

Jogappa

Gender, identity
and the politics of exclusion

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Published by:

Aneka, Bangalore

First Edition: October 2014

Supported by: Heinrich Böll Foundation

Cover design: Boski Jain

Formatted by: Shailaja S at Varna Designs

Printed at:

Graiprint Private Limited

The Religious Transworld of South India Series: Book 1

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Dedicated to Shobha (20th March, 2013),
who started us on this path.

Acknowledgements

Researching a largely undocumented transgendered community and its unique culture has been a challenging task. We have been successful due to contributions of so many people. We wish to thank our Jogappa participants who willingly and enthusiastically shared their life stories with us. Each and every one of them has immensely contributed to our study. We are also grateful to the Jogappa community of north Karnataka for being part of this study from the time of its conception, and providing valuable inputs, as well as participating in the post data collection consultations.

It was Shobha who opened the door to the world of Jogappas for us. We remember her fondly and missed her through every step of the project. She was our research assistant during the early stages of the project. Prabhavati Kamble took over the role of Research Assistant after Shobha's tragic death. Prabhavati was adept at conducting the interviews which has enabled us to garner rich information. Her work has been invaluable for this report. We would like to specially acknowledge V. R. Syam Prasad, who provided crucial support in undertaking the long and difficult task of data collection with immense patience.

The field work done for this study was made possible by the support offered by the Karnataka Sexual Minorities Forum (KSMF) and the local CBOs of the region: Sweekar Sangha (Belgaum), Shruti Sankula (Gadag), Milana (Bagalkote), Nava spoorti (Bijapur), Samara (Dharwad), Hongirana (Koppal), Pragati (Bellary), and Sneha Society (Gulbarga). They helped with the logistics and the use of their office space.

The north Karnataka dialect is distinct and we are indebted to our transcribers Padma Priya Prabhu, Nagaraj G., Kranti Aditya, Mohammed Gous Shaikh (Sham), Basavaraj, Akhila Vidyasandra, and Aditya Prasad for doing such a good job.

We are grateful to Meera Pillai and Amrita Chanda for the strong partnership in documenting the life histories of three Jogappas. The work done by Meera forms the second part of this series - The Religious Transworld of South India. Amrita documented the life histories on video and has consolidated the footage as a documentary film on the Jogappas Yellamma, Jogappa, Gender: A Brief Oral History.

We extend our special thanks to Suchitra Yagna Narayan, IIM, Bangalore for fine tuning the interview and survey formats used in this study. We also received inputs from Nagaraj Putari, an anthropologist who has worked on the Jogin traditions in the Telingana and Andhra Pradesh region. We are thankful to David Bodapati, Sumitra M.B., Akkai Padmashali, and Umesh P. for providing us with the much needed media support for the consultations.

We wish to thank Sangama for their administrative support and encouragement. Samara CBOs, and all other solidarity groups extended a hand to us and helped us take this initiative. We especially thank Sreekanth Kannan and Nilima Datta for adeptly managing the financial and administrative requirements of this research.

This report was analysed, consolidated, and written by Shubha Chacko, R Vaishno Bharati, and Aditya Prasad. We owe C. K. Meena a debt of gratitude for going through the painstaking task of editing the document.

Lastly, we thank the Heinrich Böll Foundation for providing us with this exciting opportunity to contribute to the literature on the diverse

population of transgenders in India. We are especially grateful to Dr. Axel Harneit-Sievers (Head of India Office, Heinrich Böll Foundation), Shalini Yog, Shikha Gulati and the entire HBF team for their demonstrating their faith in us by supporting this unusual undertaking.

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual minorities are considered anomalies within society — the deviants, the ‘unnatural’, and the ‘other’. They not only present alternatives to heteronormativity but also dare to question it by their very existence. Society is taught to fear them, ignore them, and/or discriminate against them. They are erroneously considered to be ‘western imports’ and a recent ‘phenomenon’, even though there is enough anthropological and documented evidence of various types of genders and sexualities having existed since time immemorial.

Much of the literature on sexual minorities in India focuses on the HIV intervention programmes among the gay, MSM (men who have sex with men) and Hijra population. As is highlighted by Khosla (2009), it is only as a factor of HIV that the social exclusion of sexual minorities is researched and documented. But in the last two decades, many books and journal articles have been written about gender and sexual minorities in India with reference to their identity formation, class, caste, gender, religion etc. Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai’s (2001) annotated book provides a wide selection of writings on same-sex love, in several languages, across centuries, and from numerous religious backgrounds. Ruth Vanita (2007) argues against the ‘invisibility’ of queer lives by exploring literary texts by prominent authors. Gayatri Reddy (2005) explores the intersecting of class, religion, and gender in her ethnographic study on the Hijras in Hyderabad. Arvind Narrain and Gautam Bhan’s (2005) book was one of the first attempts made to document voices from the Indian sexual minorities. Many

transpeople have penned their autobiographies (Vidya, 2008, Revathi, 2010) and there have been explorations around issues faced by female-born sexual minorities such as the work of Ashwini Sukthankar (1999). Except for a few references to Jogappas (Bradford, 1983, Hildebeitel, 1998), the literature on them is almost nonexistent.

Transgender identities that display gender fluidity as a way of life question our most basic assumptions of gender and sexuality. There are various trans-identities in India — Hijra, Aravani, Jogappa, Shivashakti, Kinnar, and Sakhi-Bekhi among others. Each of these identities is both temporally and spatially specific. The following section will contextualise the contents of the report by providing a brief overview of the status of transpeople, with specific focus on Jogappas, in India, through historical, social, and political lenses. The transgender population of India is the most visible of all people of alternative genders and sexualities. Their easily discernible gender expression often renders them the most visible of the sexual minorities, but this visibility also results in greater discrimination, lack of opportunities, and systemic social exclusion, even within the sexual-minority communities. In general they are viewed in dichotomous extremes; that is, they are either worshipped and feared, or ridiculed and despised but either way they are not regarded as human beings with equal rights. They are largely relegated to a few 'traditional' occupations in the informal sector, with little legal protection. Having been ostracised by their family and society, most of them are denied access to basic rights such as education, housing and work. They are also routinely subjected to discrimination, harassment and violence.

The derision and hatred with which sexual minorities, particularly transpeople, are viewed is clearly rooted in patriarchy. Menon (2005:34) argues that the "normalisation of heterosexuality is at the heart of patriarchy", which is used to alienate the sexual minorities from mainstream society. There are numerous transgendered identities across India, many of which are ignored by the mainstream sexual minorities movement. Cohen (1995) exemplifies the risk of subsuming non-normative gender identities

under a single label and emphasises the need to view transgendered identities as being varied. With reference to Hijras and Jhankas in Varanasi, he writes “all thirdness is not alike (1995:277)”, alluding to the diverse gender expressions and identities that exist the world over. Jogappas are specific to the northern part of Karnataka, some parts of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra. They have been almost entirely overlooked within academia: going through relevant literature for this study has revealed the scarcity of academic scholarship on Jogappas. Gender performance, particularly in reference to the queer population, has elicited a fair degree of academic research and discussion in the last few decades. Drawing from feminist movements, gender studies, postmodernism and Queer Theory, the sexual- minority movements have argued against biological determinism, essentialism and heteronormativity.

Diversity among the Transpeople: The Unique Case of the Jogappas

Gender, which can be understood as a performance, is also spectral in nature. Butler (2003) opines that gender gets performed by the stylisation of repeated acts. The script of gender has numerous renditions, as is demonstrated by the transgendered identities of India. Though there are many transgender groups in India, all of which are culturally and geographically diverse, they are often homogenised. Although this approach effectively obliterates diversity amongst the transgender community, it has certain merits; homogenising the community across India presents them in significant numbers, which enables them to demand their rights, have their voices heard, and even achieve a certain political importance.

With the advent of the HIV programme in India, transpeople, along with others such as sex workers and MSM, were primarily viewed as passive recipients of the health programme. Even today, after the formation of a discernible sexual-minorities movement, the HIV/AIDS discourse is still

strongly used by both pro and anti gay rights activists and the State. The discourse brings in much-needed funding but also reinforces the opinion that sexual minorities are carriers of an epidemic. It also results in the issue of health being viewed narrowly; for instance mental health of transpeople receives scant attention. Conversely the State's stance on sexual minorities is ambiguous; while it acknowledges them as being more vulnerable to HIV infection, it fails to recognise them as full citizens of the country.

Given that there are benefits of being viewed as a homogenous community, why is it important to view transpeople as a culturally diverse community? Exploring transpeople only as gender 'dissenting' individuals, dissociated from their socio-economic and cultural context, is incomplete, to say the least. For a holistic understanding, it is important to refrain from viewing transpeople simply as those in need of health care, or merely as subjects of identity studies. The cultural specificity of gender minorities is subsumed by a general discourse on the transpeople of India that links them with health services, the queer movement, and so on. Marginalisation within larger marginalities is often ignored. It is essential to document each transgender group's unique way of life, their specific needs and the socio-cultural, economic and political problems they face, so as to accordingly formulate effective advocacy strategies for them.

The Jogappas' mythical connection underscores the religious links to their identity formation and also contextualises the irony of the social exclusion they face. Jogappas (or Jogatis) are largely linked to Goddess Yellamma ("Goddess of All" or "the All Powerful"). The goddess is also known by a host of other names, the more popular ones being Jogamma, Holigamma and Renuka. The region also has other goddesses seen as related to Yellamma — as her sister or as another form of her. The most famous temples dedicated to her are located at Mahur in Maharashtra as well as at Saundatti (Belgaum district), Chandraguthi (Shimoga district), and Hulgi (Bellary district), all in Karnataka. Yellamma is a local goddess, worshipped by many in the northern part of Karnataka across caste and class.

The Legend of Yellamma

There are many versions of the story of goddess Yellamma and the ritual of dedication associated with her. These versions differ from region to region, illustrating the various caste histories of, and claims made on this regional deity. We believe that all these versions are 'authentic', since the notion of authenticity has political implications that are often not considered. Furthermore, it is essential to document these different 'voices' and versions as markers of diversity; variations in this story could constitute another study that is worth undertaking independently. In order to illustrate the religious connotations of the Jogappa identity, as well as those possessed by other identities associated with Yellamma, we have included one version of this story below.

According to a common version of the legend, Yellamma was initially known as Renuka. She was the wife of the *rishi* (sage) Jamadagni, one of the Saptarishis (Seven Great Sages), and considered to be very pious and chaste. Every morning, Renuka would go to the river and make a pot out of wet clay from the river bed to carry water for her husband's *puja*. The immense power of her chastity held the wet clay together. One day, while she was making the clay pot, she happened to see two Gandharvas playing in the water nearby. On seeing them, she became sexually aroused and lost her concentration. The clay pot wouldn't take shape, despite many attempts. When she went home without it, Jamadagni realised what had happened. Furious that his wife had entertained such 'sacrilegious' thoughts, he ordered his sons to behead their mother. The first four sons refused to do so, but the fifth and youngest, Parashuram, immediately did as he was told. Jamadagni was impressed with his son's unquestioning loyalty and granted him a boon. Parashuram asked for his mother to be brought back to life. The other sons of Jamadagni, who refused to behead Renuka, were cursed to lose their masculinity for their 'cowardice'. When Renuka was brought back to life, she became Yellamma.

The story varies a great deal beyond this point. One version includes a dalit woman who helps Yellamma. Here, when Jamadagni cast Renuka out of their home, she was forced to wander. She was spotted by a dalit woman named Matangi. Matangi took her to her house, gave her food and water and comforted her during this difficult time, it is also believed that when the goddess stayed in Matangi's house, she ate the non-vegetarian food that she was served. As a Brahmin woman her consumption of non-vegetarian food is indicative of the respect she had for Matangi. It is interesting to note that in this version, it is not the goddess who helps Matangi, a poor, dalit woman, but the other way around. This story is not only a way for dalits to lay claim to Yellamma but also demonstrates how dietary sanctions for some Jogappa sects can be traced to myths and folklore.

It is unclear how Yellamma achieves apotheosis or how she became associated with the queering of identities, but Jogappas do trace the legacy of their gender identity through the cursed sons of Jamadagni. Yellamma is also the goddess of the Devadasis, who are women generally from the oppressed castes. They were historically known as singers and dancers of the temple, who often engaged in sex work. However, Yellamma's devotees are not confined to the Jogappa and Devadasi traditions. Most of them also worship other gods/goddesses.

Dedication to Yellamma

People dedicate themselves or others from the family to the goddess. While some boys are dedicated to Yellamma and then are considered to be 'sacred women', many 'choose' the goddess. Both Bradford (1983) and Hildebeitel (1998) refer to the growth of matted hair as a sign of Yellamma's influence on an individual. Bradford reports the claims of Jogappas verbatim, noting that once the goddess wishes to catch a person, the person has no choice but to change his or her gender. This construction of 'powerlessness against the goddess's wishes' gives gender change a religious sanction that is not otherwise available. Thus,

transgenderism is framed as a divine decision rather than an individual's wish.

It is believed that when the goddess is unhappy with a family, misfortunes may befall them. Later, she may focus on one individual, who begins to exhibit signs of having been 'caught' by Yellamma. The process of dedication is explored in the next chapter. The Jogappas have a *muthu* (a necklace of red and white beads) tied around their neck which is equivalent to the traditional nuptial knots tied around the bride's neck: thus the identity requires a matrimonial association with the deity. Their identity is therefore framed within the heteronormative construction of marriage. This idea also recurs among many transgender communities in India; for example, in the communal marriage of Aravanis to Aravan at Koovagam.

During the pilot study of the research, we found that Jogappas face less social opposition than other transgendered identities as the religious sanction for their gender expression renders their identity less controversial. Most of them dress in sari, while a subgroup (called Parashuram Jogappas) generally dresses in *lungi* and shirt. Those in *saris* sport long hair and wear ornaments and accessories, while some in male attire choose to do so. Castration is discouraged (Wilhelm, 2010) and those who choose to undergo castration/emasculation suffer a 'demotion' in status; the person is not permitted to perform *pujas* and his/her status is lowered. Despite this, there are those who continue to opt for castration.

Jogappas' mythical connection to the epics and puranas is not unique in the Indian context. Transgenderism within the religion/myth paradigm can be observed in many traditions. Be they the Hijras of the north, the Aravanis of Tamil Nadu, the Shivsaktis of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana or the Sakhi-Bekhis of West Bengal, the connections among religion, gender, and sexuality are illustrated through many myths, stories and folk tales that provide some space for alternative genders and sexualities in modern society.

The Jogappas' ritualistic life includes many aspects that are markedly different from the more visible Hijra community. The notion of Yellamma 'catching' individuals provides socially approved processes for gender 'transgression'. Dedication is a more complex practice than we initially believed. Those who 'show' signs of being caught by Yellamma are then given to the Jogappa order. There are others who negotiate the acceptance of their becoming a Jogappa with their families. Some are forced to sever links with the family in order to join the tradition; while a few are dedicated by their families to assuage Yellamma. The case of the Jogappas complicate our understanding of gender identity, sexuality and religion; as well as the idea of 'willing' and 'forced' dedication

The Jogappas are expected to be asexual ascetics, but many Jogappas do engage in sex. However, their sexual relations with other men are not acknowledged, and therefore they have to be particularly discreet. While their transgression of gender roles is accepted to some extent, their transgression of heteronormativity is not. There is a clear divide between what is considered 'holy' and what is primarily seen as being 'sexual', and these two seem to be mutually exclusive.

Social Exclusion of Jogappas

Much has been written on social exclusion (Faria, 1995; Rodgers; 1995; Kothari, 2003), but Amartya Sen's theories provide the least restrictive framework to view the social exclusion faced by Jogappas. Sen, using an Aristotelian perspective, explores the idea of "poverty as capability deprivation (2000:4)". He uses a broader understanding of poverty and argues that since individuals are essentially social beings, being deprived of social interaction is a deprivation which constitutes an important aspect of poverty, and leads to other deprivations as well. Sen further writes that "social exclusion can, thus, be constitutively a part of capability deprivation as well as instrumentally a cause of diverse capability failures (2000:5)."

Chacko and Narrain (2014) write that "given the extreme nature of the exclusion of transpeople, the ongoing battle for inclusion, equality and

recognition of diversity must occur in a range of forums — politics, the courts, the media, government policies, the broader society, and even the intimate space of the family.” Jogappas are one of the most socially excluded communities as they are denied access to a range of entitlements and social spaces. Their own families often shun them and deny them rights over the familial assets.

Since the livelihood options associated with the Jogappa tradition are slowly being depleted, Jogappas now find it difficult to find any occupation which provides them with food, shelter, clothing and security. Further, since they are associated with ritualistic duties and occupy a somewhat honoured position because of their religious affiliations, it has been difficult for them to be absorbed into mainstream livelihood options. There is significant discordance between traditional ‘acceptance’ / ‘space’ and the present socioeconomic condition of Jogappas.

Rationale

This research is primarily an attempt to better understand an ignored population. It also is also intended to inform future advocacy work in this field. It is essential that the diversity of the transgender population is recognised, as they are a culture-specific identity group that requires customised interventions. This research is an attempt to fill the lacuna in existing literature about this distinctly unique group, which has otherwise been subsumed by the larger, overarching national discourse on transpeople. This research has also been undertaken to effectively feed into efforts to demand rights and entitlements for Jogappas.

