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Transgender Identity in Pre-colonial and Post colonial India: A Study in Reversal

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Abstract: Before the colonial rulers arrived, Indian culture had a high degree of tolerance and inclusivity toward sexual orientation and gender identity. Androgynous sexuality has been glorified rather than avoided in Indian mythology and classical writings like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Colonialism's efforts to restrict sexuality under heterosexuality also led to the establishment of male and female gender roles. As a result, after colonialism, the lifestyles of Hijras in India underwent significant transformation.. A lack of appreciation for "TritiyaPrakriti" (Third Nature) was evident in postcolonial India despite the exaltation of equivocal sexuality within classical Hindu texts, ritualism and practice. Hinduism, on the other hand, sees the ambiguities and inconsistencies inherent in such in-between categories as transvestite, gay, hermaphrodite, and transgender as both relevant and powerful. It is common and important in Hindu mythology to talk about the united power of men and women being a powerful force. Many references to the revered and well recognized existence of transgender people may be found in the famous Indian epic, The Mahabharata. Sikhandi's character is derived from first in this respect. Sikhandini, who changed her name to Sikhandi, is a transsexual in modern terms because her body had a specific genital transformation. It is Sikhandi's arrival in the Battle of Kurukshetra that marks the turning point in the

Keywords: "Third Nature," "Hinduism," "Postcolonialism," and "TritiyaPrakriti"

Introduction

Hijras associate themselves with Shiva, a Hindu deity who embodies both male and female aspects and is revered by both Hindus and Jains. Even though Shiva is considered an ascetic who refuses to engage in sexual activity, the Hindu god appears in numerous sensual and procreative positions. Shiva, in one version of the Hindu creation story, engages in a severe but legitimate kind of tapasya: self-castration. As Serena Nanda points out in his well-known book *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India*. the thirty-fifth year of Nanda's life Triad or Trinity means

three things in Hinduism: Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver), and Shiva (the destroyer). Shiva is both the destroyer and the creator, since he is both the source of all life and the sustainer of all life. Shiva consented to Brahma and Vishnu's request to construct the world, and sank under the ocean for a thousand years to do so. Both Vishnu and Brahma grew concerned. To help Brahma create, Vishnu provided him with the female strength he needed. After then, Brahma went on to create all of the other gods and

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creatures. On his way to begin creating the universe, Shiva found that it had been done before him. Shiva was so enraged that he snapped off his 'linga' (phallus) and tossed it to the ground, stating, "There is no need for this linga" (Nanda 30). In doing so, he creates the "linga" fertility cult, which symbolizes the paradoxical idea of creative asceticism. The castration of Shiva's linga does not make him asexual; rather, it expands the scope of Shiva's sexual authority throughout the universe. In his acclaimed book, *Siva: The Erotic Ascetic*, Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty made an interesting observation on Shiva's ascetic fertility:

[the linga] becomes a source of universal fertility as soon as it has ceased to be a source of fecundity of the individual. In the words of O'Flaherty, "

As emasculated men, the Hijras have the ability to bless others for fertility despite their emasculation. 'Ardhanarisvara' (half-man, half-woman) is one of Shiva Agamas²'s most popular forms of Shiva, which portrays Shiva's Shakti as a whole (female creative power). Gouri, Shiva's sole wife, is a well-known part of Hindu mythology. Ganga is considered to be his secret wife in temple literature and oral traditions. In Shiva temples, the pierced pot atop the Shiva-linga represents Ganga. When the bull Nandi inquired about Shiva's transformation into Ardhanarisvara, he was given a tale about the renowned sage Bhagiratha. The sage Bhagiratha prayed to the gods, pleading with them to allow the celestial Ganga River to flow through the earth, washing away the sins of the living and easing the passage of the dead into the next world. However, the sage is warned by the river goddess Ganga that she will not be able to survive the force of her fall. Shiva was called to stop Ganga's fall by Bhagiratha who then begged Shiva to imprison Ganga in his massive braids. After agreeing, Shiva ascended to the planet's highest point and prepared to greet the river goddess. When Ganga jumped, she was taken aback when she became trapped in Shiva's powerful lock. Her deluge was reduced to a trickle as a result. Consort Parvati grew enraged when she saw the river goddess

Ganga on top of Shiva's head. furious. Out of rage Parvati vociferates thus: "You call me your wife but let another woman sit on your head." (Pattanaik 167) Toplace Parvati, Shiva embraced her until she merged and became the left-half of his body. Hijras (transgender people) say that worshippers of Shiva give them special respect because of this close identification of the Hijras with Shiva, particularly in connection with the ritual of femasculation. Hijras often worship at Shiva temples.

Deities of other religions can likewise be sexually ambiguous or dual-sex. Some depictions of Vishnu and Krishna (a Vishnu avatar or incarnation) have them as androgynous. The world's most beautiful woman, Mohini, was Vishnu in one myth. To reclaim the holy nectar from the demons who had stolen it, he assumed the guise of a woman and went into battle. To slay the monster Araka, Lord Krishna takes the appearance of a woman in another well-known story. Strength in Araka's character was due to his chastity.

The lovely woman Krishna took on the shape of wedded him, despite the fact that he had never seen a woman before. It wasn't until three days after the wedding that the demon was killed by Krishna. The other gods saw him for who he truly was at that point. Krishna reveals himself to the other gods by saying: People who are neither male nor female will exist, and whatever words they speak will come to fruition—whether good or harmful (blessing or curse). As of (Nanda 20-21), India's hijra community takes pride in this mythic allusion, which is commonly cited by them..

