseminate their lived experience

Trans women writers in India use *writing* as a tool to express, translate, and share their lived experiences with wider audiences. Through autobiographies, essays, poetry, and digital storytelling, they narrate personal journeys of gender identity, social exclusion, resilience, and self-discovery. These writings help to bridge the gap between the trans women's community and other individuals by addressing the misunderstood views of mainstream society. Writing also allows them to document histories that are usually left out of official records and traditional narratives. It becomes a form of resistance and healing against society's misconceptions. Works by authors like A. Revathi, Living Smile Vidya, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, and others have shown how self empowerment can contribute trans individuals for the developement and educate society at the same time. Writing,

therefore, is not only an act of self-expression but also a form of activism that brings visibility and recognition to trans lives.

2.7.2 Critical analysis of tracing the select trans women entry into writing through interviews

Understanding trans women's pathways into literature offers deeper insights into how they resist marginalization, reclaim their dignity and rights, and create space for themselves and others. These interviews collected after they become writers reveal that writing grew out of lived experience, activism, and the urgent need to be heard in spaces that had long excluded them, making it a deeply political, educational, and personal act. In an interview, A. Revathi avers,

Sangama became a school. My education didn't come from books; my education came from work and learning new things about how much I did not know about how the world worked and what mattered. It was only after arriving there that I realized there were people called lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and trans men...I left Sangama in 2010. After a decade of this work, I realized that my interest had shifted, and I was interested in education. We need a broader education about these issues; they must be discussed in schools, colleges, and universities. That's when I decided I needed to write. I needed to get access to these spaces where education really happens...I worked with A. Mangai, a famous feminist theatre director and actor who helped me to make a 45-minute one-woman play from this big memoir of mine. After writing my book and my play, my work has been educational, political, and cultural education. (Alturi, 2024)

Like Revathi, Vidya also deepened her understanding of gender identity within the NGO's supportive environment. She observed two distinct groups—trans women who had fully transitioned and Kothis, who presented

as male in public but lived as women within the NGO to avoid societal ridicule. They highlight that formal education failed to produce knowledge about diverse gender and sexual identities, and Sangama and NGO helped them bridge the knowledge gap between themselves and diverse gender and sexual identities. This understanding is not easily accessible to other individuals, as they do not have mostly in-person contact with trans individuals or NGOs. Considering the lack of diverse gender- and sexuality-related syllabi in schools and colleges, members of the trans community continue to suffer in the social sphere, which leads them to write books, as she stated in the above quotation. Additionally, Revathi's collaboration with Mangai to create a play based on her autobiography further extends her personal lived experiences into performative pedagogy. Her work challenges marginalization within literature, media, and public life. Following that, Living Smile Vidya highlights,

I can say that it was all due to my lovely brother, Mr. S. Bala Bharathi. He was the one who asked me to write a blog and continuously encouraged me, and the blog was a huge success then. One day, *Kilakku* Publishers came up asking me to write my autobiography, and I just accepted it with half a mind. When I started writing, ohhhh, trust me, it was worse than my life to recollect all the memories, ahh... (The Heroines of My Life, 2014)

Vidya's journey into writing highlights her brother's consistent support, which gave her the confidence to begin sharing her thoughts through a blog. Her blog still exists, and it was started in 2006 and was active till 2015. However, it can become obsolete at any time. The archive shows the various collection of writings everyday experience, movie review (directed by trans woman), poetry and even documented her drawings (it expresses her identity). This start in the digital space shows how online platforms can create opportunities for trans individuals who are often excluded from traditional literary spaces. Her statement about accepting the invitation to

write her autobiography shows how her emotional labour becomes a public narrative, offering readers insight into the life of a trans woman in India. Her writing and interview reveal that trans women's narratives are not just a form of self-expression, but also an urgency for resistance. Laxmi Narayan Tripathi says,

I am Laxmi. I am myself. When I want to dance, I dance. When I want to sing, I sing. When I want to be an activist at the forefront, marching forward, I am there. If my mother feels I'm a son to her, I'm a son. If my sister feels I'm a brother to her, I'm a brother. If my disciple feels I'm a guru to her, I'm a guru. To my guru, I'm her disciple. (Laxmi Narayan Tripathi: *India's Third Gender*, 2015)

Like Revathi and Vidya, Laxmi does not directly discuss about how she started writing. Still, her interview reflects self-awareness, pride in her identity, and confidence, which likely encouraged her to share her narratives with the world. Her confidence in embracing multiple roles shows that she does not let society define her. This strength and self-belief led her to write and share her experiences. Her decision to write *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* likely came from this need to express herself and make sure people hear her voice. The interview section points out that Revathi is self-aware about the purpose of her autobiography and takes her writing seriously, which is why she engaged in performative pedagogy to educate both trans and non-trans individuals. On the other hand, Vidya and Laxmi use their narratives not only as personal testimonies but also as tools of activism. Vidya focuses on confronting systemic discrimination and reclaiming dignity through lived experiences, while Laxmi emphasizes visibility, pride, and community empowerment. These trans women writers use their writing as a way to respond to social exclusion, misunderstanding, and invisibility. Their words push back against how society often misrepresents or ignores trans people. Writing becomes a way for them to express their lives in ways that others often fail to see or understand.

2.7.3 The lived experiences of the selected trans women through their autobiographies

The following paragraphs explore the autobiographies of A. Revathi, Living Smile Vidya, and Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, which serve as landmark narratives that highlight the multifaceted challenges faced by trans women. These works detail their experiences of physical, verbal, emotional, economic, sexual, and institutional abuse, rooted in the societal dichotomy surrounding gender identity.

2.7.3.1 Gender identity and early marginalization

From a young age, all three writers expressed their feminine or gender nonconforming identities in their childhood. Revathi's autobiography begins with her childhood as Doraisamy in a Namakkal village, where she expressed her feminine identity through the medium of dance, wearing her sister's skirts, and drawing kolams. She writes, "I didn't know that I behaved like a girl, it felt natural for me to do so" (7). This deep sense of womanhood, which leads to her being constantly bullied, mocked, and humiliated by family, school, and society, who called her "Number 9", "female thing", and "female boy" (4). Her feminine identity was considered shameful by her biological family, leading to physical abuse from her father and brother. She recalls, "I was also beaten up by my father for behaving like a girl. He would say, 'you are not a girl. you are boy. Behave like one.' He would hit me with his belt or a stick or whatever he could lay his hands on" (13).

While Revathi's experiences expose the violence that stems from nonconformity within a rural setting, Vidya's story unfolds in a different socio-cultural background but reflects similar struggles. Hailing from Chennai, Vidya, like Revathi, knew from a young age that she was different. As a child named Saravanan, her childhood life was filled with confusion, shame, and strict control, especially from her father, who pushed her to

confirm to the male role he had envisioned for her. She painfully writes, “I was a girl. Unfortunately, the world saw me as a boy” (33). Vidya’s childhood acts of wearing skirts, dancing like heroines, and mimicking female film stars show how gender identity often blooms in secret, long before societal validation.

Similar to Revathi and Vidya, Laxmi describes a deep sense of liminal identity. She was born into an upper- caste family in Thane as Laxminarayan alias Raju. Since her childhood, she has experienced feminine identity, as she avers, “it is true that I was like a woman. My mannerisms, my walking and talking style were all feminine” (4). Laxmi was also victimised by hegemonic struggles, like Revathi and Vidya. As the son of her parents, she was expected to behave like a male and to take responsibility for the entire family. She says, “I knew, I couldn’t fulfill these expectations because, inwardly, I did not feel like a man. On top of that, I was gay.” (37). This reveals, however, that although her parents tried to persuade Laxmi to live as a man, at one point they were supportive and did not go against her will. It is significant to note that, unlike Revathi, she did not receive verbal and physical abuse from her family members.

From their autobiographies, it is clear that Revathi and Vidya face verbal, physical, identity and emotional abuse from their family members, whether in rural or urban settings, under patriarchal domination, particularly from their father and brother. In Revathi’s autobiography, it is noted that when her brother beats her, her mother supports him, encouraging the violence. It illustrates that both male and female family members reinforce patriarchal gender norms on gender nonconforming children, though physical abuse is mostly inflicted by male relatives. Similarly, Laxmi’s family insists that she follow the male gender identity assigned at birth. These examples reveal that in the families of Revathi, Vidya, and Laxmi, as in many Indian households, male identity is considered superior and must be performed correctly. Their family members, shaped by social

expectations, often believe it is their responsibility to correct and control gender expression through verbal humiliation or physical abuse. This violence is not only personal but also structural, rooted in cultural ideals that associate family respect with strict gender roles. The lack of awareness and understanding about gender identity further fuels this abuse, as non-conforming behaviour is often seen as immoral, unnatural, and a curse for the family.

For a supportive trans women's community, the family environment is crucial for respecting their choice to choose their name and pronunciation, allowing freedom in gender expression, listening without judgment, and for gender-confirming children to have a safe space to express their opinions and ideas and to avoid discrimination in external environments. When the family environment marginalizes their liminal identity, it leads to continued marginalization outside the home, such as in academic and non-academic institutions, workplaces, or public spheres.

2.7.3.2 Intersection of economic marginality and healthcare access in trans narratives

Revathi and Vidya's autobiographies discuss in depth the financial and medical struggles that trans women face, which are crucial issues affecting the development of their community. For example, Vidya highlights her financial hardship: "[m]y situation is no different from that of thousands of other tirunangais ... Come on, hurry up and beg! Let's each go to a different job." She also reflects on her medical struggles and the lack of proper facilities: "[w]ould there be no more tests? Wouldn't they test us for BP, blood sugar?... But it was no operation theater, I realized as soon as I entered the tiny room—it was a slaughterhouse" (5, 7).

Similarly, Revathi also accessed SRS in untrained doctors and breast augmentation treatment without a doctor's prescription (207) and used traditional hair removal methods, such as plucking. This highlights how

trans women in India, due to a lack of financial resources and accessible healthcare facilities, often rely on unregulated and untrained medical practitioners or traditional practices like *Dai Nirvana* (means sex reaffirming surgery) and facial hair removal. Such methods can result in long-term mental and physical health complications. Revathi and Vidya's autobiographies highlight their own medical struggles as trans women while also shedding light on the broader medical challenges faced by trans women in Indian society. It shows that trans women are facing struggles in SRS wherever they access, which suggests that need for medical facilities and financial support. However, Laxmi did not face financial struggles due to her educational background and awareness, and she chose not to undergo sex reassignment surgery, considering her personal choice. This suggests that not all trans women wish to access their gender affirming surgeries.

2.8.3.3 Employment discrimination against trans women

Revathi's efforts to find work at STD booths, grocery stores, and textile shops reflect their desire to earn a living with dignity and escape the stigma of begging or sex work. Despite her willingness to work, she was repeatedly rejected due to widespread societal prejudice. Revathi, for instance, was insulted with comments like, "If we're to employ you'd be the ruin of all the boys here... We can't employ people like you. What do you know anyway? Get lost, go to Mumbai or Delhi and be with those like you. You're fit only for dancing on the roads, and having cheap, riotous fun!" (161). In a similar vein to Revathi, Vidya also attempted to shift away from begging by selling essential items to passengers. She attempted to redefine herself as a business-oriented trans woman, but her efforts were met with rejection.

These experiences reveal the harsh reality of discrimination faced by trans women, even when they pursue legitimate work. If society provided them with fair employment opportunities, it would help break the cycle of poverty, reduce their dependence on begging or sex work, and challenge the

negative stereotypes that marginalize them. It would also promote social inclusion, improve their mental well-being, and affirm their identity and value as equal members of society. Employment, in this context, is not just about survival; it is about dignity, acceptance, and justice.

2.7.3.4 Sexual abuse and gendered vulnerability

Laxmi faced sexual abuse since her childhood, both from her distant cousin and from his friends, including her own brother's friends. Laxmi says,

He molested me again, and then again. He was accompanied by his friends and all of them took turns to violate me. The physical and mental torture I went through is indescribable. But I didn't say a word to anyone, either then or later. I kept my feelings bottled...They obviously derived a sadistic thrill from my suffering. But who would believe me if I complained?...The first time I refused to have sex with Shashi's friends, they were upset and angry. They cajoled me into acquiescing, and when that did not work, they blackmailed me. The blackmail scared me and I surrendered.... I decided to be as rowdy and aggressive as they were. I dare them to touch me. It worked (6, 7, and 8).

This child's sexual abuse happened within the family environment, where the home is supposed to provide comfort and safety, but she faced continuous molestation from her own family members. Her silence reflects fear, shame, and a lack of trust that others would believe her. The coercion and blackmail she experienced show how gender non-conforming children are easily targeted. Later, she started acting strong and began to use aggression as a way to protect herself. According to the survey by the Swasti Health Resource Centre, four of ten transgender people face sexual abuse before completing 18 years. The abuse begins as early as age five, but most vulnerable are those aged 11 to 15 (Abuse Of Transgender Indians Begins

In Early Childhood, 2017). Sexual abuse happened to another trans woman in Varanasi, she says, “[a]round 15 months ago, B was gang-raped by her clients. She tried to file a police complaint, but said she was instead mocked and threatened at the police station” (Raped, Mocked By Police For Seeking Justice: India’s Rape Laws Do Not Cover Transwomen, 2022). Such incidents not only affect trans women but also gender non-conforming children, and can lead trans women to become aggressive as a way to protect themselves from ongoing abuse, which can reduce their progress in society.

2.7.3.5 Discrimination against trans women in institutional spaces

The lack of awareness extends to schools, where teachers need to educate gender identity and create a comfortable zone for the students to become better citizens in society. Teachers in the schools have dominated and discriminated against based on their gender identity. In the Indian society, many progressive laws and benefits are emerging, and it is also significant to teach gender identity in schools, colleges, and universities. Organizing workshops for students, teachers, and the broader community is equally important to promote awareness and understanding of gender diversity. Due to lack of awareness about trans women’s gender identity, Revathi, and Vidya, faced physical abuse from their school teachers and students, as Revathi says,

I think I was punished not just for being distracted, but also because I spoke Like a girl, holding my body coyly like one. I remember being caned for ‘not being brave like a boy’. And since I did not play boys’ games, I got punished by the PT teacher too. He would box my ears and yell, ‘Are you a girl or what? Pull your trousers down, let me check. He would make as if he was going to strip me and I would start crying. The other boys laughed at this (6-7).

The physical and sexual abuses continued from her school teachers to students. She avers, “[w]henever, I walked past them on the school grounds,

they would yell, ‘Hey girl-boy’ and hit me on the head with their balled-up fists. They would pinch me on my chest, and taunt me...” (9). This type of abuse continues from one individual to another. In a similar vein, Vidya’s childhood was marked by both privilege and academic success, as she was known as a class topper in her hometown. However, her feminine expressions often attracted ridicule from those around her. Reflecting on these experiences, she recalls, “[W]hen I walked down the street, youngsters started teasing me: ‘Look at the nattamai’s son. He walks like a female!’” (23). The repeated mockery and social pressure began to take a toll on her education and confidence. As she notes, “Once again I became an object of ridicule, and inevitably my studies were affected” (25).

This suppression stems from a societal environment that offers no space for trans individuals to express their feminine feelings or identities. Revathi and Vidya faced physical, verbal, identity, and emotional abuse for their gender non-conformity and femininity because teachers, like the broader society, were influenced by heteronormative values. Students also imitated this abuse, following the behaviour of teachers and others around them. This cultural ignorance and educational gap led both teachers and students to perceive Revathi and Vidya either as women trapped in male bodies or as men attempting to adopt a female identity. The continuous bullying created a deeply unsafe learning environment, leading to a loss of confidence, academic decline, mental health issues, social isolation, and educational inequality. As a result, Revathi and Vidya were forced to discontinue their education at both school and college levels. Similarly, Lee (n.d.) notes in his dissertation, “transgender college students face discrimination, harassment, and oppression in college and university campuses. These conditions contribute to transgender student’s limited academic and social success” (p. 15). The lack of understanding about gender diversity and job opportunities further pushed them toward sex work and begging for survival. This experience reflects the reality faced by many other trans students in Indian society. As Vidya poignantly noted in an

interview, “India is the only country where transgenders are ignored as they are not human beings, and to survive their life they have to beg and also indulge in sexual works” (Red Pix 24x7, 2015, 2:15). This issue has impacted every trans women’s life directly or indirectly.

Laxmi’s school experience was very different. She did not face ridicule or discrimination related to her gender identity. Instead, she performed well academically and graduated as the top student in her class, with the support of Sangita Sethi and Ashok Row Kavi, who helped improve her English and engaged her in meaningful discussions on art, culture, history, dance, and even sexuality. These discussions encouraged her to continue her education and boosted her confidence. This contrast shows how school environments and gender diversity discussions can shape the lives of trans individuals in different ways. While Revathi and Vidya were seen as feminine boys with limited opportunities, Laxmi grew up with confidence and a hopeful future. This difference highlights the importance of a supportive and inclusive school atmosphere. This observation shows the urgent need for educational reforms that support all students equally.

The physical, identity, verbal, emotional, sexual abuse extends to another government institutions such as police stations. The very spaces meant to offer safety and protection fail to do so because of the persistent denial and discrimination against their trans identity. Revathi avers,

I screamed that I did not want to go into the cell. I fell at policeman’s feet. He kicked me with his boots. He then asked me to take my clothes off – right there, while the prisoner was watching. I pleaded with him and wept, but he forcibly stripped me. When I was standing naked, he stuck his lathi where I’d had my operation and demanded that I stand with my legs apart, like a woman would. He repeatedly struck at that part with his lathi and said, ‘so, can it go in there? Or

is it field one can't enter? How do you have sex then?' I felt heart-broken and could not speak. (206)

Further, Laxmi describes the harassment by the police:

In our group, only Sangeeta, Mardana, and Vardaan did sex work. Soon the police began to harass them. There were bitter quarrels between the cops and the girls, and they landed up at the Sheelfata police station...police had been brutal in their dealings with them...it helped being a hijra because the public often think of us troublemakers and, given a choice, would avoid engaging with us. (52, 53)

Additionally, she highlights the harsh reality of trans women's lives in India after her senior chela, Subhadra, was murdered and the case was dismissed without justice. Revathi and Laxmi's narratives reveal that police brutality is widespread and often targeted at individuals because of their transgender identity. Police stations often fail to register cases of abuse against trans women, viewing them as aggressive and assuming they are the cause of the problem. They are frequently stereotyped as sex workers, beggars, or criminals, which leads to further discrimination and denial of legal justice. In some cases, the police themselves are part of the problem, as they also harm trans women through physical, verbal, and sexual abuse. This adds to the violence and discrimination the community already faces. Their autobiographical narratives emphasize that the absence of an inclusive policy in the public systems. Considering that, it is essential to implement strong legal protections, along with mandatory gender-sensitization training for all public-facing staff in institutions like police stations, hospitals, and government offices. Recently, the Indian government has begun to introduce the Protection of Rights Act and other beneficial schemes aimed at the development of the trans women's community. However, transphobia, lack of awareness, and limited gender sensitivity continue to result in

systemic exclusion and discrimination. Taking into account, creating platforms to raise awareness about the law, rights, and associated punishments through social media, writing, and public engagement can play a vital role in challenging institutional erasure and advocating for meaningful structural reforms.

2.7.3.6 Self-empowerment and community building among trans writers

Revathi, after finding her voice through personal struggle, worked with Sangama, a human rights organisation in Bangalore, where she advocated for the rights of sexual minorities. Her journey of individual and collective empowerment broke the silence around *hijra* lives in Indian society, challenged harmful stereotypes, and inspired hope among other trans women. Building on this foundation of community support, Vidya's journey of self-discovery was similarly shaped through her involvement with an NGO. This semi-protective space embraced her feminine identity and gave her the strength to navigate a hostile world. Later, a rally organized by the NGO further empowered her to express her identity publicly and without fear. With support from her friends, she secured a sponsor to continue her PhD. However, she faced numerous challenges to survive; despite this, she eventually found employment as an assistant in the Electronic Data Processing department. Over time, Vidya transformed into a multifaceted figure: a writer, actor, assistant director, and trans and Dalit activist. Her journey of self-empowerment was recognized by magazines like *Aval Vikatan* and *Kumudam*, and she continues to lead her life as a proud and accomplished trans woman. Her writing also contributes to broader visibility for trans lives and rights, extending the boundaries of community and belonging.

Laxmi's self-empowerment and active participation in DSW helped her overcome abuse and become a successful person, writer, dancer, and

activist. She later founded Astitva, an organization dedicated to the rights and welfare of sexual minorities, amplifying not just her own identity but that of the trans community at large. This shows how all three autobiographical writers contribute to and benefit from their narratives. Together, through NGOs and rallies, including Vidya's experience, many trans women learn to find their voice, demand recognition and rights, and empower themselves. Believing in the power of visibility, Laxmi organized the Indian Super Queen Contest across ten cities to reshape public perception. Through the repeated use of visual platforms like cinema, she highlights how *hijras* are often perceived as unattractive or inferior. She states, "I wanted to reverse that mindset... If there are Miss India and Miss Universe contests for women, why not for *hijras*, I asked myself" (131). Not only through writing and NGOs, Laxmi also took initial steps to normalize her gender identity against the patriarchal mindset of society. She made every effort to increase the visibility of the trans women's community in society. Considering the portrayal of trans women in Indian cinema, Laxmi's achievements and identity representation extended to digital platforms, including television shows (*Boogie Woogie*, *Bigg Boss*), films (*Aashiq*), advertisements (*X Zone*), documentaries (*Six Degrees*, *Between the Lines*, *Call It Slut*), and music albums (*Na Re Baba Na*, choreographed by Joe Khan). These writers identified that visibility and progressive representations in writing, digital media, and cinema can build a stronger foundation for trans women's equality.

In India, trans communities have rarely received rights or visibility without protest. Writing autobiographies has become an important part of their fight for equality, as *hijras* use their life stories to challenge dominant social norms. These autobiographies are a way for them to express themselves and share their experiences within the larger society. Philippe Lejeune, in *On Autobiography*, describes the genre as a true story written by a person about their own life, focusing on how their personality develops over time. In this way, Indian trans women's autobiographies not only tell

their personal stories but also help change how people see them and break harmful stereotypes.

Melissa Griffiths from Melbourne shares a similar struggle, revealing that transgender people often face violence and harassment due to their gender identity and expression. She experienced verbal and emotional abuse noted: “[f]eeling safe nowadays depends on where I am in the city and what part of it. At night I have to be more cautious what streets I go down” she felt safer after the implementation of Sydney’s lockdown law in 2014. In India, even with such regulations, trans women continue to face daily abuse. Griffiths avers, “I take time alone and do positive things like writing to educate people on trans issues and modelling which helps me feel beautiful with my own mind-body image”. (How I cope with the daily abuse I receive as a transgender person, 2020). Like Griffiths, Revathi, Vidya, and Laxmi’s writing and activism serve as powerful tools to educate, resist, and uplift the trans community.

Revathi, Vidya, and Laxmi write about their existence and the innate details of trans women and their personal details as members of the trans women's community. In their autobiographies, they shared their identity, pathetic conditions, traditions, and cultural practices. Revathi writes in her preface, “I hope this book of mine will make people see that *hijras* are capable of more than just begging and sex work. I do not seek empathy from society or the government. I seek to show that we *hijras* do have the rights to live in the society” (V-VI). They turned to writing not only to articulate the realities of their lived experiences but also to create space for other members of the transgender community. Through memoirs, autobiographies, essays, and poetry, these writers are contributing to the space of Indian transgender literature, challenging marginalization and expanding the boundaries of authorship. This not only empowers the trans women’s community but also serves as an educational resource for wider society. Their writing functions not only as a means of sharing and

preserving their ideas but also as a call for equality and dignity, while emphasizing cultural significance and affirming their rightful presence.

By explaining their trauma in autobiographies, trans women help to build and strengthen their community. Prior to 2010, there was limited public awareness about the trans women community and their lived struggles. By emphasizing their personal experiences of abuse, struggle, and marginalization based on gender identity, these writers bring their realities into the social sphere to encourage awareness and advocate for change. Without such narratives, the public often relies on visual media platforms that perpetuate pejorative and stereotypical portrayals, further marginalizing transgender identities in Indian society. In addition to raising awareness, autobiographical writing also leads to personal transformation. Revathi, Vidya, and Laxmi are not only strengthening their community through writing but also developing themselves. It opens up opportunities for recognition, education, public speaking, and advocacy, helping them become influential figures. In this way, trans women's autobiographical writing can transform both the lives of the authors and their community.

Moreover, trans women's writings play a crucial role in resisting misrepresentation and bridging the knowledge gap around gender identity. These narratives give voice to experiences that are often ignored or misunderstood, helping other trans individuals feel seen, heard, and less alone. They reveal the specific moments and spaces where humiliation occurred, insights that mainstream Indian cinema has largely failed to portray. As a result, autobiographies become powerful tools in the ongoing fight for recognition and rights. By emphasizing their lived experiences, Revathi, Vidya, and Laxmi help society understand the urgent need for protective laws and support systems to safeguard the lives of trans people from the pressures of rigid gender norms. Additionally, autobiographies serve as tools for empowerment, inspiring younger trans people,

encouraging community solidarity, and pushing society to support trans rights, protections, and dignity.

2.8 Trans Women's Portrayals by Non-Trans and Trans Directors

After the publication of trans women's autobiographies and their entry into government and non-government organizations, Indian society progressed slightly. Writing is one of the significant reasons for the inclusion of trans women as central characters in Indian movies, as we can see through similar representations. The films *Kanchana* and *Super Deluxe* are taken in the Indian directors and aim to show positively by non-trans women individual directors. However, the directors are not aware that to portray trans women characters and represent them as sex workers, beggars, and child kidnappers. They repeat stereotypes that make trans people appear different or less important.

In the *Kanchana* film, trans women are portrayed as the central (Kanchana) and minor (Geetha) characters. Considering their gender identity, both of them were rejected and sent away by their biological family, forced to survive, and they began begging for their livelihood until they were later adopted by a kind man. Kanchana's character is portrayed as a complex, positive, aggressive and revengeful character. Additionally, in this same movie, another trans woman character, Geetha, is portrayed positively as a doctor. However, she too faces discrimination by the medical college students who verbally abuse her, calling her names like "Number 9", "Ushh", and "ali." When Kanchana learns about the humiliation, she reacts by aggressively confronting and punishing the abusers. Additionally, the character of Kanchana is portrayed by a male actor, whose masculine body languages contrast with the character's gender identity. Later in the film, she is brutally killed by a group of criminals who seek to seize her land.

Similarly, *Super Deluxe* is directed by a non-trans woman filmmaker and features a trans woman as a central character, portrayed by a male actor whose masculine body languages contrast with the character's identity, portrayed as a sex worker, a beggar, a child kidnapper. Here in this film also, Shilpa's character faced verbal abuse from the children, and institutional and sexual abuse from the police station. Such portrayals reflect real-life struggles shared in the autobiographies, like police brutality, family and society rejection. While trans women writers portrayed themselves with their experience from their perspective, which films fail to portray to develop their community. This shows that even when they face abuse or harm, no one from their family or society comes forward to support them. It shows a one-sided, harmful depiction to increase box office collection. Trans women writers use literature as a tool for self-empowerment, creating platforms for support, resistance, and community building. However, the reach of this medium is limited to literate audiences. A large number of non-literate individuals remain excluded, highlighting the need for more positive representation, such as film and visual media, to ensure wider outreach.

