

The Caged Soul of Billy A case of Gender Dysphoria

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Abstract – Gender Identity Disorder (GID) is a complex psychological problem. According to American Psychiatric Association (APA) Gender Dysphoria involves a conflict between a person physical or assigned gender and the gender with which he, she, they identify themselves. People with Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria may be very uncomfortable with the gender they were biologically assigned with, sometimes described as being uncomfortable with the expected role with their assigned gender. People with GID may often experience significant distress and/or problem associated with this conflict between the way they feel and think of themselves and their physical or assigned gender. This basically includes class of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, and Transgender or Transsexuals (LGBT). These people are individuals of any age or sex whose appearance, personal characteristics, or behaviors differ from stereotypes regarding how men and women are “supposed” to be.

The case discusses GID as a disorder, its diagnosis, line of treatment and coping methods with its implication on socio-economic frameworks. Billy who suffered from GID and struggled hard each day in search of his real identity. In spite of the being dejected from the society, he stood against the unwritten norms of stereotyped world. Right from the beginning till the end of his problem he fought bravely; keeping aside the traumas that he had gone through right from parent's separation to sexual assault, lost days of childhood, social boycott and pain related to gender transformation etc. He stood again all odds and created a new identity (by undergoing sexual transmission process). This is how he made a choice and took a brave a decision of placing his soul in the right body and won the major battle of life. His caged female soul was freed from the body of a male. He did so by altering his gender from male to a female.

Keywords: Abnormal, Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria, Sexual Assault, Projective Techniques, Eunuchs.

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THE CASE HISTORY:

Billy, an eight-year-old, fairly good-looking child was brought to *Dr. Sharma*, his paediatrician for a check up with a health-related issue which needed much attention.

Sudha, Billy's mother along with her three other children (all girls) had recently moved out from a stormy marital relationship. *Mahesh*, Billy's father, left his mother because of substance dependence disorder which led him to abuse *Sudha* and his children physically, mentally and economically. After a prolonged discussion on establishing cordial and affectionate marital relationship and with immense support from *Sudha* for discontinuing the substance abuse, *Mahesh* could not manage to alter his habits; *Sudha* finally decided to get legally separated and moved to her mother's place along with her four

children. She had three daughters, who were all elder from Billy.

Billy's birth and developmental history was uneventful. The paediatrician recognized the potential challenge of parent's separation and counselled Billy's mom to take much care of her children especially of Billy, who is youngest among all and might suffer from pain and anguish of being raised by a single parent who is not of his own gender. Billy was the youngest one, between all his sisters there was a gap of two years but, Billy was born further late and the age difference was of four years from his just elder sister. On probe, *Sudha* informed that before Billy she had terribly painful and devastating miscarriage. She carried the foetus for a more than six months and the abortion process caused great damage to not only her body but psyche as well. During the same

times, her husband suffered a major loss in his business and as a result their company later on got dissolved. Since then, his father got addicted towards drugs. Sudha being a wife played her role honestly she put all her efforts to support Mahesh both mentally and monetarily but could manage to sustain the zeal and love in the relationship.

Billy was accidently conceived, four years after the terrible business and emotional losses and setbacks. The stressful conditions of family and Sudha's regular intake of painkiller injectibles in order to get relief from psycho-somatic abdominal pain that caused due to turmoil of her father's death became the major cause of risk to her pregnancy. Her gynaecologist already warned her about the side effects of such injections which could be a risk to both foetus and the mother. The circumstances broke her and she became weak both physically and mentally. Things were miserable; there was no one to look after and support her rather she had pressure of looking after three little girls of her. During the eight month Billy was born by a caesarean operation. He was an under-weight child as he was born one month before the gestation period, doctors advised for special care of both mother and the child.