Most western academics have not considered the sheer diversity of sexual-minority identities that exist around the world. For decades, their framework held a simplistic understanding of a masculine gender, a feminine gender, and a third gender that included all those who were ‘different’. Even now, western LGBT frameworks view sex, gender and sexuality spectrally, and although they allow for ‘intermediary’ identities, they do not allow for the intermingling of these categories across sexes,

genders and sexualities. Further, they ignore issues of class, caste, race and ethnicity that exist in various societies, thereby narrowing their academic world view to one that is decidedly western in approach and understanding. These frameworks are 'rigid', and do not make space for the diverse identities that exist in India.

The need for a systematic study is based on:

- ⇒ Various consultations with Jogappas as well other sexual minority activists and community members;
- ⇒ A consultation that was held by Sangama and Aneka in 2009 (Transgender Identities: Implications for Policy Responses, Regional Consultation, 2009);
- ⇒ Research on Community-centred HIV Prevention Intervention Model Among Transgenders undertaken by us (Aneka);
- ⇒ Our close association with Shobha, a Jogappa from Gulbarga who worked with us for over three years. She prompted us to undertake this study;
- ⇒ Over a decade of experience in working with sexual minorities and sex workers.

Two significant Supreme Court judgments, made in the recent past, have also had considerable influence on this study. In December 2013, the Supreme Court overturned the 2009 Delhi Court judgment that had decriminalised same-sex relationships. The Delhi High Court had declared that Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalised same-sex relationships between consenting adults, was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court upheld the validity of Section 377, thus reverting to a more regressive legal climate. Next, in 2014, the Supreme Court gave its verdict on the NLSA (National Legal Services Authority) petition; it provided transpeople the right to choose their gender and also listed many directives

to both state and central governments to implement policies that empower transpeople. In the light of these two judgements, it becomes all the more urgent for the issues of Jogappas to be given due visibility, to help initiate relevant policy changes that would benefit their community.

Objectives

- To study the background of Jogappas and their initiation into this community;
- To understand the socio- economic conditions of Jogappas;
- To explore some of the cultural aspects of the Jogappa's life (space in society, some of their practices and linkages to the syncretic traditions in the region);
- To examine the relationship of Jogappas with other sexual minorities;
- To recommend strategies for intervention for various state and non-state actors.

Methodology

The research aims to find the spaces, if any, that exist for these communities, and to allow for reflective analysis on their situation. The study will cover issues that include the socio-cultural background, history, livelihood conditions, sexuality, gender identity, and socio economic status (which examines issues around accessing health care, entitlements, etc.).

One of the unique features of this study is that the Research Assistant (RA) initially engaged was a Jogappa named Shobha, who hailed from North Karnataka, the geographic region that the study was proposed to be conducted in. Hence, the building of the design, the tools, the

methods, and the data collection were done alongside community members, with the RA playing a coordinating role (along with a role in all processes of the research). Due to the unfortunate passing away of Shobha, Prabhavati, who is active with the sex workers union and is also from North Karnataka, was chosen. She conducted all the interviews along with the senior researcher.

This is a Qualitative Study, which has been supplemented by Descriptive Analysis of the survey data. Data was collected using the methods of in-depth interviews and surveys. In-depth Interviews explored these themes in greater detail. The interview schedule was used more as a guide than as a strict list of questions. The survey explored issues of livelihood, social entitlements, assets, etc. while the in-depth interview delved into the issues of family, society, identity and social exclusion. The participants for the study were selected through purposive sampling method, keeping certain criteria in mind, such as age, region and attire. This was done with the assistance of the local Community Based Organisations (CBOs), who hosted us during our visits to the field. The entire field work process could not have been possible without the coordinating efforts of the Karnataka Sexual Minorities Forum (KSMF).

Different methods were tested with the community before the interviews were conducted, the first of which was Focussed Group Discussion (FGD). As a preparatory exercise we conducted mock FGDs with individuals who had worked closely with the community and had some knowledge about them. Their feedback helped strengthen the interview guide and provided us with an idea of the manner it would roll out with our interviewees. However when the actual FGDs were conducted we realised that the participants were often not openly articulating their opinions when they were together in a group. Most of them refused to say much or merely agreed with their gurus or other senior Jogappas who were present. While the FGDs gave us some leads and helped us sharpen our tool; the method was not very effective and hence discarded.

We then decided to conduct in-depth interviews, which were to be supplemented by survey responses. A total of 35 interviews and 35 surveys were conducted across seven districts of North Karnataka: Belgaum, Dharwad, Gadag, Bagalkote, Bijapur, Bellary and Koppal. The interviews were conducted in both Kannada and Marathi, depending on the geographical area of the participants; informed consent was sought and received from all participants. Data collection was undertaken from 5 December 2013 to 16 April 2014. The interviews were audio recorded (with their consent) and then transcribed into English or Kannada. They were coded and analysed under separate themes, such as identity formation, family system, societal perception, self perception, livelihood, health, education, housing and political participation. The themes were chosen as they emerged from the data. Some of the areas that we had hoped to explore – such as the caste dimensions of the Jogappas and the future as they envisaged it — received inadequate responses or attention.

Life Narratives: Three life narratives were also captured in Gulbarga, between 2 June and 4 June 2014. The field work and documentation of the life narratives was undertaken by Meera Pillai. These were also video-documented and edited into a documentary film by Amrita Chanda, with the objective of exploring the socio cultural aspects of the Jogappa tradition. A report based on these narratives is a companion document to this one.

Field Experience

The research was conducted in seven districts over a period of four months. Visits to each district were planned in coordination with the KSMF and local CBOs, who helped us to access participants based on our sampling criteria. On some occasions, field work had to be either delayed or postponed because of certain local festivals that were celebrated by the participants. During the first and second week of April 2014, most of the Jogappas went to Saundatti for special *pujas*. Therefore, field work set to occur during this period was postponed to the third week of April. We came

to realise that our calendar and the calendar of the Jogappas don't always match!

Similarly, it was not possible to collect data on Tuesdays and Fridays, as these are considered auspicious days when the Jogappas have certain ritualistic duties to be performed for Yellamma. Initially we were unaware of this and therefore there were days when we were left waiting for the Jogappas to arrive. They did, but only after Yellamma had received her due attention. We obviously were a distant second to the mighty goddess. We had not factored this into our travel plans, but as our understanding of the community grew, we started to tailor our field work plans around their requirements.

Some participants continued to share with us even after the interview was over. A few of them enthusiastically showed us their *muthus* and explained the significance of its various components. In some places a number of others (non-Jogappa sexual minorities) turned up and said "Me too!"

The local CBOs that helped us with the study played excellent hosts. In one of the districts, they pooled in the money that we gave the participants towards their lunch expenses to instead buy ingredients and prepare lunch for everyone at the office. Many of the participants dressed in their best, knowing that they would be meeting us for the interview. It seemed we were accorded the status of being 'special' people. In some cases, we even had to wait for them to finish dressing up so that we could proceed with the interviews. And their resplendent clothing drew some compliments.

The respondents spoke either Kannada or Marathi. Prabhavathi, the research assistant, was fluent in both Marathi and the local dialect of Kannada that they spoke, and therefore data collection could be carried out effectively. Nevertheless, the local dialect was at times hard to understand for some of the transcribers, who sought the assistance of those familiar with the dialect.

While we enjoyed some of the verdant, beautiful locales chosen for the study, the oppressive heat in one office made us sweat buckets, although the participant was so animated that we forgot all about our discomfort.

Sometimes it took us a while to explain to people in the office why we needed to speak to only some of them, and that too in private. One non-Jogappa even told us that it may be better for us to speak to him as he knew everything (even better than the Jogappas!). Some respondents said that this was the first time they had thought of these issues and it was the first time their opinions on such matters were being sought. Overall we received an overwhelmingly open and supportive response, including invitations to their homes.

Limitations of the Study

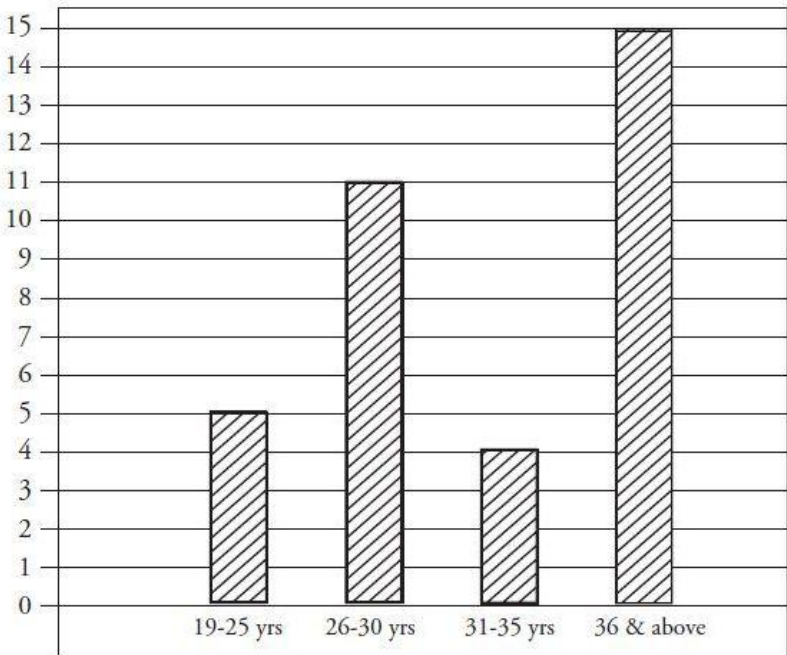
- ⇒ Though this study has attempted to look at the unique cultural practices of Jogappas and the traditions that surround goddess Yellamma, we feel there is a need to explore these concepts in depth. We have not done that as it is beyond the scope of this study.
- ⇒ The Jogappas who were participants of the study were the ones who have been associated with the local CBOs. This may have resulted in the employment of an exclusionary criterion in the selection of our participants, which was completely unintended.
- ⇒ Some of the issues touched upon would require greater exploration, such as their future, their relationships with various actors etc.
- ⇒ While we have explored issues around caste and gender vis-à-vis the Jogappa community; these are also areas that require more attention.

Profile of the Participants

Age Group:

An attempt was made to find participants across age groups. Age was one of the criteria of purposive sampling as we wanted to document the changes that have occurred within the Jogappa community, both in terms of how they view their transgendered identities in the modern world and the evolution of their traditions over time. They were categorised into four sub-groups: 19-25, 26-30, 31-35, and 36 and above. The table and the bar chart are given below.

Figure 1: Age Group of Participants



Caste and Religious breakup

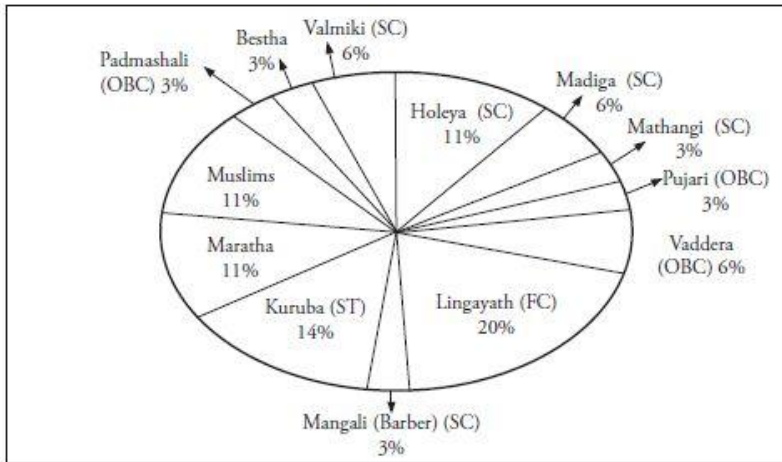
The caste composition of the Jogappa participants interviewed was varied. We had initially gone into the field assuming that most

Jogappas hailed from dalit or other oppressed caste groups. This was proven wrong, as we found that Jogappas were dedicated across caste groups. The participants were from scheduled caste (SC) groups Holey, Madiga, Mathangi, Mangali and Valmiki; scheduled tribe (ST) group Kuruba; forward caste (FC) Lingayath; other backward castes (OBCs) Vaddera, Pujari, and Padmashali and others such as Maratha and Bestha.

Of the 35 participants interviewed, four were from Muslim families. We did not find members of any religions apart from what are broadly classified as Hindus (including dalits) and Muslims. This would be further explained in the next chapter

Figure 2: Caste-wise Distribution

| Caste | No. of Participants | Caste | No. of Participants |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Holey (SC) | 4 | FC | 7 |
| Madiga (SC) | 2 | OBC | 4 |
| Mathangi (SC) | 1 | SC | 10 |
| Pujari (OBC) | 1 | ST | 5 |
| Vaddera (OBC) | 2 | Muslims | 4 |
| Lingayath (FC) | 7 | Others | 5 |
| Mangali (Barber) (SC) | 1 | Total | 35 |
| Kuruba (ST) | 5 | | |
| Maratha | 4 | | |
| Muslims | 4 | | |
| Padmashali (OBC) | 1 | | |
| Bestha (Boat-man) | 1 | | |
| Valmiki (SC) | 2 | | |
| TOTAL | 35 | | |



Attire

Attire plays a significant role in the sub categories within the Jogappa identity. Jogappas wear both male and female attires and commonly refer to this difference as 'satla' (in saree or female attire) and 'panti-satla' (in male attire). These terms also indicate identity differences between those who present themselves as women and those as men. About 63% of the participants were in satla, while the remaining preferred to be in panti-satla.

Report Structure

This report is divided into eight chapters and a Recommendations section. The first chapter explores the processes of identity formation amongst Jogappas and dedication to Yellamma, and the second, the relationships they have with their families, and the manner in which Jogappas perceive themselves and are perceived by society. The third deals with housing, health and education. The fourth explores their livelihood options, migration patterns and income-expenses. The fifth looks at health concerns; the sixth, at political participation; the seventh, the roles played by CBOs and NGOs; and the eighth, the aspirations of the

Jogappas. This is followed by a Recommendations section, aimed primarily at the policy makers, by influencing whom the Jogappa community would be benefitted, we believe.

Note on the chapters

Since the chapters have been written by three different people, the writing styles are distinct. The regional words have been written in italics throughout the document. We have largely used the pronoun “she” when referring to Jogappas: however, this does not reflect the gender identity that individual participants might choose for themselves. Because names do not necessarily reflect the gender chosen by the individual Jogappa, we have simply used “she” and “he” based on the content of the interviews; these are not intended to be value judgments in any way, and should not be interpreted as such.

Furthermore, we have referred to the Jogappas who have participated in this study as participants and not as respondents, subjects or informants. This is done in the belief that this research project is the result of the cumulative effort of various individuals, most importantly the Jogappas who have been part of the study. They have not been passive respondents; rather, they have been actively involved in the study since its inception. The participants of the study have been informed of the outcomes of the study, both for the purpose of receiving feedback as well as to build a platform for advocacy work in the future. The quotations used in the report have been taken from the transcriptions of the audio-recorded interviews. In some places, to aid the reader's understanding, we have added explanations in brackets within the quotes. While retaining the original quotes we have at some points tweaked the quotes only to facilitate understanding. We have tried to do this without compromising the meaning or voice of the participants





Yellamma Idol; usually balanced on the head whilst performing joga

The Jogappa Identity

We don various identities in our lifetime, often simultaneously. Some identities are conceived by others and handed down to us; we personalise, conform with, and question them throughout our lives. The formation of the numerous transgender identities across India varies from region to region. Society's views significantly affect how their transgender persona evolves. In this chapter, we will explore the process of Jogappa identity formation.

The Jogappa identity is consolidated through a complex process of self perception, divine affirmation, and approval from a guru. The way a Jogappa joins the community indicates and influences the process of her identity formation, and bears relation to who constitutes her support system and the respect she receives within and without the Jogappa community. The religious association with Yellamma is pervasive in all aspects of the lives of Jogappas. Association with her provides Jogappas with the few livelihood opportunities that they usually have access to. It is important to note that this involves Jogappas freely expressing their gender identity within respected spaces in society: Yellamma is therefore instrumental in the realization of their gender identity. It is through Yellamma that they as Jogappas come together, and it is through their ways of worshipping her that they form a community.

Jogappas join the community through a process of 'dedication' to Yellamma. They do this either voluntarily or at the instance of their families. If the individual decides to join the Jogappa community and the family refuses to accept this, it leads to the person leaving the family and/or running away from home to join the community. The reasons for the dedication of young 'men' to Yellamma are varied. Some families have a tradition of dedicating certain members, generationally, to Yellamma, where possession by Yellamma seems to 'run in the family'. Participants mentioned a long-deceased ancestor who was a Jogappa. Some showed physical signs of being 'possessed' by the goddess, which then resulted in the family either accepting or rejecting the person. Acceptance is complicated as families often feel they do not have a choice but to accept the 'fated' changes that are believed to be a result of 'divine will'.

Most Jogappas said they joined the Jogappa community when they realised that the goddess had entered them: this possession manifests in forms such as *jadey* (matted hair), pain in limbs and/or the body, lethargy, shaking and shivering on certain days of month, expression of feminine mannerisms, and appearance of the goddess in their dreams. Following this, they consult either a Jogappa or a temple priest about what to do about these visions and feelings. It is after the senior person gives his/her interpretations of these signs and advises the family that they move forward.

The process of realisation that the goddess is upon them is often described as being 'caught' by the goddess, a feeling of being 'bound' and unable to control it. Most descriptions refer to changes in the body, a feeling of restlessness, and a sense of ill-health. It is seen simultaneously as an illness and as possession by the goddess.