It is also important to recognize how trans woman director Priya Babu portrays trans women in her work. In her film, the character Arikandi takes centre stage, a trans woman warrior who lived 350 years ago in Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu. The film highlights the trans woman's historical contributions, strength, and identity as a skilled warrior. Arikandi is depicted as someone who fought alongside a landlord to protect his daughter and is later worshipped as a deity, emphasizing the reverence and dignity given to her legacy. This example reflects a significant difference in the portrayal of trans women by trans versus non-trans directors. All three films aim to present trans women characters in a positive light.

However, compared to *Arikandi*, the films *Kanchana* and *Super Deluxe* have received significantly more public attention. This wider reach

increases the risk of spreading pejorative representations of trans women, as such portrayals are often aimed at increasing box office collections rather than ensuring developments. The autobiographies of Revathi, Vidya, and Laxmi reveal the profound impact of personal narratives, highlighting the complex and critical issue of trans women's identity and representation. There is a possibility that the impact of trans women's writings may be reduced, as visual media tend to reach a wider audience and have a greater influence compared to written texts. This underscores the importance of non-trans directors approaching trans narratives with greater awareness and sensitivity. More importantly, it highlights the need to create space and provide opportunities for trans individuals to represent themselves and share their own stories authentically.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has traced the multifaceted representations of trans women in Indian literature and cinema, highlighting how their identities, struggles, and resilience are articulated both by others and by themselves. The contrast between portrayals by non-trans women authors and directors and those created by trans women themselves underscores a crucial gap in representations, identity, marginalization, healthcare, migration, education, and voice. While mainstream media attempts to portray trans women characters, it often reinforces stereotypes through miscasting with limited understanding. In contrast, a film directed by a trans woman offers a positive, historically based portrayal. This comparison shows the importance of enabling trans individuals to direct more films and non-trans women to be aware of trans women's representations to visualize. Additionally, to reduce discrimination against trans individuals, it is essential to raise awareness in families, schools, and society. Teachers can play a crucial role in educating others and integrating gender identity into school curricula, and conducting awareness workshops for individuals,

teachers, and students can promote equality and understanding. The portrayal of trans women in cinema should be positive and respectful.

Chapter 1's understanding of the portrayal of trans women's experiences, representations, and challenges in the selected Indian trans women's autobiographies, those of Revathi, Vidya, and Laxmi, and in films such as *Kanchana* and *Super Deluxe* by non-trans women directors, and *Arikandi* by a trans woman director, paves the way for analyzing social media platforms, particularly YouTube, due to its wide user base. This includes examining how individual YouTubers represent trans women, as well as how trans women YouTubers represent themselves.

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Chapter 3

Digital Narratives and Implications: Analysis of the Trans Women's Community from India on the YouTube Platform

We are harassed by parents, teachers, peers, and the police. The media and law only highlight our involvement in street based sex work and begging. Why don't you highlight some of our pressing needs and concerns and the multiple violations and oppressions we experience?" (62).

—Revathi (2010)

3.1 Introduction

In the 21st century, technology emerges not only as a tool; it acts as a transformative force permeating every aspect of people's daily lives, with the rise of the internet, proliferation of smartphones, and expansion of digital platforms consistently reshaping and unveiling individual experiences and activities. The impact of these innovations varies in diverse domains. This chapter is significant as it investigates the contribution of individual YouTubers and trans women YouTubers to empowering the Indian trans women community (ITC) in society. It unravels the nuanced processes of identity formation and connectivity, delving into the intricate role of shaping their construction and development. The findings are expected to provide insights into the mechanisms through which YouTube serves as a tool for self-expression, community building, and advocacy within the trans community in India. Understanding these dynamics is important for recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities that social media brings. It provides chances to use digital platforms to foster a more supportive and inclusive environment for the ITC.

In social media, platforms like YouTube, among others, have become a key space for the minority community to find representation and

voices, as K.J. Rawson (2014) says, ‘cyberspace provides a revolutionary tool for creating, sharing, and preserving trans histories that would otherwise remain untold’ (p. 40). At the same time, such cyberspace also offers a platform ‘to understand people’s attitudes towards transgender individuals’ (Zhao, 2016). Studying social media platforms is of paramount importance in understanding how cultural institutions are employed for the development of marginalized communities (Pandya, 2021). Considering that this chapter analyses the technology of YouTube on the trans women's community, probing its implications, challenges, and the limitless possibilities it unfolds for the future.

Chapter 3 proceeds to explore trans women’s studies within an Indian context. This study particularly focuses on selected YouTube videos related to Indian trans women, including those uploaded by individual YouTubers and those featuring prominent trans women YouTubers. By analysing the content, like, and view of these videos, the study offers insights into individual YouTubers' perceptions and understanding of trans women as well as how trans women YouTubers' narratives are represented and circulated on YouTube. It offers an idea about the content of the video, which is a significant part to understand YouTube and the trans women's visibility and community engagement. The metadata of content, views and likes summarises integrated notions about the content and context. The study selected YouTube video content analysis as it enables the discernment of valuable insights into interaction, engagement, and overall video performance. By identifying various metrics, this approach helps to understand the content of trans women on YouTube.

This chapter is structured into six major sections, each contributing to a comprehensive exploration of the topic. The first section lays the foundation for the study, providing an introduction to the phenomena of YouTube and its relevance to the construction and development of the ITC. Moving forward, the second section outlines the research methodology,

detailing the chosen approach and data collection methods. The third section presents the empirical findings on individual YouTubers and trans women YouTubers, showcasing key insights derived from the collected data and the analysis used to investigate the role of their narratives in shaping the identities and representation of trans women in India. Following this, the fourth section interprets trans women YouTubers' videos as digital-age autobiographies and investigates the intervention of YouTube in the development of the ITC. The fifth section focuses on the lived experiences of the trans women's community and proposes a model for their development through YouTube. Finally, the last section concludes the chapter.

This chapter addresses the following questions: 1. What are the digital narratives related to trans women on YouTube? 2. How does the intervention of YouTube contribute to the development of the trans women's community in India? 3. How can we utilise YouTube as a potential tool for the development of the trans women's community in India? This research shows the consequentiality and emphasizes the exigency of changes in Indian networking sites to develop the ITC.

3.2 Aim

The study aims to provide insights into the potential utilization of YouTube as a tool for the development and empowerment of the trans women's community in India, investigating innovative strategies that can use the platform for positive social change and amplification of marginalized voices. This chapter also attempted to investigate the vital aspects of trans women's contributions, representations, implications, experiences and developments through interviews, particularly within the context of the YouTube platform.

3.3 Methodology

This chapter employs qualitative and quantitative methods to study the manually extracted YouTube videos, views, and likes pertaining to the ITC. The qualitative and quantitative analysis included semi-structured interviews and observations to identify, extract, and examine the various topics of the video to discern the development and representation of trans women through YouTube.

During the initial phase of the research, around five years earlier, the researcher used Python-based topic modelling and sentiment analysis to examine digital narratives. However, these methods were unable to capture nuanced themes in the data. For example, contrasting cases like “trans women arrested by Police” versus “trans women becoming police officers” could not be clearly categorized. Considering the limited availability of digital humanities tools and the researcher position as a first-generation scholar in digital humanities, this process required significant time and reflection. Consequently, the study adopted a thematic analysis approach, using close reading and qualitative methods to accurately interpret the data. This approach allowed for a more nuanced analysis of the narratives.

3.3.1 Data collection

Phase: 1

For the study, terminology used for the identities of trans women across various states and regions, drawing from the insights presented in Veerendra Mishra’s book, “*Transgenders in India*” (See Mishra, 2023 pp 27). Videos related to trans women by individual YouTubers were manually aggregated using keywords such as ‘Trans women’, ‘Transgender’, ‘Kinner’, ‘Hijra’, ‘Chandran’, ‘Maasi ba’, ‘Mangalamukhi’, ‘Kothi’, ‘Napumsak’, ‘Mumbal’, ‘Thirunangai,’ etc., on YouTube from 2016 to 2021. These terms, along with states and regions selected such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bihar, Punjab, Gujarat, Goa, Arunachal Pradesh, West

Bengal, Jharkhand, etc. They are culturally and contextually significant in describing trans women in various regions, particularly in India. Collecting data using all Indian languages and places is beyond the scope of this chapter, as India is home to many languages and places. Hence, keywords that were predominantly used to address trans women in Indian states. Using the trans women relevant terminology is crucial for capturing a comprehensive range of content, allowing the extraction of a diverse range of content shared on YouTube. This approach contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the experiences, challenges, and narratives shared related trans women by individual YouTubers in the Indian context through the medium of YouTube.

The period was chosen intentionally, aligning with the initiation of a comprehensive study in 2021 that involved collecting data preceding the last six years. The choice of this specific time frame, from 2016 to 2021, is pivotal as it enables a comprehensive examination of the evolution and dynamics of trans women's representation on YouTube.

The term 'transgender' is used to scrape trans women-related videos on YouTube. The term functioning as an umbrella encompasses various gender identities, with widespread recognition both globally and on the YouTube platform. Notably, the YouTube search algorithm is designed to recognise and retrieve content commonly utilized by both content creators and viewers. Throughout the process, careful attention was given to selecting videos specifically related to Indian trans women, as the initial scraping using the term yielded content that extended to various gender identities, including trans men, lesbians, and more. This consideration was crucial in maintaining the methodological consistency in the research.

For the research, a total number of 386 Indian trans-women-related videos, views, and likes were extracted. The data in the selection are randomly sourced from YouTube without a specific focus on videos created

or uploaded by trans women or individuals to ensure an unbiased sample, and the intention is to extract a diverse range of topics. It provides without intentionally focusing on the nuanced specific creators, themes, narratives, perspectives, and representations present in the randomly selected videos. YouTube videos, views, and likes are primarily chosen because they are a significant part of YouTube videos to provide a brief overview of the video's content and context.

Phase: 2

For the present study, the term '[p]rominent trans women YouTubers in India 2024' was used in the Google search engine to scrape the data on well-known trans women YouTubers in India. The search initially identified a list of the top 10 transgender individuals' channels. However, the page also included two individuals of different gender identities. These irrelevant channels were removed to maintain the consistency of the data collection. The final list of eight trans women YouTubers was compiled: Nikkiey Chawla, it's Me Venky, Tranz Media, Roseywondergirl, Bella Dera Tamin Vlogs, Itsme Sneha, Boy To Girl, and Olmec Transgender | Sex Change Surgery in Delhi India. The first forty videos were manually scraped from each channel. During the metadata extraction process, six videos were found to be unavailable, possibly due to the creators' personal preferences or technical issues. In total, 314 videos of content from prominent trans women YouTubers were collected, including data on likes and views. The year 2024 was intentionally selected to comprehend the current patterns of interaction, engagement, and overall video performance among trans women YouTubers with their audience, including trans women and gender non-conforming children.

The selected timeframes for this study encompass significant developments in both technology and societal attitudes, providing a nuanced understanding of how the portrayal and visibility of the Indian trans

women's community on social media have evolved during these years. By analysing content over this specific timeframe, the study facilitates a contextualized exploration of the changes, challenges, and progress experienced by the community within the broader socio-cultural landscape.

3.3.2 Preparation and Pre-processing

Phase: 1 & 2

Multilingual videos in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Hindi, Kannada, Bengali, etc., were watched in English through subtitles, and consulted with 7 language experts. Each language expert is proficient in more than three languages, including their mother tongue.

Phase: 1

During the data cleaning process, 36 YouTube videos uploaded by individuals were observed as ambiguous and complex to annotate; consequently, the researcher watched the videos to comprehend the content's significant meaning. For instance, the title 'Transwomen Demanded' is about whether they demand their rights or money, as trans women demanded money from the public either through begging or violence (Iqbal, 2020; Chettiar 2015). But, the content of the video is to create awareness about raising trans women's rights.

3.3.3 Topic Classifications

Phase: 1

Step 1: After manually examining 386 videos related to the Indian trans women uploaded by individuals, the content was grouped into nine topics, namely: the Trans movement, Violence, Non-stable job, Trans culture, Physical transformation, Childhood gender nonconformity (CGN), Occupation, Support, and Imposters (see Figure: 1) that represent various socio-cultural categories of trans women on social media. Each theme was

systematically categorized based on the group of videos that collectively addressed specific aspects within the identified themes. This iterative process involved multiple rounds of analysis and discussion among the research team to ensure the robustness and reliability of the identified themes. For example, the study assigned the theme ‘Physical transformation’ to the video ‘Kaythankay| beautiful transwomen| male to female| transition timeline| before and after|.’

Step 2: Each theme was assigned one or more IDs, called Sub-themes or sub-categories. For example, the study assigned under the theme ‘Physical transformation’, sub-categories as ‘Male to Female’, and ‘Cognisance’ were used to narrow down the categories as they all refer to various information about the physical transition and treatment of trans women.

Step 3: The study conducted manual based sentiment analysis for Sub-themes, views, and likes of trans women on YouTube. They were categorized as progressive, pejorative, and neutral to understand how trans women’s contents contribute to the construction of the trans women's community on YouTube. The study identified the number of progressive videos (53%), likes (35.76%), views (32.12%); pejorative videos (30%), likes (50.49%), views (47.77%); and Neutral videos (17%), likes (13.75%), views (20.11%). The reason why the study deployed manual-based sentiment analysis for the sub-themes, views, and likes is to discern whether the digital spectrum is employed for the development of the trans women's community or is being used to devalue and mar the identity of their community (see Figure 3).

Phase: 2

Step 1: After manually examining 314 videos uploaded by trans women YouTubers in India, the content was grouped into five main categories: Entertainment, Travel and Food vlog, Male to Female

transformation, Motivational and Cultural (see Figure 4). Similar to the categorization of videos uploaded by individuals, each theme was systematically defined based on its identified themes. For example, the study assigned the theme ‘Entertainment’ to the video ‘chinna ga cheppu #comedy #funny #india #real #entertainment #shorts #viral #trending #repeat #telugu’ (chinna ga cheppu means tell me a little).

3.3.4 Topic Visualizations

A visual representation was created using Plotly in Python to visualize the topics and their relationships for the video data outputs. Following these steps, each topic, represented by a distribution of the videos, is strongly associated with the trans community (see Figure 1). Additionally, Microsoft Excel is used to create a bar chart visualization for likes, views, and contents for the data outputs, the percentage of topics related to trans women on YouTube.

3.3.5 Interviews

To understand the current condition of the trans women community and to support the research argument, interviews were conducted with a few transactivists, scholars, writers and translator to substantiate whether the YouTube videos related to trans women employed for the development of the trans women community. The accumulated information is a semi-structured interview as a component of a group intervention, which can be seen as “[i]n-depth interviews often used to seek information in highly sensitive projects” (Koirala, 2020; Lavrakas, 2008). For the discussion on the transgender digital narrative, non-governmental organisations (NGO) that work closely with the transgender communities were interviewed, such as Priya Babu (Co-founder and Director of Transgender Resource Centre in Madurai, Trans writer-activist, documentary filmmaker, researcher in transgender community issues, E-Trans News Editor), Saranya (Secretary of Transgender Welfare Organization, Salem), Jeeva (Founder & Director

of managing trustee of Transgender Rights Association, Chennai), Mahalaxmi (Secretary of Transgender Resource centre in Madurai, trans-activist, writer, translator, scholar, E-trans News Editor). Many scholars and researchers have significantly inquired about the supplement content of trans women's issues, identity, marginalization, harassment and culture; however, they have not explored the transgender culture, identity, marginalization and harassment against them in social media. It is essential to interpret such issues in the twenty-first century to show the impartiality and inequality against trans women through social media. Inductive thematic analysis of the interviews and the multimedia posts led to findings.

The initial pair of interviews occurred at the Salem NGO office, while the concluding two were conducted remotely via Zoom video and phone calls due to the COVID-19 (CoronaVirus Disease of 2019) lockdown. Each interview spanned from 50 minutes to 3 hours. The conversations were recorded using Zoom and a phone recorder and subsequently transcribed manually. While both photos and video recordings were captured during the interviews, only the audio content was utilized in this primary research. Prior to each interview, consent forms were sent via email and WhatsApp messages to the participants, obtaining explicit permission from all individuals to include their names, genders, professions, and responses to the research questions in written form. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, incorporating both open-ended and closed questions. The discussions revolved around the participants' experiences of societal challenges stemming from mainstream portrayals and their personal aspirations for equality and a more righteous depiction in both society and the mainstream media.

3.4 Results and discussions

Society and social media describe the dichotomy of gender by exhibiting how trans women community is constructed. People construct transgender identity by observing them from the digital media without

considering whether such construction plays a negative or positive role in the lives of trans women. Zhao's findings show,

[T]hough transgender people have become more visible in media than they ever were, they are still facing severe discrimination and prejudice in their everyday lives. Media is the major source to know about trans people since only 16% of Americans reported have in-person contact with trans people in real life (Stokes, 2015, Sept).

The above-mentioned statement is indeed true for the Indian context, though the individuals in India have no empirical data about in-person contact with trans women to the researchers' best knowledge. The YouTube platform is selected because it has a large online user base and data to understand the trans women's community.

3.5 Phase 1: A Thematic analysis of individual YouTubers and their digital storytelling

3.5.1 Shaping the narrative: The changing landscape of trans women on YouTube

In Figure 1, of the above-mentioned topics, the 'Trans movement' (51%) has a larger proportion than other subjects of discussion, which demonstrates that social media platforms are employed for the welfare of the community. A close observation of the videos shows that the contents relate to trans women's rights, identity, and accomplishments in the public and private sectors. Based on the videos, the topics are subcategorized as 'Voice to cognition' and 'Voice to issues'. These subcategorizations are crucial for a better understanding of the trans women's community. Besides connectivity, as Taylor, Falconer, and Snowden (2014) have shown, social networking sites often operate as a "space" that are helpful in providing a smoother transition to "coming out" as queer and that online technology can

be used as an effective tool to negotiate this evolution in different ways (Pain, 2).

The categorized topic ‘Voice to cognition’ (35%) indicates that the videos are germane to interviews, documents, rallies, bills, protests, the progressive state of government and non-government sectors, which highlight an ongoing emerging trans women’s movement for the development of the community. For example,

- What is LGBTQ? Is being a transgender difficult? A candid conversation with a trans woman, Damini!
- Noida sec 50 Metro designated as ‘Pride Station’ to honor the transgender community
- Making Education Inclusive for LGBTIQ+ Students in India | Amrita Sarkar | TEDxDUCIC
- how can prevent of transgender for demanding money in train?
- Railways, IRCTC include transgender as third gender
- Kerala becomes first state to introduce policy for transgenders
- The Trans-Friendly Metro Station: Info and Controversies | Feminism In India
- HIJRA | Documentary on Transgenders
- I'm a transwoman & I fought the section 377 of Indian Penal Code | Akkai Padmashali | TEDxJaipur

These videos exemplify purposeful dialogue aimed at providing support to trans women, nurturing comprehension within and beyond the community. These significant videos cover a diverse range of topics related to LGBTIQ+ issues, with a particular emphasis on trans women’s experiences and rights in the Indian context. Their impact on the trans women community is multifaceted, positively contributing to awareness,

education, and understanding (Johnson, 2017). Significant challenges and developments are underscored as the inclusive education for students within the LGBTIQ+ spectrum, efforts to prevent from soliciting money on trains, the recognition as third gender in Indian Railways and IRCTC (Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation) policies, Kerala' groundbreaking policy introduction, making it the first Indian state with comprehensive policies specifically for the trans women community, etc. (Noida sector 50 metro station named 'rainbow station' to honour transgender community 2020). This symbolic gesture not only encourages empowerment, visibility, and recognition but also enhances community pride and acceptance. The emphasis on inclusivity acknowledges the trans women's community in public spaces, contributing to broader societal acknowledgement. Functioning as vital tools for community building, experience-sharing, and information dissemination, these YouTube videos significantly contribute to eliminating marginalization and integrating the trans community into mainstream society. They serve as a nuanced content and tone of positive and progressive themes on YouTube videos are essential in representing and advocating for the trans women community, emphasizing their transformative impact, shaping perceptions, and advocating for broader societal understanding (Dimri, 2019; Dey, 2020; Chinnappan, 2020).

Although trans cognition promotes a safe environment by encouraging, recognizing, supporting, and rewarding trans individuals, the issues and gaps in government welfare schemes have not been discussed. For example, in Kurian and Manoj's article, a respondent from the interview expressed incredulity about government schemes and policies for trans people, stating that they were '[t]his was purely a publicity game' (2021: 11). The study did not find many videos related to the issues and challenges in the welfare schemes and policies of the trans community in my collected data. In such cases, both trans and non-trans people should come forward to share their challenges, issues, and gaps in government policies to reform

and reframe the policies to ‘have [more] positive impacts on this gender minority community’ (Kurian and Manoj 2021:19).

Similar to the ‘Voice to cognition’, the videos of the subject ‘Voice to issues’ (16%) offer voice to issues such as denied rights, physical and mental harassment of trans women in public places. For example,

- Harassment at the workplace Tamil Trans police officer tries to suicide
- Transgender in Indian society - faced problems, molestation, and insult from school | Jan Awaz
- ரோடல் நடந்தா எல்லாரும் இடுப்ப கிள்ளுவானுங்க (If we walk on the road, all will pinch our waist) : Transgender Katrina Interview | Untold Story EP - 06
- Insulted transgender sets self on fire, triggers protests in Chennai | Latest Tamil Nadu
- Transgender woman arrested after argument over bathroom
- Transgender Dies @ Chennai, Police Harassment Blamed - Fellow Transgender Refuse To Claim The Body
- Trans woman denied basic fundamental right of education
- Madurai... Transgenders protest against attack on them
- Hyderabad Police does not care much about Trans women getting murdered...
- India: Transgender and Sex workers not given voter ID cards

Such videos explain a poignant snapshot of the harsh realities faced by trans women in India, highlighting the pervasive issues of discrimination, mistreatment, harassment, and marginalisation across various sectors, such as professional and educational settings and the intersectionality of gender identity, and economic hardships. The reference to the context indicates the impact of societal attitudes, thereby emphasizing the necessity for enhanced inclusive policies and support systems to

mitigate such occurrences. Similar to the Voice to Cognition topic, these videos intentionally contribute to the development of a supportive community by prompting awareness, advocacy, and discussions, fostering shared experiences, and educating the wider society about the specific challenges encountered by the trans community.

Together with these videos, the following videos also highlight trans police officers and gender non-conforming children (GNC) who have experienced molestation and harassment at different stages. For example,

- Minor transgender Girl Commits Suicide
- Transgender Beaten By Mob in Hyderabad After Fake Social media News V6 News
- Training police Transgender who attempts for suicide
- Transgender cop from Tamil Nadu attempts suicide, claims harassment at workplace

By shedding light on the challenges faced by the trans community, such videos can effectively capture public attention, increase awareness about these issues, and societal change to create a more inclusive and supportive environment. The collective videos emphasize the urgent need for comprehensive societal, legal, and institutional changes to address the challenges faced by trans women in India. Advocacy, education, and policy reforms are essential components in encouraging a more inclusive and supportive environment for the trans women community.

3.5.2 Implications of generalizations on the digital spectrum

The next topic ‘Violence’ (21%) (see Figure 1), includes assaults on trans women by individuals, public and government officials, assaults by trans women on individuals and public officials, and clashes between trans women in the public sphere. The subclassified topics are ‘Violence by trans women’ (17%), ‘Violence against trans women’ (2%), and ‘Violence between trans women’ (2%). The categorized topics denote the strong

connections between all the videos in the ‘violence’ entity. Examining specific videos sheds light on the nuanced narratives surrounding trans women and violence. In the ‘Violence by trans women’ (17%) topic, for example,

- Take a look at the atrocities committed by transgenders in Puducherry, and see what happened to the public
- Hijras Attacks On Youth At Hyderabad | Sakshi Investigation Story
- Sex Workers attack on Police in Secunderabad Railway Station
- UBER Taxi driver attacked and robbed by transgenders in Kochi
- Gujranwala: attack of transgenders at police station against arrested partner

Such videos convey a negative and sensationalized tone, insinuating that trans women are responsible for atrocities. This perpetuates stereotypes, encourages bias against the trans community, and hinders efforts for positive representation and understanding. These videos invite viewers to observe the consequences of these alleged actions on the public, indicating a potential impact on public perception. The video suggests a focus on alleged atrocities committed by trans women individuals in diverse places, emphasizing a negative portrayal. It captures attention by presenting the incident as something shocking or alarming. It's important to approach such videos critically, contribute to stigmatization, and reinforce negative stereotypes about trans women individuals. The lack of specific details in the video also leaves room for interpretation and raises questions about the accuracy and fairness of the depiction presented in the video.

Similarly, ‘Violence against trans women’ (2%) videos report an incident where a trans women individual face violence, such as,

- Transgender beaten up by the public | Zaheerabad Police | Rumours of Kidnapping of Children
- Mumbai: Transgender Woman Attacked In Local Train

- Police attacked Transgenders again at Kochi
- Trans Women Attacked In Hollywood As Crowd Laughs
- Transgenders Candle Rally At Kadapa Over Pulwama Attack
- MADURAI... TRANSGENDERS PROTEST AGAINST ATTACK ON THEM.
- Transgender Woman Attacked In Dallas In Apparent 'Mob Violence'

This video content amplifies the voices of the transgender women's community as they speak out against the harassment they endure. It sheds light on the ongoing cruelty faced by trans women due to various factors such as identity struggles and economic hardships. Despite advancements in society, trans women hold diverse roles in both governmental and non-governmental positions (see 'Occupation' topic). However, misconceptions and unfounded rumors, including those related to child kidnapping, complicate their experiences, emphasizing the intersectionality of challenges faced by trans individuals. Living Smile Vidya asserts that the basis for these assaults lies in harmful generalizations, with people unfairly categorizing all trans women as criminals, beggars, and sex workers. This harmful perception is further perpetuated by news channels that specifically label trans women in crime reports, unlike cases involving men or women where the gender is not explicitly highlighted (Thisai, 2015, 1:14).

In the similar vein, 'Violence between trans women' (2%) videos emphasize how incidents involving violence can extend beyond interpersonal conflicts and impact public spaces, such as shows

- In Karur, a clash between two transgenders broke the glass of a government hospital
- கரூரில் திருநங்கைகள் இரு பிரிவினருக்கு இடையே ஏற்பட்ட மோதலில் அரசு மருத்துவமனை கண்ணாடி உடைப்பு . (Glass panes of government hospital in Karur in a clash between two groups of transgenders.)

