
A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF CROSS-DRESSING LEGITIMACY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIA

Dr. K.S. Rekh Raj Jain

Assistant Professor, ICFAI Law School, Hyderabad,
nabariya_jain@yahoo.co.in

Received: Oct. 2018 Accepted: Nov. 2018 Published: Dec. 2018

Abstract: The ways of dressing echoes human prerequisite which attempt to align one's self with a specific sexual group and also reflects sensation of attire. Attires influence and shape the appearance with substantial impression on the construction of social identity. Cross-dressing is morphism of expression of disguise and self-expression usually associated with the opposite sex which been practiced in ample in many societies. Crossdressing reveals a form of gender transgression indicating the most visible form of gender non-conformity. Crossdressers can be categorized into four clear groups – Transvestites, Eunuchs, Transsexual men and Drag queens.

Cross-dressing are of diverse diversities and various reasons may be attributed. Mostly cross-dressing has been used for purposes of disguise, comfort, and self-expression throughout history including the modern times. Even socio-psycho and religious inference also reveals that individuals who cross-dressed did so for innumerable reasons.

Originally cross dressing was a private affair but currently it is visible openly due to growing acceptance of different sexualities as people are veering away from the strict confines of dress code. Dressing to express sexual orientation adds a different layer of complexity.

The laws pertinent to dress varied around the world. Laws criminalizing cross-dressing flourished throughout the 20th century, which was perhaps a reflection of society's perception of cross-dressing as sexual deviance yet cross-dressing existed. Later on cross-dressing laws are challenged on various grounds. The present contention is that one's choice of attire may be described as an expression of individual liberty and autonomy, or an expressive statement protected under the right to freedom of expression.

This paper takes the stock of the current context and aims to bring greater clarity pertinent to the thematic area of concerns regarding a qualitative analysis of cross-dressing legitimacy with special reference to India.

Keywords: Attire, Cross-dressing, Cross-dresser, Sexuality, Transgender.

Introduction: The ways of dressing echoes human prerequisite which attempt to align one's self with a specific sexual group and also reflects sensation of attire. When a person intentionally dress to reflect his sexuality it represents a means to increase the visibility of sexual identities which are not universally accepted. When it comes to dressing and sexuality, context is everything and sexually differentiated people willing to be considered different from the mainstream dress differently to express their sexual orientation in public. This includes forms of cross-dressing intended to break down stereotypical gender roles. Crossdressers can be categorized into four clear groups – Transvestites, Eunuchs, Transsexual men and Drag queens.

The sex of a human baby is determined at the time of birth either as male or female. Being male, female or something else is an individual's internal sense. The notion of gender complexity is deeply rooted in every society. How a person represents or expresses one's gender identity is internal. A question haunts whether fashion choices of dressing appearance represent our sexual identities. Yes there is long been a connection between dress and sexuality, particularly in relation to gender.⁸

⁸ Dressed for sexuality - Archer Magazine archermagazine.com, Retrieved on 4th July 2018.

Sexual identity is a representative concept. Attires influence and shape the appearance with substantial impression on the construction of social identity. In the Renaissance era man's codpiece became an emblem of masculinity, power and sexual prowess and while during the Victorian times, attire purported to reflect one's mind and character, as well as one's class.⁹ Until the 18th century there were no significant differences in the dressing of both sexes and it was from 19th century expression of sexual difference through the clothing was more important than that of the social order.¹⁰

This paper takes the stock of the current context and aims to bring greater clarity pertinent to the thematic area of concerns regarding a qualitative analysis of cross-dressing legitimacy with special reference to India.

Cross-Dressing: Cross-dressing is morphism of expression of disguise and self-expression usually associated with the opposite sex who may be male, female, straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual. There are numerous definitions and perspectives with regard to crossdressing. Cross-dressing refers to the deliberate act of wearing clothing other than those to which an individual has been socially assigned for a specific purpose.¹¹ Cross-dressing perhaps is for recreation, expression or art, or for erotic gratification.¹² It is often assumed that the connotation is directly correlated with behaviors of transgender identity or sexual, fetishist and homosexual behavior and is not synonymous to one's gender identity.¹³

Cross-dressing phenomenon is termed as transvestism and the person is said to be transvestite. The term transvestite is generally more preferred in Europe and the United Kingdom, whereas the term crossdresser is used more frequently in the United States. Both terms typically refer to a male to female transgender person who chooses to live "dual role," presenting completely female at some times or completely male at others. Crossdressers and Transvestites are a marginalized group within the LGBT community.¹⁴

Psychology Behind Cross-Dressing: Recorded history reveals that cross-dressing has been practiced in ample in many societies. The psychology behind cross-dressing could be due to gender dysmorphia, social dysmorphia with gender euphoria and transvestism.¹⁵

