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Ms. Sumiti Ahuja, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Delhi,

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Dr. Navtika Singh Nautiyal

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Dr. Rinu Saraswat

Associate Professor at School of Law, Apex University, Jaipur, M.A, LL.M, Ph.D,

Dr. Rinu have 5 yrs of teaching experience in renowned institutions like Jagannath University and Apex University. Participated in more than 20 national and international seminars and conferences and 5 workshops and training programmes.

Dr. Nitesh Saraswat

E.MBA, LL.M, Ph.D, PGDSAPM

Currently working as Assistant Professor at Law Centre II, Faculty of Law, University of Delhi. Dr. Nitesh have 14 years of Teaching, Administrative and research experience in Renowned Institutions like Amity University, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Jai Narain Vyas University Jodhpur, Jagannath University and Nirma University.

More than 25 Publications in renowned National and International Journals and has authored a Text book on Cr.P.C and Juvenile Delinquency law.



Subhrajit Chanda

BBA. LL.B. (Hons.) (Amity University, Rajasthan); LL. M. (UPES, Dehradun) (Nottingham Trent University, UK); Ph.D. Candidate (G.D. Goenka University)

Subhrajit did his LL.M. in Sports Law, from Nottingham Trent University of United Kingdoms, with international scholarship provided by university; he has also completed another LL.M. in Energy Law from University of Petroleum and Energy Studies, India. He did his B.B.A.LL.B. (Hons.) focussing on International Trade Law.

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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal providededicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

“PROMISES UNKEPT”: A SOCIO LEGAL REFELCTION TRANSGENDER LIVES POST–NALSA

AUTHORED BY - GADE SAHITHI & SOUNDARYA

Pursuing BBA LLB

ABSTRACT

The Supreme Court's path-breaking ruling in NALSA v. Union of India (2014) was a momentous step towards the recognition of the rights of transgender individuals in India by confirming their right to self-identify their gender and ordering the state to facilitate their socio-economic inclusion. Yet, the journey from legal recognition to actual-world change is still uneven and complicated. This paper critically analyzes the post-NALSA legal developments, such as the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 and assesses their effects on the daily lives of transgender individuals.

With a socio-legal approach, the research delves into the mismatch between the constitutional guarantee of equality and the persisting experiences of discrimination, stigma, and marginalization of transgender persons in access to healthcare, education, work, and housing. It also examines the contradictions in the 2019 Act—e.g., medical certification for gender identity—and their implications for dignity and autonomy. Using court cases, policy analysis, and lived realities, the paper argues for a rights-based, intersectional framework that moves beyond tokenistic inclusion. Finally, it posits that legal reforms need to be based on social consciousness, institutional responsibility, and community mobilization to promote actual equality among transgender individuals in India.

Keywords: Transgenders Persons Act 2019, NALSA Judgment, Legal Recognition, Individuals, Discrimination.

1. Introduction:

Transgender individuals in India have long been criminalized, marginalized, and outside the mainstream social and legal structure. The 2014 NALSA judgment was a ray of hope with the judicial recognition of their identity and mandating the state to safeguard and uphold their rights. The Court's historic order was hailed as a major achievement for human rights in India and opened the way for subsequent legal changes, including the 2019 Transgender Persons Act.

But, almost a decade on, the lived experiences of most transgender persons are still characterized by discrimination, violence, and institutional disregard. This paper aims to examine the gap between law provisions and social facts, exploring to what extent the promises of NALSA have been fulfilled in terms of real change. Legal recognition notwithstanding, the changing of transgender lives remains an ongoing struggle. The essay will also consider why the legal reforms, and more specifically the 2019 Act, have been less progressive than expected and will critically explore the ongoing struggles for dignity and inclusion.

2. Legal Framework and Developments:

2.1 The NALSA Judgment (2014)

¹NALSA v. Union of India ruling is generally considered to be a watershed decision concerning the rights of transgender people in India. The Court, in this case, held that transgender people constitute a third gender under Article 14, 15, and 21 of the Indian Constitution. The ruling ensured the protection of the rights of transgender individuals to identify their gender themselves, without undergoing medical treatment, which was a significant step in establishing their autonomy and dignity.

But the judgement also formulated several directives which required the State to implement certain activities, including:

Granting affirmative action in education, employment, and healthcare.

Inclusion of transgender people in socio-economic welfare schemes.

Creating gender-neutral policies for transgender people.

¹ National Legal Service Authority v. Union of India, (2014) 5 SCC 438

2.2 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019

²The 2019 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act was a reaction to the NALSA judgment and was intended to extend legal protection to transgender individuals further. The Act sets out some of the most important provisions as follows:

Right to self-identify gender.

Protections against discrimination in employment, education, and healthcare.

Criminalization of violence and exploitation of transgender individuals.

Yet, the Act has been widely criticized by campaigners and legal experts. One of the main issues is the need for transgender individuals to seek a certificate of identity from a District Magistrate to secure legal recognition. The provision is antithetical to the self-identification principle enshrined in NALSA.

3. SOCIAL REALITIES POST NALSA

Even with legal recognition, the lived experiences of transgender individuals in India remain tainted by discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization. This section will examine the social realities transgender individuals experience, even with the legal protections that exist.

3.1 Employment and Education

³Transgender individuals frequently encounter serious impediments to access to education and work. Transgender individuals are frequently compelled to leave school or experience bullying and harassment in schools. In the workplace, transphobia and discrimination frequently result in increased levels of unemployment and informal sector activities, including sex work or begging.

3.2 Healthcare Disparities

⁴Transgender individuals still experience discrimination in healthcare environments. There are reports that healthcare providers frequently deny care or misgender transgender patients. The absence of trained healthcare providers in transgender health and hormonal therapy makes the situation worse.

² The Transgender Persons (protection of Rights) Act, No.40 of 2019, Act of Parliament, 2019.

³ Human Rights Violations in Housing, work, and Access to Public Spaces in India (2019)

⁴ Human Rights violations Against the Transgender Community (2003)

3.3 Violence and Marginalization

⁵Transgender individuals face high levels of violence, including physical violence, sexual violence, and hate crimes. The police do not adequately investigate such crimes, and transgender victims are commonly revictimized. The intersectional difficulties for transgender individuals from lower castes and marginalized communities exacerbate their experiences.

4. Critical Analysis

⁶Although India is way ahead in legally recognizing transgender individuals, there are large gaps in putting these legal changes into practice. The Transgender Persons Act, although progressive, has weaknesses. The process of certification for gender recognition is still a bureaucratic hurdle that runs counter to the values of autonomy and dignity created in NALSA. Lower-caste, rural, or lower socio-economic transgender individuals are confronted with superimposed layers of discrimination. Intersectionality of caste, class, and gender identity brings about additional exclusion from the larger social systems.

5. Recent Developments and Community Resistance

In spite of the 2019 Act's drawbacks, the transgender populations in India have demonstrated amazing resilience and activism. The growth of transgender representation in politics, film, and activism has pushed back against conservative norms. State governments in Kerala and Tamil Nadu have initiated schemes to advance the welfare of transgender individuals by offering education and employment support.

6. Conclusion

The path from legal recognition to complete inclusion continues to be challenging. Although the NALSA judgment was an important milestone, actual change will involve a transformation of attitudes at the societal level and systemic reforms in policy. Legal reforms need to emphasize self-identification, affirmative action, and social inclusion to guarantee dignity and equality to transgender individuals.

⁵ The NALSA Judgement and the Rise of Gender Identity Jurisprudence in India

⁶ Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Report of the Expert Committee on the Issues Related to Transgenders Persons (2019)

FOOTNOTES:

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