- திருநங்கைகளுக்குள் மோதல் மாவட்ட ஆட்சியரிடம் புகார் மனு. (Clash between transgenders. Complaint to district collector.)
- திருநங்கைகள் இரு தரப்பினரிடையே மோதல் - கம்பு, கல், பாட்டில் போன்றவற்றை வீசி தாக்குதல் (Clash between two parties by transgenders - throwing sticks, stones, bottles, etc.)

Navigating the intricate landscape of violence among trans women requires careful consideration and understanding. Delving into video narratives that address this issue sheds light on its detrimental impact within the trans community, perpetuating stereotypes that paint trans individuals as prone to violence. To mitigate discrimination and societal stigma, it becomes imperative to cultivate an environment that leads positivity. Unfortunately, negative videos depicting violence are not only prevalent but are also repeated multiple times, affecting both individuals and society at large. It is crucial to emphasise that the increased repetition of such negative content significantly contributes to strengthening discrimination. In this digital age, the accessibility of YouTube platforms amplifies the reach of these negative narratives, potentially creating a substantial impact on a wide audience. In the age of widespread accessibility through platforms like YouTube, the impact is magnified, reaching a broad audience. Recognizing this potential influence underscores the importance of actively working to counteract the harmful narratives surrounding trans individuals and promoting understanding.

Transitioning to the subclassified topics, ‘Violence against trans women’ (2%) shows bias against trans individuals, whereas ‘Violence by trans women’ (17%) and ‘Violence between trans women’ (2%) depict the trans women community as criminals. These topics feature negative videos posted by individuals portraying trans women as threats to the public, rather than videos uploaded by trans women or others to show the trans women community's progress and development. However, the videos are not descriptive enough to address issues such as whose fault it is, the cause of

the convolution, and whether it is a defense or attack. The videos portray trans women as arrogant, attacking and abusing to get money from passengers, and damaging government property. Such misrepresentations lead viewers to believe that trans women are aggressive people. Generalizations of trans women on the digital spectrum mar their identity and preclude them from being a part of the public.

Schoenebeck et al., aver “people from protected social groups (e.g., based on gender, sex, race, religion, or disability) are more likely to be targets of harassment on social media, perpetuating and magnifying injustices they experience in their lives” (2). Similarly, trans women in India face heightened societal targets and are particularly vulnerable to identity-based discrimination on YouTube platforms (Chakravathi et al., 2021). However, individuals employ various platforms, including digital and written narratives, to voice against trans women stereotypes related to their gender identity and experiences (Irudayaraj, 2020).

3.5.3 Economic struggles: A closer look at trans women in non-stable job

The ‘Non-stable job’ (7%) subject of the study refers to trans women who work as sex workers and beggars. Considering that topics are categorised as ‘Sex workers’ (5%) and ‘Beggars’ (2%), which encompasses the existing state of trans women in Indian society (see Figure 1). In India, some trans women engage in sex work and begging due to socio-economic factors. Discrimination, limited employment opportunities, and societal stigmas often contribute to their involvement in sex work, and begging (Revathi, 2010; Laxmi, 2015). The trans community in India faces challenges such as social exclusion, lack of legal recognition, and economic marginalisation, pushing some trans women towards sex work and begging as a means of survival (Revathi, 2010; Laxmi, 2015).

Efforts to address these issues involve advocating for transgender rights, challenging stereotypes, and promoting inclusive policies to create better opportunities and support systems for the trans community in India. Although the topic of ‘Occupation’ (3%) discussed below signifies the growth of trans women in various fields, the categorized ‘Sex workers’ (5%) and Beggars’ (2%) videos discuss a large scale of their occupation. The subcategory 'Sex workers' (5%) within the topic of videos occupied on trans women sex workers encompasses content related to awareness, experiences, and the negative representation of sex work in India, videos such as,

- Transgenders active in sex massage parlours in Delhi
- Transgender sex worker shares harrowing experience as part of a life she says she has to lead
- A Day in the Life of a Transgender Sex Worker
- Sex Workers|Transgenders|Hijras Lifestyle|Lockdown లో must watch ఎలా ఉంటున్నారు TAG TELUGU YOUTUBE
(Sex Workers|Transgenders|Hijras Lifestyle|Lockdown must watch TAG TELUGU YOUTUBE)
- Transgenders or Sex Workers? | Karachi Dark Stories

contribute to reinforcing negative stereotypes about the trans women community by associating their identity primarily with stigmatized occupations, perpetuating existing biases, potentially further marginalizing them. However, the videos provide a broad and potentially leading overview that looks at complex factors like economic challenges, limited employment opportunities, or societal discrimination. The perpetuation of stereotypes and awareness in the videos may influence public perception of the trans women community

In a similar vein, examining the subject of ‘Beggars’ (2%) the discussion revolves around trans women who engage in begging in India.

Opting for begging serves as a means of immediate income, although it is both unreliable and frequently stigmatized. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the decision to resort to begging is often influenced by systemic barriers rather than personal preference. These barriers make it challenging for trans women to secure stable and dignified employment. Furthermore, the absence of legal recognition and protection exposes them to exploitation and mistreatment, compelling some to turn to begging as an alternative to conventional forms of employment. The videos such as,

- transgender during begging
- Transsexual doctor found begging in Tamil Nadu.
- Darkside of Transgenders | Bella Dera Tamin Vlog | Arunachal Pradesh | Daporijo Assaulted by Trans Beggars in Street of India
- Kinner ne general Baaghi mein jabardasti paisa mangte aur Gali death (Transgender forcefully asked money and abused in general compartment.)
- Indian transgender in train

highlight a situation involving trans women engaging in begging. However, the videos contribute to negative stereotypes about trans individuals and their economic activities. Moreover, it overlooks community development, as it fails to address the systemic issues contributing to such situations.

The challenges faced by trans women sex workers and beggars in India involve advocating for transgender rights, challenging societal stereotypes, and implementing inclusive policies. Creating awareness about the struggles of the transgender community, encouraging acceptance, and providing economic opportunities are crucial steps in addressing the underlying issues that contribute to trans women resorting to begging for survival.

These videos depict the current state of the majority of the trans population and simultaneously illustrate the suffering they face due to both official and private policies. Karunanithi rightly point out ‘Eking out a livelihood from begging and commercial sex work, they continue to remain marginalised, ghettoised and disempowered as a community’ (2015: 3). However, most Indians are ‘reluctant to recognize this community because they are obsessed with the idea of gender dichotomy and are unmindful of the existence of the “third gender”’ (Karunanithi 2015: 3). In addition to the societal stigma and dereliction, the ineffective and failed policies of the government not only impact the trans community but also lead to their pauperization as they strive to survive in such unfavourable conditions. The knowledge and access to government identity proofs, which are crucial for any job, prevent the trans community from obtaining decent jobs and becoming economically independent. Anjali, a trans woman interviewed by Pandya and Redcay, also addressed similar issues. She says,

Most of the people in my community lack government identity proofs such as Aadhaar Card, Driving License, Passport, Permanent Account Number, Ration card (either below poverty line card or above poverty line card), Voter identity cards and therefore, we are excluded from various social security schemes of the Central or State government. (2021: 153)

3.5.4 Cultural progress: Normalizing trans women’s social expansion

Following the ‘Non-stable job’ branch of study, the ‘Trans culture’ (9%) subject has the highest percentage. It refers to videos related to festivals, rituals, customs, values, references, knowledge, traditions, etc. of trans women from various locations in India. The categorised topics are ‘Festivals-rituals’ (5%) and ‘Social construct’ (4%), as they manifest the robust cultural events and activities of trans women (see Figure 1).

‘Festivals-rituals’ (5%) the primary theme of the videos is about trans women's culture and festivals. Trans women's festivals are celebrated in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh, etc. Videos such as

- Koovagam festival, India’s largest gathering of transgenders
- Traditional Transgender mass Marriage @ Koovagam - Joy, Fun & Sorrow - RedPix24x7
- Festival of khwaja Sara in samanbad
- भोपाल : Transgenders Celebrating Bhujariya Festival - किन्नरों का उत्सव - Patika Madhya Pradesh (Transgender celebrate Bhujariya festival in Bhopal. It is a festival of transgender.)
- கூத்தாண்டவர் கோவில் திருவிழாவையொட்டி மிஸ் கூவாகம் போட்டி பற்றிய ஒரு செய்தித் தொகுப்பு (A news bulletin about the Miss Koovagam contest on the occasion of koothandavar temple festival)

exemplifies a positive aspect of their culture, providing visibility and recognition on a large scale by highlighting a festival that celebrates the trans women community. For example, in Villupuram, trans women gather to celebrate the Koovagam festival and honor their god Aravan. Although the location is in South India, Tamil Nadu, trans women from various places come to partake in the festivities, considering it a festival for trans women. During the festival, trans women marry Aravan God and believe him to be their husband; on the 18th day, they mourn his death. These videos reflect how social media functions to assimilate the trans women community into normative society and helps to augment and promote their culture (Cannon et al. 2017; Manago et al. 2022; Hephzibah et al. 2018). It suggests a multifaceted portrayal of the trans community, showcasing cultural traditions, emotions, and communal experiences. It provides a glimpse into

a significant cultural event that involves the trans community, emphasizing their traditions and shared experiences. It improves the community, understanding, visibility and empathy. Additionally, it contributes to community pride by highlighting their cultural practices, potentially challenging stereotypes, and promoting positive perceptions. Likewise,

- Transgenders singing and dancing after wedding India rituals
- Telugu hot hijra record dance || Recording dance HD
- India Best Kinner Dance video song 2021|| maichia Dance video || Muralisika creation || Gujarat Maasi ba, pavaiya
- Wadhaian lene agaye khawaja sara | khawaja sara dance | lori song | khawaja sara | Wekno Punjab Punjabi kinner dancing on badahi// KINNER SAMAJ // 2019

outline the subculture of trans women concerning celebrations, festivals, rituals, and their cultural engagement with society. By depicting positive aspects of their lives, it contributes to breaking stereotypes and building a more nuanced understanding of the trans community. Additionally, it serves as a platform for community members to share their experiences and achievements, promoting a sense of belonging and unity.

In addition to these elements, the videos predominantly focus on the social construct (4%), highlighting the theme of marriages between trans women and cisgender men. The videos related to this topic trace the evolution from traditional epic marriages to the legal recognition of their unions, showcasing the intersection of social constructs with societal norms. Topics such as,

- In a first, marriage between man, trans woman set to be registered in Tamilnadu
- திருநங்கையின் திருமணத்தை சட்டப்பூர்வமாக முதல் முறையாக தமிழகத்தில் பதிவுTransgender marriage nba 24x7

(Transgender marriage legally registered in Tamil Nadu for the first time transgender marriage nba 24x7)

- திருநங்கையின் திருமணத்தை சட்டப்பூர்வமாக முதல் முறையாக தமிழகத்தில் பதிவுTransgender marriage nba 24x7 (Transgender marriage legally registered in Tamil Nadu for the first time transgender marriage nba 24x7) घे भरारी : व्हॅलेंटाईन्स डे विशेष : माधुरी आणि जयची अनोखी प्रेमकहानी

signifies a positive step towards legal recognition and acceptance of diverse relationships. This positive representation challenges societal norms and encourages acceptance, potentially inspiring hope and providing a role model for others within the trans community. These videos significantly benefit the trans community for their community development by showcasing positive aspects of cultural events, traditional ceremonies, and legal milestones. It contributes to breaking stereotypes, promoting acceptance within society and building a more inclusive narrative. Incorporating such videos into the public domain serves to advance the societal integration of trans women, nurture connections among individuals across diverse geographical locations, and impart ethical principles to the younger generation, promoting love, tolerance, and understanding (Sharma et al., 2023).

On the same sub-categories of the ‘Social construct’, there are a few videos discussing men harassing the wives of trans women, for example,

- ಮಂಗಳಮುಖಿಯನ್ನು ಮದುವೆಯಾಗಿ ಕೈಕೊಟ್ಟ ಯುವಕ ! Youth Cheats Transgender After Marriage In Bengaluru (The young man who marry Mangalmukhi! Youth cheats transgender after marriage in Bengaluru)
- Man Arrested | for Harassing Wife of Trans Woman | in LB Nagar

reflects the challenges and brings attention to the vulnerability of their marriage relationships. Such videos raise concerns about the safety and well-being of trans women and their partners. However, highlights the importance of legal measures to protect trans individuals from such harassment. It also points to the need for ongoing efforts to address the root causes of such harassment and to promote a more inclusive and accepting society.

3.5.5 Shaping trans women's male to female transition information

The next subject of discourse is 'Physical transformation' (5%), which defines surgery, hormone therapy, male-to-female physical transformation, and awareness. The classified topics such as 'Male to Female' (4%) and 'Cognizance' (1%), which connote the evolution of the trans women's community medical treatments and awareness (see Figure 1). It is significant to note that not all trans people seek gender-affirming medical care (T'Sjoen et al. 2019), although the recognition of the medical and surgical needs of the trans patient populations is growing (Ascha 2018). 'Male to Female' (4%) subject videos such as

- Male to Female Sex Change Hormone Therapy for Transgender Treatment & Surgery
- Trans Queen | Male to Female Transgender | Kannada Talk Show | LGBT
- Kaythankay| beautiful transwomen|male to female| transition timeline| before and after| hrt timeline
- Transgender Women Plastic Surgery - Pack Removal 7th Day
- India's Third Gender Movement | The Zainab Salbi Project Ep. 2
- Trans Male to Female Transformation | Dr. Karishma Aesthetics| India

- Male to female voice change surgery in india |Male to female voice feminization zenith clinic

plays a pivotal role in demystifying the transitioning process. By openly discussing hormone therapy and surgery, such videos contribute to reducing societal misconceptions and leading to a better understanding of the trans experience. This significantly aids community development by providing educational resources and cultivating a shared sense of experience among community members. Similarly, ‘Cognizance’ (1%) topic videos such as

- Cost of Male to Female Gender Reassignment Surgery in India|Sex Change Surgery|Zenith Clinic
- Total amount required for SEX REASSIGNMENT SURGERY in India.
- What Hormones do 🤔 advantages ❤️ disadvantages 🤔
(SEX REASSIGNMENT SURGERY) MTF

take a pragmatic and informative approach, addressing the financial aspect of gender reaffirming surgery. The inclusion of a specific clinic adds transparency to the information, potentially aiding in informed decision-making for individuals considering such surgeries. This practical information is highly sought in the trans community during the transition process and contributes to community development by offering transparency about the financial aspects of transitioning.

These videos discuss trans women's medical and physical transformation, including plastic surgery, voice change surgery, facial feminization surgery, sex reassignment surgery, and therapy to mitigate discomfort/distress, gender dysphoria, and body dysmorphia as they differ from their sex-assigned birth or sex-related physical parameters (Silva et al., 2021: n.pag.). It addresses medical and surgical aspects of transitioning, contributing to community understanding, the practical consideration of cost, and aiding informed decision-making. It assists many trans women,

adults, and individuals with gender non-conforming behavior (GNC) who are trapped in the male body and face dysphoria and mental health issues. The videos display the advantages and disadvantages of hormone therapy and the cost of male-to-female sex reassignment surgery. However, only 5% of videos are available to create cognizance about medical facilities and their impact on physical transformation. If content creators focus on creating more videos about medical and mental health treatments such as estrogen, anti-androgen therapy, feminizing vaginoplasty, masculinizing phalloplasty, psychological support, etc., include health centres with data on the cost and implications of pharmaceuticals, it would indeed benefit trans people.

3.5.6 Exploring tragedies: Insights into trans suicides and mental health struggles

The subsequent area of study pertains to ‘CGN’ (4%), which addresses the depression experienced by gender non-conforming children. The categorised topic is ‘Rejection’ (4%), indicating a lack of acceptance for the trans minority community within mainstream society. The videos, such as, for instance,

- Minor Transgender Girl Commits Suicide
- Kerala Transgender Woman Harassed, Attempts Suicide
- Transsexual Girl Naina On Suicides In Her Community
- Harassment at work place; Tamil Trans police officer tries to suicide
- Transgender cop from Tamil Nadu attempts suicide, claims harassment at workplace
- Transgender Suicide Viral Video: गांव बढ़ माजरा में एक ट्रांसजेंडर की खुद खुशी वीडियो वायरल (Transgender's suicide video viral: one Transgender committed suicide in the village Badh Majra)

- Indian Trans girl With No Friends Talks to Camera for Almost 8 Minutes

indicate a tragic incident involving a trans girl, trans woman, or trans police officer who has attempted and died by suicide, shedding light on the circumstances surrounding the suicide and potentially exploring the challenges, struggles, or factors that contributed to the devastating outcome. It accentuates the vulnerability of the individual and emphasizes mental health issues within the trans community, particularly among younger trans individuals.

In a similar vein, the last video describes a video of an Indian trans girl, has no friends and speaks directly to the camera for an extended period. The video provides a platform for the trans girl to share her experiences and feelings, potentially encouraging empathy and understanding within the broader community. It contributes to breaking the stigma around loneliness and offers a glimpse into the individual experiences of trans individuals. This video proves beneficial for community development by facilitating connections based on shared experiences and encouraging the formation of support networks.

The following initial video depicts a false narrative of trans women attempting to kidnap a child, while subsequent videos delve into the repercussions of spreading misinformation about trans women. Subsequently, social media functions as a centre of fake news media (Talwar et al., 2020). For example,

- Transgender Attempt to Kidnap a Child - Caught on Camera
- Transgender Beaten By Mob in Hyderabad After Fake Social Media News | V6 News
- Mob Severely Thrashed Transgender suspecting as Child-Kidnappers in Hyderabad

- Transgender beaten up by public | Zaheerabad Police | Rumours of Kidnapping of Children
- Watch: Mob thrashes transgenders rumoured to be child lifters

As a result of the continuous misrepresentation of trans women on YouTube, people believe and spread the news and deform their identity. These examples prove the result of containing pejorative or fake news on social media. The young trans adults are attempting suicide, and their life becomes miserable of fake news on social media. It also shows the functions of transphobia and transmisogyny. Priyanka Deka says,

In the last few years, numbers of fake news stories have increased via social media platforms like What's App, Facebook, YouTube, etc., because they are shared online faster than we can ever imagine...Misinformation's are false information, but when a person conveys it, believes it is true and shares...usually people never give a second thought before sharing content on social media...On the other hand, information based on reality but imposes harm on a person, organisation, or country is termed as mal-information. (The Times of India, 2021)

These videos impact the trans community in different ways and draw attention to the critical issue of mental health and suicide within the community, prompting important conversations and awareness. However, it's important for the video content to prioritize mental health and well-being, offering resources and support for individuals facing similar challenges. Additionally, these videos show the lack of support and prejudice against children who identify as non-binary or trans women, often suffering from depression and attempting suicide. Bennett et al. (2019: 522) say, '[t]he minority stress model highlights the negative impact that members of a minority group, such as children who exhibit GNC, may

experience due to stigma, prejudice, and discrimination’. The lack of government policy, financial, medical, and educational support leads to an unfavourable situation for CGN.

3.5.7 Inspiring stories of trans women in diverse professions

In the context of ‘Occupation’ (3%) subject primarily highlights the progress of trans women in both public and private sectors. The subdivided topic categories, such as ‘Civil services’ (0.92%), ‘Medicine’ (1.38%), ‘Business’ (0.46%), and ‘Sports’ (0.23%), reflect the diverse achievements of trans women in various professional domains. ‘Civil service’ (0.92) subject videos highlight the notable progress of trans women within the realm of police enforcement.

- வீர தமிழ்ச்சி! இந்தியாவின் முதல் திருநங்கை Police Prithika Yashini அம்மாவுடன்! கண் கலங்கிய பிரபலங்கள் (Brave Tamil women! India's first transgender Police Prithika Yashini with mom! Celebrities who are in tears)
- Chhattisgarh becomes 1st Indian state to give chance to transgenders in police force

Prithika Yashini became India’s first police officer in 2015 in Tamil Nadu. She made history by becoming the first trans woman Sub-Inspector (SI) in India. It suggests the historical significance of her appointment, succeeding in a law enforcement role, challenging societal norms and contributing to the broader community both within and outside the community. Subsequently, several states, including Chhattisgarh, Raipur, Kerala, etc., have begun providing opportunities for the trans community. The information on YouTube is slightly modified as Chhattisgarh is not the first state to offer opportunities for trans women in the civil services, such as the police. But the state recruited 13 transgender people into its police force (A First: Chhattisgarh Police Force Recruits 13 Transgender Constables). It reflects progress information; however, preserving accurate information

ensures greater development and authenticity for the trans women's community. In a similar vein, the sub-category 'Medicine' (1.38%) is witnessing a notable advancement with a specific focus on trans women in the field of the medical profession. videos like

- This young trans doctor has an inspiring story
- பெற்றோரின் ஒத்துழைப்பால் பெண் செவிலியராக சாதனைப் படைத்த திருநங்கை “அன்பு ரூபி” (Transgender "Anbu Ruby" who became a female nurse with the help of her parents)
- ఆంధ్రప్రదేశ్ లోనే ఫస్ట్ నర్స్ ట్రాన్స్జెండర్ || First Nurse Transgender In Andhra [Pra]desh Exclusive

emphasises the inspirational aspect of their personal journey and professional achievements in the medical field. It aims to highlight positive narratives of success within the medical profession and garner respect for the trans community. Furthermore, the 'Business' (0.46%) topic videos discuss trans women in the business realm.

- Unlimited Mutton Biryani | first-ever transgender hotel in Tamil Nadu | திருநங்கைகள் உணவகம் (Transgender Restaurant)

It introduces the concept of the first trans women's hotel in Tamil Nadu. It promotes economic empowerment, leadership, and entrepreneurship within the trans community. Similarly, 'Sports' (0.23%) subject videos like

- Transgender wrestler trying to defend title

emphasises a trans wrestler attempting to defend the title, and a sports-related narrative. The video shows active involvement, achievements and encourages participation in sports. These categorized topics as 'Civil services', 'Medicine', 'Business', and 'Sports' promote achievements, visibility, recognition, a sense of skill, pride, resilience, motivation, understanding and acceptance, contributing to community development by

creating positive role models and challenging stereotypes. Such videos have a significant impact, uplifting and educating, providing platforms for progressive narratives to encourage participation in various sectors. YouTube offers a substantial platform for showcasing talents and endeavours; however, the minimal percentage of videos indicates the need for more content highlighting trans women's presence in civil services, medicine, business, and sports to promote inclusivity and challenge traditional norms.

In an interview, Prithika Yashini stated that the court decision is it's a new beginning for the entire trans community (Tv 2016). As she stated, trans women have entered various fields of official and non-government positions, like police, judge, doctor, nurse, pilot, business, etc. They have achieved equality and remarkable jobs in public and private settings because of various government legislation and the trans movement. Such success stories on YouTube serve as motivation for trans people, gender non-conforming individuals, and other minorities, providing visible examples of success and empowerment. Trans women's opportunities are limited in the social arena (Kurian and Manoj, 2021), and their lives are mostly involved with criminal activities (BAL, 2020). However, in Indian society, many trans women enter government and non-government organisations.

3.5.8 Trans community as active contributors

Moving on to the subject of 'Support' (1%), it explores the ways in which trans women offer assistance to others, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and reciprocally receive support as well. This topic has been divided into two categories: 'Trans assists' (0.8%) and 'Assisting trans' (0.2%), examining the valuable contributions made within the social sphere. In 'Trans assists' (0.8%), videos such as

- Transgenders Distribute Food Packets To Needy Amid Lockdown In Surat

- Coronavirus Awareness Campaign By Transgenders At Berhampur Railway Station
- Coronavirus Awareness- Transgenders Distribute Masks In Puri
- Coronavirus Prevention- Transgenders Distribute Masks In Surat

indicates trans individuals engaging in a charitable activity by distributing food packets and masks to those in need during the lockdown in Surat. It communicates a community-oriented message and the active involvement of trans people in providing assistance during challenging times. Moreover, the videos indicate that trans individuals educating the public about COVID-19 and engaging with the community to promote understanding and preventive measures at the railway station. It emphasizes the active involvement of trans people in public health initiatives beyond their traditional roles. However, trans women are deprived of healthcare entitlements because of their gender identity. In India, 20% of the trans population has unmet specific healthcare needs (Pandya 2021). The trans population in COVID-19 faced severe financial, physical, and medical risks (Pandya 2021). Even though the trans population could not obtain medical and financial benefits, they assisted others to survive.

Similarly, a categorized topic video in ‘Assisting trans’ (0.2%), ‘[o]n behalf of the Nagai organization, provided rice, vegetables, and groceries to Mayiladuthurai transgenders’ emphasizes information about the trans community as recipients of support and in a caring environment. Such videos promote empathy and understanding from a wider audience. However, in contrast to the ratio ‘Trans assists’ (0.8%) and ‘Assisting trans’ (0.2%), observe that the trans community generously supports societal advancements. On the other hand, YouTube has been used to exhibit the contributions of the trans community to society and vice versa. These categorized subject videos promote a positive image of trans as proactive

and responsible citizens and encourage community members to participate in initiatives to contribute to the well-being of society. Moreover, they challenge stereotypes, contribute to building a more inclusive narrative, and depict trans individuals as valuable members actively engaged in public health initiatives.

3.5.9 Identity theft and defamation: Impact on the trans community

Shifting the focus to ‘Imposters’ (1%), this topic depicts individuals disguising themselves as trans women for illegal activities. It categorised it as ‘Misrepresentation’ (1%) to emphasise the interconnectedness between all the designated videos. The subject of ‘Misrepresentation’ encompasses videos such as

- Transgenders caught red-handed by those who dressed up as transgenders-Video
- Fake Transgenders (kinner) exposed by original hijra in khandwa MP
- Mumbai: Transgenders allege harassment by impostors
- Duplicate transgenders arrested for smuggling heroin

depicting a scenario wherein individuals deliberately pose the identity of trans women to others that the trans women community engaging in criminal activities for personal gain (Samervel 2023; Choudhury, 2023). This content has a detrimental impact on the trans community, as it reinforces stereotypes, mistrust, stigma, discrimination and adversely shapes public perception. Additionally, the videos suggest an attempt to reveal impostors in the public spectrum. These videos provide concrete examples of identity theft and the defamation of trans women. Moreover, these incidents shed light on the fraudulent use of trans women's identities in cases involving forgery and smuggling. A Guwahati-based trans women activist Neetu stated that ‘[t]here are only 200 kninnaurs while over 4000-5000 are fake’. This is a significant problem for individuals in the trans

women community but also poses a threat to the safety of the people (Choudhury, 2023). These videos significantly underscore that not all members of the trans community are involved in the alleged wrongdoing. Viewer opinions and perspectives are subject to variation based on their unique experiences and interpretations of the presented situations. These videos have the potential to enhance advocacy and awareness about trans women, encouraging activists and individuals within the trans community to address misrepresentations and dispel stereotypes.



Figure 1: The classification of YouTube topics related to trans women.