*"I had something that used to come over me, which I wasn't aware of. It used to happen without my being aware."
(Mallappa)*

The participant stresses two separate times that neither she nor the people around her understood what “came upon” her. She narrated the experience with an emphasised dissociation from the self, as if the self was not responsible for gender expression. The narration also hints at the helplessness of the individual and the lack of control over the situation. Possession by Yellamma would often manifest as a physical ailment, as a reduced ability to function properly. This hints at a deep mind-body connection and alludes to the physical expression of psychological turmoil. Almost all the interviewees repeatedly mentioned psychosomatic reasons for their gender expression.

Some Jogappas said they had effeminate mannerisms from a very young age and used to prefer the company of other girls. They sought to reinforce their chosen gender identity through association with women and girls. Many stated that they played with girls, and engaged in ‘gender-appropriate’ household chores. Some also spoke about wanting to follow the rituals and traditions practised by the Jogappas, particularly emphasising that they wanted to embody the femininity of the identity. One Jogappa said she found the traditions and customs followed by older Jogappas attractive. Another participant longingly remembered wanting to be more like Jogappas when she was a child.

“While doing that [carrying a pot of water back home by balancing it on the head], I was longing to place the god on my head and do the dance, to put kumkum on my forehead, to wear thaali, to have long hair like women etc.” (Yenkamma)

According to the participants, the sari is considered an important indicator of gender expression. Some Jogappas stated that wanting to wear a sari was one of the deciding factors in their desire to be dedicated. They seemed to believe that the sari embodies all that is feminine, and wearing it not only brings one closer to being a woman and to the goddess but also results in societal affirmation of their gender. One of the participants stated that the goddess does not spare a man if he wears a sari. Yellamma enters

the person wearing a sari and takes possession of him. The sari is clearly seen as being indicative of a change in gender performance; one either wears the sari after being possessed by Yellamma or one will be possessed by Yellamma if one wears the sari. One Jogappa said that her refusal to wear the sari resulted in her being punished by Yellamma:

“When I refused to wear sari, I suffered pain in my legs, bleeding from my ears etc. My mother prayed to the goddess that she would make me wear sari and all the symptoms stopped.”
(Radhika)

A few participants also mentioned that their families faced many problems, particularly financial ones, and that assuaging the goddess through dedication was seen as a way of ensuring the well-being of the family. When the individuals and their families encountered these changes, most of them consulted other family members, local temple priests and astrologers in order to determine the reasons behind the ‘supernatural’ occurrences in the family.

“I used to get some thing on my body and there was always some problem with my eyes. My parents, who didn’t know what was happening to me, consulted many people. They were told by someone that I was possessed by the goddess and that I should pray to the goddess for my well-being” (Chandappa)

The goddess’s possession of an individual does not warrant immediate dedication: the family and the Jogappa often engage in negotiations with Yellamma. These negotiations often include promises of deeper *bhakti*, frequent visits to Yellamma’s shrine, and vows of material offerings to be made to Yellamma. One participant stated that his family had decided to marry him off and dedicate his bride in his place. But, according to him, the goddess did not agree.

“She said that the horse which is chosen for me will be mine and I will ride on it. I do not want a replacement. Then my family agreed with her and took me to Saundatti.”(Mallappa)

It is interesting to note that Yellamma's possession is seen as a form of ownership which is described in a manner that demonstrates her power, her control, and the requirement of absolute submission on the part of the possessed. The reference to a horse particularly underlines the aspect of control, as it refers to how she has 'tamed' the individual.

Those who did not become Jogappas with their family's approval stated that they had had feminine feelings since childhood. In some cases, the family recognised this fact, which resulted in two kinds of situations: the first, where the family disapproved because they were either unaware of the Yellamma culture, or simply did not want to lose their 'son'; the second, where the family did approve but took the next step only after consulting a number of people including members of the extended family, priests and astrologers.

Having previously had Jogappas in the family also made a significant difference to how an individual's behavioural changes, or their wish to be dedicated, were accepted. During the Jogappa consultation organised in Bangalore, Jogappas said that if the *muthu* was previously carried by a female-born person in the family, it is passed on to another female-born person in the family; if a male-born individual was the carrier of the *muthu*, then tradition demands that it is passed on to another male. Meeting older Jogappas strengthened the younger Jogappa's identity. Many a time, the Jogappa would not know what was happening to her and meeting a guru would help her understand who she was. Most Muslim families, however, have found it difficult to accept, or are puzzled that their child is possessed by a Hindu goddess.

The psychological and material aspects of the lives of Jogappas who have been dedicated after being accepted by the family and those who have voluntarily joined the community are vastly different. They are

accorded different degrees of respectability within the Jogappa community, their families and society, have greater or lesser access to housing, and so on. Family acceptance (or lack thereof) has profound implications for their well-being and socio-economic status (For more on this see Chapter 3). Within the Jogappa community, there exists some bias against self-dedicated Jogappas among those dedicated by the family. The family-dedicated Jogappas have stated that they either do not know much about the self-dedicated, or that they are aware of their existence but they do not mingle with them much. Family-dedicated Jogappas, as well as the larger society, question the authenticity of the identity of Jogappas who have dedicated themselves without familial approval. They are not believed to be truly possessed by the goddess. Instead, they are accused of merely 'wanting' to be like woman, almost as if it were a fashion.

"People who themselves become Jogappas, they are not respected. Only if the goddess herself comes and resides in us, we can become Jogappas. People don't respect those who become Jogappas on their own, that is not acceptable, it is like being Hijras. They behave like soolay [sex worker], they shouldn't do that. They won't be respected if they do that." (Radhika)

Here the expression of agency and 'choosing' to be a Jogappa is viewed as 'less authentic' than those who are 'driven' to join the community. The former compare the latter to Hijras, considered an insulting comparison as their claim to the feminine gender is questioned and considered a whim, because unlike Jogappas, Hijras do not get 'possessed' by the goddess.

The Initiation Ritual

The ritual followed by the community to initiate a person into the Jogappa community is very similar to a marriage ceremony. They visit the temple priest, who is well-versed in the customs and rituals associated with the initiation of a Jogappa, along with five senior Jogappas. Auspicious

items such as milk, ghee (clarified butter), curd, turmeric, bangles and saris are collected. The exact nature and sequence of the rituals show some variations across regions but some basic practices are in common. Turmeric is applied on the body, after which the person is bathed in five pots of water (one of which also contains milk), and made to wear a *sari*. The ritualistic pouring of water is seen as symbolically aiding rebirth as a Jogappa. The *muthu* which is equated to the nuptial thread is then tied by a priest or in some cases by an older Jogappa. This is followed by an exercise of seeking alms or joga for four weeks, after which five Jogappas have to be fed. The procedure symbolises a move from marriage (and the life of a householder) to becoming an ascetic. In the case of Jogappas, both stages of life seem to exist simultaneously.

The ritual primarily initiates the new inductee into the Jogappa tradition, which comes with numerous rules regulations and traditions.

“Whatever people are offering us we eat that, whatever they give us we survive with that... by begging and moving around.”
(Yellappa)

The ceremony is also used to instruct the new Jogappa in the ways of the community — in the norms, dos and don'ts, and customs to be followed. Over time she is taught various skills such as playing various instruments, performing *pujas* and so on. She is also taught to understand the clear segregation of the auspicious and the inauspicious. There is a host of restrictions placed by the community around, for example, the consumption of food. This is dealt with in greater detail later in the chapter. They are advised to live a frugal, ascetic lifestyle, which is seen as befitting these ‘divine’ women.

Whoever ties the *muthu* around a Jogappa's neck becomes her guru. The guru and the Jogappa share a mother–daughter relationship. The guru considers her followers as her children, who are called *sisumakkalu*. *Muthus* are of many kinds and Jogappas can choose the type they wish to

tie. Their choice often depends on whether they can follow the norms attached to each, which vary in rigour.

- a. *Yenjal muthu*: The sampradaya (traditions) to be followed after wearing this *muthu* is less rigorous. It is chosen by many Jogappas who are married to women and have had children before they were visited by the grace of the goddess. Dietary restrictions for those wearing the *yenjal muthu* are also relatively lax: for instance, they are permitted to eat non-vegetarian food on more number of days although it is mainly chosen by those who were married before they entered the Jogappa tradition, others too can opt for it.
- b. *Meesalu muthu*: It is only worn by unmarried Jogappas, but it is not mandatory that all unmarried Jogappas wear it. If one wears the *meesalu muthu*, and a death takes place in one's village, one cannot have food, water or tea. One can eat only after having a bath and paying respects to the goddess. *Meesalu muthu* wearers are expected to eat vegetarian on more days, and generally adhere closely to the rules around various activities.
- c. *Parushurama muthu*: it is chosen by those Jogappas who want to remain in *panthi satla* and also perhaps get married. Their outward appearance is like that of men; however they dedicate themselves to the worship of the goddess for the rest of their lives.

The Jogappa and the devadasi traditions are associated with Yellamma but there are thousands of Yellamma devotees who are part of neither. Yellamma traditions are largely non-Brahminical in their origins and are mainly associated with subaltern communities.

The many dimensions of food

Food and eating have cultural significance and foods convey a range of cultural meanings, communicating information in terms not only of occasion but also of social status, ethnicity and wealth. These meanings, however, are not inherent in foodstuffs. They depend on the social context in which the items are found (Murcott 1982, 203). In the context of Jogappas and their subculture too there is a deeper meaning attached to the practices around food, as gleaned from the participants' responses.

1. Restrictions on meat consumption are based on the days of the weeks or other special days when non-vegetarian food is prohibited. This depends on the significance attached to the day. On days earmarked as the "devi's day" and when they perform *pujas* they do not eat non vegetarian food because they believe that on those days they must maintain ritual purity and be in an ascetic mode. Non-vegetarian food is regarded as inappropriate for days of religious observation. The traditional concept of meat producing "heat" in the body could be another reason, but this was not explored in the research. On some festival days that are regarded as celebratory they are encouraged to eat meat.

"Tuesday, Friday and Amavasya we cannot eat [non-veg]. Also on some days of puja. Next day we must eat [non-veg]." (Rangamma)

There is little restriction on the kinds of meat that they can eat. Some spoke in detail of the animal sacrifice that is part of their worship; they have to eat the sacrificial meat. Most of them also continue to follow traditional restrictions (or lack thereof) based on the caste group that they belong to.

"We don't have any restrictions for food. I don't eat because they don't cook non veg at home; we are not supposed to eat. We are Vokkaligas. We are sadaru Gowdas." (Chandappa)

Those who come from caste groups that traditionally do not eat meat continue to be vegetarian. Beef, which caste Hindus consider a taboo, is also eaten by those who come from caste/religious groups that traditionally eat beef (dalits and Muslims). They did, however, remark that they were supposed to take off the *muthu* when they eat “big meat” (a euphemism for beef).

“We have to then have a bath, become clean again and only then wear the bead again.” (Malleash)

“We can eat small meat, not big meat. Even if we eat big meat, we are supposed to remove the muthu and eat, the next day morning, we should take bath, do abhishekam for the muthu, apply the sacred ashes on our forehead and wear the muthu again.” (Gowri)

One Jogappa who is close to the Hijra tradition said:

“We don’t eat beef actually but my guru made me eat, so I have started eating.” (Tippamma)

Beef is seen as contaminating (albeit temporarily), but in this context it is not considered permanently ‘polluting’, as traditional Brahmins believe. What is remarkable is that the Jogappa community is able to accommodate people from different caste backgrounds and their varied food habits.

“Among us Jogappas it is not compulsory to eat this or that. We can eat what we like [and continue to be Jogappas].” (Radhika)

2. Caste and Commensality (eating together): In most cultures sharing of food and the transfer of food are culturally mediated. For most Hindus, food sharing and accepting food touched and tasted by someone represents principal social markers, both within the family and in the larger social sphere (Miller, Rozin, & Fiske, 1998).

In India, accepting food prepared by another person is perceived as a homogenising act, as well as a form of personal solidarity.

Members of higher castes may give food to people of a lower caste without suffering a loss of status, but they may not receive food from them. As such, people must constantly guard against sharing food with people whose pollution would lower their 'moral' status. However the Jogappas emphatically and unanimously stated that they were invited to eat in a range of households in villages and towns (across caste) and the invitation did not depend on their caste background (i.e. irrespective of the Jogappas' caste background, people of various castes fed them in their homes). It would appear that as ascetics they stand outside the caste system (Bayly, 2001).

3. The sacred act of eating: Consuming food is almost a ritual and there are clearly defined rules they must observe while eating. A sacred space and time are created around the act of consuming a meal. Any inauspicious occurrence when they sit down for a meal obliges them to immediately stop eating. These occurrences include the light going off, people having loud disagreements, or even the mention of certain words considered inauspicious, such as "slippers" or "knot". (What leads certain words to be considered inauspicious was not explored and was unclear.) Different people adhere to these restrictions in varying degrees.

"If there is a death in the locality or if we even hear of such news, we cannot eat till the body is cremated or buried. We don't go to a person's house for some time if something bad has occurred there."
(Hussein Saab)

They appeared to imply that those who wear the *yenjal muthu* face fewer restrictions than those who wear the *meesalu muthu*.

4. Food as an offering: Food is commonly offered to gods, goddesses and to people regarded as holy, as food is by and of itself regarded as a manifestation of the divine. It is ideal and material at the same time. Disciples and other villagers offer Jogappas special food or

grains on auspicious days. The kind of food offered depends on the kind of *puja*. Jogappas are regarded as holy because they are close to the goddess, and feeding someone who is 'holy' earns the one making the offering some punya (merit for the next life). Food is also offered when something good happens to people and they attribute that to the blessings of the Jogappas – as a way to express their gratitude.

“They feed us well if something good happens to them after my worship or after my telling them their future.” (Prakash)

“During the vraaths, during house warming or during the wedding ceremonies of their children, they call us. They ask us to get coconut oil; they feed us and send us off. They go to the field to fetch groundnuts; we are fed and also given groundnuts before being sent off.”(Malleesh)

Offering food has a special cultural significance. All guests to the house are traditionally expected to be fed. That Jogappas are invited to homes means that they are fed full meals on those days; it also denotes access to certain social spaces where they are revered. The donations that they receive, in the form of grain, helps to meet some of their food requirements. These offerings are also shared with the rest of the family and help enhance, to some extent, their value to the family.

“On Tuesdays and Fridays, people also offer food. If someone offers us food, we should go and eat, we shouldn't refuse. If they call us then we should go; we ourselves shouldn't go and demand. They bring jowar lour, rice flour, and offer it to us.” (Rajesh)

That would be contrary to their etiquette of dealing with devotees which stipulates that all offerings should be voluntary. The norms about feeding them are changing, leading to a decrease in the quantity of grain that they access.

Of the monthly expenditure of poor households in developing countries, a large portion is set aside for food, especially given the current over-monetised economy and the rapid loss of the commons (Tricarico, 2011).

Without the support of communities the Jogappas and their lifestyles cannot be sustained. An erosion of the way of life that used to sustain them, diminishing space for them in a neoliberal economic model that views them as beggars, and inadequate state support have caught them in a bind.

Consumption pattern: The Jogappas' food is largely similar to that of others in their region. *Jowar* and *bajra rotis*, *daals*, and vegetables make up their average meal. Most of them eat at home. They themselves cook; if they live with their families, other female family members cook. This, of course, is in keeping with the stereotypical gender role, where a women's sense of accomplishment is linked to her feeding the family a satisfying meal, even while she eats last or starves. Often, sexual minorities living alone in the cities regularly eat at small eateries or skip meals. Most Jogappas reported that they ate at home. Some, though, who were living in the cities and were away from their families, said that they survived on "tea and bread", which is not only non-traditional food but also less nourishing.

Jogappas of Telangana

We were able to interact with Mr. Nagaraj Putari from Adoni, who has conducted research on the Jogappa tradition. He says that the Jogappas there are part of three traditions – the ascetic, the *jogin* and the *tapas* traditions – as well as having a transgendered identity. According to him, unlike the Jogappas of the Karnataka who get dedicated to Yellamma for life, the Jogappas of Telangana take up this identity for a few years, as a vow. He views the Jogappa identity as being more performative than as an expression of transgenderism. According to him, the Jogappas of Andhra Pradesh associate femininity with the goddess and get possessed

by this idea of the feminine goddess. Repeated possessions result in the continuation of the performance of this character (Yellamma) beyond the time period of possession.

He said that even though possession is not gender-specific — more women than men get possessed by Yellamma — though gurus are always male-born individuals. The possessed imagine the ‘mood’ of Yellamma. They believe she becomes happy after receiving the offerings made to her, identify with her happiness, and are possessed by this feeling or mood. Intense identification with this mood results in their feeling ecstatic, which later leads them into a state of trance. The enactment of the goddess is very theatrical in nature and is connected to the feeling and embodying of *rasas* (which means essence or juice and is fundamental to many forms of Indian art including dance, music, musical theatre, and literature). During the enactment, the ‘audience’ reaches out to Yellamma, talking to and interacting with her through the spirit of the possessed. Being in a trance tires the Jogappas and makes them feel weak. The guru is her foil. He calms, consoles, and revives them; he presses his thumb on their forehead to help them recover.

Mr Putari said that often, a bull is dedicated to the goddess, which is considered ‘stamped’ by the goddess and is allowed to roam freely all over the village. The Jogappas too are seen as individuals who have been ‘stamped’ by the goddess and just like the bull, are required to ‘wander’ around unrestricted. This is part of their ascetic tradition. The detached mobility of the Jogappas makes them guests in their own homes.