Cross-dressing are of diverse diversities and various reasons may be attributed why an individual is engaged in such behaviour. The range differs as for a few it is a matter of coziness or flair, or out of personal preference, or curiosity and sexual excitement, or gender identity or experience a different life perspective and for a few to shock others or challenge social norms. The one thing most all crossdressers have in common is that the need is neither frivolous, nor easily dismissed.¹⁶

Gender Expression And Cross-Dressing: "Gender Expression" refers to how people express their gender identity.¹⁷ The gradation between male and female are expectable and acceptable and such notion presuppose a biological foundation generation diversity across a range of natural realities.¹⁸ Gender is socially constructed expression while crossdressing is learnt. Hence crossdressers accept their

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Zoi Arvanitidou, Construction of Gender through Fashion and Dressing, Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, Vol 4 No 11 October 2013, P.111.

¹¹ Crannell, Marissa, "Utterly Confused Categories: Gender Non-Conformity in Late Medieval and Early Modern Western Europe" (2015). Theses and Dissertations. P.7.

¹² Sexual orientation and gender identity glossary – portico network, <https://www.porticonetwork.ca> Retrieved on 4th July 2018.

¹³ Trans Terminology, <https://beckandbre.com> Retrieved on 4th July 2018.

¹⁴ Knowledge is power: Learning about crossdressing – LGBT helpline, lgbt.ie, Retrieved on 7th July 2018.

¹⁵ What is the psychology behind cross-dressing? – Quora <https://www.quora.com>, Retrieved on 7th July 2018.

¹⁶ Why do I Cross dress? - "Light in the Closet" www.lightinthecloset.org, Retrieved on 7th July 2018.

¹⁷ Fact Sheet: Transgender & Gender Nonconforming Youth In School, <https://srlp.org>, Retrieved on 9th July 2018.

¹⁸ G.G.Bolich, Vol.2: Today Transgender Realities, Psyche's Press, Raleigh North Carolina, 2007, P.105.

biological identity and are usually imperturbable with gender but on the contrary they sense to explore and express. Crossdressing is wearing clothing of the opposite sex and gender expression is a way in which a person acts to communicate gender within a given culture.¹⁹

Crossdressing reveals a form of gender transgression indicating the most visible form of gender non-conformity. Gender non-conformity is an umbrella term that can be used to describe a wide range of terms that often encompass other terms such as transsexual, cross dresser, gender queer, femme queen etc. The legal concept had significant impact on the lives of gender non-conforming and gender transgressing individuals across world. Cross-dressing and gender inversion could be used by both men and women as a form of subversion and resistance to authority.²⁰

Socio-Psycho and Religious Inference of Cross-Dressing: Crossdressing is recorded around the world from the ancient past up to the present. Cross-dressing has been practiced throughout much of recorded history and in many societies. There are many different kinds of cross-dressing and many diverse reasons why an individual might engage in cross-dressing behavior. Mostly cross-dressing has been used for purposes of disguise, comfort, and self-expression throughout history including the modern times. Cross-dressing implies different things in different cultures and has been viewed historically in wide varying ways.²¹ The early social literature reveals that it was illegal for women to perform in theatres so female roles in the plays were originally played by cross-dressing men or boys. Thus cross-dressing and theatre are interrelated through the unconscious use of language.²² Cross-dressing represents a symbolic act on stage and audiences recognize that the figures on stage are impersonators. Similarly as Muslim women were forbidden to act on stage due prevalence of purdah most of men and boy used act female parts who also cross-dressed for dramas.²³ Boys in female garb often formed a part of men's Harman in Afghanistan.²⁴ It indicates that cross-dressing is used for different purposes like for entertainment, for fashion and for self-expression.²⁵

Originally cross dressing was a private affair which was confined in the bedroom and the dressers remain anonymous, without revealing their male identity.²⁶ Cross-dressing, is the use of one or a few items of female attire for erotic or sexual pleasure. When they are cross-dressing, they are trying to fulfil their own idealized images of femininity. At the same time cross-dresser acknowledge that they are male and that their feminine alter ego only exists for the time they indulge in cross-dressing.²⁷ Cross-dressing is temporary in order that they can always return to their original masculine gender.²⁸ To avoid social repression, many cross-dresser tend to keep their cross-dressing secret and exhibit a masculine image in public that hides their feminine side.²⁹ Cross-dresser may also face rejection from their parents and friends who may confuse their cross-dressing with homosexuality, but again this will depend on each individual.³⁰ Some of the men associate dressing up with a sense of relaxation and stress-relief.³¹

¹⁹ Deborah A. Christel, Nicole H. O'Donnell and Linda Arthur Bradley, Coping by crossdressing: an exploration of exercise clothing for obese heterosexual women, *Spring open*, (2016) 3:11, P.1.