In their studies, Raun (2016), Kusumawardani and Trijayanto (2020) demonstrated that trans individuals in the US, Europe and Indonesia use YouTube for the welfare of their communities. Among the various topics identified, the study revealed that the highest ones are ‘Voice to Cognition’ (35%), ‘Voice to Issues’ (16%) and ‘Violence by Trans women’

(17%) (see Figure 2). The initial two subjects affirm that social media platforms play a pivotal role in raising awareness about trans women-specific issues and encouraging community development within this community. These kinds of videos build relationships and establish support, educate and motivate minority communities. The last one illustrates that trans women are prone to violence and illegal activities, aggressive and outlaw. Nonetheless, trans women, in many cases, use violence as a means of self-defense. Such derogatory videos, when viewers circulate on social media, would not only impede the assimilation of trans community into normative society but also generalize them as criminals. In this way, digital culture, in one or another way, echoes the act of colonial government.

Chakrapani et al. (2004), Aneesh (2016), Chakrapani (2010) (see also Karunanithi (2015), Kusumawardani and Trijayanto (2020), and Kurian and Manoj (2021) argue about various deficiencies starting from education, socio-economic, opportunities, and the minority stress model to mental health. Figure 2 substantiates the impact of such scarcenesses through intermediate topics such as ‘Sex Workers’ (5%), ‘Rejection’ (4%), ‘Beggars’ (2%), ‘Violence between Trans women’ (2%), and ‘Violence against Trans women’ (2%). Although these videos may highlight various facets of the trans women's world and shed light on the current scenario on the YouTube platform to increase awareness, YouTube should give preference to videos that advocate for educational and employment prospects for trans women. Incorporate subjects like ‘Festivals-rituals’ (5%), ‘Social construct’ (4%), and ‘Male to Female’ (3%) into the discussion, as these topics promote the potential social and transformative developments that can catalyze the advancement of the trans community (refer to Figure 2). Together with these topics, the low proportioned topics such as ‘Medicine’ (1.38), ‘misrepresentation’ (1%), ‘Cognizance’ (1%), ‘Surgery’ (1%), ‘Civil-services’ (0.92%), ‘Trans assists’ (0.8), Business (0.46), ‘Sports’ (0.23), and ‘Assisting trans’ (0.2%) indicate that the potential of YouTube has not been fully utilized for development of the

community. However, these topics are equally crucial as the highest topics discussed above and can significantly help the trans community by improving their critical conditions.

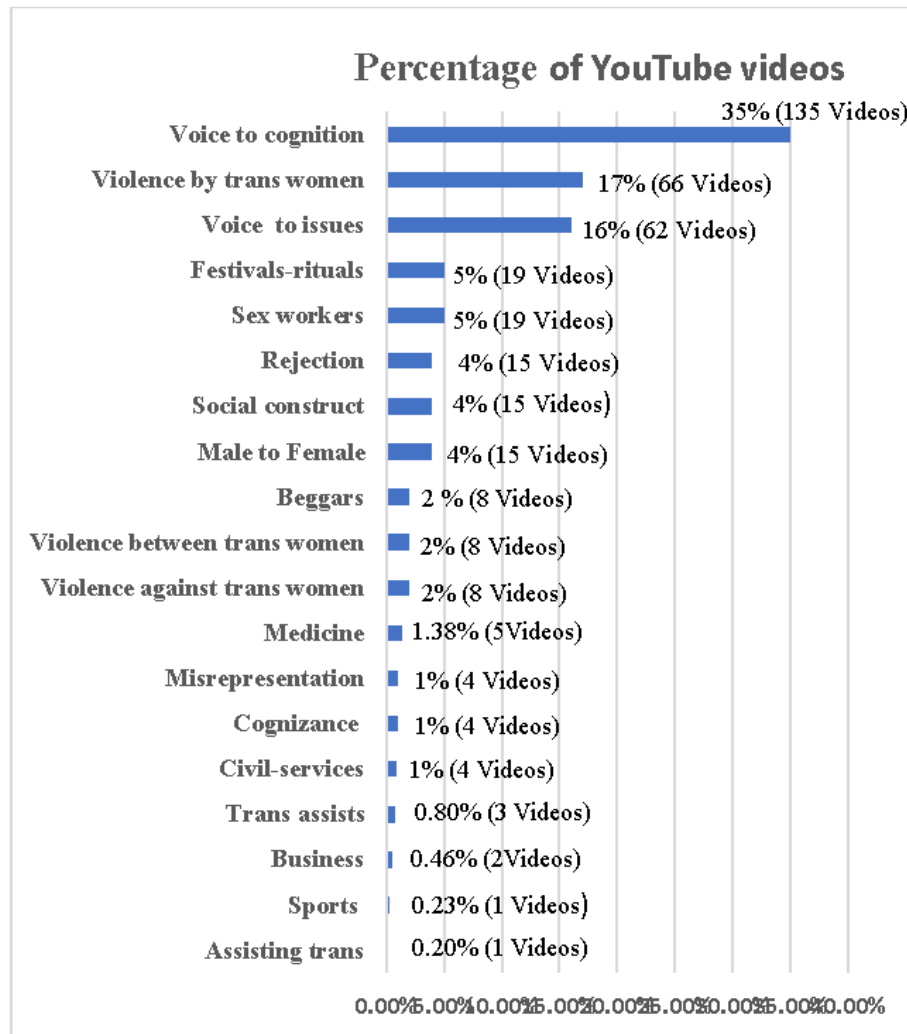


Figure 2. The percentage of topics related to trans women on YouTube

3.6 Delineation of views, likes and the role of algorithms in the dissemination of information

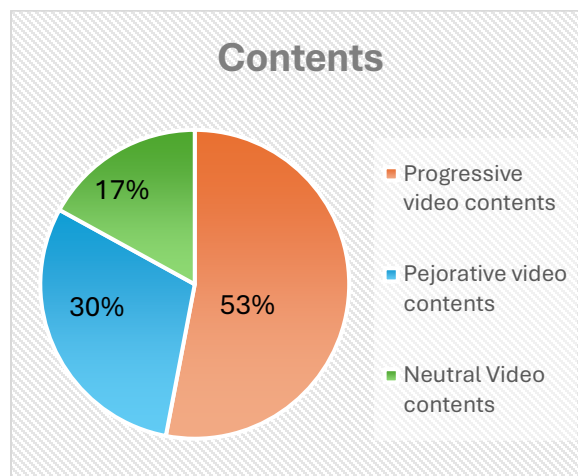
YouTube videos have great importance in any video, while the audience judges them in terms of ‘views’, ‘likes’, and ‘dislikes’ as engagement metrics to judge the content's popularity. ‘Views’ indicate how many times the video has been watched, while likes and dislikes reflect the

online users' sentiment. The metrics help the audience to view or avoid the video content. Online users hit the like button when they admire, accept, like, trust the video's clarity-quality content, share with a huge audience, and support the YouTubers' videos. Online viewers hit the 'dislike' button when the video is useless, ineffective, hopeless, disagreeable, objectionable, unadmired, unimpressed, controversial, or to share with an immense audience. It is also significant to understand how the YouTube algorithm functions and its impact on the trans women's community. YouTube algorithms are complex systems designed to personalise the user's watch time, likes, dislikes, shares, subscriptions, and location and device type to increase engagement and maximise the time users spend on the platform. Social media platforms have implemented algorithms that curate users' news feeds based on their interests and behaviours. Sometimes, social networking sites promote videos if the video content has more views, likes, and dislikes.

YouTube content creators face challenges when a video receives a high number of dislikes, as the YouTube algorithms may choose not to promote that video. If videos continue to receive repeated dislike hits, YouTube may freeze the 'views' count for those videos and finally stop recommending the creator's content altogether. Sometimes, online audiences use 'likes' and 'dislikes' to express their favour and disfavour to YouTubers (ragal 00.47–08.06; Inforlogist 00.54–02.23). In 2021, YouTube turned off the public display of the dislike count to support content creators. After this change, there is a higher chance of users clicking the 'like' button, and when a video receives more likes, it is more likely to be promoted to a wider audience.

Additionally, the study investigates the Progressive (53%), pejorative (30%), and neutral (17%) content based on the videos' views and likes. The study categorizes the progressive video content into the following topics: Voice to cognition (35%), Social construct (4%), Festivals-rituals

(5%), Male to Female (4%), Cognizance (1%), Civil-services (0.92%), Business (0.46%), Medicine (1.38%), Sports (0.23%), Assisting trans (0.2%), and Trans assists (0.8%). These videos are primarily uploaded for the development and visibility of the trans women's community. In contrast, the pejorative videos are categorised into: Violence by trans women (17%), Violence between trans women (2%), Beggars (2%), Sex workers (5%), and Rejection (4%). These types of videos can demotivate the trans women community and gender non-conforming children. The neutral videos are categorised into: Voice to issues (16%), Violence against trans women (2%), Assisting trans (0.2%), and Misrepresentation (1%), which does not indicate progressive and pejorative videos. Figure 3 indicates that, although pejorative videos represent a smaller proportion of the content, their views and likes are higher compared to those of progressive videos. This suggests that pejorative videos receive considerable attention and spread more rapidly. Given the online users' engagement patterns, algorithms have the potential to promote pejorative, progressive, and neutral videos to wider audiences. Since pejorative content has a lower proportion but higher engagement, it is significant to focus on enhancing progressive content and removing the presence of pejorative content on YouTube.



3. a

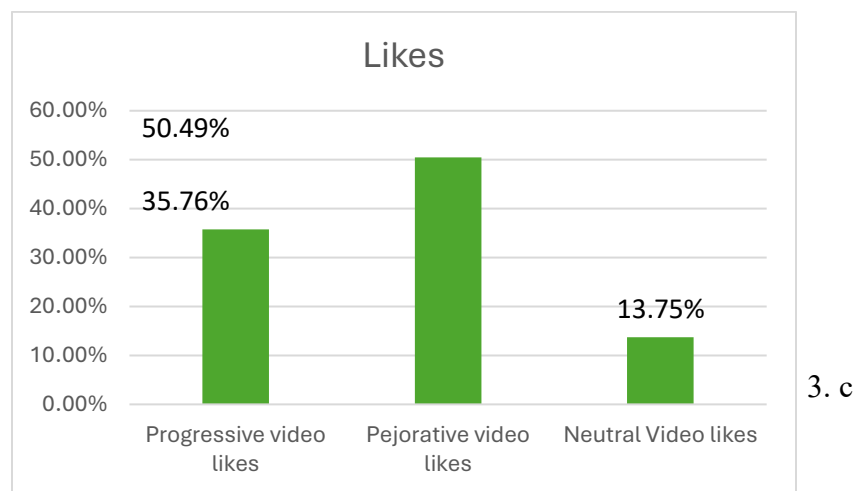
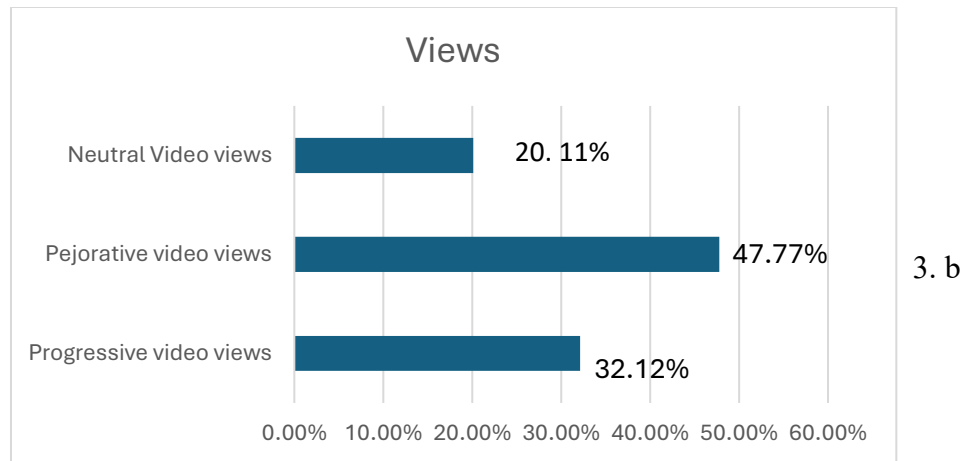


Figure 3. a, b, and c images represent contents, views, and likes of the progressive and pejorative YouTube videos related to trans women

3.7 Phase 2: A Thematic analysis of trans women YouTubers and digital storytelling

3.7.1 The role of entertainment in building the trans community and recognition

In Figure 4, 'Entertainment' (49.36%) topic contributes the largest proportion of content, indicating that social media platforms are being widely utilized by trans women for entertainment-related purposes. A closer examination of these videos reveals that the content comprises entertainment short clips and dance reels set to popular cinematic songs.

These performances serve not only as a form of entertainment but also as a medium for expressing identity, emotion, and creativity. Dance, in particular, holds cultural significance within the trans community, traditionally associated with performances at weddings and celebrations of childbirth, often as a means of economic sustenance (Revathi, 2010; Laxmi, 2015). By uploading dance videos to YouTube, trans women can rapidly gain visibility, increase their follower base, and enhance viewership and subscriber counts, particularly when content aligns with vital trends, for example:

- #comedy #funny #india #real #entertainment #shorts #viral #viral #trending #repeat #telugu
- Aap Ka Aana Dil Dhadhkana #bollywood #hindisong (Aap Ka Aana Dil Dhadhkana translates to your arrival makes my heart beat)
- Indian hijira Dance part 1

For trans women, dance is regarded as a powerful medium for expressing their feminine identity (Laxmi, 2015) through the movement and style. Many trans women are uploading dance reels on YouTube, using the platform as a space to engage with broader society. These videos not only allow for creative expression but also help in building a sense of community by connecting with others who share similar experiences and interests. Yet, as Best (2021) discussed, “[t]he scarcity of trans dancers in dance history, dance spaces, and dance research suggests a need for greater understanding of this group and how their needs are and are not being met in dance” (1). Although dance offers valuable space for gender exploration, trans participants continue to face numerous barriers, including ignorance, transphobia, lack of representation and mentorship, misrepresentation, and psychological and social impacts.

Traditional dance performances are typically well known by the specific gendered persons, roles and movements. Nevertheless, in India, Narthaki Nataraj, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi and others have made significant contributions to Bharatanatyam. Narthaki Nataraj, who was the first trans woman to be awarded the Padma Shri, along with other dancers, is breaking down barriers and redefining their identities and dance spaces. Furthermore, qualitative findings from trans researchers reveal that most participants reported that trans and GNC dancers are virtually absent from mainstream dance media (Best, 2021). In India, trans women continue to actively share their dance performances on social media platforms. Nevertheless, they often encounter similar obstacles, particularly in the form of homophobic and transphobic hate speech in online spaces such as YouTube comment sections (Chakravarthi, 2021).

In line with Best's (2021) argument, there is a pressing need for research in the Indian context to explore how trans women dancers experience prejudice and discrimination from the instructors, fellow dancers, audience, and society. Such research should examine how their needs remain unfulfilled within professional dance settings and performance spaces.

3.7.2 Healthcare journeys by Indian trans women YouTubers

The next high-frequency topic is 'Male to Female transformation' (26.43%). This topic includes trans women's gender affirming surgeries and general health issues such as tuberculosis. Streck and Best avers "[q]ueer people have also used the Internet to negotiate their identities in various ways, often through the creation of queer media" (68). As they say, the 'Male to Female transformation' topic reflects how trans individuals share experiences, information and photos related to their transitions, particularly focusing on feminine gender affirming surgeries, as a means of negotiating and asserting their identities.

Similar to the earlier discussion on the ‘Physical transformation’ topic (5%), which featured content from individual YouTubers, this topic also highlights how trans women YouTubers discuss the impact of medical facilities on their communities. The healthcare content covering both general and gender specific issues shared by trans YouTubers exemplifies how they navigate and overcome medical struggles.

Such content creates significant awareness when prominent trans women share their experiences and medical journeys on their own channels, which can create trust and relatability among other trans and GNC. The study identified that three prominent YouTuber channels, such as ‘Olmec Transgender | Sex Change Surgery in Delhi India’, ‘Boy To Girl’, and ‘Nikkiey Chawla’, raise awareness, particularly about trans women’s gender affirming surgeries. This contributes to improving medical literacy and helps reduce anxiety around such surgeries, especially in countries like India, where these topics are still considered taboo. For example,

- Vulva Reshaping Surgery Explained by Dr. Narendra Kaushik | Olmec Transgender Surgery Khwaish Parihar: Corrective SRS | M To F SRS (Testimonial) | Dr. Narendra Kaushik | Olmec India
- [B]eautiful [I]ndian transgender facebooklive
- Beautiful boy to girl Transformation | Indian Transgender | Boy the girl full body Transformation

Such videos highlight the positive outcomes of GAS and treatments and serve as a source of encouragement for the trans women's community. By showcasing the lived experiences of trans women YouTubers, these videos can challenge the misconception and promote community building, acceptance and broader understanding of trans identities. Additionally, it is significant to address the facilities and welfare schemes provided by the central and state governments that support GAS. Chapter 5 of this thesis discusses, in detail, the lack of awareness surrounding these schemes and their impact on the trans women's community (See chapter 5). This lack of

awareness regarding GAS and rights often results in financial struggles, longer waiting periods for surgeries, and limited access to healthcare. In this context, trans women YouTubers can play a significant role in community development by using social media platforms to raise awareness about these beneficial schemes and legal rights, which are essential for their well-being and progressive livelihood.

3.7.3 Trans women's travel and food vlogs as socio-digital interventions

Another frequently occurring topic is 'Travel and food vlog' (11.78%). This video content often shows visits to relatives' homes, temples, historical sites, beauty parlours, as well as cooking vlogs, makeup product reviews, skincare routines and general lifestyle activities of trans women. These travel and food vlogs incorporate personal narratives. It explores the cultural nuances in the different locations, highlighting the vloggers' interactions, experiences, understanding of the customs and their reflections on cultural exchange.

For example,

- Eating At Maharashtrian Food Joint Malwani Maharashtvachi
- Mumma Ke saath phir se Shopping karli Shopping 🛒 Chandigarh | Arunachal Pradesh | BELLA DERA TAMIN
- యుద్ధం చేసి చికెన్ పలావ్ చేశాం || Transgender Sneha || Its Me Sneha (యుద్ధం చేసి చికెన్ పలావ్ చేశాం translates to We fought and made chicken pulao)

Such videos have a notable influence on consumer behaviour, as they provide authentic experiences, inspire travel, and promote specific products and destinations. They highlight not only the lifestyle of trans women but also enhance their digital visibility and promote empowerment.

Furthermore, trans women food vloggers visit street food vendors, markets, and local and well-known restaurants to share their experiences on favourite dishes and traditions. Their food and product reviews can build consumer trust and expand connections across different gender identities worldwide. This content thus becomes both personally empowering and socially transformative. Additionally, the representations can help shift public perceptions of trans women, moving away from stereotypes that associate them with sex work and begging. Including, by documenting travel experiences and daily life, these videos promote their feminine identity, offer representation for GNC and reclaim public spaces.

In line with Best's (2021) suggestion for research on trans women dancers, it is equally important to study the experiences of trans travellers in the Indian context. Key areas for the investigation include safety, homophobia and transphobia across different locations, visibility, cultural engagement, and understanding. Such research is crucial for identifying their challenges and struggles and for improving their overall quality of life.

3.7.4 Motivational content and rewriting of trans identity in digital spaces

The 'Motivational' topic (12.74%), which includes videos centred on gender identity, empowerment, and raising awareness of trans issues. While mainstream society often perpetuates negative portrayals and discrimination that frequently portray trans individuals in stigmatized roles such as sex workers, beggars and arrogant people. However, the videos in this category offer powerful counter-narratives through lived experiences, serving as educational and inspirational content (Househ et al., 2014; Ojomo and Sodeinde, 2021).

Many trans women and GNC individuals face alienation from their families, schools, and institutions within this space due to their identity (More, 2021; Srivastava, 2023; Badgett, 2014). These videos often function

as a form of community-based counselling and emotional support, creating healing spaces for trans women and others seeking guidance. They help trans and GNC viewers understand that they are not alone in their struggles. Such motivational content also contributes to reshaping public understanding of trans rights and identities, promoting empathy and encouraging societal change. These videos have a significant impact on breaking the cycle of trans invisibility in mainstream media, encouraging mental health resilience among those battling rejection, isolation, or trauma.

Additionally, documenting the voices and stories of trans women through these videos preserves a critical historical moment for future generations, while simultaneously inspiring others within the community. Sharing motivational content and raising awareness of trans issues can play a crucial role in reducing harmful stereotypes and promoting inclusivity.

For example,

- TRANS PublicationInauguration
- ARIKANDI FULL MOVIE - India's First Transgender Director Priyababu
- ట్రాఫిక్ వాలంటీర్లుగా ట్రాన్స్ జెండర్లు#transgendersneha #itsmesneha #shortvideo # యూరప్ లో మన తెలుగు ట్రాన్స్ జెండర్ మిస్ యూనివర్స్ రన్నర్ అప్ గా హనా రాథోడ్ || Its Me Sneha (Transgenders as traffic volunteers #transgendersneha #itsmesneha #shortvideo # Our Telugu transgender, Hana Rathod, as Miss Universe Runner-Up in Europe || Its Me Sneha)

3.7.5 Cultural identity formation in trans women's digital narratives

The final significant topic, Culture (8.6%), includes content related to festivals, literature, history, and the names of trans women in different languages, along with their meanings. These videos also incorporate awareness and motivational-based content, which has a deep, layered impact on both the trans community and the broader socio-cultural

consciousness. They serve not only as tools for identity formation, heritage reclamation but also as powerful forms of public education.

Videos that explore festivals, the historical background and the meaning of names serve to reclaim their presence in public and cultural spaces. They reassert trans identity within the context of Indian tradition and cultural roots. For example, the first chapter examines instances of verbal abuse as recounted in the autobiographies of trans women. Often labelled with terms like *hijra*, which are frequently used pejoratively in society, videos that explain the historical and cultural significance of these names help shift public perception from stigma to respect. This reclamation of language and history becomes an act of resistance, promoting a more progressive understanding of gender diversity. Highlighting cultural evidence such as precolonial trans gender identities, names, origin, and social roles serves as a source of empowerment. These narratives help cultivate respect and historical awareness, enabling trans women to envision and live more progressive lives. For instance,

- మా కోడలు కి ఓడి బియ్యం పోసాను#transgendersneha #respect #shortvideo #itsmesneha
- திருநங்கைகளின் அரவான் வழிபாடு | Aravan worship of transgender people | Tranz Media

These collectively produced socio-cultural topics by trans women YouTubers also contribute to the development of technical skills such as video editing, performance, and digital presentation. Continuous video production offers potential for sustainable economic support, while reshaping narratives about trans women in both social and digital spaces. Such vlogs offer a vital platform for self-expression, emotional support, and practical survival. Studies have documented the widespread marginalisation of trans women, including verbal, physical, and sexual abuse in public spaces. These digital interventions promote gender identity, challenge

binary norms and dominant structures, and contribute to the creation of more inclusive and accepting environments for trans and GNC individuals.

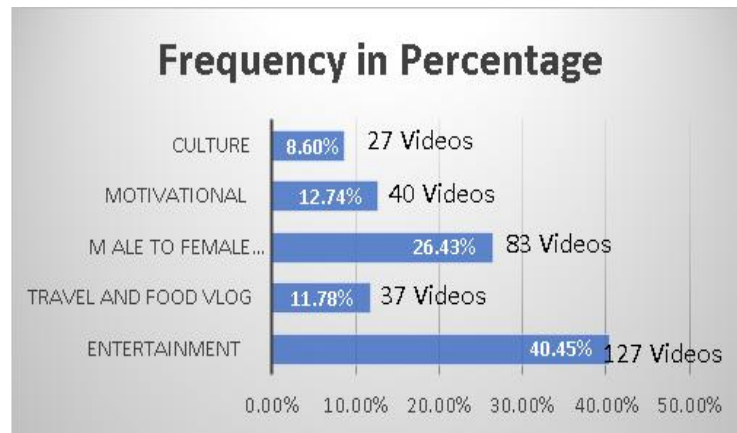


Figure 4: Shows the frequency distribution of video categories by trans women YouTubers

3.8 Trans autobiographies in the digital age

YouTube, in this context, functions as a form of digital autobiography for the trans women's community in India. The videos uploaded by trans women YouTubers narrate their personal stories and experiences. By using short or long videos, trans women can directly share their narrative with their audiences. It often involves self-representation and storytelling within the digital realm. This practice erases the line of traditional autobiography. These digital autobiographies require minimal resources, such as time, basic editing skills, and just a digital screen for viewing and sharing, which makes the audience more accessible. However, there is also the possibility of erasing, considering the author's personal choice or a technical issue. In contrast, autobiographies in literature reach only a limited audience as literate individuals with access to the text in a specific language. Digital media, however, transcends these limitations, allowing even illiterate or non-native speakers to engage with content through translation tools, voiceovers, or subtitles. Moreover, YouTube videos tend to focus on a topic, making them easier to grasp in a short span

of time, unlike texts, which may require more sustained reading. These progressive digital autobiographies challenge societal discrimination and misconceptions about the trans community. They promote acceptance, visibility, and understanding by presenting authentic, lived experiences in a direct and relatable way.

3.9 Views, likes, and algorithmic visibility in trans women's digital narratives

Table 1 provides a comparative overview of five categories of content created by trans women YouTubers, based on total views, likes, and their percentage out of a sample of 314 videos (See Table 1). The high frequency 'Entertainment' (40.45%) topic accounting for 70.76% of total views and 74.84% of likes, indicates that audience are primary engage with humor-based content on digital platforms. Such high engagement metrics suggests that algorithms lead to more visibility, and recommendations. In contrast, the second high frequency category, 'Male to Female Transformation' (26.43%) gathers only 11.66% of views and 2.58% of likes, highlighting a notable gap between visibility and appreciation. It is significant to use progressive videos like these to train algorithms to reach a broader audience and promote visibility. With continuously low likes, algorithms might not recommend the videos to a wide audience, increasing the possibility that progressive videos get ignored. The 'Motivational' (12.74%) and 'Travel and Food vlog' (11.78%) categories show more balanced engagement, with views and likes in proportion. The 'Motivational' topic has 7.79% views and 9.74% likes, while the 'Travel and Food vlog' topic has 7.12% views and 7.71% likes, indicating audience interest and support. Interestingly, the 'Cultural' (8.60%) topics views 2.48% and likes 5.13% suggest it is appreciated by online users. Such social, motivational, and educational videos promote algorithmic visibility. However, the algorithms decide recommendations not only based on likes and views but also on click-through rate, watch time, comments, shares,

content, and titles. Overall, the data highlights not only the audience engagement but also their preferences, particularly with regard to trans women representation in online spaces.

| Category | Views | Likes | Views (%) of 314 | Likes (%) of 314 |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|------------------|------------------|
| Entertainment | 8,633,342 | 339,446 | 70.76% | 74.84% |
| Travel and Food vlog | 868,385 | 34,947 | 7.12% | 7.71 |
| Male to Female Transformation | 1422067 | 11,672 | 11.66% | 2.58% |
| Motivational | 971, 038 | 44,144 | 7.96% | 9.74% |
| Cultural | 302, 632 | 23,238 | 2.48% | 5.13% |

Table 1: Shows the likes and views across video categories by trans women YouTubers

3.10 Trans women’s experience on YouTube

The study included interviews with a few trans women and non-government organizations to examine the opinions of trans women on social media. There are many visual discriminations on YouTube as most of the videos describe trans women as pejorative. One activist of Transgender Welfare Organization, Salem, Saranya, points out that social media overlooks the visualization of two-sided conversations. She says painfully, “whenever any fight erupts between trans women and people, as dominant, people become very angry, making fun of trans women and beating trans women. Generally, for defence, trans women have to argue with them and become a little aggressive to escape from beating but social media is showing only trans women are so aggressive”. In social media, trans women have positive approaches and support but trans activist Priya Babu and Jeeva remarked, “some people or the same person are not abusing in the public platforms or on comment section because have fear of their reputation”.