Sudha started working to raise her kids. Her mothers, in her absence during the working hours use to look after her kids. Billy's childhood days were uneventful, he hated going to school. Sudha and her mother thought that this could be due to "change in place and unknown environment or may be because of the partial upbringing". They all started taking more care of Billy as everyone thought it would made him feel better and will let him be open in his family environment first. During the summer holidays, Sudha enrolled Billy for Indian classical dance classes with her daughters. Young Billy was overjoyed with the idea of dancing with his sisters. He was fascinated by the acts and gestures of the dance teacher *Ms. Shama* and his sister's dance, he used to love the dance attire they wear and requested her mother to buy the same attire and accessories for him as well. Everyone thought that it's cute for a small boy to dress up like girls; this will make him look prettier so they bought one for him as well. One thing that everybody noticed was, since then Billy started being happier. His mother thought that maybe now he'll start doing better in school also. Days passed on, but Billy was only happy at home with his family. Outside, he used to be extremely reserved, quiet and sad. Teachers regularly complained about his shy behaviour and non participation in the class activities. He used to be irregular and late for the school and he often use to lose his books and belongings. His classmates used to tease him for being girlish and feminine which was altogether a different behaviour to be accepted by others as for them he was physically a boy, he in his heart loved the idea of being a girl and being called as girly but he hated them saying it with so much of disrespect and in acceptance so, on any kind of bully

he use to become violent and used abusive language.

For the forth coming school annual day function, Billy's family was excited to see Billy performing classical dance, for which he use to stay at the school after the academic hours for practice. A day before the function, Billy did not came home, it was very late than the usual time, everyone in the family got scared and worried at home. His mother called the school teachers; his sisters went on to search for Billy at all possible places where he used to be... like parks, playground everywhere. Suddenly, the grandma (only person at home) heard weeping sound near the main door. She was shocked to see Billy weeping in such a bad state. His clothes were torn, face was swelled, thighs were bleeding, there was one shoe in his foot and bag was not on his shoulder. His eyes were red and watery, he was in the state of shock and was murmuring only sentence that "I'M ABNORMAL, I'M ABNORMAL....." terrified Grandma quickly called Sudha and told her that Billy is back to home. On her return, Sudha and Billy's sisters were in shock to see Billy. After several trials of affectionate persuasion and counselling, Billy did not tell her mother about the cause of his miserable condition.

Sudha decided to find out things from his school but to her surprise the teachers and principal replied that Billy didn't even came for practice that day. Days passed on but Billy didn't talk to anyone anymore, he pushed himself in isolation. He even stopped going to school and sadly stopped dancing too. He stopped playing games with his sisters and eating his favourite meals too. Everyone in his family tried their best to do things to make Billy happy and to bring him back to the normal state but all trials failed. Sudha discussed the case with Dr. Sharma (Billy's paediatrician) and he met Billy and observed his behaviour and told his mother about referring his case to *Dr. Nitesh Kumar* who was a well known psychologist and a clinician by profession and a good friend of him.

THE DIAGNOSIS AND THE TREATMENT:

On meeting Dr. Nitesh Kumar initially Billy showed disinterest in talking about anything. After several attempts doctor could manage to build a friendly relationship with Billy. Now, Billy agreed to follow him faithfully. Doctor applied several projective techniques to find out the problem. The first was 'Draw a person' and 'Complete the story'- Billy drew a boy and many other boys on first page, on second page he drew the same boy lying on the floor and other boys were lying on him and playing with his private parts. They all were beating him and were shouting at him. Then he drew the same person crying out for help but nobody lends him a hand or came to rescue him. On doctor's probe,

about the boy in the picture who's crying, shouting, bleeding, and is helpless, Billy replied, "IT'S ME".

To confirm the same doctor asked Billy to complete the story and gave him a sentence on the sheet "*The Day before that day.....*" Billy completed the story by emphasising on words of harassment and abuse. Still doctor felt a missing link on why Billy was so disgusted with his own self. His family, his sisters shared that from childhood days, he used to be different, he was only happy with us, he loved playing what we played, talked what we talked. He hated friends who were boys, he even hated himself; he often said that- "I want to be like you didi".