²⁰ Crannell, Marissa, "Utterly Confused Categories: Gender Non-Conformity in Late Medieval and Early Modern Western Europe" (2015). Theses and Dissertations. P.115.

²¹ Vern L. Bullough, Bonnie Bullough, *Cross Dressing Sex and Gender*, 1993, University of Pennsylvania Press, P.3.

²² Marjorie B. Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*, 2011, Routledge, New York, P.40.

²³ Vern L. Bullough, Bonnie Bullough, *Cross Dressing Sex and Gender*, 1993, University of Pennsylvania Press, P.12.

²⁴ *Ibid.* P.13.

²⁵ Elaine Marie Avanzado, Julienne Louise Balota, Benigno Caraan, Jr., Dr. Nelson Tenorio, Level of openness to homosexual crossdressers: A correlation, *Laguna Journal of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 2 No. 3 September 2016, P.97.

²⁶ *The Cross-Dresser's Challenge for Acceptance*, <https://www.huffingtonpost.com> Retrieved on 9th July 2018.

²⁷ D'Exaerde, Caroline de Kerchove (2001) *Dedoublement: the negotiation of gender in transvestism*, Durham theses, P.149, Durham University, : <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk>

²⁸ *Ibid.* P.226.

²⁹ *Ibid.* P. 229.

³⁰ *Ibid.* P.231.

³¹ *Why Are Americans More Accepting of Gays and Lesbians Than Bisexuals and Cross-Dressers?* <https://newrepublic.com> Retrieved on 27th July 2018.

Historical instances, of cross-dressing of women reveals a level of intentionality. In the past women have used men's attire to gain masculine characteristics, and to appear like men so that they were employed for men's work or allowed on the battlefield. In the 20th and 21st centuries in the United States, many women have adopted and worn men's garments in various settings.

The idea of a female wearing clothing of the opposite sex and the term cross-dressing portray a set of cultural connotations. Presently the women is adopting a masculine style to be accepted in a male-centric workforce, signifying the trickling down of men's professional wear becoming women's professional dress.³² Similarly in sports women have embraced men's costumes. Even the medical uniforms of the women nurses shows the shifts in their attire by wearing medical scrubs that were originally designed to fit a male physique.

Is cross-dressing a psychological state of a person, and if so why heterosexuals prefer to cross-dress. Heterosexual cross-dressers want to represent their gender identity by gender-based attire. The psychology of crossdressing reveals that a person intense to slip on a dress is taken to be a deviant of a particularly alarming category.³³

The term cross-dressers is usually used to refer to people with transvestism. Cross-dressing is seen in varying degrees in paraphilias like dual role transvestism, fetishism and trans-sexualism.³⁴ The individual wears clothes of the opposite sex in order to experience temporary membership in the opposite sex. When cross-dressing occurs for erotic purposes over a period of at least six months and when it causes significant distress or impairment, the behavior is considered a mental disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders called transvestic fetishism.³⁵ "Transvestic Fetishism," which it defines as a heterosexual male who has "recurrent intense sexual urges and sexually arousing fantasies involving crossdressing"³⁶

Cross-dressers may cross-dress for reasons other than sexual stimulation for example, to reduce anxiety, to relax, or, in the case of male cross-dressers, to experiment with the feminine side of their otherwise male personalities.³⁷ Men who cross-dress may have feelings of gender dysphoria when they are under stress or experience a loss.³⁸ Even in the most recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, cross-dressing is listed as a "paraphilic disorder"— something that should be treated if the person feels "personal distress about their interest."³⁹ Psychoanalysis lead in depicting transvestism as a perversion and many associated with fetishism as well as with border line or psychotic functioning.⁴⁰

The intersection of gender and religion is perhaps the most dynamic and volatile pertinent to identity an expression. The question is how divine have been regarded with respect to gender and the answer is if gender crossing are possible to divine beings they are also possible for mortal beings.⁴¹ Cross-dressing never reflected the similar function in various religion but it often reflected gender crossing action of a

³² Deborah A. Christel, Nicole H. O'Donnell and Linda Arthur Bradley, Coping by crossdressing: an exploration of exercise clothing for obese heterosexual women, June 2016, Research Gate, P.5.

³³ The Psychology of Cross-Dressing - The Book of LifeThe Book of Life, <https://www.theschooloflife.com> Retrieved on 10th August 2018.

³⁴ M. Anupama, K. H. Gangadhar, Vandana B. Shetty, and P. Bhadja Dip, Transvestism as a Symptom: A Case Series, Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine, 2016 Jan-Feb; 38(1): 78–80.