It is interesting to note that all identities associated with the Yellamma tradition (Jogappas, Devadasis etc.) get married to Yellamma, and most of these are feminine identities. But Mr. Putari said that they do not view marriage in the conventional manner, but as a bond: Jogappas and Devadasis see themselves as being bound to Yellamma. They both ‘become’ Yellamma (there is an effacement of self through the act of possession) and get married to her (are bound to her).

The Jogappa is seen as being a 'good' *tapaswini* (performer of austerities), the criterion for which is that one should be 'genderless'. Since Jogappas embody both genders, they are also seen as being genderless. In another sense, they are viewed as being 'supra-gender', that is, they are 'beyond gender'.

Self Perception

Most participants expressed their happiness at *not* being Jogappas. Some also stated that they were now respected by society. A few participants observed that their family's conditions had improved since their dedication, implying that their dedication had helped solve their familial problems.

Some expressed the belief that they were fated to become Jogappas, and had resigned themselves to their 'condition'. Some noted that when people harassed them, they felt angry about being the way they were; others stated that sadly their becoming Jogappas had alienated them from their families. One Jogappa said that she did not want to be a Jogappa anymore, even though she was happy when she first got dedicated. A sense of being abandoned and lacking a support system resonates in all such narratives.

"It was nice then [when I became a Jogappa], now I have no one, I have no family. I feel despair, I am doing this because I need a source of income." (Sonal)

One participant said that she was not happy being a Jogappa as she was dedicated by her family to alleviate specific domestic problems. The person also felt resentful about following all the norms and customs associated with the Jogappa culture.

"I feel bad being a Jogappa. I too want to be like others, I too want to live like others and want to do things like others."
(Mallappa)

Jogappas seem to have a distinctly personalised relationship with the goddess. Even while narrating their problems, they referred to the goddess, her wishes, her power to direct their lives and their resignation to her will. One participant stated that she didn't want Yellamma to trouble anyone else in the way she herself had been troubled.

"I just don't want her to trouble anyone else. There was once a Jogappa in my village. When she died, other Jogappas went and prayed to Yellamma and asked her to not make any more Jogappas in my village, but still she picked me."
(Chandappa)

Dedication to Yellamma is also done to spare others from the problems 'created' by the goddess and is thus seen as a sacrifice. It is important to note that the members of the community do not want anyone else to be dedicated. This thought was repeated by Nagappa who said that individuals who 'feel' different get attracted to the traditions and customs of Jogappas. When they meet those who are already a part of the community and inform them of their wish to become Jogappas, they are often advised not to do so. It is only after several meetings that their wish is considered serious.

"At first they [older Jogappas] will advise us to not to become one and send us back. But if we go to them again and again, as we could not resist the feeling, they will take us."
(Nagappa)



The traditional muthu, an important maker of their identity



Parashuram Jogappas

Relationships with Family and Society

The family as an institution serves many functions, providing economic wherewithal, health care and stability. This is especially true in a country such as India where there is inadequate provision from the State and hence familial support becomes a crucial source of physical, financial and psychological security.

The Jogappas' familial relationships are often based on the manner in which they became Jogappas. Those who were family-dedicated, or whose decision to become a Jogappa was accepted by the families, had better relations with them, while the self-dedicated ones were found to have strained relations with their families. Often, even if Jogappas are accepted by their parents, they are ostracised by their siblings or members of the extended family. Family acceptance is not absolute; it is often conditional and the Jogappa is tolerated because her family doesn't have a choice. Even so, through the surveys, we found that most Jogappas stayed with their families.

A few participants explained that they were considered to be divine and hence treated with respect by their families, who then went on to exhibit this respect by according them status as holy or special.

“They treat us with respect, they don’t let us sweep, if they sweep they don’t throw the waste when we are around. They take bath and only then serve us food. They treat us like a form of goddess.” (Gowri)

Financial insecurity makes many Jogappas feel helpless. Some participants said that they felt they were being financially exploited and therefore moved out of their homes. One participant said that her family wanted her to stay with them only because she earned and provided financial support. Another Jogappa stated that she had to take care of her mother, who had no one else to care for her, and she was therefore in a ‘good’ relationship with her family (as she was of “use” to the family). People are often wary of associating themselves with a household that has such a strong relationship with the goddess. They fear that that they too may be caught in the goddess’ sway. A Jogappa in the family is seen as a detriment to its image. As one participant says:

“The wedding alliance for my sister’s daughter was broken because they came to know about me. It was after that, that I was completely ostracised by the family.” (Hussein Saab)

Those who have not been accepted by their families often stay alone. This also has implications on their health. Even those few Jogappas who are grudgingly invited back home are often not invited to family gatherings or important occasions. They are rendered invisible. They also expressed the myriad difficulties they face by being alone and having no support system, apart from the goddess.

“They [Jogappas dedicated by families] have mother and father; we don’t have anyone except the Devi.” (Rangamma)

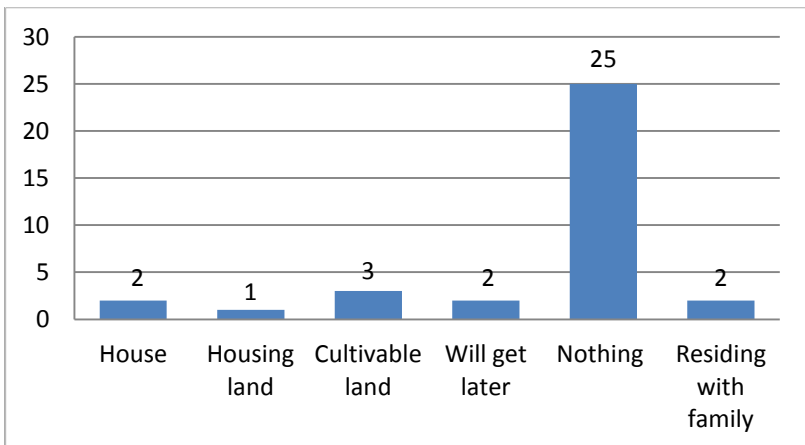
It is interesting that the goddess is seen as a source of succor who passes on her strength to them. She is seen as the only one who was by their side during the most difficult times of their lives.

Property from family

Apart from six Jogappas, none of them have been endowed with family property. A few have been promised cultivable land or housing, but most do not have any property. This will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter.

Figure 3 & 4: Assets from Natal family

| Nature of Assets | No. of Participants |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| House | 2 |
| Housing land | 1 |
| Cultivable land | 3 |
| Will get later | 2 |
| Nothing | 25 |
| Residing with family | 2 |
| TOTAL | 35 |



Marriage

Marriage in India is seen as necessary to ensure progeny (and continuation of the family name), security in one's old age, and a legitimate avenue for sex (and perhaps intimacy). For a young man, marriage also implies financial gain. Parents deem it their responsibility to get their children "married off". Of the 35 Jogappas interviewed, 26 were unmarried, eight married, and one married and separated.

When asked whether Jogappas get married to women, some Jogappas stated that since they themselves were not married, they did not know about the married ones. Almost all participants said that Jogappas should not get married after getting dedicated to the goddess, but that there were some who did so. Some participants were found to be married to women and were cohabiting with them. Some have been dedicated even after they have had children; such dedications solely depend on when the goddess decides to 'catch' them, and do not appear to be the norm. Jogappas who are the only sons in their families are often not dedicated till they are married and have children. They observe that in such cases, the brides are informed of the circumstances and what would befall them in future, and yet they agree to the marriage. Nearly all the participants stated that Jogappas were not supposed to have any sexual relationship with their wives. This is in line with the heterosexist line of thinking on sexuality and sexual relationships, according to which women (Jogappas) cannot have sexual relations with other women (their wives). While some explained that from the time they became Jogappas their sexual attraction towards their wives had greatly diminished, others categorically stated that they had never considered getting married as they had dedicated their lives to the goddess.

Despite the claim that there is informed consent from the women who marry Jogappas, questions can be raised about the agency of the women who 'agree' to such a marriage. None of the Jogappas elaborated

on how the women actually felt about agreeing to lead a celibate life after their husbands were dedicated to the goddess. One of the participants mentioned that nowadays, women walk out of such marriages. While society generally expects women to remain in marriages, no matter what the circumstances are, it also upholds pronatalist ideals: motherhood is seen as imperative. If her spouse's lack of sexual interest in her is seen as the reason for her childlessness, her extended family and community might back her in her decision to leave such a marriage.

Furthermore, strict codes of purity and impurity are followed by the community. Sex is generally not talked about. One participant did, however, speak about his wife's sexual needs and his duty to satisfy them:

"Though I'm not interested in having sex with my wife I do have sex with her as she too needs it. We [Jogappas] are able to go out and finish it [have sex], but what can she do [for sex]?" (Dinesh)

The dichotomy of the 'holy' and the 'sexual' is a recurring theme throughout every participant's narrative. The Jogappas kept reiterating the importance of norms and customs that strictly segregate and polarise these two aspects. Respect, position within the community and wider society, and the changing relationships between the Jogappa community and the Hijra community are structured by these notions.

Society

Societal perception of Jogappas differs according to location (rural or urban), mode of dedication (by family or by oneself), and the kind of Jogappa one is (satla or panthi-satla). When asked how society treated them, some Jogappas stated that they were accepted by people and respected by many. A few participants noted that people provided them material and other support, gave them food, sought their blessings and viewed them as 'divine' individuals. Others stated that most people

discriminated against them and called them derogatory names. Policemen and *gundas* harassed them and extorted money from them. They also stated that there was no one to protect them (More on this in Chapter 5).

"I was once harassed by a man....his happened right in front of a police station." (Mallappa)

However, a few participants stated that the discrimination they faced before they became Jogappas had decreased since their dedication; they felt that their gender expression had gained greater legitimacy after they became Jogappas.

"Before I became a Jogappa, people used to say that I am [play-] acting when the goddess used to come on me." (Devindra)

One participant stated that discrimination was a result of lack of awareness about the Jogappa identity.

"Earlier they did not know the difference between a Hijra and a Jogappa. Now, they have awareness, they look at us as a form of Yellamma." (Gowri)

Participants also noted that they were respected in villages but harassed in the cities, where people were not aware of the Jogappa identity and mistook them for Hijras, asking them if they were men or women.

"Some of them believe us [our gender identity] and some don't. In the cities, if we go to the dava khana (clinic) they look at us differently and don't sit next to us. They look at us and take a step back....At that time, I feel bad." (Rangamma)

"People talk bad things about me... they call me Hijra, chakka...look, he is neither a man nor a woman." (Radhika)

Some Jogappas stated that their gender was questioned especially when they were in sari, which indicated the sartorial implications of perceptions of gender.

“Most look at Jogappas in a bad manner; they think that they are men who have draped saris.” (Yellappa)

“Society looks at us in a bad way. They tease us about wearing saris and they talk about us among one another. They tease us in public.” (Chandappa)

The sari being central to their identity formation, those in satla faced greater discrimination in public spaces. A few Jogappas also felt that since too many people have now become Jogappas, this has reduced the credibility of the identity. Many of them seem resigned to people's teasing. One participant stated that she did not have any problems despite facing discrimination.

“God hasn't given us enough to stop, turn around, and back answer them. I don't face any problems. When they tease us, telling us that we are feminine, I don't turn around and retort; I just don't react and I walk away from there.” (Malleesh)



Performing music with traditional instruments is sources of income for many Jogappas



Different generations of Jogappas at the pilot study meet

Housing and Education

Housing

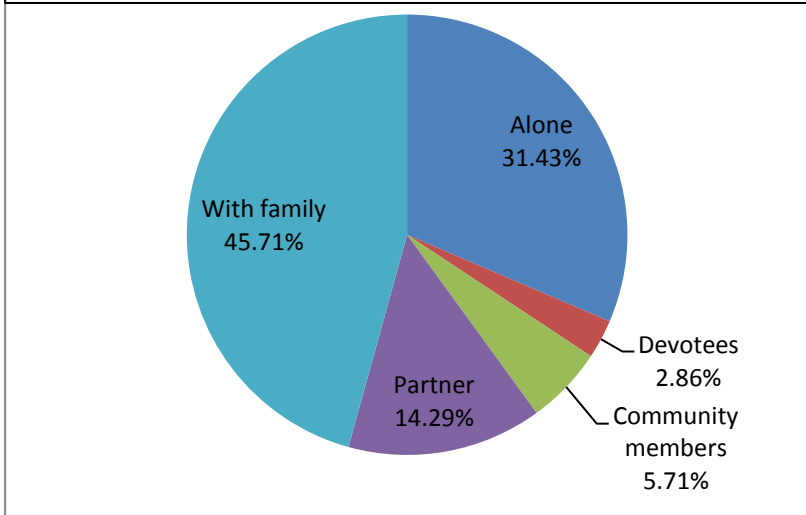
The idea of housing provokes different responses from people, depending on their class or the region they live in. What a house is, or rather, what ideal housing is, can be construed in many ways. As Bhan et al. exemplify, housing is seen through multiple discourses: as a basic human need, as a derived constitutional right, as a commodity etc. The issue of housing is not merely about having a place to reside; it includes a range of subsidiary themes within its ambit, such as accessibility to housing, security, availability of resources, and so on. Stressing the importance of this, Bhan et al. (2014:78) note, "... Without it [housing], health, education, psycho-social development, cultural assimilation, belonging, and economic development are impossible."

Housing has been a particularly difficult and scarcely addressed sector for the gender-and-sexual-minority community, and among them, transpeople face the most discrimination when trying to rent a place. Members of the Jogappa community identified housing to be one of the most important issues they faced.

Housing is largely viewed as a source of shelter and security, and also as an asset. Further, it acts as an 'address' for official records that increases access to social entitlements. At its core, however, it is a space

that provides a sense of liberty and belonging, and is therefore important in legitimising their identities in societal life. Most participants stated that they stay in rented houses. A few Jogappas who are accepted by the family, stay with their family or in familial residences, and they did not specifically identify any issues they faced with housing. Others noted having to move residences continuously round the year. A few participants said they stayed in the *gudi* (temple).

Figures: 5: Living arrangements of participants



The Jogappas' struggle with housing begins with finding a place to stay in. People are not willing to rent out rooms or houses to them; they are often wary or sceptical of them and subject them to many queries before rejecting them outright. This is especially true for Jogappas who are in *satla*, who then have to persuade, negotiate, compromise, and, in some cases, even get recommendations from others in order to be able to rent the residence. This problem was alluded to by even those who stated that the situation had improved in recent times.

"When we go to ask for a house on rent the landlord asks 'what are you?' We say 'nothing, we're Jogappas, we're part of the faith.' That's what we tell them. Now no one has a

problem renting a room to us. They give it, but only after much thought.” (Sonal)

Conjugal Spaces

The participants said that neighbours feel uncomfortable if a Jogappa stays in the vicinity, which is why most house owners usually deny them houses when there are ‘families’ in the neighbourhood. When they do manage to rent a place, it is often after they have accepted many conditions. For example, one Jogappa stated that she was only permitted to stay alone, and the house owner had placed several restrictions on having visitors; they were not permitted to stay overnight, and if they did, they had to pay a monetary fee for the ‘privilege’. This also indicates the societal perception of Jogappas; even in regions where people are somewhat used to their presence there are deep-seated prejudices that affect how they are treated. Even though they are seen as those who have the goddess ‘upon’ them, and are therefore considered asexual beings, they are viewed with some degree of suspicion. A clearly heterosexist notion of domestic space confines them within the framework of conjugality and ‘respectability’. Jogappas are relegated to the realm of non-normative sexuality, just as single or unmarried people and same-sex couples are — they, too, are commonly denied houses on rent.

Financial Problems

Another major issue brought up by the participants is how their financial difficulties affect how they rent houses. Many do not have steady employment, and often work in informal sectors; hence their income is irregular and depends on factors beyond their control. Participants stated that house owners often force them to pay exorbitant rent and sometimes refuse to return the deposit money at the end of their tenancy. Even for a *jhopadi* (shanty), owners would demand rent higher than the market rate.

Rent was frequently hiked without notice. Their unstable income sources make it difficult for them to even make their deposits and pay steady rents.

Association with the Divine

Sometimes the divine status of Jogappas helps them get houses. Yenamma said her devotees had provided her a place of residence and even built a temple for her. A few said that some people respected their religious affiliation and viewed them as 'godly' individuals, and therefore gave them houses on rent. But one Jogappa described how she was mocked for her belief in the goddess:

"I was once told 'It was so long ago that you gave me that Rs 5000, why should I return it to you? Anyway you can pray and pray to the goddess, she will give it back to you.'"
(Yellappa)

The gudi was seen as a relatively safe space by the Jogappas: one of them emphasised that they stayed there because people would not rent houses to them. Many expressed their crucial need to have personal spaces so that they could be themselves, be free to express their gender without being judged or chastised.

Residence with Family

Jogappas don't always find staying with the family a comfortable arrangement, since not all members of the family accept them.

"We do have problems in the family, my sisters-in-law get annoyed with my presence at times, but I manage." (Jainabi)

During the post-data-collection consultation with the Jogappas, many of them stated that a residence, in addition to being a roof over one's head, provides a sense of belonging, a place where one can be oneself,

without restrictions and regulations. As Chandappa said, “I want to make sure that I shift to a house which is my own.”

Many form a deep, personal relationship with the goddess.

“When I was alone I stayed with the goddess.” (Veena)

While the goddess is at times seen as the reason for their existing problems, she is also seen as a companion, and a source of support and strength.