To corroborate the argument, the study also included a few more interviews, trans women who are all activists working in NGOs, scholars and writers to understand their experience employing social media for their various activities and community development. Based on the interviews, the study found that trans women's experiences on social media and in society are similar, even when they hold respectable positions. Not only in society but also in the social platform they are facing deprecation because of continued pejorative representation. The topics of Violence and Non-stable jobs have proved with their experiences how people always aim to find some means to their identity to abuse. Jeeva is a trans activist, Founder & Director of managing trustee of Transgender Rights Association, Chennai. She says on social media platforms, trans women have been getting accuses innumerable times by unknown persons and their message are too accursed in a "comment box", for instance, when an unknown person sends messages as 'hi, you are so beautiful, you are like a woman, why you are not sending me a message, I am respecting trans women, send your phone number...' When trans women reply to him, he is making a call even dead of night, asking do you have any service? I said what kind of service. To stop their words and avoid all the abuse, I used to say this court counselling section, whatever you speak it will be recorded. Then they will stop. Priya babu continues excruciatingly, 'no rights have been written for transgenders properly'. Living Smile Vidya says in her interview that, "the government should remove illegal/unlawful discrimination against trans women on social media" (Thisai, 2015, 1:20). Sudha and Priya Babu also agree with Living Smile Vidya's opinion that, in communication technologies, people should not use identity, sexual, verbal, emotional and economic abuses on social media. It is hard to understand most of the harassment against trans people on social media without an apparent reason, cause, or justification. Mahalaxmi says, "Gender non-conforming children and adults are in danger during their teenage years. They are devalued, misunderstood, and isolated by social media's misrepresentation".

3.11 How to improve YouTube for the trans women's community?

A continuous inimical representation of trans women, people believe trans women are aggressive beggars, violent sex workers, criminals, etc., whatever they see in digital culture. In digital culture, there are a few negative videos. However, YouTuber content creators overlooked updating medical transition, financial support, and education for the trans women's community on YouTube. It is a great platform to learn and solve issues and doubts speedily in many distinct ways. YouTube can be harnessed to improve and meet the needs of the trans community in terms of financial support, medical help, and education. Kusumawardani and Trijayanto note that Sweden, a Western country, creates a supportive environment for the LGBT community. In her words,

Sweden is become one of the most highly tolerate countries related to transpeople (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) rights. In Sweden, transpeople can live in harmony with other citizen, and they even has the same rights to afford the same facilities such as education, financial support, housing, public restroom, and so on (2020, 72).

Similar to Sweden, countries such as India must improve and enhance the quality life of trans community, who often live in pitiable and mundane conditions. In this case, social media can be a great platform to learn and solve issues and doubts of trans community expeditiously in many distinct ways. YouTube, in particular, can be harnessed to improve access to critical information and resources for the trans community, such as financial assistance, medical care, and educational opportunities. YouTubers can post video content to help the trans women community and develop financially, such as providing guidance on obtaining loans to start a business, including details on types of loans, and interviewing individuals who have obtained loans and how it changed their lives. These videos would be incredibly beneficial for the community. Additionally, YouTubers can

update about the available scholarships and their requirements for trans students in India, as well as highlight gaps in the system. There are only a few videos that address medical transition for trans individuals in India, videos about medical transition are essential, and it should cover various aspects like estrogenic hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgery, voice feminizing therapy and surgery, their cost, risks, and available locations. The absence of YouTube videos addressing these concerns for trans women in India implies that digital culture has not been fully leveraged to promote the welfare and empowerment of minority communities.

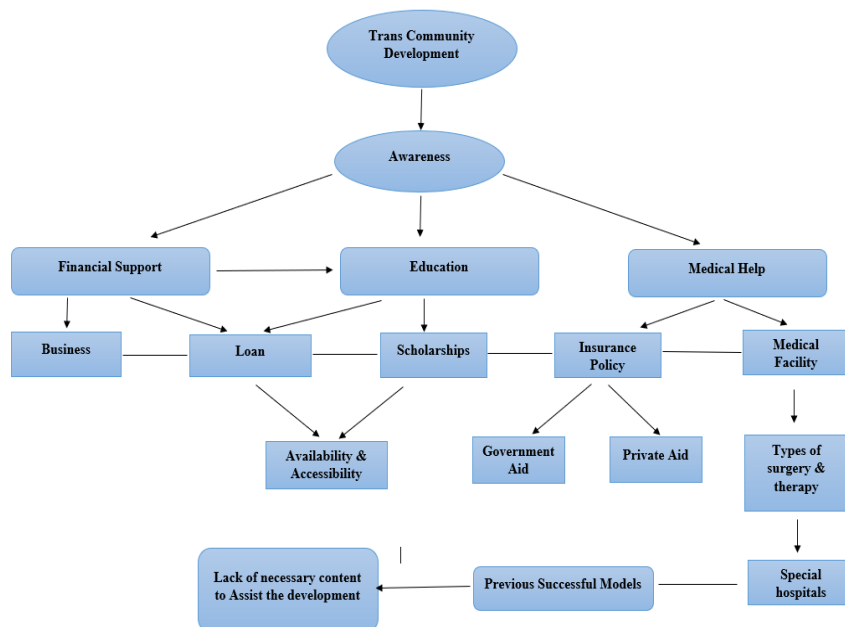


Figure 5: A model for the development of the trans women's community through YouTube

3.12 Conclusion

Overall, this chapter reveals that YouTube serves as both a platform for empowerment and a space of marginalization for the trans women's community, through the content of individual YouTubers and trans women YouTubers. while many videos support community building, representation, identity, culture, and awareness, others spread harmful

stereotypes. In light of this, digital culture should ensure that social media is used as a potential tool for the development of the trans women's community.

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Chapter 4

Digital Archives and Amplified Voices: Trans Women's Creative Outputs on YouTube as Indian Trans Women's Electronic Literature

4.1 Introduction

In India, writers and artists actively create, distribute, and engage with electronic literature (e-lit) through innovative projects that blend with digital technologies and tools (Prickett, 2015; Lost Water! Remainscape?, 2021; Meghadutam, 2019; Leaning Haiku, 2020; Blackout Poetry Tool, 2020). These projects express diverse narratives, explore new forms of storytelling, and address various social issues (see Shanmugapriya & Sutton, 2022; Mukherjee, 2017; Roy, 2025; Joseph & Menon, 2022; Roy, n.d.). Scholarships (Joseph & Menon, 2022; Mukherjee, 2017) highlight the existing categorization of Indian e-lit and its critique absence from the national literary and cultural scene. Even as mediums like video games, online poetry, and digital journals gain prominence, scholars and institutions largely overlook electronic literature. Expanding on this, Roy (2025) examines the status of e-lit in India and emphasizes its marginalization within English literary studies and institutional spaces like Sahitya Akademi. While Indian e-lit can provide crucial support for marginalised communities by creating a platform for self-representation, community building, visibility, and encouraging creative expression as a means of empowerment and resistance, the limitations in existing Indian LGBTIQ+ e-lit scholarships and genre classifications restrict their impact. These gaps create barriers to accessibility, recognition, and academic legitimacy, limiting opportunities for a broader and more diverse group of writers, scholars, and readers. The lack of institutional support, limited archiving efforts, and minimal integration into mainstream literary and cultural discourse further hinder the expansion and visibility of Indian e-lit.

The creative outputs of trans women-related videos on YouTube were not identified during the data collection process of the 3rd chapter. Instead, they reflected later through the additional information like poems, songs, and animated videos. Moreover, to the best of the authors' knowledge, scholars have hardly explored the intersection between marginalised communities, Indian LGBTIQ+ individuals, and electronic literature in India. Considering the specific gap, the study explores Indian trans women's digital literary works in this chapter. We find numerous creative LGBTIQ+ works in Western e-lit, such as Judd Morrissey & ATOM-r's *Kjell Theory* (2022), Edmond Y.Chang's *Why are the Digital Humanities So straight?* (2021), Meredith Morran's *The Buoy* (2019), etc. This Western e-lit works combines computational processes, code, visuals, user participation, interactive media, and literary expression, employing participatory methods that challenge traditional print literary forms. Writers in India actively publish a growing body of creative works on trans women, reflecting diverse narratives (Subramaniam, 2018; Padmashali, 2025; Trans woman Kalki Subramaniam, 2013; Kahaniya, 2023). However, instead of directly mirroring the e-lit models of developed countries, it is essential to recognise and develop approaches that align with India's unique cultural and literary landscape. As Mukherjee (2017) highlights, “[n]on-linear traditions of storytelling and poetry have existed in India since ancient times and in a variety of forms ranging from the stories in the *Katha* traditions to the Urdu *dastangoi* plays” (n.p). Building on these traditions, literary forms continue to evolve in the contemporary digital environment, where many creators utilise social platforms to showcase their creative work (Shanmugapriya & Menon, 2018; Roy, 2023). This evolution highlights the unique character of Indian e-lit and the significance of the approach to this study.

Similarly, trans women/individuals in India utilize the YouTube platform to share their creative works, narratives and experiences. For example, ‘ஒங்கிக் கை தட்டுக திருநங்கையே! - தமிழ்க்கவிதை படம் (Clap Louder Thirunangai!)’, which translates to ‘Clap Louder trans women!-

Tamil poem film' (Subramaniam, 2018), available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNuG8-B1w4Y&t=77s>) and 'FEMININE Transgender Album Song||Journey of Akkai Padmashali||Voice of Transgender Community||' (Padmashali, 2025), which can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGNFIFwCbxE>, etc. exemplify such works. These digital literary contributions establish their place within both Indian literary traditions and global discourse, promoting greater understanding and respect for trans experiences. Indian creative writers produce digital literature that explores themes of identity, culture, and lived experiences within Indian contexts. They use digital mediums such as blogs, websites, social media platforms, and interactive storytelling to convey narratives that challenge Indian normative structures of print writing (Subramaniam, 2018; Padmashali, 2025; Trans woman Kalki Subramaniam, 2013; Kahaniya, 2023). Additionally, recognizing YouTube videos as a form of e-lit expands the scope of digital humanities, challenges rigid literary classifications, and validates diverse, multimodal, and culturally significant storytelling forms. This shift is especially crucial in studying the digital narratives of trans communities, whose voices remain historically marginalised in mainstream literary spaces. However, platform policies, author-driven deletions, or algorithmic suppression can remove these videos, erasing trans women's lived experiences, resistance, and cultural identity. Considering this, researcher archive the metadata of trans women related videos using the Omeka tool.

This chapter examines the intersection of trans women's creative works and Indian trans women's electronic literature through four central sections. First, it examines whether trans women related creative outputs on YouTube can be classified as electronic literature. Moreover, the study identifies the defining characteristics that support this classification by examining their multimodal nature, interactivity, and narrative structures. Second, considering the scarcity of trans women electronic literature in

India, researcher archive the metadata of trans women related creative outputs using the Omeka tool for dissemination and scholarly research. This process serves as a crucial step toward bridging the gap between digital storytelling and scholarly research, recognizing these narratives as valuable cultural and literary artefacts. Third, the study investigates how documenting trans women's narratives within the framework of Indian trans women electronic literature contributes to scholarly research and societal awareness. Finally, the study discusses the ways to enhance Indian trans women's contributions to electronic literature, along with the challenges such as financial barriers, limited technical access, and inadequate institutional support while recommending solutions like workshops, digital platforms, and collaborative networks to strengthen their participation in e-lit. This chapter expands the genre of electronic literature in India to amplify the marginalised voices, particularly trans women, and encourage societal transformation. Furthermore, by situating digital narratives, the chapter underscores the importance of recognising trans women's creative expressions.

4.2 YouTube literature on Indian trans women as trans women e-lit

Esko Lius (2003) presupposes a few criteria for classifying works as digital literature: digital delivery and consumption, verbal language as a meaning carrier, and aesthetic focus. Similarly, Raine Koskimaa (2000) identifies four categories of digital literature: digitisation of the print version, digital publication of the original texts, literature using new technologies, and networked literature. Continuing this, the Electronic Literature Organisation (ELO) defines e-lit as “works with important literary aspects that take advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or network computer” (2015). Moreover, the Electronic Literature Collection Volume 4 highlights that the “definition of elite is incomplete and evolving. Eliterature authors creatively adopt new

technologies whenever available, eluding contemporaneous definitions” (2022).

Joseph & Menon (2022) claim, “[e]lectronic literature in India often falls into the first two points of Koskimaa’s categorization”. However, Indian trans women/individuals create YouTube content that meets Lius and Koskimaa’s criteria for electronic literature. Mukherjee argues that e-lit is not mostly “born digital but are digital version of the text” (2017, para. 9). Nevertheless, YouTube functions as an inherently open-access creative platform, where creators produce and establish content in electronic format. As Mukherjee highlights, the study identify two types of creative work on YouTube: Print-to-digital adaptations with an aesthetic focus and born-digital works with an intrinsic aesthetic emphasis. For example, in 2015, Kalki Subramaniam published ‘விதியை எழுதினேன்.. - கவிதை: திருநங்கை கல்கி’ (Fate, I wrote.. -poem: Trans Women Kalki) on a blog (Trans woman Kalki Subramaniam, 2013). Readers may access the poem link through the following link: https://sahodari.blogspot.com/2013/04/blog-post_83.html. Initially, it resembled a print-format Tamil poem and in 2018, it evolved into digital poetry as ‘விதியை எழுதினேன் - திருநங்கை தமிழ்க்கவிதை படம் - கல்கி சுப்ரமணியம்’, Fate, I wrote- Trans Women Tamil Poetry Film- Kalki Subramaniam), presented in Tamil and subtitled in English (see Figure 6). The video (Subramaniam, 2018) link can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqhY8al7HiM>.

Kalki Subramaniam’s moving digital narrative poem “*Fate, I Wrote*” highlights self-determination, resilience, and defiance against societal norms, combining self-expression with interactivity (Subramaniam, 2018). The dynamic interplay between text and audiovisual enhances poetic expression, creating a multimodal literary experience. The symbolic visual structure reinforces the themes of rebirth, self-creation, and transformations. An overhead shot of Kalki Subramaniam in a circular red skirt resembles a blooming flower, centralizing her presence and

highlighting her struggles while emphasising resilience within the broader social landscape. Additionally, it demonstrated how poetry in electronic spaces serves as both personal liberation and collective empowerment, allowing trans women’s marginalized voices to shape their own stories beyond societal constraints (see Figure 6).



Figure 6: Screenshot from the YouTube video “Fate, I wrote- Trans Women Tamil Poetry Film- Kalki Subramaniam”

The born-digital creative work, such as the animated story on YouTube titled “किन्नर माँ का प्यार - Hindi Kahaniya - Cartoon - Kinner Bani Maa -हिंदीकहानी - Hindi Moral stories” (Trans Mother’s Love – Hindi Stories – Cartoon – Kinner Became a Mother – Hindi Story – Hindi Moral Stories) originates as a digital production (see Figure 7). The video can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1SBKrX7h58&t=15s>. This moving Hindi animated story explores gender identity, education, economic marginalization, and everyday struggles by combining visual storytelling, text, and digital aesthetics (Kahaniya, 2023).



Figure 7: Screenshot from the YouTube video “किन्नर माँ का प्यार - Hindi Kahaniya - Cartoon - Kiner Bani Maa - हिंदी कहानी - Hindi Moral stories”

Additionally, another the born-digital work such as a song featuring human characters with background visual effects on YouTube titled “FEMININE Transgender Album Song||Journey of Akkai Padmashali||Voice of Transgender Community||” originated as a digital production (see Figure 8). The video can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGNFIFwCbxE>. This visual and musical narrative explores gender identity, marginalization, harassment, and everyday struggles by combining text with digital aesthetics. Such creative videos reveal Akkai Padmashali’s poetic vocal talent, which reshapes societal norms and advocates for trans women’s community-building. Such born-digital works exist, spread, and circulate digitally, challenging conventional literary structures and creating space for trans storytelling. As a form of e-lit, it integrates text, sound, and digital presence to amplify marginalized voices, providing alternative modes of storytelling beyond print traditions. These narratives align with the broader domain of e-lit due to their digital nature, storytelling, poetic narrative artistry, human and machine-mediated characteristics. They also hold immense potential for adaptation into interactive fiction, multimedia narratives, and digital humanities research, especially in the context of marginalized storytelling.

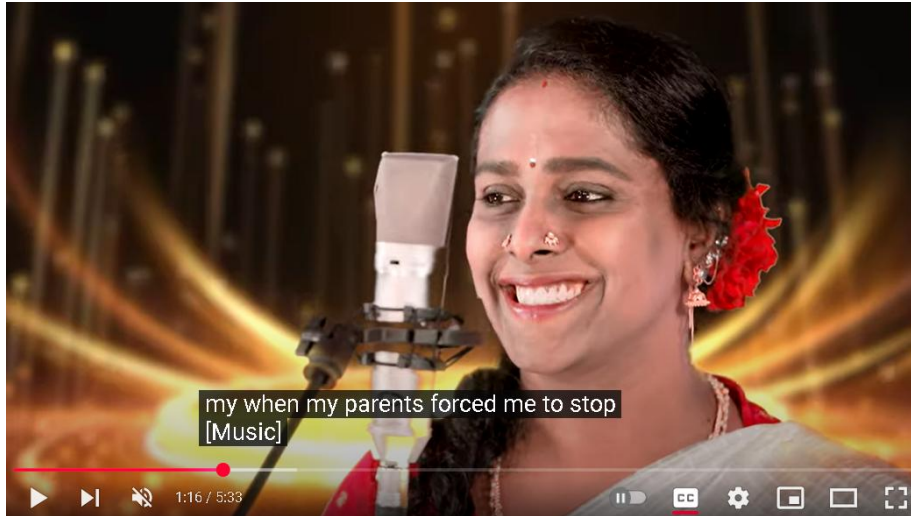


Figure 8: Screenshot from the YouTube video FEMININE Transgender Album Song||Journey of Akkai Padmashali||Voice of Transgender Community||

These print-to-digital and born-digital works demonstrate digital delivery and consumption, the use of verbal language as a carrier of meaning, maintaining an aesthetic focus, and the incorporation of new technologies and networked literature. Additionally, viewers actively engage through views, comments, likes, and dislikes, reinforcing these works as electronic literature. Furthermore, these works reject traditional, non-digital formats. While users can print the scripts or transcripts of trans women related videos, this process removes essential elements like narrative flow, music, moving images, and interactive features. The platform also allows user interaction, such as pausing, rewinding, fast-forwarding, liking, disliking, viewing statistics, and commenting, which enhance the user's engagement with the content. Indian trans women/individuals and other marginalised genders increasingly utilise digital platforms like YouTube to showcase their creative works, including poems, stories, oral songs, creative performances, etc. It is an accessible platform where individuals with minimal technical knowledge can easily produce and share videos for community networks.

Can we consider YouTube as a medium for trans women's electronic literature? In the pre-digital era, individuals primarily learn about the trans women community through print materials, in-person interaction, or word of mouth. However, print-based dissemination of information takes significant time to reach a wide audience. While the digital medium presents challenges, such as spreading misinformation (YouTube is major conduit of fake news, factcheckers say, 2022), it quickly reaches a larger audience, making it an invaluable tool for community development and creative expression (Kim, 2012).

Despite the opportunities that social media platforms offer, Indian society largely ignores the creative contributions of trans women/individuals. To the best of the authors' knowledge, substantial research or notable awards rarely acknowledge their creative works. A few trans women (A. Revathi, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, Living Smile Vidya, Kalki Subramaniam, Vijayarajamallika, Chandini Gagana, Akkai Padmashali, etc.) emerge as poets and novelists, gradually gaining visibility through print-based publications and receiving recognition in public media platforms. Nonetheless, individuals prefer platforms like YouTube due to its accessibility, ability to reach a broad audience easily, and the potential for direct interaction with user participants, as well as the added advantages of generating income. Joseph & Menon (2022) confirm that Indian e-lit exists in the form of social media writing. Building on this argument, trans women's related creative outputs on YouTube, recognizing it as a growing medium of Indian electronic literature, can help the trans women community gain recognition and awareness while paving the way for significant cultural, economic, and personal empowerment, as well as broader community building.

4.3 Archiving metadata of Indian Trans Women's Creative Works

The researcher acknowledged that she positioned herself as a researcher outside the trans women's community. However, she approached

this work as an ally committed to amplifying their voices. With this positionality in mind and considering the scarcity of trans women's electronic literature in India, we archive the metadata of trans women-related creative outputs using the Omeka tool for dissemination and scholarly research. Considering the scarcity of trans women's electronic literature in India, the research archives the metadata of trans women-related creative outputs using the Omeka tool for dissemination and scholarly research. It is a crucial step toward bridging the gap between digital storytelling and recognizing these narratives as valuable cultural and literary artefacts. Similar to the 3 chapter, the study manually collected unorganized creative documentation links related to Indian trans women from the YouTube platform using various key terms such as 'Trans women,' 'Transgender,' '*Kinner*,' '*Hijra*,' '*Thirunangai*,' '*Napumsak*,' '*Mumbal*', etc., poems, songs, stories, and animated videos in multilingual such as Tamil, English, Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, etc. and using various states and regions such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bihar, Punjab, Gujarat, Goa, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand, etc. The study chose these specific key terms, languages, and regions because they reflect diverse cultural, linguistic, and social identities associated with trans women in India. The study applies the traditional above-mentioned keywords that predominantly address trans women in Indian states. In addition, the study recognise that the poems, songs, and animated stories were chosen to archive and to consider Indian trans women electronic literature because they offer diverse linguistic background, personal experiences of trans women, cultural impact which can spread widely with all age group of people to be referenced by trans women and individuals. The researcher randomly sourced these videos from YouTube without specifically focusing on trans women or individuals who create or upload them to ensure a diverse range of topics. Furthermore, the study does not establish a specific timeline for collecting additional video content. Nevertheless, the research finds videos from the period between 2012 and 2025.

Additionally, similar to Chapter 3, the study employs the umbrella term ‘transgender’ as a key term to scrape trans women-related videos on YouTube. The term, functioning as an umbrella, encompasses various gender identities, such as LGBTQ+, with widespread recognition both globally and on the YouTube platform. Throughout the process, the researcher remains meticulous in selecting videos explicitly related to Indian trans women, as the initial scraping using the term yields content on various gender identities, including trans men, lesbians, among others. This consideration is crucial in maintaining methodological consistency in our research.

During the collection process, the researcher manually extracted 27 poems, 3 songs, and 28 animated stories in multiple languages. For metadata collection, researcher use SEO Studioⁱ to scrape thumbnails and video titles. However, the titles often lack sufficient detail or remain incomplete, making scholarly research, understanding and interpretation challenging. To address this, the study extracts the audio, transcribes it into the original language using Google Recorder, and then translates it using Google Translate to identify the content of the video. Since the video exists on YouTube and may face copyright issues, and its title does not provide enough information, the study uses it for descriptive purposes to convey the necessary details. To ensure accuracy, the researcher consulted with five language experts, each proficient in more than three languages, including their respective mother tongues. It also uses Pictory. Aiⁱⁱ to better understand the content. Moreover, the study utilize an artificial intelligence image-generation tool like Ninja.aiⁱⁱⁱ to create a logo for the Indian trans women’s e-lit metadata archive. To enter the details into the Omeka platform and avoid copyright issues, researcher upload the default Dublin Core metadata, including title, subject, description, creator, source, publisher, date, contributor, rights, relation, format, language, type, and identifier. While the platform includes metadata and links to creative works, it lacks the original versions of these works, which embody key elements of

electronic literature such as aesthetic expression, verbal interaction, and user participation.

This process transforms the collected content into a well-structured digital metadata archive that captures the unique storytelling, diverse genres, and varied expressions of identity and experiences among trans women. The study refers to this archive as the “Indian Trans Women Electronic Literature Metadata Archive” to highlight its focus on preserving and organising literary and digital narratives created by and about trans women in India (see Figure 9). The archive can be accessed at the following link: <https://5593.omeka.net/>. Investigator systematically preserve it using the content management tool Omeka. To the author's knowledge, this serves as the first metadata archive in India that specifically scrapes data from YouTube to document trans women’s electronic literature. Furthermore, the archive functions as a model for developing similar digital resources for other marginalized communities, advancing inclusivity in digital humanities. By enabling collaborations among scholars, technologists, activists, creative writers, and the trans women community, it contributes to creating inclusive digital spaces and ensures that trans women’s voices remain preserved for future generations.

Significant differences exist between the creative outputs on YouTube and their transformation into an archive with metadata. Creators on YouTube produce videos for diverse purposes, such as self-representation, storytelling, activism, education, and entertainment. Although this platform preserves and organizes content through user-defined tags, playlists, and algorithmic-driven recommendations, those contents remain scattered and inconsistent and lack a cohesive framework. In contrast, an archive focuses on systematic documentation and long-term conservation to prevent content from being lost and maintain its accessibility. Metadata adds structure by providing detailed, standardized descriptions, making the content more accessible. This structured approach

ensures systematic curation and organization, allowing scholars, educators, activists, non-government organisations, trans individual communities and the public to search, interpret, analyze, and reuse the content effectively.



Figure 9: Screenshot of the Indian Trans Women Electronic Literature Archive.

4.4 Trans women's creative narratives and metadata archive contribute to scholarly research and raise societal awareness

Creative narratives and archives offer researchers primary sources to study trans women lived experiences and fill gaps in Indian literary and cultural studies. They also ensure that their stories and struggles reach the audience, encourage empathy and understanding and counteract stereotypes, misconceptions, and academic discussions by portraying the diversity of trans women's experiences, talents, and resilience. These narratives and metadata archive preserve and recognize the voices of trans women as a vital part of India's literary and cultural heritage. Additionally, research scholars from literature, gender studies, sociology, history, digital humanities and the public, use these resources as educational tool to learn about trans women's stories, struggles, contributions, gender diversity, social justice, and human rights. This source of pride and inspiration motivates other trans women/ individuals to share their creative works to strengthening their representations and encouraging mutual respect between

transgender and other genders in Indian society. Moreover, these creative narratives and metadata archive serve as living documentation of changing social attitudes toward trans communities by capturing evolving representations, understanding cultural shifts, tracing public discourse, etc. It also analyzes the challenges of traditional and patriarchal representations and examines intersections of gender, regions, language and cross-cultural perspectives on gender and identity within these narratives in Indian society. By archiving trans women's creative outputs and recognizing their work as Indian trans women's electronic literature, this effort ensures their voices remain visible in cultural and social discourse, preventing their erasure.

