

# Transient Marginality and Identity: A Reading of Select Transgender Poems of Kumar Gautam

Sunil. C. R.

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Government First Grade College for Women, K R Nagar  
Mysore, Karnataka State, India

**Abstract :** This study intends to trace the transitory nature of marginality and identity through analysing the few transgender poems of Kumar Gautam. Marginality refers to the condition of being outside from the main stream of life. Identity refers to the acquired or assigned qualities of a group or an individual in a society. As the life of man is ever changing and temporal in nature even the marginality and its identity also tends to change with time. It attempts trace the changes among transgender from nullity to identity with reference to their poems.

**IndexTerms:** Marginality, Identity, Transitory and Transgender

Marginality is an involuntary position and condition of an individual or group at the margins of social, cultural, political, economic, ecological and biophysical systems, preventing the development of capabilities. Identity refers to the collective aspects of characteristics by which a thing or self is definitely recognised or known or what makes a thing or a person unique. It means both identity and marginality express the existence of dominant center/ power structure in opposition to them. So marginality is an experience of a person or a group amid the existing milieu of culture. And identity as contextual condition characteristics and features of a person or group. In turn Both are ephemeral in nature.

On this pretext, this study attempts to understand the marginality and identity of transgender with reference to the poems of Kumara Gautam. Kumar Gautam is a writer-director based in Mumbai. He has been associated with several TV shows across GEC channels as a writer, creative director, creative producer, lyricist and director. He writes and performs English, Hindi and Hindustani (Urdu) poetry at leisure. His poems voice the sufferings of socially deprived community, namely, transgender, by the major communities in the society and simultaneously imprint the identity and their existence.

India is a nation of multi cultures, linguistics, ethnic groups and religious people dwelling harmoniously with all its inherent differences. This dynamic nature of Indian society symbolizes the existence of dominant power structure on the base of culture, religion, economy, power, community and sex where the sidelined one becomes the marginal who always strives to be a part of main stream with recognized identities. And one such marginalized community of people in India is transgender. Transgender is a person whose sense of personal identity differs not only anatomically from male or female but also in terms of gender which is a cultural construct. The identity of transgender is an inclusive of anatomy, persona, psychological and sexual orientations, socio cultural and behavioral traits imbibed in a person as a natural one comprising cross- dressers, transgender and transsexuals. This acquired, natural and transplanted sexual trait with cultural construct of third gender sense is beyond the notion of dominant structures in the society which has marginalized them in the society.

Marginality as an experience effects the life of people are well portrayed the woks authors. It is a multi-layered concept. Dominant socio cultural order marginalizes the minor cultural groups, ethnics, families or individuals on the edge and their identities are of more imposed one through cultural constructs. Transgender being a part and parcel of Indian society, their existence is neglected and unacknowledged. Their sexual identity and individuality is under threat and were mrginalised as Hijras, Kinnars, Shikandi and looked down upon as the curse of God. It expresses their psychological conflicts and dilemma of who are they? What are they? Their unrecognized anatomy, opposite feelings and aspirations against their own body and the trauma of non-existence of living human being is clearly expressed in Kumara Gautam's poem "Who am I":

I wonder  
Who am I?  
A body trapped in different soul  
Or a soul mismatching the body.

I ponder  
Who is at war?  
Me with myself  
or the world is picking fights with me.

I am amused.  
Who made me slave?  
My dilemmas  
Or Society

Marginalisation of transgender is a socio cultural process of side lining the minor or the periphery by the hegemonic group or majority through their system where minors like transgender are exploited and oppressed socially, culturally and sexually. Their identities are imposed as sexual objects and having nullified their individuality. Their sexual abuse, physical infliction and the plight of their life and the hidden deep hope and resilience are well depicted in the poem “I Can Still Fly”:

My mind is torn,  
Body ripped,  
There’s enough chaos,  
The universe has broken me up into fragments,  
But my ardor has not dampened.

Above poem not only depicts the plight but also unveils the innate strength to accept and hope for new life ahead. This silent perseverance leads to revelation and to rise in the life ahead as these identities and marginalization are transitory one. Marginalisation as a process and ever changing in nature, it conditions the transgender and the verge group physically and mentally both at individual and societal level. The acute cultural pressure makes them temporarily alienated, but their self-reliance, simultaneously, changes their innate nature and thoughts leading to gradual transformation into their way of life as well. In a way, marginality and their identity tends to change over a period of time which is not only physical life but also innate one. The dominant cultural oppression, suffering and the feel of alienation of Kinnar is felt in Shilok Mukktatti’s poem “Kinnara of the Dark World”

My mother loves me, but never understands me.  
As for my father, I am not the one he wanted,  
For the siblings, we are ghastly speech,  
Forget the relatives, it’s a far speech at all.

The un-dampened spirit, self-reliance, patient suffering and realization of transgender provides strength to aspire for new life and identity negating the so-called socio-cultural identities. This revelation goads and lays stepping stone towards their liberation from the clutches of hegemonic pseudo cultural constructs. Such anguishes of transgender resulted in the transformation of themselves in all the facets of life. One can witness their academic persuasions, working in public sectors, active participation in social activities carving their new identity. In recent past there are many acclaimed writers like Revati, Vidya, Ghazal Dhaliwal etc have written novels creating an identity for themselves and for their minor community. They write themselves and represent their men as torch bearers for a new life amid the main stream of the society. Kumara Gautam’s poem “Let The Lights In” expresses:

Expose!  
Come out of shadow!  
Let thw world see whole of you!  
Admire you and your flaws!  
It’s the imperfection that makes you Unique.  
.....  
.....  
.....  
Let the belief of world shine on you  
And with in you  
Let the Lights in!

However, marginality and identity are ephemeral in nature. As life cycle subjects to change over a period of time, similarly ways of life, culture, beliefs and practices also tends to change. Literary works as an expression of life depicts the changing society, culture and man’s conducts at the community level and as an individual, revealing his transient nature towards main stream of the rejuvenated society. Select transgender poems highlight their movement from marginality to mainstream along with the changing from null status to acclaimed identity. So marginality as a process tends to change asserting its power. Transgender poems records their exploitation, abuse and oppression, having patiently suffered and accepting the reality with resilience, realization of their innate strength and converting aspirations into action and assertion of their own identity on par equivalent to the dominant community. Writings of transgender is their voice, identity and the traces the growth of transgender. Hence, the acquired notions, belief and practices, power center and characteristic traits and identities appear to be false over a period of time. This transient nature of marginality and inculcated identities always conditions the life men and minors like transgender.

## References:

1. Bernstein, Mary. "Identity politics." *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 31.1 (2005): 47-74.
2. Haque, Saidul. *Queer Discourses and the New Literatures in English*  
<https://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/engp08/chapter/queer-discourses-and-the-new-literatures-in-english/>
3. Gautama, Kumara. *Transgender Poems*  
<https://kumargautam.wordpress.com/tag/transgender/>
4. Kikhi, K., & Gautam, D.R. (Eds.). (2023). *Marginality in India: Perspectives of Marginalisation from the Northeast* (1st ed.). Routledge India. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003279679>
5. Tully J. Identity politics. In: Ball T, Bellamy R, eds. *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*. The Cambridge History of Political Thought. Cambridge University Press; 2003:517-533.
6. V., Sarada. (2016). *Subaltern Identity Of Transgender: A Perspective Of Indian Society*. *International Journal of Research - GRANTHAALAYAH*. 4. 101-104. 10.5281/zenodo.158977.