Housing is also seen as a source of security — physical, ‘moral’ and financial. One participant stated that her mobile phones and money kept getting stolen because thieves would frequently break into houses in her area. Some were concerned about how society would view a Jogappa living on her own, and were apprehensive about their ‘image’ being ‘spoilt’, particularly if their family members were staying in the same village or town.

“The men around come near our house and wink at us and all. I don’t want people thinking that, look, men are after her and all. I don’t want people thinking wrongly about me, my brother-in-law and sister are in the same village... if I am living separately I can do whatever I want.” (Tippamma)

One Jogappa mentioned that when she travelled out of town, she either stayed with other Jogappas or with Devadasis; in return for the Devadasis’ hospitality, they would make a token payment.

House as Property

Very few participants actually own property. Since Jogappas generally do not have children to continue the lineage of the family, they are often not considered right for inheriting property and have only a tenuous claim on it. One participant, Dinesh, narrated how existing government schemes failed

to address their needs, with the attitudes of people's representatives being along the lines of "put some temporary shelter in any vacant place... why do you people even need a house." She said that even if some shelter was provided, they were often chased from the place.

Housing is also important for getting identification cards that provide social entitlements from the state. One Jogappa stated that to get a rented house, one needed identity cards, to get which one had to provide proof of one's address:

"I stay in a rented house; there is a problem as they ask for identity proof. Only when we get a house can we get an identity card, as they ask for address proof and other things."
(Nagappa)

She also went on to say that they usually sought the intervention of the local *zamindars* to help them; only after the *zamindars* explained to the house owners who they were did they get rented houses. The implications of a lack of access to housing on access to social entitlements and identity cards were exemplified in the data collected through the survey.

Figure 6: Residence and Social Entitlements – Survey Data

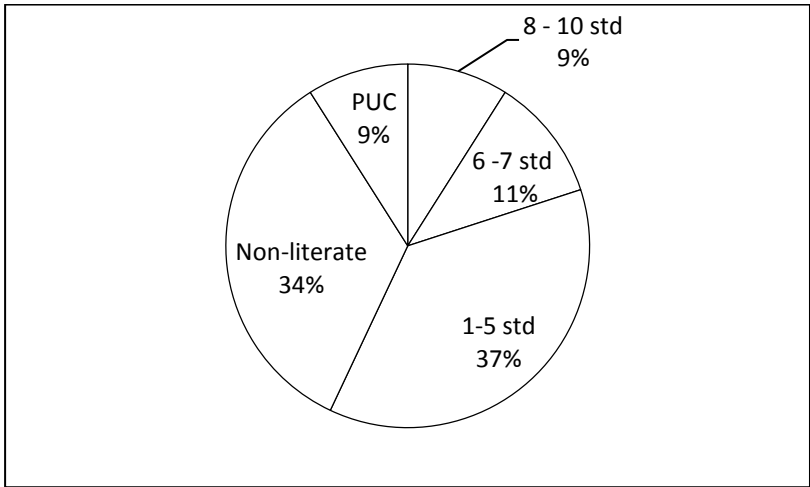
| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 11 | 31.4 | 31.4 |
| No | 24 | 68.6 | 100.0 |
| Total | 35 | 100.0 | |

| Ration Card | Presently where do you live | | | | | Total |
|-------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| | alone own house | alone-rented house | Family Members | Community Members | Partner-rented house | |
| Yes | 4 36.4% | 0 .0% | 7 63.6% | 0 .0% | 0 .0% | 11 100.0% |
| No | 1 4.2% | 11 45.8% | 9 37.5% | 2 8.3% | 1 4.2% | 24 100.0% |
| Total | 5 14.3% | 11 31.4% | 16 45.7% | 2 5.7% | 1 2.9% | 35 100.0% |

None of the Jogappas who stayed alone in rented houses had ration cards. Most of the Jogappas who said they had ration cards were those living with their families, indicating that the families had ration cards, not the Jogappas themselves.

Education

School is the first public space encountered by children, and therefore plays a significant role in identity formation. For many transpersons, school is a place of deep discrimination, where they face abuse from fellow students and admonishment from the teachers: this, alongside other factors, results in them discontinuing their education around the time they enter high school. Their first realisation about their own sexuality occurs around this age, and their behaviour and mannerisms may develop to reflect these self realisations. Their classmates often ostracise and discriminate against them and sometimes abuse them physically and sexually. However, as a result of poverty or needing to work at home to support the family, most participants had either never been to school, or dropped out at the primary school level.

Figure 7: Education levels

Some said that their parents could not afford to send them to school, or that they had to work either at home or in the fields: it must be noted that this was true of all the children in their households, and not just them. This is because most Jogappas hail from rural regions, where the main occupations tend to be farming and cattle herding, and require the participation of the entire family to make ends meet.

Though some Jogappas did talk about the discrimination faced by them in school, the experiences of most of them were markedly different from their Hijra counterparts. There is sufficient anecdotal evidence to suggest that the hostile atmosphere in school contributed significantly to Hijras dropping out of school. This was mainly because of the way their identity is 'received' by others around them as a result of the religious association they have with Goddess Yellamma. Most Jogappas, along with others in their household, were engaged in income-generating activities.

"No I did not go to school; I used to take care of the cattle at home." (Bhagavathi)

"I was sent to do coolie work and earn for the family at a very young age." (Prakash)

"No I haven't gone to school; we were sunk in poverty at that time. I used to earn for my family." (Rajesh)

Some Jogappas said that their parents were not convinced about the importance of formal education and therefore never sent them to school. Two participants mentioned that even though their parents were keen to educate them, they didn't want to go to school; one said she liked to work in the fields instead, and the other said that she was trying to understand her gender identity. Of those who dropped out, some tended to blame themselves for not paying enough attention in school or for not understanding the importance of education.

"I made it to 3rd standard, and even that I did not pay attention to properly." (Sonal)

High drop-out rates

The dropout rate among the few Jogappas who had gone to school was quite high, for various reasons: work demands at home; financial problems at home because the family had no breadwinners, or needed more hands to work on the family farm; their habit of going out to play with girls; other responsibilities such as having to arrange for a sister's marriage and clear debts they took to conduct it. Some Jogappas said that they stopped going to school after some time as they were afraid that their gender expression would be reported to their parents. Some reported no discrimination in school but said their freedom was curtailed at home because of their feminine behaviour, which often resulted in physical abuse and even prompted one of the Jogappas to run away from home. There was constant fear of being outed to their family by school authorities; one Jogappa said that her teacher used to inform her parents about her feminine behaviour in school. One of the participants who has studied till PUC (Pre-University Course, Standard XII), said that she was harassed by her classmates, and was given women's roles in school plays and dance

programmes. She narrated two disturbing incidents of abuse during her school years: one, when she was sexually abused by a male teacher, and the other, when she was pelted with stones while on stage.

Preoccupation with the goddess

A few participants said that possession by Yellamma and the consequent dedication was the reason they did not attend school. When participants were asked whether they would like to continue their education, some said that they were not interested, and others asked how education would serve them. A Jogappa who had persevered through a trouble-ridden school life and studied till the second year of PUC said that her education had been in vain because it had not helped her secure employment, or given her any other opportunities. One participant said that although her parents had not discouraged her from pursuing education, she herself had concluded that it was not important. Another Jogappa, Rangamma, when asked whether given an opportunity she would want to continue her education, said, "It did not occur to me [to study] at all, now what will I learn, madam?" Since education has never yielded much to them, the belief or hope that education could 'provide' for them is dim. The implications of generally low levels of education among the Jogappas are seen in the kind of livelihood options and opportunities that are open to them.

The realisation that one's gender is different from others of the same sex is often daunting, confusing, anxiety-ridden, and time-consuming. One Jogappa said that even though her parents were keen that she be educated, she was "preoccupied" with the goddess. She wanted to be like a woman and dress and behave like one, but her teacher asked her not to come to school because of her feminine mannerisms. One participant mentioned sexual attraction as being a major distraction. She said that she was sexually active at a very young age. She used to save up money and pay boys to have sex with her. Once she was tricked and abused by an older man on a remote hill. A passerby had driven him away, but for days

after that, the Jogappa feared that the stranger would come home and inform her parents of what had happened. This fear made her stop going to school.

For those whose parents were not aware of their behavioural ‘change’, school became a space where they could try to express themselves, but it was always at the risk of being outed, and frequently resulted in them dropping out of school. One Jogappa from a Muslim family said that she never went to school as she was abandoned by her parents when the *jadey* appeared in her hair.

Most participants said that they had never received any skills training from any organisation. One Jogappa said that one of the local CBOs provided training for self employment. Another said that one of the local CBOs had promised to provide some training but she did not specify the nature of the training programme. Yet another participant said that a local CBO had promised to give them training in mehndi design, embroidery, beautician’s skills, tailoring, etc. through the Women and Child Development Department; she said they had even promised to help them secure bank loans.

Most skills-training programmes held by the state are stereotypically designed, because the targets of these courses are almost always for those regarded as ‘proper women’, and they are generally designed only to provide training in a very specific skill, often in the use of outdated technology. There is little thought about the practical side — in terms of absorption in the labour market and/or the range of other capabilities an entrepreneur requires.

Conclusion

Housing was expressed as one of the most important needs by the participants. Jogappas stay with their families or in rented houses. Some stay with their partners and a few of them stay in the *gudi*. Housing

provides them with an 'address', security, and acts as a place where they feel they 'belong'. Housing is also viewed as property, which only a handful of them have. It was found that finding a place on rent was a difficult task for Jogappas, who faced many financial difficulties as well. Many expressed the need to have a place where they could be themselves.

Most Jogappas have not been to school, which has resulted in significant differences in their life experiences during their childhood and young adulthood when compared with other transgendered identities. Many had to drop out of school due to poverty or familial responsibilities. Of the Jogappas who attended school, some spoke of the discrimination they faced there. The impact of education on livelihood options will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.



Disciples worshipping the goddess at a Jogappa's residence.



Jogappas at a community residence.

Health Concerns

Public spaces and infrastructure are gendered, contrary to claims that they are ‘gender neutral’ and benefit people across genders equally. Jogappas are doubly discriminated against when it comes to their access to one of their most basic needs — toilets. In many parts of India, toilets are few in number and not easily available, and people defecate and urinate in the open fields. (Around half of India’s population of 1.2 billion has no domestic toilets, and in many villages, almost two-third the homes do not have toilets, according to the 2011 census [Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2011]).

The Jogappas said they had to find a place in the fields that was far away from the areas designated for others, and go earlier as well, to avoid conflict; they could not be seen anywhere near the spaces used by either men or women. This, however, was not seen as a problem but merely as a fact of life.

“No I don’t have problems. I wake up at 4 a.m. to do my business and get back. So I don’t face any problems.”

(Santosh)

In the cities, those in male attire generally get away with using the men’s toilets but those in *satla* are unsure which toilet to use: some, however, note that they had no trouble using women’s toilets, though they are in the minority.

“We face a lot of problems with toilets. If I go to the men’s toilet they kick us out; if I go to the women’s toilet they use bad words. We feel bad about having to go outside [urinate outdoors] every time. Our government has to consider this [problem]. In Belgaum we identified a few areas where we can go and finish our business. We can access neither the ladies’ nor the gents’ toilets; we are shooed away by people saying that the toilets are not meant for us. Some of them say that nobody else will come to the toilet if they find people like us [using it]. So we have to look for an open space to go.” (Hussein Saab)

Participants said they had been derided by both police and public when they tried to use the women’s toilets. One of them narrated how she was pushed out of the toilet by a woman who questioned her right of entry since she was not a ‘real woman’. Besides the cultural prudery that limits contact between men and women, the specific concern for the physical safety of ‘women’ is one of the reasons employed for barring Jogappas from using the same bathroom as ciswomen. Owing to their male gender at birth, it is assumed that they might sexual assault ciswomen.

Further, one participant reported that she avoids travelling to cities on a regular basis, because she is unsure of which toilet to use. The lack of access to something as fundamental as a toilet therefore clearly has consequences for mobility in the community. Government sectors tasked with dealing with such issues are unable to meet this challenge, despite it being their responsibility to ensure access to such basic facilities. Jogappas are therefore left to engage in practices of ablution that expose them to health risks. As Jody L. Herman notes, “Until public policy and public administration can meet the challenge to address this problem and rethink our reliance on gender segregation in our built environment, the onus will always be on the individual to try to navigate these spaces safely (Herman, 2013).”

When it comes to healthcare, transpeople find accessing primary, emergency, and transition-related health care problematic. Bauer et al identify two key sites of erasure — informational erasure and institutional erasure (Bauer, Hammond, Travers, Kaay, Hohenadel, & Boyce, 2009). These processes work in a mutually reinforcing manner to erase transpeople and communities and produce a system in which a transgender patient or client is seen as an anomaly.

Transpeople approaching health services commonly report that providers are uncooperative or hostile, with staff addressing or responding to the transperson in a gender-inappropriate way, often adopting a mocking or ridiculing attitude, and withholding or refusing healthcare. Transpersons are sometimes treated as ‘objects’ of study, with students and others coming to gawk at them and inspect this ‘strange being’. The stigma and prejudice appear to put large numbers of transpersons onto a ‘stigma-sickness slope’, that is, the daily experience of harassment, abuse and prejudice commonly drives transpeople to social, economic and legal margins of society and this impacts their physical and mental health, which in turn may push them into more vulnerable situations including vulnerability to HIV and other infections and illnesses.

The connection Jogappas have with health and healing also has certain traditional connotations. They are themselves seen as having acquired natural and supernatural healing powers through their closeness and deep devotion to the goddess. They are able to defeat sickness-causing agents, rid patients of malevolent spirits, and heal themselves through certain natural remedies, and a change of diet etc.

Specific health issues

Among the health issues that Jogappas mentioned were specific ones such as their legs aching, due to the long lengths of time they spend walking during their daily routines. But it was before they became Jogappas, and before they fully understood and accepted the power of the

goddess (who is also a healer) within them, that they seemed to have experienced a range of health issues. People spoke at length about certain pains and ailments and generalised body aches, or about feeling “restless and uncomfortable” before they acknowledged and accepted their Jogappa identity. They all reported that their health status showed a marked improvement after their dedication.

Many made an association between health and the pattern of their living arrangements, and said that those who live with their families are healthier, perhaps because of better access to food and care, and the possible psychological benefits that may motivate them to seek healthcare when needed.

Though traditionally Jogappas do not get themselves emasculated, some have now expressed a desire adopt this practice. This change in attitude, which may be largely attributed to their growing association with Hijras (many of whom traditionally opt for Nirvan, the practice of castration), and may also have been triggered by greater awareness of similar medical procedures. Castration has implications for health and health providers, both through the process leading up to the castration and post-surgery recovery period, as well as complications that may arise later due to castration (for example urinary infections).

Jogappas and HIV: HIV has been lagged as an issue of concern by a number of participants. This is interesting because often they are considered to be asexual beings (and they also often portray themselves as such in order to be considered ‘respectable’ and ‘auspicious’). A few participants intoned that those who travel are more prone to contracting STIs, including HIV; through this, they are implying that travellers may have more sexual partners (as sex workers or otherwise) owing to the greater degree of anonymity they are afforded, and lower condom availability.

They are also highly conscious of HIV, as this is the single biggest focus of most NGOs. While NGOs do help build awareness and focus on pressing health issues, they also over-emphasise HIV prevention and

individual risk behaviour and ignore structural causes. However, their intervention is the primary programme through which the government and other institutions reach male-born sexual minorities including Jogappas.

Despite this, Jogappas had mixed views about their access to HIV prevention services. Some spoke at length about the various services that the CBO links them to. A Jogappa peer educator, speaking about referral support for those who have been tested positive for HIV and required to be on ART, said:

“First we take them to the government hospital and introduce them to the counsellor. After counselling we help them with the tablet treatment.” (Ravi)

Others were almost ‘untouched’ by the intervention. Four people (among the 35 interviewed) had no knowledge about how HIV spread, nine did not use condoms and 15 did not get themselves tested regularly. These figures are all the more revealing since all the Jogappas we interviewed were mobilised by the CBOs they were in touch with.

“No. We don’t know much about all this. We don’t have any information. We live far away so no one tells us about all this.” (Chandappa)

One person spoke of the pain felt after having anal sex without lubrication. That they are posited as sexually inactive makes it more challenging to reach out to them and offer them HIV prevention services. Two of them said quite categorically that they didn’t do any “dirty work” and therefore did not have health problems

“We don’t do any dirty work and don’t get any other dirty diseases.” (Veena)

“Those who do dirty work, they may get other diseases.” (Bhagavathi)

Another also said that the CBO advises them not to do any such “dirty work”. This is worrying since a moralistic approach to sex or sex work leaves little chance of affecting real change.

Discrimination and lack of knowledge among medical personnel

Often, doctors and other health personnel, who are ignorant about Jogappas, mistreat them; this makes the community wary of doctors and hospitals. They describe the treatment they receive during medical visits to hospitals or doctors as follows:

- ⇒ They are not attended to, and often ignored.
- ⇒ They are attended to last, regardless of when they arrived.
- ⇒ They are spoken to in an insulting manner.
- ⇒ Members of the medical staff often refuse to touch them.
- ⇒ They are sometimes automatically sent to the STI clinic.

“Most of the doctors devalue and ignore us; only a few respect us as human beings, and they are those who believe in goddess Yellamma.” (Ravi)

Undue prominence to HIV results in other health issues being sidelined or brushed aside.