Now there was some clarity in doctor's mind and he asked Billy to complete a few sentences, Like:

I am.....a girl

I love.....my family

I am afraid of....school

Rape.....me

I hate.....those boys

The psychologist, Dr Kumar understood that Billy had gone under sexual assault. It was evident from different projective technique. He was convinced that sudden change in Billy behaviour and conduct was due to "Sexual Assault". During the sessions, Billy himself narrated the whole incident to Dr. Kumar which happened on the day before his annual function. He told Dr. Kumar that everything was fine, he was extremely excited for his final costume and the dance performance. He took his costume and moved towards the boys washroom, the moment he entered, he saw that it was already filled with few senior boys whom he hated as they used to make fun of him. The boys started laughing on seeing Billy and forced him to show his genitals as they all used to call him 'Eunuch' as he was unlike normal boys. On hearing this, Billy got extremely afraid and tried to run from the place. One of the boy ran and locked the washroom door from inside. The boys shouted at him for not following their orders. They snatched his dance costume from Billy's hand and ordered him to dance. Billy didn't follow any of their orders due to which they felt humiliated. On this, the cruel boys beat him so badly that his nose started bleeding. Billy was crying out of help but his mouth was also kept shut by tying a knot around his mouth his hands and legs were held tight by two boys. They then sexually abused him and made a video on their phone and tortured badly by saying that if he tried to open his mouth in front of anyone they'll viral his video and then everyone will come to know that he's not normal.

Billy then unfolded his biggest clandestine. He told him everything from the starting on why he always

used to refuse going to school and why was he so afraid to face the outer world. He stated that, "I never got comfortable with such a stereotypical society. During early school days he never wanted to sit and talk to boys. He always felt that comfort with girls of his same age group the way they behave, dresses up, plays with different girlish material, the way they use to talk in soft gentle tone, every single thing a normal girl did, he had a craving of doing the same. But boys and other people use to tease him by calling him through awful names (gay, abnormal, eunuchs) used to lock him in girls washrooms, used to spread bad rumours about him, which completely destroyed his self esteem. On the other hand, with his family, he used to feel safe and secure and comfortable. As his sisters never pointed out or questioned him that why he always give opinions on different dresses, makeup, jewels, looks, cooking and other domestic work of a woman. Sometimes his mother and grandma used to question and think about his behaviour but then they use to ignore it because there was no other male person to accompany him in his home. Something which moved the psychologist was a sentence that he said "*I sometimes wonder when a girl doesn't feel happy and satisfied with her eyebrows she goes to the salon and get rid of it...same applies in the case of our genitals if someone is not happy of their genitals why can't they go and get rid of them, it is as simple as that*" from then, Dr. Kumar made out that there is something serious with his case, it is just not a case of sexual assault but something much more than that. And Billy then revealed that he always felt disguised of his genitals therefore he also tried harming himself as he wanted to get rid of his sex organ, repeatedly intense desire of being a female and dressing in female attire, being lost in his fantasy world where he is normal a female, and always wanted to be treated as a female. Dr. Kumar strongly observed his behaviour mapped them with the symptoms of DSM IV TR. He found that the symptoms were matching with Billy's behavioural factors. Dr. Kumar, therefore clinically diagnosed him as a victim of *Gender Identity Disorder (GID)*. Doctor was made sure by Billy that he strongly wanted to undergo gender transformation in order to be considered as *Normal*.

Dr Kumar explained Billy about his problem and counselled him that he is not the only person who suffers from this disorder, he told him that there are many such cases he himself treated and are treated worldwide by various health practitioners'. Billy was counselled and made feel normal by the doctor words. Doctor told him about different famous personalities like *Chaz Bono*, who was born as Chastity Sun Bono, daughter of pop icons Cher and Sonny Bono, *Cabaret*- the celebrity performer, David of famous Arquette crew. *Carrera* - famous for "RuPaul's Drag Race". *Isis King*, the first transgender contestant to appear on "America's Next Top Model", *Lea T* -a Vogue

model, India's first trans woman and celebrity hair stylist: *Sylvie Rodgers*, *Bobby Darling* -an Indian actress and model.

On knowing about these famous people, Billy felt relieved and felt like leading a normal life. He got convinced that now his problem can be shared with the family, whose love, care and support was much desired by him.