³⁵ Heinz Duthel, Kathoey Ladyboy: Thailand's Got Talent, 2013, Herstellung and Verlag, P.27.

³⁶ Cross-Dressing, Brett Genny Beemyn, Encyclopedia, 2015, glbtq, Inc. Retrieved on 10th August 2018.

³⁷ Transvestism - Mental Health Disorders - MSD Manual Consumer, <https://www.msmanuals.com> Retrieved on 10th August 2018.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Why Are Americans More Accepting of Gays and Lesbians Than Bisexuals and Cross-Dressers? <https://newrepublic.com> Retrieved on 27th July 2018.

⁴⁰ Vern L. Bullough, Bonnie Bullough, Cross Dressing Sex and Gender, 1993, University of Pennsylvania Press, P.213.

⁴¹ G.G. Bolich, Cross Dressing in Context, Vol.4, Transgender and Religion, 2008, Psyche's Press, Raleigh North Carolina, P,205.

deity or deities. Cross-dressing was tolerated as well as was supported as a feature of religious devotion and its advantages have figured in numerous religions. Various functions of cross-dressing could be visualized among east and west in the ancient world. In fact religions both ancient and modern have made a place for sacred cross-dressing which concludes that cross-dressing intended human response to divine realities.

The Holy Bible clearly condemns cross-dressing and the Bible calls cross-dressing or transvestitism a choice that is a demonstration of unbelief and rebellion against God and His order.⁴² Islam forbids men to imitate women and women to imitate men, and in fact it emphatically forbids that, to such an extent that the Prophet cursed those who go against the human nature with which Allah created them.⁴³

Cross-dressing is common in Hindu mythology. Cross-dressing symbolizing androgyny is often thought to be a sign of spirituality. In Hinduism male cross-dressing is often a part of Sakti worship. In some ancient tantric sects, particularly those worshipping Durga (Kali) whereby men adore the feminine attire. In some places cross-dressing became an acceptable way of life because it is believed have been ordered by Gods. Giving further justification for cross-dressing at festivals was the existence of cross-dressing episodes the careers of several legendary heroes.⁴⁴

Cross-dressing remains one of the most confusing and misunderstood acts in our society. For years cross-dressers have remained in the shadows and there are many misconceptions about cross-dressers as majority of them attribute to LGBT spectrum but majority of them are heterosexual.⁴⁵

Presently gender fluidity is visible in the clothes that men and women wear. Cross-dressing is not considered a social issue.⁴⁶ Cross-dressing can be a very liberating experience to express one's gender attire. Prior to the 1960s, there was little organizing among cross-dressers? A new era began in 1960, when Virginia Prince began publishing *Transvestia* magazine and helped found the first national organization for cross-dressers.⁴⁷ Currently there are lots of places in society where crossdressers can be warmly welcomed and accepted such as gender clubs, drag clubs, youth organizations, gender conferences, pride parades, conventions, comicons, cosplay, and campuses which reveals concept that crossdressing is not just for the closet.⁴⁸ Hence contemporary history suggest that crossdressing is rooted in the desire for equality.

Dress Appearance and Sexuality: In general dressing communicates biological sex but of the late it has become less necessary for our clothes to be gender specific. A question haunts whether dress choices and appearance lead to assumptions about sexuality. Hayfields study provide evidence that dress greatly offers cues about sexuality, whether or not the individual consciously had that intention.⁴⁹ Dress and appearance have been strong influences in constructing individual identities and individual's freedom to dress as visually or elusively is to express one's own sexuality. The present era brought about more adventure and exploration of identities, with labels whose meanings have changed throughout. Dressing appearance do convey diverse messages irrespective of the intentions, motivations and level of awareness of the wearer.

⁴² What does the Bible say about cross-dressing / transvestism? www.gotquestions.org Retrieved on 12th August 2018.

⁴³ He likes to imitate women - islamqa.info, <https://islamqa>, Retrieved on 12th August 2018.

⁴⁴ Ibid, P. 8, 10 and 30.

⁴⁵ Why Are Americans More Accepting of Gays and Lesbians Than Bisexuals and Cross-Dressers? <https://newrepublic.com> Retrieved on 27th July 2018

⁴⁶ Why is cross-dressing considered a social issue? <https://www.quora.com> Retrieved on 12th August 2018.

⁴⁷ Cross-Dressing, Brett Genny Beemyn, Encyclopedia, 2015, glbtq, Inc. Retrieved on 10th August 2018.

⁴⁸ In which places are cross-dressers most socially accepted? <https://www.quora.com> Retrieved on 12th August 2018.

⁴⁹ Hayfields study although small in sample size, <https://www.coursehero.com> Retrieved on 1st August 2018.