Similarly, Jeff Garvin's *Symptoms of Being Human* (2016), a digital queer writer, explores the potential of digitization and online communications as essential tools for addressing contemporary issues in digital literary and cultural criticism. He views digital spaces and literature as powerful mediums that highlight pressing concerns such as gender injustices, inequality, and discrimination in today's culture, literature, and society. In addition to, the e-lit platform, *We are Angry* (Prickett, 2015), discusses the brutality of rape, bolstering its narratives with real reports, statistics, and editorials in digital storytelling. By engaging with art, technologies, and narratives, digital literature amplifies awareness, inspires action, and reimagines societal engagement with pressing challenges. It underscores that Indian e-lit serves not only as a medium of artistic exploration but also as a tool for addressing socio-political concerns. Continuing this discussion, the ELO 2023 conference "Overcoming Divides: Electronic Literature and Social Change" discusses these themes broadly. In response, the investigator created an electronic literature archive for marginalised communities like trans women to raise societal awareness. By creating and sharing this archive, this research enhances awareness in schools, colleges, among scholars, and within the general public through a syllabus and workshops. Moreover, it ensures easy dissemination. By

situating Indian e-lit alongside trans women's creative outputs, research scholars advocate for a more inclusive, collaborative, and innovative literary practice that resonates locally and globally. This greater awareness can encourage allies to support trans rights and inclusion actively.

4.5 Enhancing Indian trans women's presence in e-lit along with their challenges and opportunities

Apart from recognizing, categorizing, and archiving Indian trans women's e-lit, it is crucial to amplify their digital creative narratives. At the International Conference on Digital Humanities and AI: Intersections, Innovations, and Implications (Indian Institute of Technology Dhanbad, 2025), the Indian e-lit roundtable discussions with Shanmugapriya, Samya Brata Roy, Bhavani Singh, and other research scholars offer valuable insights. Shanmugapriya emphasises a crucial point: increasing the contributions of creative writers in Indian e-lit is significant. As she highlights, it also applies to the contributions of trans women creative writers in Indian e-lit. This discussion raises key concerns: the study cannot expect all trans individual creative writers to learn the software or applications needed to produce e-lit works. Additionally, hiring software technicians requires financial support that the trans community cannot afford, given the current poor economic challenges (Pandya & Redcay, 2020; Mundi, 202). Roy points out in the roundtable that India lacks sufficient funding for electronic literature. In light of this, it becomes clear that the Indian government and academic funding agencies do not provide dedicated scholarships or grants to support research scholars and trans individual creators in learning technical skills or tools of e-lit. However, it remains essential to enhance the creative and scholarly contributions of Indian trans women, to support Indian-based fellowships for their work, and to encourage the development of software and minimal computing-based e-lit tools that preserve and promote their narratives. So, what can we do to develop Indian trans women's electronic literature and engage trans women creative writers?

- Introducing Indian trans women's electronic literature, along with its significance and impact on the trans women's community, is essential.
- Academic institutions and transgender non-government organizations can serve as a medium for disseminating trans women's electronic literature and encouraging collective contributions to the field.
- Conducting free workshops and training programmes focused on digital storytelling, e-lit creation software, and minimal computing can empower trans women creative writers to contribute to the field of electronic literature.
- Additionally, creating a network of trans individual writers, mentors, digital artists, and scholars in the Indian e-lit space, encouraging dialogue and exchange of ideas, can support and encourage innovative collaboration among trans women writers.
- Developing digital platforms to publicize transgender and LGBTQ+ e-lit writings and sharing ideas can help encourage more participation. It can also help elevate their voices and provide visibility within the Indian e-lit community.
- Ensuring transparency in workshops and other platforms, such as developed countries fellowships (For example, ELO fellowships, National Endowment for the Humanities, etc.) for Indian research scholars and LGBTQ+ individuals is necessary for learning e-lit-based technologies and enhancing both trans women creative writers contributions and scholars' research work.

These points also raise the question of whether marginalized communities, such as Indian trans women, can receive the fellowship for learning electronic literature-based techniques from other countries, organizations, and institutions. Hardly anyone from this community gains recognition as a digital humanities or electronic literature scholar, and many have limited educational backgrounds (Das, 2019; More, 2021; Pandya & Redcay,

2020). We all agree that formal education is not always essential for creative work. Considering this, India and developed countries can implement more flexible funding schemes and relax their criteria when selecting fellowship awardees from the Indian trans women and LGBTQ+ community to increase creative productions. Even if research scholars collaborate with the trans women community to produce Indian trans women's e-lit works, leading to great visibility and social support, will they receive immediate financial support for their knowledge production, time, and labour? Will this financial backing motivate them to contribute more actively to Indian trans women's e-lit? Right now, the researcher does not have clear answers to these questions. Platforms like YouTube function as spaces for knowledge sharing and potential financial support. Research scholars and individuals interested in Indian trans women's e-lit can generate some financial compensation through YouTube, depending on increasing views, likes, and subscriptions. This revenue is not immediate, which may lead to frustration and potentially demotivate trans women creative writers. At the 2024 Electronic Literature Organization and Media Arts Festival conference, Shanmugapriya notes that while Indian artists engage in and sell computer art, intermedia art, and new media art, a significant absence remains in the realm of electronic literature (A Glimpse into Past And Present Challenges: Indian Electronic Literature, 2024). However, since India lacks electronic literature publication platforms, trans women creative writers can establish their own websites to showcase and publicize their work. Such platforms not only grant them authorship and visibility but also provide financial support, allowing the readers to access their creative works while directly supporting the authors. There is also a key difference between creating a website and using social media platforms to publish trans women's creative works, which allows complete creative control, enabling writers to design and present their work without external restrictions.

Notes

ⁱ SEO Studio tool provides over 170 free tools for SEO experts,

Youtubers, webmasters, students, and writers. visit:

<https://seostudio.tools/>

ⁱⁱ Pictory. ai is an AI-powered video creation platform that transforms text, images, links, and presentations into video format. Visit:

<https://pictory.ai/?el=2000b&htrafficsource=pictoryblog>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ninja AI offers tools for research, writing, coding, image generation, and file analysis, allowing users to work more efficiently and

productively. Visit: <https://myninja.ai/>

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Chapter 5

Migration and Healthcare Challenges: The Lived Experiences of Indian Trans Women and the Utilization of Government Schemes

I think that as every society is evolving, even mine should evolve with education, work, respect, and access to technology. We are a sexual minority that is visible, and yet we are treated as the invisibles. I believe I was never invisible. I thought, “I’m the face in the crowd, Not the crowd.

—Laxmi Narayan Tripathi

5.1 Introduction

The pervasive social and institutional stigma against transgender communities promotes violence, social isolation, legal challenges, stereotypes, social prejudices, and lack of opportunities. These forms of discrimination are particularly pronounced in key areas such as employment, healthcare, education, and migration (Hughto et al., 2015; Bhattacharya & Ghosh, 2010; Cerezo et al., 2010; Rosati et al., 2021; Nataraj, 2022; Acharya et al., 2023; Raza & Karthikeyan (n.d)). Within healthcare and migration, trans women face specific challenges and limitations due to systemic barriers within the system, which include a lack of facilities, understanding, and physicians for treating trans patients (Gupta et al., 2016; Poteat et al., 2013; Bhattacharya & Gosh, 2010). A lack of understanding of trans identity leads to marginalisation by society and families, resulting in poor-quality education and limited employment opportunities. Therefore, many trans women migrate to areas within and outside India where they can find greater acceptance, financial stability, and healthcare recognition (Padilla et al., 2016). This chapter focuses on India

because most trans women are from poor financial backgrounds and tend to migrate within the country.

Furthermore, the 2nd and 3rd chapters reflect trans women's struggles and experiences related to migration, healthcare, education, financial challenges, and gender transitions. This chapter analyzes the lived experiences of contemporary South Indian trans women to examine the impact and utilization of the state and central government schemes related to healthcare and migration within the trans women's community. Trans individuals' challenges may vary from location to location upon migration. However, it is crucial to examine the current status of trans women, as significant recent healthcare and migration advancements have been granted. Consequently, this chapter surveyed and interviewed stigma, and government beneficial schemes. The choice to focus on trans women's migration destinations underscores the necessity of comprehensively understanding the contextual factors shaping their experiences and trajectories.

A supportive environment for trans women can be achieved through better education, training of healthcare professionals, legal reforms, insights and developments in various sectors. Over the past fifteen years, India's multifaceted diversity, traditions, deep-rooted values, social customs, and regional practices have shaped the development of trans women's healthcare, and migration leading to improved facilities with greater understanding. Healthcare and migration beneficial schemes are available for trans women through both central and state governments. In urban cities like Madurai, Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and so on, government and private hospitals are also beginning to expand their services. The study defines healthcare and migration as individuals moving from one geographical location to another region or country, primarily to seek specialized or more accessible healthcare services. The migration motive can be the non-availability of healthcare, cost difference, quality of care, or

legal, social or cultural barriers to prevent individuals from accessing appropriate care in their place of origin.

The chapter structures its content into six sections. The first section delves into an introduction and a comprehensive review of the existing literature on identity, marginalization, violence, education, economic support, migration and healthcare aspects concerning trans women in both Western and Indian contexts. Subsequently, the second section delineates the methodology employed in the study, encompassing a qualitative and quantitative analysis of surveys and interviews conducted among trans women in India, elucidation of the study's contextual framework, and the dissemination of gathered data through digital humanities. The third section critically examines the narratives surrounding migration, healthcare, economic, educational challenges, experiences and insights gathered from surveys and interviews conducted among trans women. The fourth section elaborates on disseminating collected data through digital humanities, concerning available healthcare amenities in governmental and private healthcare facilities, emphasizing the essential nature of dissemination in promoting awareness regarding existing medical provisions, notably in the Madurai and Chennai region. The last section presents the conclusion of this chapter.

Studies such as Cerezo et al. (2010), Padilla et al. (2016), Fontenot et al. (2020), etc. (See also Rosati et al. (2021), Eiseler et al. (2023), Safer (2017), and McCauley (2018)) highlight the migration experiences and challenges of transgender individuals, the need for adequate access of gender-affirming resources and services, the importance of developing policy, education, mental health, and social acceptance to transform the lives of trans communities across different parts of the world. In the Indian context, while trans women have a long cultural history, their community remains historically marginalized, facing profound challenges in migration, healthcare access, etc. They experience a multifaceted phenomenon

influenced by many factors, including social, economic, and cultural dynamics.

Their decision to migrate is frequently driven by the desire to access gender-affirming medical treatments and escape social ostracization and stigma from their own native (Padilla et al., 2016; Cerezo et al., (2010). However, some trans women do not desire to undergo feminizing surgeries and treatments; while most undergo gender-affirming surgeries (GAS) such as vaginoplasty, hormone therapy, breast augmentation, facial feminization, voice change surgeries and body contouring (T'Sjoen et al., 2019). They are compelled and choose to relocate to other states, such as urban centers, to continue their essential healthcare services to align their physical appearance with gender identity and alleviate gender dysphoria (Raza & Karthikeyan (n.d)). Padilla et al. (2016), Carpenter (2022), and Safer (2017) emphasize that they migrate to locations abroad for advanced and specialized healthcare due to social, economic, and inadequate healthcare in their local areas. By addressing the gaps, research scholars (Cerezo et al., 2010; Bhattacharya & Ghosh, 2010) highlight physical and mental care in local healthcare systems. They emphasize the pressing need for more inclusive and comprehensive medical services in India to ensure that trans women have access to medical care without needing to leave the country. Better education, development, and training of healthcare professionals and legal reforms can create a supportive environment for trans women. In the same way, Clancy et al have highlighted the importance and impact of such research where they pointed out that researchers “can identify critical problems, research the benefits and harms of policy solutions, estimate the costs and consequences of policy proposals, and actively participate in the policy process to aid real-time decision making.” As they mention, this research can serve as a model to improve policies for the trans women's community.

Over the past fifteen years, India's multifaceted diversity, traditions, deep-rooted values, social customs, and regional practices have shaped the development of trans women's healthcare, and migration leading to improved facilities with greater understanding. Healthcare and migration beneficial schemes are available for trans women through both central and state governments. In urban cities like Madurai, Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and so on, government and private hospitals are also beginning to expand their services. The study defines healthcare and migration as individuals moving from one geographical location to another region or country, primarily to seek specialized or more accessible healthcare services. The migration motive can be the non-availability of healthcare, cost difference, quality of care, or legal, social or cultural barriers to prevent individuals from accessing appropriate care in their place of origin.

This research explores the current landscape of healthcare and migration for South Indian trans women, identifying the benefits and barriers in central and state government schemes. However, individuals' challenges may vary from one location to another upon migration. It is crucial to examine the current status of trans individuals, as significant recent healthcare and migration advancements have been granted. The choice to focus on healthcare and migration destinations underscores the necessity of comprehensively understanding the experience of transgender women.

Many scholars and researchers have significantly inquired into issues pertaining to trans women's identity, marginalization, harassment, and culture. However, to the authors' knowledge, no literature review has been available that explores the migration, healthcare, and beneficial schemes of trans women in the Indian context. Moreover, they overlooked the challenges of accessing medical facilities. The study ask the following key questions: 1. What challenges do trans women face when migrating to access medical facilities?, 2. Do the beneficial medical facilities provided

by state and central government schemes reach the trans women community, and how are these facilities utilized?, 3. How can a digital platform enhance healthcare access, overcome geographical barriers, and contribute to the welfare of trans women?

5.2 Aim

This study aims to identify and analyze the specific challenges faced by trans women while exploring the intersection of migration and healthcare, highlighting medical, economic, and logistical barriers. Additionally, it will evaluate the accessibility, reach, and utilization of government-provided medical facilities, particularly state and central government schemes, to determine whether these services effectively benefit the trans women's community and how they are being utilized. Furthermore, the research explores the potential of public digital humanities in enhancing the social, and healthcare-related welfare of trans women.

5.3 Methods

5.3.1 Study setting

This chapter employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to study the experiences of Indian trans women's migration and medical facilities. The research focuses on a purposive sample of 53 trans women who participated in a survey and 4 interviews regarding the utilization and challenges of government initiatives, specifically "Ayushman Bharat Scheme" (2022) from the central government, "Transgender Welfare Board (2008)" and the "Vidiyal Payanam Scheme (2021)" from the Tamil Nadu state government. Participants were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling techniques from Transgender Resource Centre, to examine the challenges trans women face in migration and access to healthcare schemes in Madurai Metropolitan City, Tamil Nadu.

The method helped us to reach individuals who are involved in the community, but it may cause selection bias. To mitigate this, the study focused on clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria included 1) individuals identifying as trans women, 2) those aged 20 to 54 years older, 3) residents of Madurai, and 4) willingness to participate in the study. Exclusion criteria were 1) individuals unable to communicate in Tamil, as this was the primary language for participants to feel comfortable discussing their experiences with the investigators, 2) refusal to participate, and 3) residents of Chennai or other states, to consistently focus on the Madurai region.

5.3.2 Transgender welfare initiatives and regional focus

For this research, the study chose two metropolitan cities such as Madurai and Chennai. However, the study focuses solely on the migration and medical experiences of trans women in the Madurai region. Considering the lack of healthcare centers in Madurai, the chapter also examines medical facilities in Chennai to highlight the advanced services available there.

Tamil Nadu was the first state to introduce a “Transgender Welfare Board” in 2008 to provide free GAS in government hospitals, free housing, various citizenship documents, admission in government colleges with a full scholarship for higher studies, and initiating income-generation programs (Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Department Transgender Welfare Board, 2021). In addition to this scheme, the central government scheme “Ayushman Bharat Scheme” of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was introduced in August 2022, under which more than 50 health facilities are being provided. As part of this scheme, the “Ayushman Bharat TG Plus” card is offered to transgender society. It is significant to note that India is the first country in the world to provide free healthcare facilities like cosmetic surgery to the trans community under a

government scheme. Concurrently, a person who belongs to a trans society from any state or part of India can take advantage of this scheme using the trans card in any affiliated hospital (GS TIMES IAS-PCS, 2025). Such healthcare facilities are broadly categorized into general and gender-related healthcare. Both types of health care are crucial for trans women and can ensure better health outcomes and quality of life. However, this research focuses on gender-related healthcare such as vaginoplasty, breast augmentation surgery, laser hair removal treatment, mental health counselling and support services, etc. The choice of surgery varies depending on the trans woman's goals and medical advice. Additionally, the metropolitan cities of Madurai and Chennai are well known for their advanced medical facilities, research, and innovations. It has a strong presence of transgender non-government organizations (NGOs), community groups, and activists who work tirelessly to advocate for LGBTIQ+ rights initiatives, legal and social support, and employment opportunities in a supportive environment. These factors give the authors unique advantages for concentrating on this particular state and district.

Moreover, for the study, choose the “Vidiyal Payanam Scheme” (free fare scheme) (2021) to understand trans women's migration experiences. Through the Department of Social Welfare and Women Empowerment, the government of Tamil Nadu has announced a scheme allowing women travellers to use government-run normal-fare buses for short distances (up to 30 kilometres) within cities and towns free of charge. Women receive zero-fare tickets when travelling on these buses. The Tamil Nadu government extended the fare-free scheme to trans women for a better life.

5.3.3 Participant management

Data was collected by five trans men familiar with the Transgender Resource Centre (TRC) and the trans women community. They conducted 49 face-to-face surveys, and researchers carried out 4 semi-structured

interviews and surveys over phone calls, all administered in Tamil, the preferred language of both participants and investigators to ensure clear communication and accurate responses (See Appendix C). The investigators documented the surveys, while the researchers audiotaped the interviews with permission and carefully transcribed them into English. In-depth surveys and interviews occurred over five months, from February to June 2024, and each session lasted one hour to engage with participants and gather comprehensive information about their migration and medical care, facilitated through the TRC in Madurai. The participants, including five trans men, supported this research voluntarily and did not receive any remuneration, as the authors did not receive funding from any organizations.

5.3.4 Ethical consideration

The investigators were not formally trained in ethical research practices; however, they possessed valuable experiences as transgender activists, social workers, and community engagement specialists, which ensured respectful interactions with participants. The research adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring informed consent from all participants. Prior to the data collection process, the questionnaire included questions such as (1) Have you undergone or considered gender-affirming surgery? If so, what services are you interested in or have accessed, and where did you access them? (2) Are you aware of state and central government healthcare schemes? and how did you learn about them? (3) What sources (e.g., friends, community groups, social media) do you rely on for information? (4) Have you accessed the state government's migration scheme? How helpful was it? It was shared with the TRC to meet ethical standards and was reviewed by the ethical review board before the study commenced (See Appendix C). Additionally, the approval letter was signed by the committee member, the data collection team, and the 53 trans women participants. I communicated that participants' access to the state and central schemes

would not be affected. The participants could withdraw from the study at any time. Moreover, the analysis report will be sent to the TRC and participating trans women community members to ensure transparency and ethical consideration after this research is published. A Google questionnaire form (See Appendix C) was used for data collection, and participants documented their information with permission while their names were kept confidential to ensure that trans individuals' responses could not be traced back to identify or pinpoint any participant. A comprehensive set of standards was established to protect the identities and well-being of the trans women participants throughout the study.

5.3.5 Approach to data interpretation

The interview and survey data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and key insights. The process involved carefully reading and rereading the transcripts to gain familiarity with the data, followed by systematically grouping similar responses and concepts. Later, it developed into central themes that capture the core experiences, and challenges faced by trans women in accessing healthcare and migration schemes. The themes were refined through an interview collection to ensure they accurately reflected the participants' narratives. This thematic approach focused on uncovering both structural barriers and community-driven strategies, providing a deeper understanding of how trans women navigate government schemes and medical services.

5.3.6 Main outcomes

The primary outcomes of this study include 1) the experiences of trans women in accessing healthcare services, 2) the perceived effectiveness of government schemes in facilitating medical care, and 3) the impact of the free fare scheme on the mobility of trans women for healthcare access. Additionally, the study seeks to highlight both the challenges and positive outcomes experienced by participants in navigating these systems.

5.3.7 Data collection procedures

The study collected data on gender-related healthcare details in Madurai, including 1 public and 4 private centers, and in Chennai, 1 public and 56 private centers (see Figure:10 and refer to the CSV file). This chapter used specific key terms in Google search engine, such as “trans women/transgender healthcare clinics, LGBTQ+ healthcare hospitals, gender-affirming healthcare facilities, and medical centers for transgender patients in Madurai and Chennai”, to obtain various public and private hospital name, addresses with phone numbers, URLs (Uniform Resource Locators), information about ties to state and/or central schemes, and details on available medical services for various public and private hospitals.

5.3.8 Social Support Systems

The collected data has been transformed into a CSV (comma-separated values) file. The primary objective of this data gathering is to convert it into a sustainable format while ensuring its accessibility to all stakeholders. To achieve this, the chapter employed the digital humanities method to visualise and disseminate the collected data. An advantage of digital humanities is the ability to communicate research findings to the scholarly community and the general public. Hence, the chapter approach aligns with public digital humanities principles, which aim to use digital tools and methods to benefit the public, requiring sustainable design, minimal computing, open access, and affordable infrastructure (Ope-Davies, 2022).

Consequently, the investigation selected the free version of the Airtable tool for data visualisation and dissemination, and the GitHub^{iv} repository for long-term data storage. The CSV file is uploaded into the Airtable tool, which converts the data into a table format. The data is available in English^v and Tamil^{vi} to facilitate easy access for the trans community, gender non-conforming individuals, and other stakeholders.

The reason why the research selected this repository and digital tools, such as Airtable and GitHub, is because they are sustainable, maintenance-free, universally accessible, and cost-effective. Furthermore, the study shares the database in both Tamil and English to ensure it is accessible to the South Indian trans women's community, as the data originates from Tamil Nadu. The data has also been shared with local NGOs in Tamil Nadu for broader distribution, and use. Although the digital tools did not significantly contribute to the analysis, the study used them as a model for the development of the trans women's community by raising awareness about hospitals, their medical facilities, and partnerships with state and central governments to utilize. In the future, the research plan is to raise funds to upgrade the platform into a website that will provide valuable information and resources for the trans women's community.

5.4 Results and Discussion

A total number of 53 individuals are self-identified as trans women and members of the TRC, Madurai. *Dai Nirvana*, a traditional but risky method of removing male genitalia practiced within trans women communities, is not recommended by doctors. As a result of medical advancements, safety concerns, and risks associated with the traditional method, all of them have opted for GAS in private and public health centers. In the following section, the research briefly explains the findings of their interviews and surveys, focusing on themes related to healthcare, migration, economic hardship and the mental health of South Indian trans women.

| Variable | | Total (n=53) | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--------------|----------|
| | | n | (%) |
| Interest Surgeries/Treatments | Vaginoplasty | 53 | (100%) |
| | Breast Augmentation Surgery | 46 | (86.80%) |
| | Laser hair removal treatment | 19 | (35.80%) |
| | Voice change treatment | 7 | (13.20%) |
| | Face feminization surgery | 0 | (0%) |
| Access Statistics | Mental Health | 52 | (96.2%) |
| | Vaginoplasty | 46 | (86.90%) |
| | Breast Augmentation Surgery | 44 | (83%) |
| | Laser hair removal treatment | 18 | (33.20%) |
| | Voice change treatment | 2 | (3.90%) |
| Hospital Accessed | Face feminization surgery | 0 | (0%) |
| | Mental health | 52 | (96.2%) |
| | Government hospital | 12 | (21.70%) |
| | Private hospital | 31 | (58.50%) |
| | Not interested in revealing their healthcare choices | 10 | (19.80%) |
| Benefits from Scheme | State scheme | 10 | (19.80%) |
| | Central scheme | 2 | (3.80%) |
| Awareness of Scheme | State scheme | 48 | (90.40%) |
| | Central scheme | 23 | (44.20%) |
| Unawareness of Scheme | State scheme | 5 | (9.60%) |
| | Central scheme | 30 | (55.80%) |
| Sources of awareness | Friends & NGOs | 44 | (83.02%) |
| | Social media | 7 | (13.21%) |
| | Family and relatives | 2 | (3.77%) |
| Monthly income of trans women | 6,000 and 15,000 | 19 | (35.7%) |
| | 15,000 to 18000 | 31 | (58.3%) |
| | 18000 to 25,000 | 3 | (6%) |
| Job | Sex works | 19 | (36.5%) |
| | Beggars | 18 | (34.6%) |
| | Sex workers and Beggars | 16 | (30.8%) |
| | Acting and modelling, floor cleaning, business, shopkeeping, and working in NGOs | 13 | (24%) |
| Savings from the free fare scheme | 500 to 1000 | 30 | (57.1%) |
| | 1000 to 2500 | 23 | (42.9%) |
| Free fare scheme | Increased visibility and safety | 47 | (88.2%) |
| | Avoid due to bus restrictions | 6 | (11.8%) |

Table 2. Address the data on gender-affirming healthcare, economic conditions, and support scheme awareness among trans women (n=53) in Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

5.4.1 South Indian trans women in gender-affirming healthcare

In India, there has been an increasing recognition of the unique healthcare needs of the trans women's community. Table 1 indicates trans women participants, there is a close match between interest and utilization of GAS aligns with their strong desire for physical characteristics that match one's gender identity. However, they experience significant challenges as a result of the lack of gender diversity awareness in society and social institutions such as medical and institutional systems, which has profound

effects on accessing medical facilities and migration. In the collected survey and interview data, the study identified trans women participants who expressed strong direct and indirect barriers to accessing state and central government schemes in healthcare and migration. Firstly, direct barriers, such as in the South Indian trans women community, face discrimination in the healthcare settings, limited availability of services in healthcare and migration, financial constraints, social exclusion, and feelings of isolation. Secondly, indirect barriers such as limited awareness and development of healthcare and migration schemes. These barriers are intertwined with one another and are reflected in their lived experiences.

The data in Table 1 proves that many trans women use private hospitals (58.50%) more than government hospitals (21.70%) for their GAS, which leads to community networks. It indicates that trans women are concerned about the quality, expertise and reliability of the healthcare access. Moreover, a few trans women (19.80%) were not interested in revealing their healthcare choices, citing concerns about personal choice. It highlights privacy, stigma, and potential fear of discrimination in healthcare settings. A trans woman points out,

I chose a private hospital instead of a government hospital. I have heard from friends that some government hospitals are not effectively performing gender-reaffirming treatments. Moreover, the providers do not have enough experience with these surgeries. Since procedures like gender-affirming surgeries involve a one-time payment, I do not want to risk suffering lifelong complications with my body.

Another participant shared,

I had my gender-reaffirming surgery at a private hospital and my breast augmentation surgery at a government hospital. Based on my

knowledge, I prefer to have the surgery at either a government or private hospital, depending on which one performs best.