When the psychologist declared Sudha about her child's problem that he was suffering from a disorder called Gender Identity, she was not ready to accept any such an unrealistic, unnatural thing for her son. She was shocked and blamed herself for being an irresponsible and careless mother. She was crying out of pain to see her son being a victim of such a disorder. It was a hard time for her. Then the psychologist told her about the sensitivity of Billy's case and suggested her to tell the same to the other family members. He said, it's tougher for Billy to go through such times in his life and what he faced in such a young age was unimaginable for anyone of us. The psychologist made Billy's family aware of GID by defining it as 'a feeling of discontentment when it comes to gender or sex assigned to a person at birth is called gender identity disorder or gender dysphoria' in medical field. He then told Billy and his family members that's Billy's case is not the only case that he has seen and he has also dealt with similar cases before also. He explained them by telling that there are N number of people, in fact a good portion of population (around 4.88 lakh as per 2011 census.) is suffering from this disorder And the problem depends upon different factors such as biological, social, environmental, and psychological factors. He further explained it by adding that dealing with it is really tough; however, there are still ways to cope up. He counselled Billy and his family to follow some of the coping techniques like:

1. *Do not lose hope*-the first and the foremost thing that you have to keep in mind is to be hopeful, don't lose it whatever the circumstance is. Remember there are millions of other people all across globe who are experiencing the same or have experienced it, how hard it was for them and look how successful they are now. Example: *Gazal Dhaliwal* a successful screenwriter took another life changing decision. She went through a medical process to fix this gender identity disorder she was born with. Her journey to being who she is, has been two-fold. The external path to find a place for herself in the daunting business of movies...and the internal path of combat with her own identity and destiny. Another famous personality is *K Prithika Yashini* who has become India's first transgender police officer. *Deepak Kashyap* a well known trained and counselled psychologist in REBT and CBT who is a homosexual. First

transgender judge: *Joyita Mondal*. *Nitasha Biswas*, India's first ever Transgender Beauty Queen.

2. *Just be you*- don't be afraid of expressing yourself. There are no rules, no limits, take note of that. You can paint, sing, act, dance or even play sports.
3. *Relax*- you need to learn handling your emotions. Take a deep breath when get distressed. Have patience in calming yourself; please note you can't achieve it overnight.
4. *Look for trustworthy friends*- There are some good people out there who will accept and understand you, whoever you are and whatever you do. When you find such people do not hesitate to share your feelings, and emotions that are inside you.
5. *Get in front of mirror*- this may sound crazy to you, but there is nothing wrong if you talk to yourself. It's a good way of releasing your negative emotions out.

Towards the end of the session, Dr Kumar, the psychologist counselled the family to support Billy and give freedom of choice to take decision independently regarding his life and the treatment that he chooses for himself. Whether he chooses to live the way he was born or he wants to undergo alternate treatments like puberty blocker, hormones or surgery. He also suggested his family members to take his decision as their own and not to resist him from doing anything in order to be normal as any kind of denial or resistance for his decision will lead to severe anxiety and depression. In extreme situations, people choose to end their life and commit suicide. So it's advisable to give due regard to his decision with all you might. Support him to regain his confidence to face the cruel world outside.

THE PRESENT STATUS:

Billy with Dr Kumar's consultancy and guidance got his gender changed from a famous surgeon of a renowned hospital. Now, **she** leads a normal life as lady and running her own dance school, she is also a successful choreographer and offers her services to different event management companies, in her free time she like to write poetry. Her family and friends are now proud of her, she says "*My Soul was Caged in a wrong body but I freed my-self from being victim of circumstances. I'm free Now and I love It!!!*"

GID SUFFERERS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT:

According to American Psychological Association (APA) Socio economic status is often measured in terms of education, income and occupation. It is commonly conceptualized as a social standard or class of an individual or a group. It further reveals inequalities in access to and distribution of resources.