With growing acceptance of different sexualities the people are veering away from the strict confines of dress code. Dressing to express sexual orientation adds a different layer of complexity.⁵⁰ Thus cross-dressing communicate sexual desire or attract sexual attention from others. Cross-dressing appearance reveals the sexuality deviance and such persons would face risk, rejection disapproval and could be vulnerable to the higher risk of discrimination, hate crimes, and violence. Research has emphasized the significance of dress and appearance in communicating sexuality and identity in the LGBTQ community.⁵¹

Legitimacy of Cross-Dressing: Dress is principal way to display gender which is ultimately designed to cover our bodies. Cross-dressing is complex expressive system in which clothes stand at the centre.⁵² A question arises whether is it legitimate to cross dress or is it against the law to cross-dress. There are a variety of laws around the world which affect what people can and cannot wear. For centuries, and all around the globe, strict laws have governed what people wear.⁵³

One way in which law has played a role in enforcing gender norms is by prohibiting cross-dressing. Sumptuary laws were common in medieval Europe, Elizabethan England and colonial North America and served to regulate public attire according to occupation, class and gender. Colonial systems exported dress regulations to many countries around the world.⁵⁴ United States cities began to adopt laws prohibiting cross-dressing in the mid-1800s.⁵⁵ Between 1848 and World War I, forty five cities in the United States passed laws against crossdressing.⁵⁶ Early cases, however, dealt with the textual vagueness of laws that criminalized dressing in clothing of the opposite sex. Individuals prosecuted under the cross-dressing ordinances began to successfully challenge the laws on vagueness grounds. In *City of Columbus v. John Rogers*⁵⁷, John H. Rogers, an appellant, was charged in the Franklin County Municipal Court with appearing in public in the dress and attire of the opposite sex in violation of Section 2343.04 of the Columbus City Codes. The Ohio Supreme Court struck down a Columbus statute which outlawed “dress not belonging to his or her sex” because of the statute’s vagueness. In the 1970s, United States courts began to hear challenges to such laws on both freedom of expression and vagueness grounds. At present cross-dressing laws are rarely enforced in American cities today. Countries like Sudan, Nigeria, and Guyana had laws which prohibited cross-dressing.

Dress laws vary considerably around the world. And there are different laws relating to it in different region, provinces, states, cities wherein one of them would be welcoming while the other would banish such behavior. There are countries where it is illegal and you would be charged for immoral act for crossdressing in public such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, and Malaysia especially if you are not a Malay native person. In November 2014, an appeals court in Malaysia overturned a State law that barred Muslim men from dressing as women in a historic victory for the country’s transgender women.⁵⁸

Laws criminalizing cross-dressing flourished throughout the 20th century, which was perhaps a reflection of society’s perception of cross-dressing as sexual deviance. From caliphates to communist republics and even in the democratic West, a moral war is being waged on our attires, one that rages on

⁵⁰ Dressed for sexuality - Archer Magazine archermagazine.com, Retrieved on 16th August 2018.

⁵¹ Deborah A. Christel, Nicole H. O'Donnell and Linda Arthur Bradley, Coping by crossdressing: an exploration of exercise clothing for obese heterosexual women, June 2016, Research Gate, P.5.

⁵² G.G.Bolich, Vol.1: Dress and Gender, Psyche’s Press, Raleigh North Carolina, 2006, P.223.

⁵³ 5 countries with the strictest dress codes - World Economic Forum <https://www.weforum.org> Retrieved on 27th August 2018.

⁵⁴ Chapter seven: Gender Expression and Cross-dressing – ICJ, <https://www.icj.org> Retrieved on 27th August 2018.

⁵⁵ Cross-Dressing and the Law, <http://fashionlawwiki.pbworks.com> Retrieved on 27th August 2018.

⁵⁶ Michael Ferguson (2016) Arresting Dress: Cross Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco by Clare Sears, Journal of Homosexuality, 63:8, P.1161.

⁵⁷ 41 Ohio St.2d 161.

⁵⁸ Malaysia court upholds ban on cross dressing by transgender Muslims, www.reuters.com retrieved on 27th.

today.⁵⁹ Cross-dressing laws are challenged on various grounds. One's choice of attire may be described as an expression of individual liberty and autonomy, or an expressive statement protected under the right to freedom of expression. Cross-dressing may also be considered an element of trans-identity protected under non-discrimination and equality guarantees.⁶⁰ The legality of cross-dressing varied transtemporally and transnationally.⁶¹

Special Reference to India: History, literature, mythical and pop figures are rich with instances of cross-dressing usage in India. Cross dressers also known, as transgender/transvestite people existed in Vedic times and Mahabharata.⁶² According to Mahabharata the Pandavas have to spend Agnyatbaas (disguise) for a period of one year in which they had to keep their identities secret to avoid detection, wherein Arjuna cross-dressed as Brihannala and became a dance teacher. In Mahabharata Shikhandi is a character in which a woman who dressed like a man.