The survey and the trans women's responses reveal that the choice of healthcare is closely connected with community networks. These networks offer numerous benefits, including access to better quality care, reducing the likelihood of medical complications, providing emotional support and guidance, mitigating risks, increasing confidence, and fostering cultural and identity alignment. However, there are potential disadvantages, including limited healthcare choices, misinformation or biased opinions within the community, and the high demand for certain trusted providers or institutions, which may result in longer wait times, reduced availability, or increased procedure costs. Additionally, when community networks favor private over government hospitals due to perceived quality differences, it can further marginalize public healthcare systems, reducing their utilization, investment, and opportunities for improvement. The balance between reliance on community trust and trans women's independent research based on evidence-based healthcare information can facilitate well-informed and empowering decision-making while mitigating potential challenges and drawbacks.

5.4.2 Awareness and Outreach Challenges

The state and central governments offer free gender healthcare schemes that are tied up with a few government and private medical centers, such as those in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, to provide a range of feminine treatments for trans women. It aims to promote inclusive healthcare, foster equity, reduce healthcare disparities, and support the well-being and integration of trans women into the community. Only a low proportion of the trans women participants benefit from state schemes (19.80%) and from central schemes (3.80%), indicating a lack of awareness and interest in these beneficial programs (see Table 1). A trans woman offered her reply as,

I underwent gender-affirming surgery at a camp organized by Pondicherry Medical College. They provided free gender-affirming surgery, along with 15 days of free bed rest and food. I accessed the central government scheme through my trans women community network. My friend has a friend who works at the medical college, and I trust my community members. Through her, I was able to access and feel comfortable with my gender-affirming surgery.

Another trans woman shared,

I do not know anything about the schemes.

The lack of awareness and interest can stem from distrust of government systems and dependence on informal networks. The first participant's statement highlights a lack of initial awareness about healthcare centers in Tamil Nadu. However, by accessing beneficial schemes, she set an example that encouraged other trans women within her community network to seek treatment from the same medical institution, and prompting migration to a different state. Additionally, the second participant's limited knowledge and unwillingness to learn about available schemes perpetuate challenges for their community, as they rely solely on community networks for information and support.

However, while a low proportion of the trans women participants accessed state (19.80%) and central (3.80%) government schemes, a high proportion are aware of the state-level Transgender Welfare Board (90.40%), likely due to Tamil Nadu being their home state. A moderate proportion (44.20%) are aware of the central Ayushman Bharat scheme, reflecting the broader challenge of reaching people in a large nation like India (See Table 1). A trans woman responded,

I know about the information of Tamil Nadu state scheme, but I do not know about central government schemes. I know both of them will take time and give me more tension, so I did not try both.

The statement highlights that while trans women participants are aware of government schemes, they lack trust in the processes associated with these treatments and programs. This mistrust contributes to the dissemination of skepticism within marginalized trans women communities, discouraging others from availing themselves of these beneficial schemes. Furthermore, when information about the schemes is presented in complex formats, it becomes even more challenging for trans women, particularly those with limited education, to comprehend and access. The negative experiences, including stigma or discrimination faced at government healthcare facilities, further undermine their interest in government programs.

Moreover, a significant portion of the trans women community in Tamil Nadu remains unaware of both state (9.60%) and central (55.80%) government schemes aimed at supporting them (See Table 1). Such proportions of non-awareness can adversely affect the well-being of the trans women community. The lack of awareness significantly limits their access to healthcare, social support, and financial assistance. Furthermore, this gap in awareness hinders the effectiveness of state and central government schemes, rendering them underutilized and ineffective in achieving their intended goals. Addressing the awareness is crucial for the holistic development and integration of the trans women community into society.

5.4.3 Key sources of information for trans women

Trans women are aware of schemes through various sources such as friends and NGOs (83.02%), social media (13.21%), and family and relatives (3.77%). Trans women point out that they are aware of schemes

through friends and NGOs as the primary source of information (See Table 1), which underscores the strong reliance on interpersonal trust; approachable and readily available as always, they are surrounded by friend's and NGOs circle. However, the completeness and accuracy of the information shared within these networks can vary significantly, leading to inconsistent levels of awareness within the community. Moreover, while the high proportion of key sources from friends and NGOs offers significant potential for accessing government schemes, mistrust and experiences of discrimination in healthcare settings often discourage trans women from engaging with these schemes. It can contribute to the spread of misinformation, further hindering their access to essential resources.

Additionally, social media networking sites can offer several benefits as a source of information. They are easily accessible, allowing users to approach any time without restrictions. It has a quick dissemination of updates, fostering real-time awareness of the schemes and opportunities. Furthermore, these platforms allow users to connect with broader communities, access diverse perspectives, and engage with resources that may not be available locally. However, a trans woman noted the reason for avoiding social media websites as,

I cannot trust social media websites. They only use English, and translating the language takes time, and the translation is not always accurate. There is also a possibility that most of the information is fake or vague. Many trans individuals are around me, so as a first step, I talk with my trans women's community network and friends. Gender-affirming surgery is important to us. Like me, most trans individuals are interested in and aware of these surgeries. They know at least some information through our community network, and that is how I learned all the details. I trust those who have experience with specific surgeries and healthcare centers. The

problem is that some of them are not updated with details about the schemes and advanced technologies.

Another trans woman marked,

There is only limited information on social media platforms related to gender-affirming healthcare.

The low proportion of participants (See Table 1) and their statements highlight that refusing to access social media can pose several drawbacks for trans women, particularly in terms of awareness, connection, isolation from support networks, visibility, advocacy, networking opportunities, and empowerment. Furthermore, maintaining authentic and reliable information on social media platforms related to gender-affirming healthcare is crucial.

The low involvement of family and relatives (See Table 1) highlights a lack of awareness among their biological families and relatives. This reflects a broader societal stigma that limits equality, understanding, and familial support for trans women, pointing to a significant area for improvement in outreach strategies. Increasing awareness of schemes among trans women's families and relatives offers several benefits. It not only enhances access to information for trans women but also improves emotional support and resource accessibility, reduces financial burdens, strengthens advocacy efforts, fosters inclusion, provides better guidance, and promotes independence within families and society.

5.4.4 South Indian Trans women's migration and barriers

The Tamil Nadu state government announced a free fare scheme for trans women to enhance their lifestyle, following Delhi and Punjab. This increased mobility can lead to greater independence and improved quality of life. In India, they make multiple short or long trips in a day for employment, healthcare appointments, legal and administrative tasks, social

support, shopping and personal needs, safety concerns, education, networking and advocacy, recreation and leisure, etc. The implementation of free bus facilities for trans women can have progressive impacts, such as economic empowerment, social inclusion, safety and security, and recognition and validation.

Some trans women participants (88.2%) note that stepping out helps increase their visibility and confidence in public spaces, making it safer and encouraging more trans women to do the same. This visibility helps other genders to think differently about the perception of sex workers and beggars. Additionally, a trans woman answered,

I am really happy to benefit from the zero-fare bus scheme, just like other women. While society and the government recognize our gender as the 'third gender,' I see myself simply as a woman. However, it does not provide much economic support. To my knowledge, this is the first scheme where trans women receive equal treatment. I hope that all schemes and legal rights will be offered equally in the future. Starting with this free fare initiative, I am optimistic the government will continue to ensure our rights in other areas too.

However, A few trans women (11.8%) highlight that they are not utilizing this beneficial scheme, even though they are well aware of it, as the scheme is not applicable to deluxe and express buses. Additionally, 53 trans individuals point out barriers such as overcrowded buses and infrequent services. The scheme does not help them get economically strong or access gender health services because they often need to travel long distances to different cities or states for quality treatment. The migration connects not only with physical aspects but also with economic risks and uncertainties. It indicates the need for healthcare and migration support, including social acceptance. A trans woman explains,

I do not often use the Tamil Nadu state government's free fare facilities in my daily life. As we know, this free fare facility was initially intended for women, not trans women. It was only after we submitted a formal request to the government that trans women were included. However, we are still faced with challenges, as conductors and drivers often do not stop at the correct or crowded points, and some buses are not well-maintained. Additionally, some conductors refuse to let sit free fare passengers on the bus seat. While I do save a little money by using it, these issues make it difficult, so I often prefer to take private buses instead.

Responds from trans women emphasize the profound challenges, particularly in accessing migration. To enhance the socio-economic development of trans women, policymakers must ensure that beneficial schemes comprehensively reach all segments of society. Increased promotion, awareness, and advancements in these schemes are necessary to meet the needs of the trans women community. Additionally, extending free bus fare facilities specifically to trans women is recommended to improve their economic opportunities and integration into mainstream society.

5.4.5 Economic status and hardships

In many parts of South India, trans women continue to face ostracism, violence, and marginalization due to entrenched societal norms and cultural taboos surrounding transgender identity and expression. This discrimination and systemic inequality often lead to significant economic and employment challenges for members of the trans women community. Consequently, many trans women are compelled to engage in precarious and often illegal occupations to survive the economic hardships they face, including sex work (36.5%) and begging (34.6%), and they are engaged in both activities (30.8%) simultaneously due to their financial difficulties. However, progress is gradually being made through the efforts of NGOs and the resilience of the trans community. As a result, some trans women

participants (24%) have found alternative occupations such as acting and modelling, floor cleaning, running their own businesses, shopkeeping, and working with NGOs to sustain their lives (See Table 1).

Participants allocate their entire income (See Table 1) for basic needs such as food, housing, transportation, healthcare, clothing and personal care, community and support networks, education and training, entertainment, family support, etc. Despite these challenges, GAS remains a top priority, adding to their financial strain and exposing them to unsafe environments and health risks. A trans woman shared her experiences,

However, I went to a government hospital for my breast augmentation surgery, and I spent 35,000 on silicone implants. The higher the price, the better the quality of silicone a trans woman can get, which means it can stay in the body safely for more years. Each type of silicone has different rates and weights. I am really careful about this—since it will be in my body for years, I want it to be better quality and safe for my health. I have used all my long-term savings to cover the costs of my gender-affirming surgeries and treatments.

This statement underscores that while surgeries may be free at government hospitals, silicone implants are not covered, exacerbating financial hardships. This suggests that government schemes promoting free surgeries are often more about public attention than substantive support, further burdening trans women economically. However, government schemes have played a role in facilitating trans women's migration by offering certain benefits. Participants reported that they could save a minimal amount through free government transportation (see Table 1). A trans woman expressed,

The free fare scheme savings are not changing our community members' lives or helping improve our economic situation.

The statement demonstrates that state-sponsored free transportation schemes, introduced to improve the economic conditions of trans women, are not significantly impacting their lives or transforming their circumstances. This underscores the need for greater societal sensitivity and inclusivity, as well as the importance of enhancing the free fare scheme to make it more effective. The lack of research, developments, and awareness in the social institutions perpetuates economic hardship, leading to further limited access to basic needs, restricted healthcare access, high migration, educational barriers, social isolations, insecurity and vulnerability, lack of political and social influence, mental health issues, and marginalization in society.

5.4.6 The mental health of trans women in gender-affirming surgery

In Tamil Nadu, mental health counselling is mandatory before GAS to help prevent post-surgery depression and dilemmas. Also, the research report shows that many participants (96.2%) expressed interest in and accessed (96.2%) counselling before their GAS at the state and central-run health centers. This finding highlights a progressive step toward supporting trans women within the healthcare system. Despite this progress, they continue to face discrimination in healthcare settings, as one trans woman shared,

Providers expect me to come in female attire to receive hormone therapy and mental health treatment. I am undergoing hormonal treatment without my parents' knowledge. Before my gender-affirming surgeries and treatments, I felt they would not be comfortable or accepting of me.

From the narrative, this chapter identified that many counsellors lack the experience and understanding necessary to offer meaningful support. This leads to misdiagnosis, misguidance, and the invalidation of trans women's experiences, eroding their trust in the mental healthcare

system. Inappropriate advice can exacerbate the mental health challenges faced by trans clients, causing them to avoid or withdraw from counselling altogether. Such ignorance hinders acceptance and inclusion, with a high likelihood of discouraging others in the community from seeking help, further restricting access to mental healthcare. As a result, individuals may feel hopeless and isolated, significantly increasing the risk of self-harm and suicide. Furthermore, unconscious biases among counsellors perpetuate societal stigma, undermining the creation of a safe and supportive environment essential for effective mental health care. Another participant noted,

There are no well-functioning mental health centers or gender-affirming surgery facilities in Trichy or Coimbatore. I learned that Madurai's healthcare centers are running more smoothly regarding mental health and surgery services. I have heard that mental health counselling in private hospitals is functioning well, but they charge high fees ranging from 27,000 to 1,00,000. In some cases, the services are inadequate, yet they still proceed with gender-affirming surgeries. Moreover, accessing private or public health centers requires multiple visits, especially for mental health care, which often involves a minimum of three to six sessions with providers. The combined costs of time, travel, and expenses make it economically challenging for me.

Moreover, from the data collection, the study realized that since the data was gathered in Madurai, trans women actively participated and benefited from mental healthcare services, supported by the TRC. It serves as a vital link between trans women and healthcare providers, facilitating communication and support. This role is crucial because, when doctors lack awareness of trans women's specific needs, NGOs need to act as intermediaries to support trans individuals until healthcare providers gain the necessary awareness. Nonetheless, their narrative captures the support

of the community network throughout her journey of seeking medical facilities, which indicates strong emotional and psychological support. Additionally, the statement indicates that their continued session with mental health services also leads the financial strain, resulting in the importance of establishing mental health centers in their local healthcare facilities and extending free fare services. It underscores the relationships between healthcare, migrations, and economic exchanges that are interconnected in the lives of trans women and underscores the systemic barriers to accessing healthcare.

The study provides a comprehensive understanding of gender-affirming facilities, migration, and the direct and indirect barriers faced by South Indian trans women in government schemes. This chapter developed four main themes. First, South Indian trans women face significant healthcare barriers, such as discrimination, limited services, and preference for private hospitals over government facilities, driven by trust and quality concerns. Community networks play a dual role by offering support yet perpetuating biases. Second, Government schemes like free bus fares foster visibility and independence. However, limited services and poor quality lead to increased migration and neglect of the facility. Third, the persistence of social stigma, lack of awareness about available schemes, and preference for private healthcare, with limited access to government schemes, lead to economic hardships. Finally, mandatory counselling for GAS in Tamil Nadu shows progress, but ignorance and discrimination in the healthcare setting hinder effective care. Strong community networks, supported by resources like the Transgender Resource Center, provide vital psychological and logistical assistance.

Overall, the research findings highlight that the promotion, awareness, and advancements in the schemes are necessary to meet the needs of the trans women community. Additionally, extending free bus fare facilities specifically to trans women is recommended to improve their

healthcare access, mobility, economic opportunities, and integration into mainstream society. However, the awareness does not equate to the utilization, satisfaction or actual benefits of trans women. The lack of awareness about healthcare services and schemes in their native state and country significantly impacts the GAS and migration experiences of trans women, often preventing them from accessing essential medical treatments. Moving to new regions without this knowledge can lead to fear, stress, anxiety, social isolation, and missed opportunities for support. These challenges can severely limit their access to necessary resources and exacerbate mental health issues, ultimately affecting their quality of life. Moreover, reliable information on where to seek help, available services, and how to apply for them is crucial. While trans women often rely on their community members and friends to choose health centers, this supportive network, though beneficial, may not always provide comprehensive knowledge about all medical facilities and healthcare options in their native state and country, requiring them to spend considerable time verifying information for accuracy with multiple people. Without promotion and awareness from the state and central government, the current trans women community struggles are similar, and there is a possibility to persist in the future trans women community. Using social media platforms and promoting targeted videos and hashtags with credible information about support programs can be crucial. Expanding the use of these platforms could further raise awareness and improve access to beneficial programs, ultimately empowering and improving the well-being of trans women (Social Good from Social Media, 2017).

Additionally, to enhance healthcare and economic opportunities for trans women, the government can increase the number of public hospitals and medical facilities in their local cities and districts. This will allow trans women to access timely healthcare services and reliable information, helping them avoid economic challenges. Through these facilities, education about specific care and gender diversity in society can reach

everyone. Reducing or eliminating bus fares in Tamil Nadu, India, can help trans women save money, promote social inclusion, enhance healthcare services and mental well-being, and improve economic support, which they can use for further self-improvement. Furthermore, to promote the well-being of the trans women community, it is significant to ensure knowledge providers and treatments are available in all GAS- specialized centers. Researchers (Hana et al., 2021; Shrivastava et al., 2023; R and Menon, 2022) emphasize that gender-related and mental healthcare topics should be incorporated into medical education better to address the needs of the trans women community. Moreover, it is significant that all NGOs, like the Transgender Resource Center, establish connections with GAS-specialized centers. Furthermore, state and central schemes across all private hospitals must provide these facilities exclusively and comprehensively. The study highlights the crucial role of awareness in reaching the broader trans-women community. It demonstrates that a lack of awareness results in challenges not only in physical well-being but also in mental and economic stability. The analysis emphasizes that increased awareness can significantly improve access to medical and migration access.

However, community networks play a vital role; it is significant in enabling trans women to access all necessary resources independently and comprehensively. Creating Airtable provides valuable information to the trans women community and gender-nonconforming children (see Figure: 10 and refer to the CSV file). Establishing supportive networks not only benefits the trans women community but also aids research scholars. This was one of the key motivations for creating the Airtable initiatives.

Public digital humanities can be leveraged to disseminate resources to the trans community when it comes to healthcare access and advocacy. As outlined in the methodology, this chapter utilized the Airtable online application to distribute in Madurai, including 1 public and 4 private centers, and in Chennai, 1 public and 56 private centers details

electronically (see Figure: 10 and refer to the CSV file). Sharing gender-related healthcare access information, and advocating within the trans women community and non-governmental organizations are crucial for trans women who migrate or move between locations, especially when considering their personal choices. This information helps them obtain treatment near their new locations and ensures quality care, allowing them to access necessary medical services more easily without geographical barriers (see Figure: 10 and refer to the CSV file). Additionally, NGOs and trans women can use this information as a guide for their healthcare needs in different hospitals and places to access healthcare policies. This practice also raises awareness about inclusive healthcare practices.

In the Airtable, the study compiled a corpus of information about healthcare details on the website platform (see Figure: 10 and refer to the CSV file). Additionally, engaging in discussions and collaborations with NGOs can help transform this corpus into trustworthy and reliable information, empowering better decision-making within the community. Moreover, sharing the data with scholars can enhance transparency, facilitate interdisciplinary usage, and provide easy access to structured information. It also enables collaboration input and expansion of the dataset, fostering an open-data culture that encourages innovation within the field.

However, based on the data collection, Chennai, has a higher number of health centers compared to Madurai. Despite this, Madurai shows significant activity, there is a possibility of migration to Chennai, a metropolitan city, or other districts or states to access GAS. Furthermore, the limited free fare facility and high migration rates can contribute to economic hardships and highlight the need to enhance GAS and free fare facilities (see Figure: 10 and refer to the CSV file).

| | Trans Women Healthcar... | Address with phone nu... | Hospital Website Links | Available Services with f... |
|----|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|
| 1 | Pavithra Hospital | No 7, Ethiraj Swamy Salai, E... | https://www.justdial.com/C... | https://www.practo.com/ch... |
| 2 | Priya Nursing Home | Address: No. 6,(Old No. 82)... | https://www.justdial.com/C... | Reconstructive Urology |
| 3 | Hande Hospital, | Address: 44, 44, Lakshmi Ta... | https://handehospital.org/... | SRS, etc... |
| 4 | Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth (SBV)/... | Address: P4WJ+6R6, Tirupo... | https://ssmcri.ac.in/contact/ | |
| 5 | Iyyappa Hospital & Diabeti... | Address: No.308, 310, MP... | https://iyyappamultispecial... | https://iyyappamultispecial... |
| 6 | Murugan Hospitals | 264/125 Kilpauk Garden Ro... | https://www.practo.com/ch... | https://www.practo.com/ch... |
| 7 | Sims Hospital | Metro No.1 Jawaharal Neh... | https://sims hospitals.com/ | SRS, hair removal, Breast a... |
| 8 | Abhijay Super Speciality | Address: 22/2, ESI Hospital ... | https://www.practo.com/ch... | Plastic Surgery |
| 9 | Sri Hospitals | Address: Sanjeevarayanpet... | https://srihospitals.in/index... | reconstructive surgery |
| 10 | Padmini Nursing Home | Address: 9, PachaIappas Co... | https://www.practo.com/ch... | https://www.practo.com/ch... |
| 11 | Right Hospitals | Address: 1, Vasu St. behind ... | https://www.righthospitals... | https://www.righthospitals... |
| 12 | Mmrv Multi Speciality Hos... | Address: 2, 5/PC, Bharathi S... | https://www.practo.com/ch... | https://www.practo.com/ch... |
| 13 | Xcellent Care Hospital | Address: 7/14, 7th Cross Str... | https://www.practo.com/ch... | https://www.practo.com/ch... |
| 14 | Om Sakthi Multispeciality C... | Address New #16 Old #172... | https://www.clinicspots.co... | https://www.clinicspots.co... |

Figure 10: List of healthcare hospitals with addresses, phone numbers, website links, and available services for trans women in Madurai, as compiled in Airtable.

5.5 Conclusion

The study provides a nuanced exploration of healthcare and migration challenges faced by South Indian trans women, particularly in the context of government schemes. The findings reveal that central government schemes have not reached a significant portion of the trans community compared to state initiatives. This highlights the critical need for inclusive policies that address the specific needs of trans women, particularly in gender-affirming and migration services, to enhance socio-economic conditions. Increased promotion, awareness, and advancements in the schemes, along with community-centric digital initiatives, are essential to ensure broader accessibility. Overall, the research underscores the importance of creating supportive environments where trans women feel safe, included, and understood.

Notes

^{iv} For more details, refer to the project repository available on GitHub:

[https://github.com/KaviEshaa/Chennai-hospitals-specializing-in-TG-healthcare/blob/main/Trans%20women%20Data%20\(1\).xlsx](https://github.com/KaviEshaa/Chennai-hospitals-specializing-in-TG-healthcare/blob/main/Trans%20women%20Data%20(1).xlsx)

^v For more details on Madurai and Chennai hospitals specializing in TG healthcare in English, please refer to the CSV file provided:

<https://airtable.com/appGjNgjXGbMHs4Gs/shrup4PFoCoMNqzL7>

^{vi} For more details on Madurai hospitals specializing in TG healthcare in Tamil, please refer to the CSV file provided:

<https://airtable.com/apphJMbUcqAW1rFxZ/shrsoSj2PzQRzYb3h>

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Chapter 6

Conclusion

The thesis contributes to a comprehensive and inclusive approach to studying trans women's autobiographies, cinema, YouTube narratives, electronic literature, and interviews and surveys, ensuring their voices are fully represented and understood in all their complexity, which has not been fully recognized by the scholars. Each major chapters examine representation, identity, marginalization, culture, social changes, power dynamics, visibility, and development of the Indian trans women's community.

6.1 Key findings and contribution of the thesis

The thesis identifies the key findings, including: 1) The close readings of trans women's autobiographies emphasize that, to reduce discrimination against trans individuals, it is essential to raise awareness among families, schools, and society. In this effort, teachers can play a crucial role in educating about gender identity. Furthermore, integrating gender identity into school curricula and conducting awareness workshops for individuals, teachers, and students can promote equality. In addition to educational spaces, the portrayal of trans women in cinema should be positive and respectful. 2) The qualitative and quantitative study of the YouTube narratives reveals that individual YouTubers, including trans women YouTubers, are not fully utilising the platform for the development of the trans women's community. Like Sweden, India can take steps to remove pejorative content, and social media can be positively used to support the empowerment and development of the trans women's community. 3) From the YouTube narratives, the study identifies the creative outputs related to trans women and emphasizes them as part of Indian trans women's electronic literature. In addition, the study contributes to this emerging field by developing a metadata archive of Indian trans

women's electronic literature. 4) The thesis also observes key issues related to the limited reach of central government schemes to the trans women's community. In response to this gap, the study finds that promoting awareness and improving existing schemes are essential to address the needs of the trans women's community and society at large. Furthermore, extending free fare facilities to trans women can significantly enhance their access to healthcare, mobility, economic opportunities, and social inclusion.

6.2 Summary of the chapters

The introduction chapter presents the literature review of the trans women's identity, representation, financial, educational, medical, and workplace-based discrimination in the Indian and Western contexts. It also identifies a gap in the Indian context and provides the rationale for selecting the narratives of autobiographies, cinema, YouTube, and electronic literature. Further, it discusses the contribution of the thesis, including research questions, objectives, and methodological approach of the study. Finally, it ends with an overview of the thesis chapters.

Chapter 2 allows a better understanding of trans women's identities, representations, developments, and issues in the selected autobiographies: A. Revathi's *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010), Living Smile Vidya's *I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* (2007), and Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's *Me Hijra Me Laxmi* (2015). These autobiographical narratives are compared with the selected movies, such as *Super Deluxe* (2019) and *Kanchana* (2011), based on representations of trans women. This comparative approach reveals the challenges faced by trans women, such as identity, social stigma, abuse, economic and educational barriers, and healthcare disparities, and the autobiographies' contribution to a broader understanding of trans women's community building, self-empowerment, and societal dynamics in the Indian context. Moreover, the study identifies

how trans women's autobiographies lead to positive representation and visibility in the visual narrative platforms like cinema.

Chapter 3 discusses trans women's video content and metadata, such as likes and views, from individual YouTubers and trans women YouTubers to understand the representations, identities, and discrimination faced by the trans women community in the Indian digital society. It also examines the main issues of trans women, such as educational, medical, and financial challenges, offering a nuanced perspective on the lived experiences of trans women. Additionally, it emphasises the potential of YouTube as a powerful tool for developing the trans community and advocating for the upliftment and inclusion of trans women in Indian society. Moreover, it explores the YouTube contribution through algorithmic visibility and defines videos created by trans women YouTubers as a form of digital autobiography. Furthermore, the interviews with members of the trans community highlight the current challenges and societal activism, as well as a call to utilise social media platforms for positive change and representation.

Chapter 4 identifies trans women's creative outputs on the YouTube platform as Indian trans women's electronic literature, with defining characteristics such as hypertext fiction, digital poetry, interactive narratives, and multimedia works that blend text, image, sound, and video. Additionally, considering the scarcity of trans women's electronic literature in India, this chapter archives the metadata of trans women-related creative outputs using the Omeka tool for dissemination and scholarly research. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of documenting trans women's narratives within the framework of Indian trans women's electronic literature and contributes to societal awareness and mutual respect between transgender and other genders in Indian society. Furthermore, this chapter discusses ways to enhance Indian trans women's presence in electronic literature, along with the challenges and opportunities they may encounter. This chapter expands the genre of electronic literature

in India to amplify marginalized voices, particularly those of trans women, and to promote societal transformation.