“If something like this [falling ill] happens, we have to go to the government hospital. They check for rashes and once in four months we go for checkups.” (Santosh)

This refers to the tests for HIV, and the government doctors’ reactions seem to underline this overemphasis on HIV. On one hand, the HIV programme has caused doctors to almost automatically assume that if a transperson comes to the hospital it has to be HIV-related, and on the

other, the HIV programme itself fails to adequately address their needs including HIV-related ones.

“I think the government hospital authorities do not know much about our community. We mostly get ourselves checked in the organisation [NGO/CBO]. They don’t care for us much in the hospitals.” (Mallappa)

Medical staff and other patients pass comments about them or even chase them away. The rude and hostile behaviour of the staff is the biggest deterrent in their seeking medical treatment.

“Even if we go to them, we are not able to tell our problems correctly we are scared. If we have some boils in the back side, we say that we have developed boils somewhere else this is what is happening.” (Devendra)

Another factor is the cost involved, which includes the cost of getting to the hospital, loss of earnings for the day, and cost of medical treatment. Therefore many of them go to the hospital only when they are seriously ill. However, CBOs’ intervention in sensitising doctors and accompanying Jogappas to hospitals has had a noticeable impact. Many reported that nowadays they did not face problems at hospitals.

“Doctors used to treat us badly before. They used to ask us, why are you like this, you shouldn’t be like this. Some of them wouldn’t treat us, saying that we are chakkas. After this organisation explained to them that, no, they too are like us, the torture has decreased considerably, it is much better these days. They don’t have much of knowledge about Jogappas.” (Hussein Saab)

“I go to the government hospital. They treat us well; they ask me what the problem is, and then advise me what to do.

They know that I am a Jogappa, they treat me well.”
(Mallesh)

Although many said that the main reason they were taken to the hospital was to check for STIs and HIV, they seem to have a greater access to the formal health care system than before, as they have become more confident about going to hospitals and talking to doctors. Twenty-seven participants said that they went to government hospitals. They noted that the increasing cost of health care, owing to the growing privatisation of medical facilities, is also responsible for their turning to government hospitals for medical care. However, they routinely have to bribe the staff at government hospitals in order to receive medical attention, and so medical treatment almost always drains their finances.

“Now a days we are not getting free medicines in government office, they only write it and we have to get from somewhere by paying money. So we go only if it is very serious.” (Bhimappa)

“They expect a little money from us; if we give them money they take good care of us and if not, they don’t.” (Rajesh)

Many medicines that used to be available for free at government hospitals are now either unavailable (and hence have to be bought in the open market) or limited in quantity. Medicines, HIV testing kits, etc. often go out of stock, which obliges people to come back another day, or even discourages them from returning.

Another deterrent is that the hospital often expects a family member to accompany the patient to support her and ensure she adheres to treatment, but many Jogappas do not have supportive family members to turn to.

Self medication

The participants revealed to us that in an effort to make their bodies more feminine, many of them took unregulated doses of hormones. Female contraceptive pills, which contain certain amounts of estrogen and progesterone, are also employed by some Jogappas to stimulate the development of feminine characteristics in their bodies. They also used various other tablets and creams. They got their information on medications through their contacts with other transpeople, especially Hijras.

“When we migrate we ask others how they got their breasts enlarged and write down the name of the medicine on a piece of paper. When we come here [back to the village] we ask the chemist, and also tell other Jogappas about this.”
(Bhagavathi)

“Some go to the towns and opt for ‘operations’ for breast [implants]. But we cannot afford this and we do not know how to go about it. So we don’t go in for such treatments.”
(Jainabi)

The Jogappas also mentioned that some drank alcohol, which indicates that there are no religious restrictions against alcohol consumption. However, there is not enough data to draw any conclusion, but it is noteworthy, especially for those on ART and/or other medication.

Livelihood and Migration

A common theme that emerged from discussions with participants was the importance of enhancing livelihood opportunities. Poverty is both an indicator of and the driving force in the many problems transpeople face as they seek to live healthy and successful lives. The few studies around this issue point to the significantly higher incidence of poverty among transpeople (Frazer, 2009). Livelihood security improves a person's sense of security and could also pave the way for higher social status.

The emphasis of this theme underlines to their lack of a steady source of income. The obvious reason for this is that as Jogappas, they are shut out of most avenues of employment except for the informal sector or those traditionally associated with their culture, both of which offer only insecure, low-income jobs. This chapter examines the Jogappas' common sources of livelihood and income, and the consequent problems.

General Livelihood Opportunities and Sex Work

Most Jogappas are self employed in the informal sector; in the formal sector, the space for transgender communities as a whole is next to nothing. Rural employment often lacks the structuring of urban employment, which revolves around contractually stipulated wages and

regular work hours. Further, jobs in rural areas rarely offer living wages, that is, wages that can support a person's minimum living requirements, and therefore, many people take up more than one 'job'. Jogappas are no exception, often performing multiple jobs in addition to their traditional practices; hardly anyone said that they had just one or two sources of livelihood.

The occupations of most Jogappas are linked to their tradition, and to their deep connection with Yellamma. Their perceived divinity nurtures the belief that seeking their blessing is fortuitous: their practices, such as *joga* and palmistry, are demonstrations of the Goddess's powers. *Joga*, for example, is a form of worship; people

Figure 8: General Livelihood and Occupations

| Livelihood options | No of respondents |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Seeking (alms) JOGA | 11 |
| Dancing/Poojas | 10 |
| Petty business | 2 |
| Agri. work | 4 |
| Working in a NGO | 2 |
| Sex work | 2 |
| Cooking | 1 |
| Working in a temple | 3 |
| Agriculture | 1 |
| House maid | 1 |
| Courier oice | 1 |
| TOTAL | 38 |

honour the Goddess by supplicating her earthly avatars, offering them money, food, grain, clothing and so on.

Jogappas earn a living mainly by singing and dancing for wages, performing *pujas*, and *joga*. Close to 60% of the participants noted that they were regularly engaged in *puja* and *joga*. The cultural and religious norms that govern Jogappas' traditional occupations vary from place to place.

Joga and *puja*, for example, are performed mostly on Tuesdays and Fridays, days seen as holy, or as days of the Goddess: others only perform *pujas* when they are invited to do so.

The other occupations the participants took up included working for daily wages (as labourers), as well as in areas traditionally viewed as female occupations: domestic work, cooking, tailoring and applying *mehndi* (henna).

Notably, only two participants are engaged in petty businesses such as vegetable vending. No one has pursued larger ventures; a few participants noted that they had neither the knowledge nor the means to run their own businesses; the participants also seemed to lack the confidence to do so, and to work in formal sectors.

*"No one will fund us or provide us with opportunities."
(Mallappa)*

Their observation about "lack of knowledge" has two implications. The first is the low level of education among members of the Jogappa community. As observed in Chapter 3, 71% of participants have either never gone to school, or dropped out after their first few years of schooling. The second is that neither the government nor the CBOs/NGOs actively working with the community have adequately spread information and helped them access about schemes for self employment, government loans, etc. that are available to them. A few, such as Hussein Saab and Kamal, said they were aware that such schemes existed but knew nothing more about them. Ramesh noted that there was talk of self-employment training at the CBO/ NGO he visits, but they hadn't followed up on it. Clearly, attempts to disseminate employment-related information have been unsuccessful.

Besides the lack of knowledge, for most Jogappas the concept of being in entrepreneurial occupations seems far removed from their sphere of possibilities. Several Jogappas cited lack of public support as a

significant barrier to self-employment and entrepreneurship. While a few were confident that their townspeople would support them, many were not so sure.

“If we were to start a shop, the general public will create problems for us, call us bad words, and prevent us from being successful,” (Kamal)

Other hurdles mentioned were lack of funds (as Mangalamma noted, “We can do it, but we need money”), the public’s contempt for their community, and harassment from the police and local *gundas* (thugs).

Through such observations, Jogappas appear to believe that society is not ready to accept them outside of their religious capacity: while working in informal sectors is acceptable, allowing them agency in more entrepreneurial ventures does not seem to be encouraged. Another drawback is that the belief in the divine powers of Jogappas has begun to gradually erode. Without their connection to the Goddess, Jogappas would no longer be able to earn through *puja* and *joga*. As Tippamma explained, “Earlier we used to do fortune reading, but now no one believes [in it]...”

Gendered Labour Markets

About two-thirds of the participants were *satla* Jogappas and the rest, *panthi-satla*. Their choice of clothing determines their choice of jobs. Most participants stated that they preferred to do the work generally assigned to women although this would fetch them less wages than if they did ‘men’s’ work. Mangalamma, however, noted that she would be paid men’s wages on request.

Some, such as Sonal and Bhimappa, said they would alternately work in female or male attire, based on the demands of the job. Occupations are also chosen according to individual preferences. For example, Kamal stated that she preferred earning an income through her profession as a lavani dancer, and that she avoided performing pujas as far as possible. By contrast, Santosh, a *panthi-satla* Jogappa, preferred not to sing or dance, as it would entail wearing a sari. Of course, these choices

are not a given, since the need for income can override the need to express one's chosen identity.

The government has done little to add to their income or to nurture their sense of self. In 2010, the state government recognised all transgender communities as a Backwards Class, and passed an order that would provide transpeople over the age of 40 with pensions. However, it is only recently, after considerable pressure largely by the KSMF, that a few benefits from the scheme have started to flow. With transgender identities yet to be officially defined, this order has been in cold storage.

"The NGO asked us to produce the necessary documents. I have submitted them all three months back.... But we still haven't received any money." (Chandappa)

The CBO-run Targeted Intervention programme offers a few placements to Jogappas, usually in positions at the bottom of the pyramid, such as peer educators. They are paid a small honorarium, for which they are expected to work fairly long hours. While it is true that such jobs increase their confidence and skills, and improve their chances of getting into mainstream jobs, they are exploited to some degree by being paid paltry sums for arduous work.

Sex Work

Sex work is a contentious topic across India. While sex work in itself is not legally banned, benefiting and living off earnings from it is illegal. Society castigates those who engage in sex work and sees them as morally corrupt. However, for many working class communities and sexual minorities, sex work is a valuable source of income.

Given the extremely limited livelihood opportunities open to them, sex work becomes an important source of income for many Jogappas, despite its social stigma and problems related to health and safety.

But among the participants, few openly admitted they were engaged in sex work. Their perceptions of sex work varied starkly. Most of them acknowledged Jogappas' involvement in sex work and its financial utility, and were well aware of the circumstances and problems it entailed. A few condemned sex work and those who engage in it. The situation is further complicated by the fact that society often regards Jogappas as asexual beings.

Some denied that Jogappas had anything to do with sex work, noting it was Hijras who took it up, and that the Jogappa tradition forbids sexual contact after the *muthu* is tied.

“If our senior Jogappas come to know [that someone does sex work] they call them and make them pay penalties of more than Rs 50,000-1,00,000. That’s why Jogappa won’t do sex work.” (Ravi)

However, others contradicted this claim. Kamal states: “Most of the Jogappas do sex work and they earn money from it too. It is their own [choice], we have to respect it.” Santosh noted that sex work fulfilled “mai shok” (bodily needs), while Mahadev went even further, observing that sex itself was important: “Only if we do sex the goddess will come on us... 99% of them [Jogappas] are into sex work, only, they don’t accept it.” he latter part of his statement shows how societal stigma attached to sex and sex work extends to the Jogappa culture as well, and prevents most of them from speaking openly about it.

Most participants identified harassment and abuse from the police and gundas as the main problems of sex work. The police regularly asked them for bribes, which included demands for free sex, in exchange for continuing to ignore their activities. Interestingly, Rajesh noted that in her

area of operation, the police were actually helpful in that they regularly provided them with information if there was to be a “raid” on those involved in sex work, or those seeking alms on the trains: however, she is the sole exception, with most noting that the police were more trouble than a source of help.

Some of the participants stated that clients too were often dangerous; they inflicted physical trauma (three participants listed “biting” as a common practice); some tried to rob them, snatching their purses, jewellery or phones. Sometimes, group sex is forced on them.

“There are men who bring lots of other men, and then no matter how painful it is, one has to bear it.” (Mallappa)

Others said that people harassed them at cruising points, which are generally public places such as bus stands; here, bus drivers, autodrivers and others would regularly taunt them with lewd and crass language (they are often called “chakka”, a derogatory term for the transgender community). All of this makes sex work difficult and unsafe, and has implications for their earning potential and expenses.

Expenses

The general expenses that participants listed point to a lifestyle strongly based on day-to-day survival. Besides food and other basics, most Jogappas listed the following as major expenses: clothes, jewellery, gold and silver, makeup, *saris* and blouses, and *puja* materials. Some visit beauty parlours. Malleesh observed that she spent part of her income on betel nut and “Fair and Lovely” (a ‘beauty’ product). Kamal, referring to the observable trend among Jogappas of buying ‘beauty’-related products, stated; “We have a passion for ‘girly’ things.”

Those who were on reasonably friendly terms with their family tended to share a part of their earnings with them. Many said they shared a

certain portion of their income with their mothers or sisters; in general, they seemed closer to the women than the men in their family. As Reshmabee observed, “We do so because, when we require it in future, they will take care of us. In difficult times in the future, we expect them to do the same for us.” Another stated: “They [women] understand us more than the other male siblings in the family. We feel that in our old age they will take care of us.” A third Jogappa made the striking observation: “[We share with our mothers] also because we feel that our mother is a divine figure.” The notion of Goddess as mother, and inversely, mother as Goddess, underlines the fact that the Goddess does not occupy just a part of their life but permeates every aspect of it.

Married Jogappas tended not to share their earnings with anyone outside the immediate family. Those without families to support stated that they shared earnings with fellow community members, but only as and when required. Many said they regularly received donations in the form of grain, clothes, and cooked food, and money, only rarely. Their disciples often invited them to perform *pujas* during festivals and harvest seasons, and fed and clothed them as payment. Their disciples and people in surrounding neighbourhoods were the most common sources of donations.

Given their financial insecurity and day-to-day hurdles, most do not have any manner of savings: only about one-third of the participants have bank accounts. They often invest in gold and silver articles such as jewellery; Norman Loayza and Rashmi Shankar (2000) identify the practice of employing durable and valuable physical assets such as jewellery and gold as traditionally preferred saving tools. While it is conceivable that these could be sources of money in an emergency, such investments are unlikely to provide any other longterm benefit.

Migration

Jogappas migrate to neighbouring towns or cities to earn money through sex work or *joga*, or to seek sexual satisfaction; there, they can be

relatively anonymous and protect their families from social stigma since people are unlikely to know their antecedents. Most migrate briefly to larger cities during festivals or tourist seasons, when they can maximise their earnings. Most said they were motivated to migrate in pursuit of sex. They travelled to neighbouring towns or to major cities such as Bombay and Pune. Other popular destinations include Saundatti, Bangalore, Goa, Belgaum, Mangalore, and towns in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Popular festivals for migration are *poornima* (full moon) and harvest festivals; some also travel during *Dasera*, *Ganesh Chaturthi* and *Deepavali*. Personal preferences determine the choice of destinations, festivals, and seasons for travel. For example, Bhagavathi from Bellary noted that she travelled on invitation; Banamma said she would not travel unless invited; Gowri and Santosh stated that they needed to travel regularly and at times spent up to six months at a time in a city before returning to their home town. As noted elsewhere, the issue of access to toilets also affects mobility.

Living arrangements also vary. Some said they stayed with relatives; others said they made use of community contacts to secure board and lodge. Bhagavathi pointed out that Jogappas would contact offices (CBOs, NGOs) if they ran into any trouble.

Jogappas who have migrated are beset by the same problems they faced earlier, minus the degree of respect their status had earned them in their hometowns. Some noted that they were often mistaken for Hijras, and treated with disdain. People would question them in a hostile manner on their feminine attire. Mangalamma pointed out that getting seats on buses and trains was difficult; people were generally unhelpful and condescending.

Other Jogappas said that they deliberately acted the way Hijras do: for example, clapping their hands while performing joga (clapping of hands is not part of the Jogappa tradition). They stated that adopting Hijra behaviour made earning easier, as people were more familiar with Hijras.

Some stated that they had observed younger Jogappas going on pilgrimages to have Nirvana (castration) done; this, once again, is common to some Hijra cultures, and is rarely practiced by Jogappas. Many expressed envy for how Hijras freely practice sex, wear “fashionable” clothing and so on. Migration, therefore, gives Jogappas a certain freedom from behavioural restrictions expected of them in their hometowns and a degree of liberty in how they choose to express their identity.



A crowd gathers to watch the Jogappa dance

Political Participation

Sexual minority groups of India have begun seeking greater representation in regional and national politics. Establishing their presence on the political arena is seen as necessary for their concerns to be represented. As Anne Phillips observes, “By their presence in the decision-making chamber, members of a previously marginalised group can better guarantee that their interests and perspectives will be articulated. By their presence, they also make it more likely that members of dominant groups will recognise and speak to their concerns (Phillips, 2000).” While the visibility and political strength of sexual minority groups, such as middle-class gay communities, has certainly increased over the past decade, smaller communities such as Jogappas remain invisible and unrepresented.

The political sphere reflects and reinforces dominant values and prejudices. With the Jogappa community, debates about their divinity or deviancy are used to disallow them from assuming any position of authority. Since they are generally viewed as a class with no social visibility other than as an embodiment of divinity, their presence and representation in politics is practically nil. What little representation they have tends to be in the HIV prevention initiative which, besides being confined to a narrow

aspect of health and living, has been reasonably successful only because it has been implemented through CBOs and NGOs.

Jogappas need political space to address issues specific to their community. Given their status as a 'minuscule minority', however, it will take a long time for the issues they face to transform into politically valid concerns.