India's history reflects that traditional Indian attire was the way of life which changed with the changing times. Dressing beyond a binary gender expression in terms of clothing and appearance was considered against prescribed societal norms. The moment any deviancy the person met with disapproving stares, prejudice and often, even heckling and harassment.⁶³

In India cross-dressing is not a new phenomenon. It's been going on for centuries. Cross-dressing, it seems, was a viable and visible choice that was available to persons, being one that was just as often voluntary as it was a necessity. The fiercely conservative social system of India did not encourage female actors. Thus history reveals abundant testimony of men dressing as women and playing female characters. In traditional, folk theatre ("nautankis") or street plays, or in classical dance or drama performances, men have often taken up the feminine role.⁶⁴ Bollywood has a long history of making prominent actors dress up as women.

By cross-dressing they actually flaunt their sexuality. In India eunuchs (Hijras) too cross-dress, who uses female clothing as professional costume to appear cross-dressed in public to earn money as for them it's a bread and butter matter. In Rajasthan cross-dressing men not only perform during the annual Nagaur Festival but also entertain tourists. Launda Naach (dance) of Bundelkand is performed by young boys and men under twenty five, who dress up as women and basically, go wild to the beat of the dhol that mark the wedding season.⁶⁵ Hundreds of cross-dressers in India participate in festivals at Chamayavillaku in Kerala to seek the blessings of the Goddess Bhagavathy or Aadi Shakthi, Ganga jatara in Tirupati to offer prayers to the goddess Gangamma, the Gramadevata (the goddess looking after the village) of Tirupati where they can publically live the life of a woman.⁶⁶ From all over India and neighbouring countries thousands of hijras, eunuchs and cross-dressers flock to the southern Indian village of Koovagam in Tamilnadu, for Hindu festival celebrating transgender people.

With time, cross dressing became quite a discreet affair and over the years including the contemporary men have been seen to slip into the dresses of women, wear make-up and portray women. Cross-

⁵⁹ 5 countries with the strictest dress codes - World Economic Forum <https://www.weforum.org> Retrieved on 27th August 2018.

⁶⁰ Chapter seven: Gender Expression and Cross-dressing - ICJ <https://www.icj.org> Retrieved on 27th August 2018.

⁶¹ Gender Non-Conformity in Late Medieval and Early Modern Western dc.uwm.edu Retrieved on 27th August 2018.

⁶² Is India ready for cross-dressing execs? <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com> Retrieved on 30th August 2018.

⁶³ Why Are We So Uncomfortable - With People Who like to Crossdress? <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com> Retrieved on 30th August 2018.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Launda Naach and Behlol: Two cross-dressing traditions that mark Bundelkhand's wedding season, <https://www.firstpost.com> Retrieved on 30th August 2018.

⁶⁶ Here's A Glimpse Into The Dual Lives of Indian Cross Dressers, <https://www.indiatimes.com> › Lifestyle Retrieved on 30th August 2018.

dressing is no more a statement of one's sexual orientations. Today in an era that is shedding inhibitions and embracing transparency, men are no longer scared to own up to their female side⁶⁷ and it appears cross-dressing is the new found 'gimmick' or the success mantra of comedy shows on Indian Television.⁶⁸

A highlighted universal reality is that those dressed in gender non-conforming clothes often face discrimination and violence. Recent incident reveals that three Hyderabad cops risk their lives to save crossdresser from fury of massive mob.⁶⁹ India is not an exception and it is common men wearing secret cross dressing. Today it is estimated that about five per cent of the male population are cross-dressers.⁷⁰

Conclusion: Dressing reveals a clear distinction between the sexes which indicate socially constructed nature of gender differences. The inherent contradiction of dressing stems from the reflection on the depiction of the body in the affirmation of gender identity. Cross-dressing has been practiced since ancient times, which is evident in history, mythology literature, theatre, folklore, and the present day with a myriad of uses and reasons. At present various reasons may be attributed why an individual is engaged in such behaviour.

Crossdressing reveals a form of gender transgression indicating the most visible form of gender non-conformity. Though religion as well as laws of most the countries prohibited cross-dressing yet it existed. Even socio-psycho and religious inference also reveals that individuals who cross-dressed did so for innumerable reasons.

Dressing appearance do convey diverse messages irrespective of the intentions, motivations and level of awareness of the wearer. People may adopt the dress of the opposite gender for reasons as varied as personal identity, disguise, provocation or humor. Cross-dressing remains one of the most confusing and misunderstood acts in our society. Cross-dressing was considered a non-conformity behaviour and was mostly attributed to homosexuality and transgenders. Cross-dressing is a meaningful occupation for certain group of cross-dressers.