A large portion of our population comprises of transgender which is around 4.88 lakh as per 2011 census and then they were not registered anywhere. Even if some NGO's registered them, even then our society doesn't considered them as a whole individual and never gave them equal respect and rights that they deserved as a human beings. Since they were nowhere legally registered in Government policies therefore they are automatically exempted from giving service tax to government. As a result every single penny that they earn by default gets converted into black money and goes to parallel economy and being misused in other illegal and criminal activities. The main problem that are being faced by such individuals (LGBT) are of discrimination, unemployment, lack of educational facilities, homelessness, lack of medical facilities: like HIV care and hygiene, depression, hormonal pill abuse, tobacco and alcohol abuse, and problems related to marriage and adoption. Under such circumstances they start involving themselves into illegal offense.

- a) The transgender got their voting right in year 1994 but this also ended up as a failure for them as their voting identity cards were caught up in the male or female questions.
- b) The other fields where this community feels neglected are inheritance of property or adoption of a child. As a result they are pushed to the periphery as a social outcaste and many may end up begging, dancing and as sex workers. This is by all means human trafficking.
- c) The transgender and transsexual have very limited employment. Even if they completes their education they are not accepted in corporate sectors for job opportunities, this is because of the stereotyped mind set of social world that these individual are not capable with proper skills, ability and knowledge of doing something good in life (iasscore.org).

Other Issues that transgender have to face are:

1. They have no access to bathroom/toilet, prisons, hospitals and school. The lack of access is illustrative of discrimination faced

by transgender in availing each facilities and amenities.

2. Parents, family, friends plays a vital role in every aspect of life. Most families do not accept if their male child starts behaving in ways that are considered feminine or inappropriate to the expected gender role. Consequently family members may threaten, scold or even assault their child for such behaviour. On the other hand in some families they gradually tries to understand the problem of their child but denies on undergoing any sexual transition due to shame and norms of society as a result their child run off from home, goes under depression, willingly joins communities like 'HIJRAS, KINNARS, SAKHI, SHIVA', or they ultimately commits suicide. On an average out of 10 only 2 families accept their child as it is if they are going through such an disorder, because for them the only thing what matters is their child's happiness .*If family, being the first society accept their identity then society will also transform and nation will progress.*

To deal with the discussed problem, Government in recent past had passed a verdict. The Supreme Court directed the Federal and State Governments to include transgendered people in all welfare programmes for the poor, including education, healthcare and jobs to help them overcome social and economic challenges. "All documents will now have a third category marked transgender. (Supreme Court verdict April 2014)

Supreme Court judgement on transgender right (iasscore.org)

- Legal recognition for third gender
- Legal recognition for people transitioning within males/ female binary
- Public health and sanitation
- Socio economic rights
- Stigma and public awareness

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Even though there are rights assigned to LGBT by the Supreme Court judgement which might bring transgender on the equal footing with other citizens but more need to be done to change the attitude of society towards them, like:

1. *Awareness*- The first and foremost step is to spread awareness by breaking the stereotype. As mentioned above also the

Supreme Court rights and judgements for transgender has been operated but the question is “how many LGBT’s are still aware of their rights till today”? and same question goes for us too “how many people living today in India are aware of transgender rights”?

2. *Acceptance* – Secondly we must accept each and every person the way we are; be it GENDER, colour, caste, religion, or community. Because at the end of the day we all fall under the same hierarchy of species i.e human beings. Accept the person with both the challenges mentally and physically.
3. *Equal Opportunity in the job sector-* If anyone is having any kind of hitch for letting LGBT’s part of their organization or sector. Don’t just simply reject them on the basis of their individuality. Give them opportunities to show their skills, abilities, strength, weakness, at least for once. Then only they’ll contribute their income to the Indian economy and big portion of population that contributes to the black money will come to an end. And this is how the organization will raise their graph positively both socially and economically. *Like now Indian Companies Are Hiring Transgender People* (Times Internet Limited Part of Huff Post News, 2017)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss the role of family, schools and society for GID suffers.
2. Discuss how GID patients should deal with their problem and fight for their rights.
3. Discuss the biological and environmental constraints for GID.
4. Discuss the socio-economic status of transgender in India.

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ABBREVIATIONS:

- GID: Gender Identity Disorder

- DSM IV TR: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4th edition text revised
- REBT: Rational emotive behavioural therapy
- CBT: cognitive behaviour therapy

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