After understanding the challenges and marginalization faced by trans women in education, medical, and financial aspects in Chapters 2 and 3, the study discusses a nuanced perspective on their lived experiences through state and central government schemes, particularly focusing on their access to healthcare and migration facilities in Chapter 5. In addition, to support the development of the trans women community, raise awareness, and reach a wider audience, this chapter collects hospital details related to gender-affirming surgery for trans women and converts them into a CSV file and a GitHub platform in both Tamil and English.

To conclude, this thesis explored how trans women in India are represented and how they express their identities through autobiographies, films, YouTube, electronic literature, and oral narratives. It identified a gap in academic research around these forms and showed how trans women face challenges in areas like education, healthcare, and employment. The study shows that, by using online platforms, digital tools and methods, trans women can share their stories, raise awareness, and build community. This research highlights the importance of including trans voices in both academic work and society. It also suggests that digital spaces can play a powerful role in supporting trans women's visibility, rights, and empowerment in India.

6.3 Limitations of the study and Future scope of the study

6.3.1 Limitations of the present study

1. The research is primarily based on YouTube, whereas there are other social media like Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, Twitter, etc., which could not be explored in this chapter. The study also discovered that using a few states as keywords to search for videos related to trans women yielded no results.

2. Similar to the manual-based sentiment analysis of videos uploaded by individuals based on content, views, and likes, the study aimed to conduct a similar analysis for videos uploaded by trans women YouTubers. However, this was not possible, as the majority of their videos reflected predominantly progressive and neutral sentiments.
3. There is a lack of information regarding the YouTubers' gender and sexual identity in the selected 386 YouTube videos and channel descriptions. As a result, the study could not categorise the videos of individual YouTubers as belonging to trans women or other gender and sexuality identities. Another limitation arose in that the study could not utilise the dislike data since YouTube stopped displaying the count, preventing the collection of data for several videos to analyse.
4. Considering data accessibility and the scope of this study, the study focused on publicly visible metrics such as content, likes and views, not with click-through rate, watch time, comments, shares, and titles, considering restrictions for online users.
5. Encompassing the creative outputs of Indian trans women in all the Indian languages remains essential in the Omeka content management tool; however, covering all the Indian languages is not feasible, as India has a vast linguistic diversity. Additionally, the study identifies those creative outputs in certain languages, such as Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Konkani, etc., that do not appear in available resources. Like YouTube, the Omeka tool does not support high storage needs, as it offers a maximum of 500 MB. Additionally, dealing with copyright issues presents significant challenges.
6. Identifying the creators of the videos remains another major challenge. In such cases, the researcher marks the creator field as 'N/A'. Furthermore, emphasizing trans women's creative outputs as

e-lit on digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, etc. is essential. However, considering the scope of this chapter, the thesis focuses on YouTube.

7. Examining various aspects of medical and free fare facilities from central and state government schemes in all districts and states in India is essential for understanding the benefits, challenges, and developments experienced by trans women; however, encompassing all states and districts of India is beyond the scope of this study. So, considering limitations, the study chose Tamil Nadu, particularly with the trans women community in Madurai.
8. Collecting data directly from trans women proved challenging due to several concerns they raised. Many participants questioned the benefits of the research, particularly regarding financial compensation, and expressed frustration, stating that despite having participated in interviews with other researchers in the past, they had not experienced any tangible benefits, whether legal, financial, or social.
9. Some participants were reluctant to discuss the medical facilities they accessed with heterogender or individuals outside their community. Although researcher intended to offer remuneration for their valuable time, it became evident that their frustration stemmed from societal challenges and a perceived lack of benefits from participating in research.
10. Despite the researcher's efforts to passionately and thoroughly explain the significance and potential advantages of the study, it was clear that the participants were frustrated by societal challenges, lack of financial support, and the frequency of interviews and surveys. Consequently, as previously described, the study decided to refocus researcher efforts and engage a team of trans men for data collection.

6.3.2 Future scope of the study

1. Future research will explore a wide range of topics, including the impact, challenges, significance, and evolution of trans women-related creative outputs on the Omeka platform. The study will analyze emerging themes in their storytelling, as well as their use of visual aesthetics, editing techniques, and performance styles.
2. Additionally, the study will conduct a comparative study of Indian trans women's creative genres, such as poetry, songs, and animated videos. It also aims to examine how trans women's creative outputs on YouTube contribute to community development and lived experiences through a collection of interviews with trans women.
3. Furthermore, the research plan is to expand the archive by obtaining permissions, broadening the scope of narratives included, integrating advanced digital tools, and collaborating with creative authors. The work will expand by examining why trans individual creative writers upload their outputs anonymously. As a part of this effort, in future, the study also plans workshops on electronic literature tools to engage LGBTIQ+ creative writers in e-lit, encourage collective contributions, and facilitate the dissemination of their work.
4. Future investigations focus on a broad spectrum of topics, including the impacts, challenges, and developments of educational, financial, and healthcare schemes offered by the state, and central government, addressing critical gaps of trans women in India. These inquiries will encompass their migrations and experiences of barriers and successes. Moreover, it is crucial to examine the family's and society's acceptance, stigma, and violence impacting their migrations both within and outside India.
5. As an initial step, this study explores the state and central schemes of trans women in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, with a significant focus on key aspects of healthcare and migration. Additionally, future

research aims to document educational, healthcare, and financial scheme tie-up institutions on the website to ensure accessibility and maximize benefits for trans women, gender non-conforming children, and stakeholders.

Appendix-A

Trans women in Tamil Language and Literature: Examining Identity, Representation, and Cultural Dynamics

Introduction

Priya Babu is a renowned trans woman author from Tamil Nadu, India, who is proficient in both Tamil and English. She holds significant roles as a trans activist, counselor, reporter, documentary filmmaker, a researcher specializing in transgender community issues, and serves as the chief *E-Trans News* editor. She is a proponent of radical sexuality, actively advocating for the rights of sexual minorities in South India. Babu leads multiple initiatives aimed at the progress and betterment of the transgender community. Furthermore, she holds the position of co-founder and director at the pioneering Transgender Resource Center in Madurai, India, established in 2016. This center prides itself on a rich collection of Tamil and English books, which meticulously document the transformative journey of the transgender community in India and elsewhere. With an extensive collection of over 200 books in both languages and an archive of 10,000 news collections, the library remains diligent in tracking government orders and Supreme Court decisions concerning the transgender community.

Babu, who worked as a reporter at 'Youth India Magazine' in 2017, was known for her column called 'Arthanariswaram.' Her column delved into the historical background and the treatment of the transgender community by society. In order to reach a wide audience, she established a YouTube channel called 'Tranz Media' in 2013, where she discussed social issues and the cultures surrounding the transgender community. Babu's interests are evident in her activities, such as studying Tamil cultures,

exploring historical identities, and analyzing the representation of trans women in traditional Tamil literature. Her goal is to enlighten the transgender community and promote equality. Babu has made significant contributions to her field of study, covering a wide range of topics from Tamil classic literature to contemporary society.

In Tamil literature, various names are used to refer to males, females, and transgender individuals. She recognised that the trans women's terms 'Ali, Pottai, Pedi, etc.,' (means effeminate man), and a few name meanings from classic literature had transformed the cause of society/media interaction after a few decades. She recognised its transformative power and understood the importance of providing trans women with respectable and honourable names to combat social stigma. Priya Babu, an advocate for transgender rights, approached Mr. Ravi, an officer of the Indian Police Service (IPS), seeking a name for the trans community. Mr. Ravi proposed the term 'Aravani' during a beauty contest held at the Koovagam festival in 1997, which aimed to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS among trans women (Shanmugavel, 2018). The name 'Aravani' carries significant religious and cultural significance and has since been widely used to refer to trans women in Tamil Nadu. Babu has contributed significantly to the transgender community, working towards their increased visibility and acceptance in society. Through her initiatives, she has challenged stereotypes surrounding the trans community and provided them with a platform to express their opinions. Notably, Babu and lawyer Ragini filed a petition in the Madras High Court in March 2004, advocating for the voting rights of the transgender community.

Babu is dedicated to creating economic opportunities and offering alternative sources of income for transgender individuals in India. In 2021, she introduced 'Trans Kitchen' in cities such as Madurai, followed by Chennai in 2023. This impactful initiative seeks to empower transgender individuals who frequently rely on sex work, begging, or dancing to make

ends meet, by offering job opportunities in guest services, administration, and support roles. Her visionary endeavors extend beyond Trans Kitchen, reaching new horizons. In 2023, she spearheaded the establishment of the first-ever transgender publishing and film companies. These ventures serve as a platform to enhance the visibility of the transgender community and provide greater opportunities for them to enter these industries. Babu's efforts are focused on promoting inclusivity and fostering a more diverse and representative public sphere.

Babu has received numerous prestigious awards from government and non-government organizations. These include the 'Best Transgender Social Worker Award' from Lion's Club in 2008, the 'Su. Samuthiram Best Marginalised Community Writer Award' from the Tamil Nadu Progressive Writer Association in 2009, and the 'Life Achievement Award' from the Tamil Nadu Writers Association in the same year. In 2012, Babu was honored with the 'Periyar Award' from Bharathidasan University, as well as from Periyar Thiravida Kalagam and Periyar Art and Cultural Association in 2014. Babu's remarkable achievements were further recognised by Anantha Vikatan magazine, which named them one of the Top 10 individuals in 2012. Other accolades include the 'Best Social Worker Award' from SRV Schools in Trichy in 2015, the 'Best Social Worker Award' from 'Niza Nataka Iyakkam' in Madurai in 2018, and the 'Aval Vikatan' award from Aval Vikatan magazine in the same year. In 2018, Babu also received the 'Best LGBTQAI Media Award' from Humsafar Trust in Mumbai, followed by the 'Madurai Citizen Award' from Madurai Radio City in 2019. Additional honors include the 'Best Social Worker Award' from Jewel one shop in 2020, the 'Best Social Worker Award' from the Rotary Club in 2021, and the 'Best Transgender Media Person Award' from the Born2win organization.

In 2007, she released her debut book, ' *Aravanigal Samuga Varaiviyal*' (Transgender Sociography). Her second book, ' *Moonram Palin*

Moogam (Third Gender Face), is published in 2008. This marked her as the first trans woman novelist in India. Later, Mahalakshmi Raghavan translated into English as 'The Face Unseen' in 2019. In addition to these works, Babu has also authored '*Transgender and Social Rights*' (2009), '*Sexual Minorities Love Documents*' (2010), '*Transgender Welfare Board Schemes Guide*' (2011), '*Transgender Social History in Tamil Nadu*' (2012), and '*Transgenders Victory*' (2014), Transgender album song '*Vanam Thandi*' (2017), '*Transgender in Tamil cinema*' (2019), '*Edaiyenam*' (2021) was translated into English as '*Transgenderism in India*' (2021) by Mahalakshmi Raghavan, a transgender novelist, researcher, and activist.

During the course of my conversation with Priya Babu, I landed on a sensitive topic revolving around the transphobic conflicts she faces due to ambiguous words in the Tamil language. In this interview, Babu shares her intimate experiences, perspectives, and new insights regarding the stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding her community. It serves as a societal reflection on the often less-discussed issue of the trans women community. The series of questions below strive to shed light on the challenges faced by trans women and bring awareness to their difficult circumstances. This interview aims to provide a deeper understanding of the cultural contexts and historical perspectives of trans women.

1. **Kavitha:** I am concerned the question might be sensitive but for the record, I ask this question. how do you identify yourself in terms of gender and how should I address you?

Priya Babu: I identify as a woman and prefer to be referred to using she/her/herself pronouns. Although I was born with male-assigned organs, I have recognised my femininity since childhood. People like myself face societal pressures, and many of us struggle throughout our lives to gain societal recognition of our gender

identity as women. Gender identification is not determined by biological sex. That is why individuals in the trans women community, including myself, use feminine terms such as padu thathi (great grandmother's mother), thatha Guru (great grandmother), nana guru (grandmother), guru (my mother), Kaalaa Guru (my mother's sisters or aunty), guru bhai (my sisters), bhata guru bhai (elder sister), chotta gurubhai (young sister), Chela (daughter), naththi chela (granddaughter), santhi chela (great-granddaughter), satak naththi (great granddaughter's daughter). Although we use the terms 'trans woman' and 'transgender' in official documents, I always identify myself as a woman.

2. **K:** When and why did you decide to become a writer? What were your intentions or goals in writing?

PB: During my visit to Mumbai for my physical transformation treatment, I discovered a solitary store that exclusively sold Tamil books. It was there that I stumbled upon Su. Samuthiram's novel '*Vaada Malli*' in 2017. This remarkable book sheds light on the daily lives and challenges faced by trans women in society, making it the pioneering work of its kind. The author's writing, portrayal, and understanding deeply inspired me, and my passion for reading paved the way for my own journey as a writer. Through my writing, I aim to amplify the representation, rights, awareness, and other pertinent information pertaining to trans women, all in the pursuit of fostering equality. I firmly believe that trans women possess a unique perspective and sensitivity that allows them to express profound emotions unlike any other individuals. Writing, in my personal view, holds the extraordinary power to effect transformative change in the world.

Since 2004, I have been actively involved with the Tamil Nadu Progressive Writers Association (TNPWS), where I have contributed to the advancement of the transgender community. In recognition of my contributions, I was selected to serve on the TNPWS board in 2012. On April 15th of the same year, the Tamil Nadu Progressive Writers Association organised Transgender Day, during which I was entrusted with creating the program and preparing the report for the Vanavil (Rainbow) Foundation. As part of our efforts, we organised a writing workshop specifically catered to members of the LGBT community, with a turnout of over 30 individuals. Our aim was to provide support and encouragement to these community members in their writing endeavours. Moreover, my intention is to see more trans women writers in future, further diversifying the literary landscape.

3. **K:** ‘Edaiyenam’ is a Tamil grammatical phrase, and the word also implies ‘Edai+eanam,’ which means ‘in between gender’ How would you characterise the Tamil book title ‘*Edaiyenam*’? Why did you choose ‘*Edaiyenam*’ as a book title? And why did you choose to call your English book ‘*Transgenderism in India*’ instead of translating the Tamil book title?

PB: The Tamil alphabet comprises three genders: valinam (hard consonants) represented by ‘க, ச, ட, த, ப, ந’ categorised as male, mellinam (soft consonants) represented by ‘ங, ஞ, ண, ற, ட, ன’ categorised as female, and edaiyenam (medium consonants) represented by ‘ய, ர, ல, வ, ழ, ள’ categorised as transgender. The vallinam consonants are associated with the chest, mellinam consonants with the nose, and edaiyenam consonants with the area between the neck. The first writer to refer to the edaiyenam consonants as transgender letters was Vannacharapam Dhandapani. The concept of classifying genders into categories such as male,

female, and transgender dates back to the Sangam period or even earlier, as evident from the use of consonants to denote gender. Considering this historical context, the book has been titled ‘Edaiyenam.’ Its purpose is to illuminate our history, culture, evidence of a dignified lifestyle, rich literary heritage, and profound spiritual insights. The translator opted for an English title to reach a multilingual audience and offer readers a deep comprehension of the book's content. Consequently, the book's contents substantiate the chosen title by delivering on its promise.

4. **K:** Like ‘Edaiyenam’, why does the Aidam letter ‘ஃ’ in *Aruvagai Ilakkanam* in Tamil refer to transgender letters? What do you think about this gender categorization? and do you think this might be the basis for gender discrimination in society?

PB: The letter ‘ஃ’ in the Tamil alphabet is referred to as the ‘Aidam’ letter, which holds significance as a representation of transgender identity. Unlike other letters, it cannot be used as the first or last letter of a word; instead, appears in the middle. This resemblance to transgender individuals, who may have been assigned a male or female sex at birth but identify, express themselves, or behave in ways that do not conform to societal norms associated with that assigned sex, highlights a parallel. Both the letter and transgender people undergo a transformation away from male and female categorizations. These gender categorizations hold significant meaning. The ancient Tamil grammar book serves as compelling evidence of the existence of gender categorization not discrimination. Specifically, the book explicitly divides individuals into male, female, and transgender categories. This historical text validates the recognition and acknowledgement of transgender individuals within ancient society.

5. **K:** In the passage, you referred to Dhandpani's assertion regarding Aidam 'ஃ', which he claims to be a meaningless letter for transgender individuals in his book chapter 'Sollilakkanam' within 'Aruvagai Ilakkanam' (Priya Babu, 2021). However, you did not express your own perspective on this statement. Is there a specific reason for omitting your explanation? Furthermore, how do you interpret this statement? The following quote from the poem. 'Sollikkanam' is provided below:

Aanpaal penpaal uyarthinai enbaathum

Alipaal agrinai enbathum azhage

(Aruvagai Ilakkanam, Sollilakkanam 20)

Penmai vittu avavuva pedu aanpaal

Aanmai vittu avavuva pedu penpaal

Irumaiyum Agrinai anavum aagum

(Nanool Sollathigaram, Peyariyal-264)

According to the above excerpt, the author compared heterosexuals to living-species but at the same time, he compared transgenders to non-living species. According to my understanding, such a comparison offers a sense of inequity as the former is anchored to living and the latter to non-living. How do you perceive this?

PB: The book 'Edaiyenam' boldly embraces trans women's representation, culture, and identity as a profound statement. I didn't write this book with the intention of providing a critical analysis, nor do I see any reason to omit this explanation. In Tamil classic literature, trans women's identities have been celebrated and demeaned. While we celebrate 'Thirukural' as a universally revered

literary work, it is important to acknowledge that within its verses, two couplets employ the term ‘Pedi’ in a derogatory manner.

English Couplet 0614:

Beneficent intent in men by whom no strenuous work is wrought,

Like battle-axe in sexless being’s hand availeth nought.

Couplet Explanation:

The liberality of him, who does not labour, will fail, like the manliness of a hermaphrodite, who has a sword in its hand (Pope, 2002).

English Couplet 0727:

As Shining sword before the foe which ‘sexless being’ bears,

Is science learned by him the council’s face who fears.

Couplet Explanation:

The learning of him who is diffident before an assembly is like the shining sword of a hermaphrodite in the presence of his foes (Pope, 2002).

I agree. It is unacceptable to compare and discriminate against transgender individuals by treating them as inanimate objects. In Tamil classic literature, however, trans women are equalised, venerated as gods, and advisors. On the other hand, they are also denigrated as cowards and non-living things. It is important to note that these literary works document a range of gender experiences, both degraded and revered, but we cannot attribute them as a

reflection of the collective consciousness of ancient people based solely on these few texts.

6. **K:** Literature serves as a medium to represent trans women from Tamil classic to contemporary digital literature. Do you think such kind of degraded discourse could contribute to the marginalization of transgender minority? Have any trans women or individuals voiced their criticism regarding these derogatory depictions in Tamil classic literature?

PB: The devaluation of transgender individuals in works such as '*Silapatikaram*' and '*Manimekalai*' has been limited in scope, and we cannot solely attribute it as the cause for the struggles faced by the transgender community in the contemporary era. There is no concrete evidence to support the claim that such discourse directly contributed to their marginalization. However, based on my understanding, it is worth noting that during that time, trans women and individuals, in general, were not well-informed about literature. Some may have regarded it as literary work, similar to mine, while the majority remained uneducated. Presently, social media plays a crucial role in educating both literate and illiterate individuals about the stigma surrounding transgender issues, empowering them to raise their voices against it. It is important to recognise that literature does not always reflect societal perspectives; it primarily represents the viewpoint of the author. The majority of people are unaware of what literature conveys about society. Therefore, it is inaccurate to claim that the derogatory portrayal of trans women in Tamil classic literature directly causes social marginalization. Society's devaluation of trans women is predominantly depicted only within the context of Tamil classic literature.

7. **K:** The art of dance has always been an integral part of the lives of trans women. In various districts such as Madurai, Theni, Dindigul, Virudhunagar, and Tirunelveli, trans women actively participate in traditional dances like Karagattam, Oyilattam, Paraiattam, Kaniyankoothu, and more. In North India, the dance of trans women often marks the beginning of many celebrations. Even in Tamil classic literature, the term ‘Adugai’ in ‘Agananooru’ symbolises the dance performed by trans women (Priya Babu, 2021). How do you see the dance of trans women on the train to extort money from the passengers? According to you How do you see/understand the reasons for their changing cultural and religious identities in modern society?

PB: Undoubtedly, dance emerges as an undeniable form of art. *Pedi Kuthu*, depicted in ‘*Silapathikaram*,’ serves as another literary masterpiece that explores the realm of trans women's dance, alongside ‘*Agananooru*’. Following the enactment of the Criminal Tribals Act in 1874, trans women found themselves compelled to embrace dance as their primary source of income due to societal constraints that restricted their engagement in other forms of labor. Acknowledging that extorting money from individuals or the public is inappropriate and unacceptable is important. However, it is crucial to avoid generalizing the actions of all trans women based on the actions of a limited fraction among them. Remarkably, when male or female individuals commit crimes, society tends to attribute their actions to their individual identity rather than broad generalizations based on gender. Moreover, certain transgender women rationalise their actions by asserting that it functions as a defense mechanism against public abuse, stemming from their own encounters with sexual harassment and being forcibly removed from trains. In order to evade physical harm and mistreatment by broader society, a select group of transgender women—though not all—

receive guidance from their elders to adopt a more assertive demeanor.

8. **K:** Tamil classic literature has various names for transgenders, such as Pedi in ‘Tholkappiyam’, ‘Agananuru’, and ‘Sivagasindhamani’, Azhithoo in the ‘Avinayam’ grammar book, and the five names found in the ‘Soodamani Nigandu’ grammar book as Pedi, Pendagan, Nabunjagan, Ali, and Sandan. Yet the name Ali is frequently used to denote significant spiritual work. What is the reason behind the constant use of the term Ali? What are the conceptual changes in the names of transgender and what are the impacts of such changes on the contemporary transgender society?

PB: A particular name seems to emerge in Tamil every few centuries. For example, women are referred to by various names such as pendu, pen, pettai, magalir, Thai/Thaiyal, paavai, and more. However, the term that has endured the test of time as the most commonly used term for women is ‘pen’. Similarly, the name Ali also exists within our society. Interestingly, the term Ali has undergone two recent changes, transitioning from Aravani to Thirunangai. The demeaning of the term is not because of the term but the people who look at the term when the minor community people are marginalised economically and think badly among the social spectrum.

9. **K:** You refer to trans women as the third gender so frequently in the Tamil text. But why did you and a few trans women register condemnation against the term ‘third gender’? (Priya Babu, 2021)

PB: Yes. My first Tamil novel title is ‘*Moonram Palin Moogam*’, written in 2014. Initially, our intention was not to seek acceptance as trans women. Our primary focus has been on acknowledging and embracing ourselves as a valid gender, thereby advocating for

recognition and understanding. To make it clear, even we need awareness. We see the old trans women are not aware of media, elimination, hierarchy, and involved with sex work, begging and other criminal activities. Later, Kalki Subramaniam, Revathi, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, Living Smile Vidya etc., filled petition, and worked for trans community to give awareness to accept as gender. Supreme Court recognised us as a third gender which was the very first recognition. Although April 14 is celebrated as Transgenders Day, in books, articles, and documents, people use 'third gender'. Recently the discourse has stated as Why third gender? I mentioned in my '*Moonram Palin Moogam*', and '*Edaiyenam*' book third gender term as social consciousness. First, we have to give awareness, then only we have to go for discourse. No, we are in the place to give basic awareness about transgender that is the reason I used the term third gender in my book. Still now we didn't rise big voice not to call the third gender. It is like transnational term for transgender people. For example, women didn't get directly property rights act. First women make other individuals to realise, the rights to wear top shirt (refer Breast Tax), equal pay for equal work, and property rights. Like third gender is an official term now. Recently in Tamilnadu, we started to rise voice not to call third gender and to refer thirunangai (Trans women), thiru nambi (transmen), mahilan (gay), and mahili (lesbian).

10. **K.** Lastly, in the next decade, how do you see the conditions of trans women in terms of their rights and profession, considering the impact of digital media?

P.B: Looking ahead to the next decade, my hopeful expectation is that we will have equal representation across all professions, particularly we will have a better position to occupy medical, educational, independent financial support, and so on. Digital media plays a pivotal role in encouraging our

success and support as it has the power to reach a wide audience. There is a gradual increase in awareness about the rights and experiences of trans women, and people are increasingly becoming more attentive to these issues. Through our relentless efforts and the aid of digital media, our rights and gender-non-conformed children will become more visible and acknowledged in society, leading to a significant shift in the way people perceive trans women, moving away from harmful stereotypes like associating us with sex work, begging, dancing, or criminal activities.

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Appendix B

Chapter 2: Interview questions

1. Do you think the YouTube platform is biased against trans women?
2. Have you noticed that videos or comments on YouTube tend to portray trans women as aggressive? How do you respond to such portrayals?
3. How do individuals interact with trans women in online and offline?
4. What kinds of harassment do trans women face on social media? How and why does it happen?
5. How is the trans women's community marginalized and oppressed on social media, and why?
6. What are the specific dangers that lead to the misrepresentation of trans women on YouTube?

Appendix C

Interviews and Survey Responses from South Indian Trans Women on Migration, Healthcare Access, and the Role of Government Schemes

Interview Questions

1. Have you undergone or considered gender-affirming surgery?
If so, what services are you interested in or have accessed, and where did you access them?
2. Are you aware of state and central government healthcare schemes? and how did you learn about them?
3. What sources (e.g., friends, community groups, social media) do you rely on for information?
4. Have you accessed the state government's migration scheme?
How helpful was it?

Survey questionnaire form

To be answered by the interviewee:

1. What is your age (in years)?
2. What is your gender identity?
 - a. Trans women
 - b. Trans men
 - c. Other: (please describe)
3. What is your educational qualification?
 - a. No formal education
 - b. 1st to 8 standard
 - c. 9th to 12 standard
 - d. Undergraduate degree
 - e. Other (please describe):
4. What is your native place?
5. Where are you staying now, and purpose
6. What gender-affirming surgeries are you interested in?
 - a. Vaginoplasty

- b. Breast augmentation surgery
 - c. Laser hair removal treatment
 - d. Mental health
7. What gender-affirming surgeries have you accessed?
- e. Vaginoplasty
 - f. Breast augmentation surgery
 - g. Laser hair removal treatment
 - h. Mental health
8. Where did you access gender-affirming surgeries?
- a. Government hospital
 - b. Private hospital
 - c. Both
 - d. Prefer not to disclose
9. Have you benefitted from the state government scheme?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
10. Have you benefitted from the central government scheme?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
11. Are you aware of the state government scheme?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
12. Are you aware of the central government scheme?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
13. How did you learn about gender-affirming surgeries and government schemes?
- a. Friends and NGOs
 - b. Social Media
 - c. Family and relatives
14. What is your income per month?
- a. 6000 to 15000
 - b. 15000 to 18000
 - c. 18000 to 25000

15. What is your profession?
- a. Sex work
 - b. Collecting money from the shops
 - c. Both
 - d. Other (please describe)
16. How much do you save from the free fare scheme?...
17. What is your opinion about the free fare scheme?...