Some acts of cross-dressing which were once considered transgressive and forbidden, are now considered unremarkable, while men adopting women's clothing can still be subject to widespread prejudice. Cross-dressing by heterosexual men is also often stigmatized in popular culture where as the contention is that women can and do wear men's clothing through and through and nobody bats an eyelid.

Cross-dressing is a common practice with a long history, yet a lack of knowledge and understanding persists, among most of us. Hence a holistic approach shall adopted toward the members of cross-dressing by the society rather than subjecting them to victimization. The public at large shall develop the level of openness, acceptance and recognize the inner feeling of the person of cross-dressing. Even the legal system of the nation shall protect and value the practice of cross-dressing. Recognition of individuality requires a guarantee of a composite of entitlements and cross-dressing is rooted in the desire for equivalence which the modern world shall seek to create.

⁶⁷ The cross-dressing plague on TV - Times of India Blogs, <https://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com> Retrieved on 30th August 2018.

⁶⁸ The Cross Dressing Man And Indian Television - Fried Eye, <https://www.friedeye.com> Retrieved on 1st September 2018.

⁶⁹ 3 Hyderabad cops risk their lives to save crossdresser from fury of mob, - <https://www.thebetterindia.com> Retrieved on 30th July 2018.

⁷⁰ Is India ready for cross-dressing execs? <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com> Retrieved on 1st September 2018.

References:

1. Dressed for sexuality - Archer Magazine archermagazine.com, Retrieved on 4th July 2018.
2. Ibid.
3. Zoi Arvanitidou, Construction of Gender through Fashion and Dressing, Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, Vol 4 No 11 October 2013, P.111.
4. Crannell, Marissa, "Utterly Confused Categories: Gender Non-Conformity in Late Medieval and Early Modern Western Europe" (2015). Theses and Dissertations. P.7.
5. Sexual orientation and gender identity glossary – portico network, <https://www.porticonetwork.ca> Retrieved on 4th July 2018.
6. Trans Terminology, <https://beckandbre.com> Retrieved on 4th July 2018.
7. Knowledge is power: Learning about crossdressing – LGBT helpline, lgbt.ie, Retrieved on 7th July 2018.
8. What is the psychology behind cross-dressing? – Quora <https://www.quora.com>, Retrieved on 7th July 2018.
9. Why do I Cross dress? - "Light in the Closet" www.lightinthecloset.org, Retrieved on 7th July 2018.
10. Fact Sheet: Transgender & Gender Nonconforming Youth In School, <https://srlp.org>, Retrieved on 9th July 2018.
11. G.G.Bolich, Vol.2: Today Transgender Realities, Psyche's Press, Raleigh North Carolina, 2007, P.105.
12. Deborah A. Christel, Nicole H. O'Donnell and Linda Arthur Bradley, Coping by crossdressing: an exploration of exercise clothing for obese heterosexual women, Spring open, (2016) 3:11, P.1.
13. Crannell, Marissa, "Utterly Confused Categories: Gender Non-Conformity in Late Medieval and Early Modern Western Europe" (2015). Theses and Dissertations. P.115.
14. Vern L. Bullough, Bonnie Bullough, Cross Dressing Sex and Gender, 1993, University of Pennsylvania Press, P.3.
15. Marjorie B. Garber, Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety, 2011, Routledge, New York, P.40.
16. Vern L. Bullough, Bonnie Bullough, Cross Dressing Sex and Gender, 1993, University of Pennsylvania Press, P.12.
17. Ibid. P.13.
18. Elaine Marie Avanzado, Julienne Louise Balota, Benigno Caraan, Jr., Dr. Nelson Tenorio, Level of openness to homosexual crossdressers: A correlation, Laguna Journal of Arts and Sciences, Vol. 2 No. 3 September 2016, P.97.
19. The Cross-Dresser's Challenge for Acceptance, <https://www.huffingtonpost.com> Retrieved on 9th July 2018.
20. D'Exaerde, Caroline de Kerchove (2001) Dedoublement: the negotiation of gender in transvestism, Durham theses, P.149, Durham University, : <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk>
21. Ibid, P.226.
22. Ibid, P. 229.
23. Ibid, P.231.
24. Why Are Americans More Accepting of Gays and Lesbians Than Bisexuals and Cross-Dressers? <https://newrepublic.com> Retrieved on 27th July 2018.
25. Deborah A. Christel, Nicole H. O'Donnell and Linda Arthur Bradley, Coping by crossdressing: an exploration of exercise clothing for obese heterosexual women, June 2016, Research Gate, P.5.
26. The Psychology of Cross-Dressing - The Book of LifeThe Book of Life, <https://www.theschooloflife.com> Retrieved on 10th August 2018.
27. M. Anupama, K. H. Gangadhar, Vandana B. Shetty, and P. Bhadja Dip, Transvestism as a Symptom: A Case Series, Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine, 2016 Jan-Feb; 38(1): 78–80.
28. Heinz Duthel, Kathoey Ladyboy: Thailand's Got Talent, 2013, Herstellung and Verlag, P.27.
29. Cross-Dressing, Brett Genny Beemyn, Encyclopedia, 2015, glbtq, Inc. Retrieved on 10th August 2018.
30. Transvestism - Mental Health Disorders - MSD Manual Consumer, <https://www.msdmanuals.com> Retrieved on 10th August 2018.
31. Ibid.
32. Why Are Americans More Accepting of Gays and Lesbians Than Bisexuals and Cross-Dressers? <https://newrepublic.com> Retrieved on 27th July 2018.