Involvement in Electoral Politics

Voter ID cards allow the holder to vote, act as proof of identity and can be used to access vital public services. Most participants confirmed that they hold voter ID cards. However, most of these cards carry their names given at birth. While some, such as Yellappa and Jainabi, have applied for and received voter ID cards in their 'sari' identity (i.e. with their preferred female name and sex), many applications have not yet yielded results.

Yenkamma, a *satla* Jogappa, noted that when they (Jogappas) try to vote while in female attire, they are questioned about the discrepancy between their current appearance and the image on the ID card. She pointed out that she votes with an ID card under her given name, Venkatesh. She said, "...they ask us about the difference in the name and our appearance and we tell them the matter."

Other Jogappas did not touch on the topic of elections except to confirm or deny that they owned ID cards, or had voted. This is possibly because most of them either do not follow politics closely or do not consider it relevant to their lives. They are excluded from mainstream society and politics, and political figures and parties have made almost no attempt to reach out to them.

Those Jogappas who have voted have largely chosen from among the three major parties active in the region — Bharatiya Janata Party, Congress and Janata Dal (Secular) — while a few support smaller parties

or independents. Their electoral choice appears to be personal and not linked to a strategic or centralised move to bring a particular candidate or party to power. We also observed their tendency to vote for a candidate or party that had essentially 'bought' their votes. Thaiappa, for example, stated that in the recent elections he voted for the Congress because "they made some offerings to the Goddess". Similarly, Yenamma said, "We [vote for] the people who 'do good' by us, take care of us, and listen to us." Neither spoke about the politics of their chosen parties or candidates. here is almost no discourse on Jogappas or other sexual minority communities within electoral politics; besides promises apparently made for short term political gain, little has been done for the benefit of Jogappas.

Most participants said they had no political affiliations, or chose not to disclose who they supported. They either gave vague and noncommittal responses, or requested us to skip the question. Their lack of interest in voting and politics is not surprising, given that they do not feel directly connected to it and perhaps do not fully understand it either. This is perhaps best summed up by Banamma's response to questions about her having chosen BJP: "What is to be gained from discussing this?"

If political participation is not part of a Jogappa's everyday life, actually running for elections would be nothing short of fantastical. And yet, half the participants expressed a wish to contest elections. The other half simply noted "I have no interest in running", and did not elaborate even when pressed to do so.

Societal support is seen as a major barrier to contesting. Devindra noted, "It would be difficult for a Jogappa to win, because outside of support from their community, no one would vote for them": this sentiment was echoed by others such as Chandappa and Thaiappa. "People will laugh at us", said Prakash, while Yenamma remarked, "We can't [run for elections], because we are Jogappas." The stigma they bear, and the low aspirations they seem to have internalised prevent some of them from considering entering politics. "We do not have the money for it", Yenamma claimed. A

lack of funds was cited by many, including Girija and Chandappa, as a barrier to running for elections, which reflects the role money is accorded in electioneering.

Yellappa and Rani were among those who wished to contest; they sounded convinced that the respect that society accorded them would translate into votes. While Jogappas such as Thipamma, Yenamma and Haseena were more cautiously optimistic about a Jogappa candidate's chances, none of them were interested in running for elections. "I don't want to contest, but I want to support our people, if they run for elections," observed Thipamma. Yenamma, too, noted, "I do not have any interest, but I will support community members if they run." hey expressed the belief that it was possible for a Jogappa candidate to receive enough societal support to actually win an election.

The participants were then asked what an elected Jogappa candidate's priorities should be, in terms of working for the betterment of the Jogappa community. Shelter, housing, health support, counselling, employment, food, and social awareness were the most commonly mentioned immediate requirements. "We should be given proper employment, and be able to eat full meals," said Santosh.

Employment is a key issue, as observed in previous chapters, and so is housing. Mallesh also brought up the State Government's undelivered promise of pension (discussed in the previous chapter). Gowri stressed on the importance of social support, of sensitising people to the issues Jogappas face.

Relationship with Other Social Movements

By uniting, however loosely, a broad range of groups and individuals, and by taking joint action against the bodies and forces that oppress or discriminate against them, social movements can change public policies, draw attention to relevant issues, and shift norms and values.

However, for these transformations to happen it is important for the different constituencies of the movement to engage with one another, build broad common positions, and take on board their varying concerns.

For the Jogappas to capitalise on the growing sexual minorities' movement in India, their concerns and representative members of their community need to be included in the discourse and actions of the movement. This is only beginning to happen now. Simultaneously, Jogappas must begin to understand and build links with other sexual minorities.

Participants exhibited varying degrees of knowledge about other sexual minorities. Those in Belgaum seem to be more exposed to a range of identities – Kothis, Hijras and double-deckers were specifically mentioned. Their interaction with other sexual minorities has been at the DICs. In some other places, participants mentioned only Hijras, while expressing a desire to be more like them. One person stated that she was considering having herself castrated, and this was inspired by her interactions with Hijras (many Hijras go through this process, but it is generally not approved of in the Jogappa community; as a participant noted in the consultation, those who undergo castration are no longer accepted as Jogappas).

*“Before I did not know them, but now I know about them.
Nirvan and things like that; even I know what a satla means.
Now I too want to get nirvan and be like them.” (Hussein
Saab)*

Another person stated that since they faced similar discrimination, she was aware of them. Some of them opined that since other sexual minorities are more accepting of Jogappas, they should make an effort to reach out to them.

*“I am 29 years old now, I've known about them since I was
18 years old. When people call us all chakka and such*

words, we are all united. Even if we see some of them on the street, we talk to the Kothi and get to know about her. Instead of being shooed away by the others and rejecting Kothis and Hijras, I feel that it is better to talk to people who welcome you.” (Rajesh)

“We share the good and bad of life with each other. They are also just like us, they too have problems, and we share it with each other.” (Rangamma)

“No I have no problems [with them]. They have not done anything to me till now, everybody talks well to me, we have regard for each other and stay united.” (Bhimappa)

The relationship with Hijras is a complex one. There are times when Jogappas assume a Hijra identity, especially in areas where the public is unaware of Jogappas. Many Jogappas feel that they are similar to the Hijras, and some even said they had formally joined the Hijra community (thereby being members of both communities). There was also an opinion that that Hijras had more freedom and some were almost jealous of them. Others strongly believed that Hijras were usurping their place, robbing them of the respect they received from society (as they were now clubbed with Hijras). Further, a few participants expressed suspicion towards the validity of a Hijra's identity, stating that since they are not chosen by the goddess, their claims of being women are 'suspect'. However, one of the deepest and most forcefully expressed emotions was the fear that over time the Jogappa culture would disappear and the transwomen from that region would also join the Hijra community. This was because the Hijra community was stronger (more visible and articulate) as well more 'attractive', since the Hijras earned more money and were less bound by religious restrictions. When this idea was suggested to some of the older Jogappas they responded angrily and retorted that this was simply not possible, as those who tie the muthu would never abandon the goddess.

“We will be able to work with our own community members, it will be better to work among our own people. We can work with sexual minorities, even if they are Kothi or are in pant-shirt. It will be better, however, if they are from our own community.” (Devindra)

“I know things about them. But I don’t know them personally.” (Hussein Saab)

What is evident is that the interface and knowledge about other sexual minorities is based on the work of the NGO/CBO that is active in that area. It is paradoxical that while initially the HIV epidemic in some ways increased stigma against homosexuals and homosexuality (as they were considered the “vectors of the disease”) it has also translated into some focus on the ‘homosexual community’ and brought together the different constituents of what in HIV parlance is the ‘MSM’ (men who have sex with men) category. The work around HIV prevention did allow them to come together – though not always informed by a politics of a movement.

However since the HIV related interventions have not ‘targeted’ female-born sexual minorities (as they are considered a low-risk group) the knowledge of the existence of female-born sexual minorities is very limited. Lesbian, bisexual and queer women, transmen, and other sexual minorities who were considered female at birth are even more marginalised: this is due to structural factors such as social exclusion and violence, as well as the fact that there are few groups or NGOs that specifically work on these issues. This limited knowledge and weak links with them has implications for organising and building larger solidarity.

CBO and NGO Spaces

The biggest (and most often singular) governmental or NGO programme, with or for Jogappas, is around HIV prevention. By 1999, India's national programme on HIV/AIDS had 14% of its programme budget for 'targeted interventions', and other prevention programmes for "high-risk populations)." Four years later, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) launched the 'Avahan' programme, which employed an updated version of this model. In 1987, the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) was initiated, with help from various funders, to coordinate the national response to HIV/AIDS. The aims of the programme were to prevent HIV transmission, decrease the morbidity and mortality associated with HIV infection, and minimise the socio-economic impact of HIV infection. Its Phase 3 avatar had a much stronger focus on prevention programmes among high-risk groups (NACP 4 is just being rolled out; however most CBOs and other stakeholders are more familiar with NACP 3). These targeted interventions, now the flagship programme of the government, have kept the rate of infection low. Most of these services are provided by NGOs and CBOs, and involve a basic HIV prevention package of awareness raising, condom promotion, and mainly referrals for STI treatment and HIV-related counselling and testing. The more experienced NGOs and CBOs also provide psycho-social counselling and have drop-in centres (DICs): a few have also offered services such as access to

lubricants. A few have (or previously had) their own STI clinics, and provide HIV care, support, and treatment referrals.

One of the high risk groups that these interventions focus on are a category of people called MSM ('Men who have Sex with Men' or 'Males who have Sex with Males'). Jogappas, along with other male-born transpeople, are presumed to fit into this category and are therefore viewed as potential beneficiaries of this programme.

Participants found such interventions valuable for various reasons:

1. **A place to be themselves:** Every participant spoke of the high levels of comfort they feel at CBO-run DICs. In an atmosphere of discrimination and lack of social acceptance, a welcoming space that allows them to be themselves is precious.

*"Now this only the place where we feel comfortable; we usually come dance, express our feelings, and we get health-related services like [referrals to] ICTC, STD clinic. If I am tired I can rest here. It's almost home for us."
(Chandappa)*

*"I have freedom here, I can wear whatever I want, and there are objections at home to my dressing as myself. Here I have the freedom to do whatever I want."
(Hussein Saab)*

*"We got some space in the NGO to be with other TGs in a way they wish to be, like, dancing, wearing female clothes, talking/sharing in a sisterly manner etc."
(Mallika)*

People speak of it as a place where they can meet others for a chat; a social space; a place where they can take rest. One participant, though, struck a different note; she somewhat flippantly remarked:

"This is a nice place for time pass. I don't think anything else about it." (Radha)

- **Understanding themselves and strengthening community bonds:** For most Jogappas, as with other transpeople, the process of accepting their identity is a struggle. Despite the visible presence of a Jogappa community, they feel a deep sense of loneliness and confusion on discovering that they are 'different'. Self-stigma is often the result of "self-issues interact[ing] with external causes (such as discrimination or violence in family, school, social or work settings), and results in depression, low self-esteem, anger and self-harm, even suicidal intent". (Ramakant, 2013).

"After one year of my becoming a Jogappa, I came to know of this house. I thought, I am the only person like this, I am the only person who has become like this. I used to sit and cry, and tell my parents and cry. I met a person once and then that person said that they will show us an office, I was scared at that time, but when I came here they took good care of me, gave me tea and coffee..." (Radhika)

"Five to six years back someone from office came and spoke to me. They called me, they told me to come for programmes. I was still young at that time, around 18 years old. I was scared, but I came, then I saw that there are a lot more people like me. Earlier I used to think that only my life is like this. But I got to know that there are lots more people. I just come here talk to people." (Mahadev)

- **A stronger sense of community:** The other major gain from the intervention has been the slow but steady strengthening of a sense of community. While Jogappas are already part of a community and have a shared belief system, and similar ways of living and being, they come together mainly for religious and cultural occasions – *puja, jagranai, jathre* etc. the DICs, on the other hand, have helped them start discussing the many common issues that their community faces.

*“We get some space, a place to meet other TGs, they call us to give some information and for some discussions.”
(Shankarappa)*

“We meet together here and we talk. We discuss. About many things.” (Dinesh)

The DICs and the HIV prevention programmes have served to mobilise the community members into groups, and in some cases, even into organisations (a few have formed CBOs, which now run the HIV programme).

- **Information about HIV and HIV prevention services:** The primary role of the NGOs/CBOs is to provide HIV-related services. They distribute condoms, disseminate information on HIV, and motivate people to avail services such as regular testing for HIV. For many Jogappas, as with other vulnerable groups (termed as high-risk groups), this is the first and only source of services around HIV. The first contact and information sharing is by peer educators and, sometimes (though perhaps not adequately), more culturally appropriate methods are used. Issues around HIV prevention and some referral efforts (to link the person to other services) were as follows:

"They do ICTC testing; they say that if at all we meet some other Jogappas we get them here. Whether they are dressed even in pant and shirt or sari we get them here. They give us condoms, they tell us to make use of the clinic facilities."
(Yellappa)

"People give us condom. They enquire about our health."
(Jainabi)

"What we get [from CBOs]? Information about STDs, HIV/AIDS, condoms, jelly [lubricants], counselling, and if someone has HIV infection they will be referred for further treatments. This is the main thing." (Kamal)

It is telling that there was no mention of any kind of care and support services for those who have tested positive for HIV.

- **Information sharing place:** The CBO/NGO is seen as a place where information is shared on schemes available to them, health-related issues, and developments in the state concerning sexual minorities; also as a place that dispenses general advice on lifestyle.

"The other issue is that they conduct meetings every month."
(Yellappa)

"Like a few days ago that madam had advised us to take a few skill trainings, we said okay. We would want to give it a try, we come here with our friends." (Rajesh)

"People call us for meeting and give us health awareness. They even give us TA & DA [travel allowance], tell us to be healthy." (Nagappa)

A couple of participants pointed to the behaviour-change role that CBOs take upon themselves.

“They advise us not to do dirty work like others. They advise us on how to behave.” (Veena)

“They tell us that we should not behave in a rural way.”
Prakash

The two quotes above are revealing; they reflect the NGO/ CBO’s judgmental attitude towards sex work which they call “dirty work”. While exhorting Jogappas to behave in ‘acceptable’ ways may seem like mere friendly advice from the CBO staff, intended to help them in better, construing Jogappa behaviour as ‘improper’ smacks of elitism. This has negative implications for the intervention as it could compromise the rights of Jogappas and scuttle possible solutions for their issues.

- **Social Entitlements:** Social entitlements are provided by the state, and hypothetically, all citizens can access them, claim them, suggest modifications, and also seek legal redressal if these entitlements are denied. They range from the basics such as identity cards, voter ID cards, ration cards and so on, which the government has to provide, to elaborate Public Private Partnership endeavours such as insurance schemes for People Living with HIV (PLHIVs). Even though many such entitlements exist on paper and the infrastructure to provide them is also supposedly in place, they do not reach transpeople, who are often not considered ‘worthy citizens’, and who somehow fall through the cracks. Some of the more concerned and organised NGOs/ CBOs are involved in helping Jogappas access a range of entitlements, such as ration cards and voter identity cards. These result in some

direct benefits: access to some money and subsidised food-grains and other provisions, and the ability to exercise the most basic citizenship right — that of adult franchise. They also serve as a form of identity card that allows them to access other services (travel by train, open a bank account, etc.).

“[We] Got some information about social entitlements, like ration card, voter IDs, Aadhar cards.” Sushila

“We are getting ration cards because of them; they filed an application that we need houses.” (Hussein Saab)

“They (CBO/NGOs) are even working towards their [Jogappa’s] social entitlement. They should get all the provisions of the government.” (Mahadev)

There is a range of services, such as health care, education and banking, that is difficult to access. Participants reported that the CBO helped in this area, especially in accessing health care at the government hospitals.

“We get all sorts of benefits through the CBO — health and treatment. A—Z we get everything. They take us to the government hospitals and help us there.” (Mallappa)

Some funding agencies have a rather different take on the matter. they offer instrumentalist arguments to support the inclusion of these entitlements as part of a larger programme. They link lack of access to entitlements to increased “risky behavior (and therefore HIV infection). This line of reasoning may be problematic but it has resulted in some benefits owing to the Jogappas.

- **Reducing Discrimination:** The Jogappas also said that in some cases the NGO/CBO has helped reduce discrimination against CBO and NGO Spaces them. It would appear that efforts to work with different institutions and with the public at large had resulted in a change in the way Jogappas along with other transpeople were perceived. This is a long term gain for them.

“The discrimination that we were facing from both organisations and society has stopped. Now society has developed awareness about our community.” (Rani)

- **Crisis intervention:** CBOs/NGOs provide one of the most crucial and valued forms of support in times of crises. The nature of the crisis — rejection by the family, problems with partners, violence at the hands of the police and gundas, etc. — determines the nature and strategy of the response, which can range from negotiating with the family and providing emotional comfort to the person, to giving the person medical and legal support. Such timely help for a group of people that have little formal or informal support builds their self-confidence and encourages them to campaign for their rights. Given that this subject was mentioned by one person only, it raises questions about current crisis intervention mechanisms.

“They teach us good things. If we have any problems, they come to solve it. If there is any crisis they come to help us.” (Sushila)

Disappointments

The participants also expressed some disappointments about the CBOs, even though it was the CBOs that had mobilised them for the

research. Some participants stated that the CBOs had not met with their expectations, or had promised them benefits they were yet to receive.

“So far we are hearing that pension, housing facilities are there but I still haven’t got [anything].” (Prakash)

(This is in contrast to what another participant claimed. So it appears that while some organisations are responsive, many are not.)