33. Vern L. Bullough, Bonnie Bullough, *Cross Dressing Sex and Gender*, 1993, University of Pennsylvania Press, P.213.
34. G.G. Bolich, *Cross Dressing in Context*, Vol.4, Transgender and Religion, 2008, Psyche's Press, Raleigh North Carolina, P,205.
35. What does the Bible say about cross-dressing / transvestism? www.gotquestions.org Retrieved on 12th August 2018.
36. He likes to imitate women - islamqa.info, <https://islamqa>, Retrieved on 12th August 2018.
37. Ibid, P. 8, 10 and 30.
38. Why Are Americans More Accepting of Gays and Lesbians Than Bisexuals and Cross-Dressers? <https://newrepublic.com> Retrieved on 27th July 2018
39. Why is cross-dressing considered a social issue? <https://www.quora.com> Retrieved on 12th August 2018.
40. Cross-Dressing, Brett Genny Beemyn, *Encyclopedia*, 2015, glbtq, Inc. Retrieved on 10th August 2018.
41. In which places are cross-dressers most socially accepted? <https://www.quora.com> Retrieved on 12th August 2018.
42. Hayfields study although small in sample size, <https://www.coursehero.com> Retrieved on 1st August 2018.
43. Dressed for sexuality - Archer Magazine archermagazine.com, Retrieved on 16th August 2018.
44. Deborah A. Christel, Nicole H. O'Donnell and Linda Arthur Bradley, Coping by crossdressing: an exploration of exercise clothing for obese heterosexual women, June 2016, Research Gate, P.5.
45. G.G.Bolich, Vol.1: Dress and Gender, Psyche's Press, Raleigh North Carolina, 2006, P.223.
46. 5 countries with the strictest dress codes - World Economic Forum <https://www.weforum.org> Retrieved on 27th August 2018.
47. Chapter seven: Gender Expression and Cross-dressing – ICJ, <https://www.icj.org> Retrieved on 27th August 2018.
48. Cross-Dressing and the Law, <http://fashionlawwiki.pbworks.com> Retrieved on 27th August 2018.
49. Michael Ferguson (2016) Arresting Dress: Cross Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco by Clare Sears, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 63:8, P.1161.
50. 41 Ohio St.2d 161.
51. Malaysia court upholds ban on cross dressing by transgender Muslims, www.reuters.com retrieved on 27th.
52. 5 countries with the strictest dress codes - World Economic Forum <https://www.weforum.org> Retrieved on 27th August 2018.
53. Chapter seven: Gender Expression and Cross-dressing - ICJ <https://www.icj.org> Retrieved on 27th August 2018.
54. Gender Non-Conformity in Late Medieval and Early Modern Western dc.uwm.edu Retrieved on 27th August 2018.
55. Is India ready for cross-dressing execs? <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com> Retrieved on 30th August 2018.
56. Why Are We So Uncomfortable - With People Who like to Crossdress? <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com> Retrieved on 30th August 2018.
57. Ibid.
58. Launda Naach and Behlol: Two cross-dressing traditions that mark Bundelkhand's wedding season, <https://www.firstpost.com> Retrieved on 30th August 2018.
59. Here's A Glimpse Into The Dual Lives of Indian Cross Dressers, <https://www.indiatimes.com> › Lifestyle Retrieved on 30th August 2018.
60. The cross-dressing plague on TV - Times of India Blogs, <https://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com> Retrieved on 30th August 2018.
61. The Cross Dressing Man And Indian Television - Fried Eye, <https://www.friedeye.com> Retrieved on 1st September 2018.
62. 3 Hyderabad cops risk their lives to save crossdresser from fury of mob, - <https://www.thebetterindia.com> Retrieved on 30th July 2018.
63. Is India ready for cross-dressing execs? <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com> Retrieved on 1st September 2018.