“I requested them to give us some loans and help us get voter ID card. So far they have not given me anything.” (Tippamma)

“No, nothing. Only about HIV, HIV, HIV.” (Ravi)

However, the expression of disappointment was muted, perhaps because a highly marginalised community would have low expectations or because those who go to the DICs are familiar with the CBOs/ NGOs and therefore has a more positive attitude towards them.

Suggested areas of focus for the CBO/NGO

1. **More entitlements:** Participants suggested that the NGO/ CBO focus on getting recognition for Jogappas and ensuring that they are able to access social entitlements. Most felt that this was not only the responsibility of the NGO/CBO but that it could most effectively achieve this since it was stronger and had the necessary resources.

“They should help get us recognised as women. It is very problematic as of now.” (Thaiappa)

Recognition of the gender they choose to express is a critical need for them, for bolstering their sense of self and gaining them access to services. They often face problems with identification CBO and

NGO Spaces documents such as birth certificate, passports and ration card which enable them to enter a variety of relationships in civil and official society such as obtaining a driver's license, and accessing legal services, employment opportunities, university admissions and essential benefits including health care. Erasure of identity is the main challenge for transpeople and State recognition alone can gain them visibility.

"If at all they are able, they should provide us other additional support such as helping us get voter ID cards, Aadhar cards and ration cards." (Mahadev)

"Pension — I have filed papers for pension, it seems the GO copy has been approved, but we haven't started receiving any money as of now." (Chandappa)

"Pension should be equally provided to all Jogappas..." (Kamal)

It was suggested that the NGO should negotiate with government agencies to ensure a smooth flow of entitlements to the Jogappas. Their perception that the government should provide them entitlements shows that they see themselves as citizens who have rights. However, their insistence on the NGO negotiating with the government underlines their perceived inability to access these rights unless a more influential body mediates on their behalf.

"They should take support from the government and do good things for us. That is, with the help of the government." (Bhimappa)

"We should be provided homes; it will better; now it is very difficult for us. They should help us in getting ration cards."

Because now I am able to walk around and somehow take care of my expenses. After I get old I will not be able to move around much. If we are provided a ration card, we could buy provisions with it.” (Radhika)

Participants felt that NGOs should play a role in helping them gain respect in society.

“If Government didn’t respect us, [CBO name omitted] has to fight with government. If services are there need for those like us then they must fight for the same. Doctors and others should accept us. They should help us so that people will give us respect. Not talk like this way to us.” (Hanumanth)

This is an interesting finding as it is focusing more on an abstract idea rather than something tangible. This shows the complexity of human needs – where dignity and respect are as important for well-being as material needs are.

2. Facilitating livelihood options and increasing employment:

Many of them underlined the need to increase their livelihood options. It is interesting to note that next to no one spoke about needing help to make their existing livelihood more secure; perhaps this was because they perceived this task as unfeasible or because they felt it was not part of the NGO’s mandate to take it up.

They spoke of the need for support to develop skills, to access credit, and to get into more mainstream jobs or to become small entrepreneurs. This would allow them to earn enough to lead a better life, gain greater acceptance in society, and ensure a more secure future, particularly in their old age. Some of them suggested specific occupations they could pursue.

"If they are able to create a way for us to earn our living, able to let people know that we beg for a living, able to create any employment opportunity, it will be good."
(Rangamma)

"We too want some sort of employment; then people will respect us." (Hussein Saab)

Tipamma, for example, lagged voter ID cards and loans as important entitlements. Jainabi noted that one might not need to travel around as much if more livelihood opportunities were made available to them, while Yellappa linked the same to not needing to seek alms at all. Nagappa also identified the need to consider the health of Jogappas: "When we had young blood and strength in our body, we used to dance and earn, but now we are old and can't earn like before. Something should be done for us..." he noted.

Others outlined their concerns as follows:

"Like few days ago that madam had advised us to take few skill trainings, we said okay. We would want to give it a try. We should do all of that and start something and see if people come to us or not." (Rajesh)

"We were told how to feed cows and all that. We were also told that it may be possible for us to avail Rs 20, 000 as loans through this organisation. That is one useful thing that could possibly come from being a part of this community." (Malleesh)

"They should be able to provide us some work because we are educated. If they are able to support us in setting

up something on our own, there are people who know to stitch, make mehndi designs and other such things.”
(Mahadev)

Housing

Housing seems to be one of their biggest needs. They pointed this out as particularly important since they have often been driven out of their family homes and have found it difficult to get houses on rent as Jogappas. Also, rent is a substantial monthly expenditure, and if they are unable to pay it regularly they are evicted.

“There will be no problem of house owner if Jogappas have their own house. People who don’t have house, they should be helped to get house. If this is done it will be good.” (Kamal)

“There are lots of Jogappas who have problems staying with their families; it will be helpful for them, if they have a place to stay on their own.” (Chandappa)

1. **Bringing them together:** It is worth noting that many Jogappas have discovered the value of unity, of being organized. Many social movements have utilised the idea that through the formation of collectives, disempowered groups can press for their rights and/or improve their situations. It is encouraging that a group as marginalised as Jogappas have already begun to take note of the advantages presented by this particular notion; working towards improving their unity is a possible pointer for future action on their behalf.

“Everyone should come together, only then we all can enjoy the benefits; we all should stay united and talk about our problems and try to get benefits.” (Mallappa)

“We should speak up, we should tell people that we too are human beings, they should look at us with both eyes, for this the NGO should support us.” (Mallappa)

“Whole of Gadag has lot of Jogappas, all of them should be brought together.” (Chandappa)

“They should bring all the Jogappas together in one place, provide them a place to stay, they should be given all awareness.” (Chandappa)

Change and the Future

Society's progress over time has significantly impacted how Jogappas are perceived and treated. Growing modernity in urban and suburban areas has led to reduced belief in the divine. Besides this, the media has had an impact on the visibility of trans communities: television and news programming tends to focus on Hijras as archetypical transpersons, and while this has improved the visibility of Hijras, it has also resulted to some extent in Hijra culture overriding smaller regional sexual minority groups.

Many participants believe that Jogappas are not as respected as they used to be. They said that those who used to believe in their divinity have now started to disrespect them; people have stopped believing in their fortune telling abilities, in their power to bring good fortune, and so on. Bhagavathi, for example, notes: "Earlier, people used to wash our feet and seek our blessing. Now they don't do it anymore." This has had a considerable impact on their livelihoods.

Hussein Saab observed that wives have now started to walk out of marriages to Jogappas, though he did not elaborate further. Women married to Jogappas do not always tolerate such relationships in the present day. As noted in the first chapter, several Jogappas have stated that once they become part of the tradition, they no longer have sexual

relations with their wives: a few noted that the women they are married to are not always satisfied with this arrangement, and where they would have endured it earlier, they have now started to leave such marriages. As Dinesh pointed out, their wives too desire sexual pleasure, so it is unfair to have a sexual partner outside the household, but then expect the wife to live a life devoid of sexual satisfaction. This subverts society's patriarchal expectation of the women to wordlessly suffer through such hardships.

Others believe that living conditions of Jogappas has improved over time. Banamma spoke of some of the positive effects that some NGOs/CBOs have had; the campaigns they've run have increased society's knowledge about Jogappas, and consequently, the level of respect towards them. Sushila stated that village Panchayats provide Jogappas with housing, which was not the case ten years ago, though this seems to be an isolated case. Veena and Mallesh, among others, observed that HIV awareness had definitely gone up (see Chapter 3 – Health).

A few participants also noted that what little public understanding of Jogappas there was has become muddled because, as Radhika observed, the public has stopped differentiating between various sexual minorities such as Jogappas, Hijras, and Double- Deckers. She believes the stigmas associated with these other minority categories are now associated with Jogappas. There's also an observable erosion of Jogappa culture in the face of Hijra culture; the latter is far more visible on the national level, as it receives more attention in the media and in society in general; as the dominant culture, it inadvertently overshadows smaller sects like the Jogappas. Further, some of society's negative impressions about Hijras, such as them being 'unclean' because it is thought that they are 'sexually promiscuous', are often transposed onto Jogappas.

There are both positive and negative aspects to the changes Jogappas have observed in society. Most of what they identify as negative is a result of urbanisation, which indicates that Jogappa culture and

practices are tied to more rural settings. Their religious and cultural practices are inherently resistant to modernity, and so steps have to be taken to ensure their preservation.

Future Needs

“We want a good life.”

This is something the participants unanimously expressed. That Jogappas want to be able to earn their own living, without depending on others for sustenance, is clear. Though some expressed the need for pensions and housing, everyone ultimately reverted to income and employment. Other commonly cited requirements include public toilets, financial aid, ID cards, ration cards, education, health care, and freedom to practice their own spiritual values as they see it. These are day-to-day requirements, and show that they do not tend to think about the future: when they lack the confidence to run their everyday affairs, they can hardly be expected to think too deeply about their ‘tomorrows’. While NGO interventions have certainly benefitted Jogappas, NGO engagement with communities is often somewhat superficial, and the NGO line (which is project-determined) is pushed at the cost of listening to the needs and voices of the communities. ‘NGO-speak’ sometimes takes the place of a true, reflexive process.

Some participants also specified that they wanted increased contact between their and other sexual minority communities. Many Jogappas noted that their relationship with Hijras had improved after community leaders from both sides met to discuss their problems. Mallappa pointed out that there was more contact among the sexual-minority communities now, and they interacted and cooperated with one another. Other Jogappas noted that they were friendly with Kothis (another sexual minority group), who tend to be very supportive of the Jogappa community.

The participants asked for awareness programmes to spread information on the Jogappa community among society, in order to nullify the false beliefs about them that lead to discrimination and abuse. In all, the Jogappas want respect from society, and their dignity to remain intact.

The idea of exploring their thoughts about the future was to get a glimpse into their aspirations and hopes. However this did not yield very rich data. Perhaps a more participatory method would have been more appropriate — and this is an area to delve into in the future.



Speakers at the consultation, gathered outside the venue.

At a consultation to discuss the Supreme Court Judgement (NALSA).



Recommendations

This study has attempted to improve the knowledge and understanding of the Jogappas, who are believed to be at once blessed and cursed by the Goddess Yellamma, and are one of the least known transgender communities in India. There is little knowledge or academic understanding of them; society has mixed views about them, seeing them as “powerful and holy” and/or as “strange and deviant”.

This study ran for over ten months: it has highlighted traditions and practices associated with the Jogappas, and examined issues around their identity, their social position, livelihood opportunities and economic status, and issues such as health and living conditions. It also highlighted the fault-lines around issues of entitlements and government provisioning of services. The Jogappa community has provided all the research content, and helped put together the recommendations listed below. These recommendations are intended to give shape to public policies aimed at bettering their lives.

General Recommendations

- ⇒ State government to implement 'State Policy for Transgenders in Karnataka, 2014' and ensure adequate budgetary allocation;
- ⇒ Ensure that all Jogappas are aware of the Supreme Court judgement;
- ⇒ Create public awareness to enable Jogappas to access public spaces such as parks, banks, shops and so on, without fear of harassment;
- ⇒ All plans and decisions concerning policy and programmes for them should include representatives of the community in the decision-making processes and mechanisms;
- ⇒ There must be reservation for transpeople in employment (public and private sectors), higher education, and other sectors and schemes. This reservation should be constructed along the lines of those for persons with disability; i.e. cross-cutting and not as part of categories such as OBCs;
- ⇒ Provide a community centre in Saundatti for Jogappas to meet and as venue for training sessions etc. This space should be controlled by the community, along with local government officials;
- ⇒ Such a space could facilitate the forming of an association that can represent the community;
- ⇒ NGOs and other CSOs should promote leadership of Jogappas and also help Jogappas to be more organised within the state. They should be helped to form links with Jogappas in other states as well as with other sexual minorities, sex workers, people living with HIV, and other progressive groups and movements;

- ⇒ Conduct sensitisation workshops on the rights and choices of Jogappas for the youth, the public, CSOs, etc;
- ⇒ File a PIL against the police for its abuse and violence of Jogappas and unreasonable arrests, if evidence exists;
- ⇒ Sensitise the media to the rights and dignity of Jogappas.

Culture and Traditions

- I. The Jogappa community has evolved to form a unique subculture within Indian society. However, mainstream society knows very little about them. Further, their beliefs and mores are being eroded by the onslaught of 'modernism'. It is therefore imperative that their stories are recorded and disseminated. The Jogappas themselves can play a key role in this documentation process. Popular media should be encouraged to report extensively on the lives of Jogappas.
- II. Further research on all aspects of their lives and practices is crucial. Academic institutions and other research centres should undertake this along with the Jogappa community. It is a time of great transition and therefore time is of the essence.
- III. Many Jogappas are talented in storytelling, singing, dancing, etc. but do not receive the attention and support that would keep these traditions alive. They should be encouraged and supported to take their performances to different parts of the state and the country, and abroad.

Establishing their Identity

- ⇒ Mechanisms, that make access to identity cards in the gender of one's preference easy, must be set up. These mechanisms should be efficient and sensitive. The card issued by this authority should be valid for access to all other entitlements (so as to prevent having to go through this process repeatedly.)
- ⇒ Introduce an additional column on gender, independent of sex, in all forms — in educational institutions, banks, railways, etc. This will help the public differentiate between sex and gender, and also allow transpeople (including Jogappas) to claim their identity.

Education

- I. Stories about the lives and culture of the Jogappas should be part of all school syllabuses.
- II. Issues of sexuality and gender must be introduced in school and in the teacher training curriculum, and should include special focus on transpeople including Jogappas.

Health Care

- I. Gather data on HIV among Jogappas through a separate Sero-surveillance mechanism without compromising their rights to confidentiality and ensuring that the testing is voluntary and ethical.
- II. Ensure that Jogappas' access to health care is free and free from prejudice.

- III. Remodel the existing HIV prevention programme to ensure that the needs of Jogappas are met. This may involve changing the communication models, the outreach programmes, etc.
- IV. Special support for those living with HIV, which includes additional nutritional support and free bus passes. Some of these have been promised but not given. Counselling services (that are culturally appropriate) for psychosocial matters should be provided for Jogappas and their families at the DICs.
- V. Sensitise the staff in all government medical establishments and para medical workers to transgender issues; action must be taken against those who discriminate against transpeople.
- VI. Provide adequate coverage under free medical insurance schemes, which keeps their specific requirements in mind.
- VII. Promote community-based health programmes that are respectful of their health practices.
- VIII. Community Care Centres for Jogappas living with HIV, as they have little support.
- IX. Provide training and enrol them as paramedical workers.
- X. Medical aid for major diseases and emergencies.
- XI. Free master health check-ups for all Jogappas, with Jogappas themselves playing a role in mobilising their community members.

Law and Police

1. Regularly organise paralegal training for Jogappa leaders/ activists. This will help them understand their rights and could also favourably influence the attitude of the lawmakers.
2. Provide free and immediate legal aid, as well as a helpline maintained with the help of local CBOs.
3. Document all atrocities against them with the help of Jogappa representatives. Right now there is little understanding of the systematic violence that they face and such incidents are dismissed as aberrations.
4. Expand laws on sexual assault to include all persons including transpeople.
5. Hold consultations with various stakeholders to build consensus on a broad antidiscrimination law that is inclusive of all forms of discrimination.

Livelihood

1. Make efforts to extend skill training schemes to them. These have to be linked to placement guarantees and efforts to make the labour market ready to accept transpeople. Skill training schemes should also build on their existing skills.
2. New livelihood options should complement the occupations they traditionally follow without replacing them.
3. Pre-assess the entrepreneurial skills of individuals and the market potential.

4. Provide access to adequate capital (in the form of loan cum subsidy) along with a range of other handholding support (links with experts, with well-wishers, suppliers and markets). A small sum — even if given as a subsidy — would be inadequate and not result in sustainable change.
5. Provide space for businesses in towns where there is greater population low and a niche for certain enterprises: for example, near bus stops, railway stations, DC-Taluk offices, other government offices, and so on.
6. Make agricultural land and irrigation facilities available to them.
7. All livelihood options must correlate with the environment they live in, which could be rural, semi-urban or urban.
8. Study feasibility of forming Self Help Groups among them and linking them to the National Rural Livelihood Mission.
9. Extend anti-sexual harassment laws to cover all transpeople, including Jogappas.
10. Sensitise employers and employees in public and private sectors, government officials in relevant departments, banks and corporate houses, as well as community leaders and religious leaders.

Housing

1. Allocate houses for them under various schemes, ensuring that the locations of these houses provide enough social support for long-term stay.

2. Consider their needs (including a space for them to do their *pujas*) while constructing houses for them.
3. Support the repair and improvement of houses they currently live in.
4. Provide them temporary shelter when they are going through a crisis, or have some other short-term need.

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Jogappas are a small transgender community who are largely based in parts of North Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra. They are in the paradoxical position of having religious sanction for their gender identity, through their association with the goddess Yellamma, but, at the same time, facing oppression and discrimination from various sectors of society. Their cultural significance is often unheard of outside of the regions they occupy, owing to the limited visibility accorded to them, even with the growing sexual minorities movements across the nation. Further, little academic research and limited social understanding of them, results in the circulation of false beliefs and flawed information on their community.

The issues explored here range from their an exploration of their identity, family lives, employment, health and their experiences with services and politics. The report also captures the issues, wishes, and requirements the community members identified as essential for their future living as well recommendations for action.

This research has been conducted in order to diversify the knowledge and understanding of the community, to inform policies, and to encourage further studies into the diverse transgender populations