Transvestism is seen as a sign of shame in popular culture. Wearing female clothing is the best method to make a man feel bad. It's usual to use the term "wear bangles and stay at home" (Pattanaik 139) to disparage a man. Lord Krishna, on the other hand, transforms the derision into adoration. Cross-dressing is a common theme in Krishna mythology. The fable of the 'white cowherd,' in which Krishna and Radha alternately wear each other's

garments, is known as the Krishna-Radha narrative. 3 Every night, Radha put her life on the line so she might be with Krishna. At midnight, she would sneak out of her house and make her way to the Yamuna riverbank meadows of Madhuvana, where Krishna would play his flute and captivate her with his charming grin and passionate embraces. She did this every night. Radha's devotion to Krishna made her envious, possessive, and abrasive at times. If he couldn't become like her, she thought, Krishna wouldn't comprehend her pain and need. That's why Krishna came up with the idea of swapping places with Radha for one night. Both Radha and Krishna wore the other's garments at the designated time. Radha played the flute, and Krishna danced around her to its soothing strains. As a result of the numerous references to cross-dressing in Krishna-lore, the once-hated concept of transvestism was elevated to a highly adored one. One of the Pandavas, Bhima, dressed as a woman in the Mahabharata to punish Keechaka, the elder brother of queen Sudeshna of Matsya and the commander-in-chief of king Virata's forces. Bhima reprimanded Keechaka for making sexual advances toward Draupadi because of her attractiveness.

Human beings who are neither men nor women, the hijras challenge the foundations of Indian society's gender norms. The hijras are subjected to abuse, contempt, and even pity because of this belief in the existence of two basic genders (male and female). Hijras, on the other hand, aren't just regular people; they've undergone a ritual metamorphosis to become something more profoundly holy. All the Mother Goddess and Shiva temples are open to hijra worshippers, but their primary devotion is to Bahuchara Mata, an Indian Mother Goddess whose main temple is located near Ahmedabad, Gujarat. A modest shrine to Bahuchara Mata can be found in every hijra home. However, hijras do not become vehicles for the Mother Deity' power until after the emasculation procedure in the name of this goddess, which they perform on newly born children and married couples. Her name is Bahuchara and she is one of the most revered goddesses in the Gujarat region. She

is also related with male transvestism as well as transgendered people. A well-known hijras oral tradition folklore tells the story of how her adoration came to be. Bahuchara was a young woman traveling through Gujarat's wilderness with a group of other young women. Thieves broke into the celebration. With her knife drawn, Bahuchara slashed her breast so that she might give the neo-Nazis a substitute for the stolen goods they had stolen from her. her chastity. This act of self-annihilation led to Bahuchara's deification and the practice of self-mutilation and sexual abstinence by her devotees to secure her favour. Bahuchara is also specifically worshipped by childless women in the hope of bearing a child, particularly a son. The goddess on the rooster, Bahuchara Mata, is invoked in many hijra communities during the hijra's castration ceremony which is termed as 'nirvana'. It makes the end of one identity and the birth of a new identity. The use of the word 'nirvana' suggests the act of castration is seen as liberation. In Buddhism, 'nirvana' refers to breaking from all concepts that bind us and cause suffering.

Throughout the Hindu epic, The Mahabharata, we may find numerous references to transgender people, both lauded and celebrated. Sikhandi's personality is the most important factor in this regard. Originally named Sikhandini, the prince Panchal was given the name Sikhandi as a blessing when he attained masculinity. Sikhandini, who changed her name to Sikhandi, is a transsexual in modern terms since her body undergoes a specific genital transformation. The presence of Sikhandi in Kurukshetra signals a turning point in the conflict, and his/her role is crucial. Sikhandi played a crucial role in the death of Vishma, which was essential for the establishment of 'dharma' (the path of righteousness). If Vishma had not been killed, the Pandavas would not have been able to defeat the Kauravas. Despite nine days of combat, the conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas was never resolved. In the Kaurava army, Bhishma was the commander-in-chief. Dhitarashtra was told by Sanjay in Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata that

Bhishma's valour and destructive might were unparalleled.

...The Pandava army was decimated by hundreds and thousands of arrows fired by Ganga's son. Devabrata, thy father, began to crush those warriors under his feet like a herd of bulls, causing a heap of paddy sheaves to form. The Ganguli Sec CIV P-258

Vishma's death seemed to be the only way for Pandava to win the fight. Find a clue to Bhishma's carnage if the Pandavas are to win the battle. As the oldest Pandava, Yudhistira, inquired about Bhishma's strategy for defeating him in combat. Bhishma responded to Yudhistira's question by saying: That mighty car warrior, the son of Drupada, O king, whom thou hast in thy army, who is known by the name of Sikhandin, who is wrathful in battle, brave and ever victorious, was

a female before but subsequently obtained manhood. How all this took place, ye all know truly.

Brave in battle and clad in mail, let Arjuna, keeping Sikhandin before him and attack me with his sharp shafts.

[Ganguli (Trans) Sec CVIIP-27]

The Pandavas acted in accordance with their grandsire's (Bhishma's) exhortation and thus Arjun attacked Bhishma behind Sikhandin and ultimately put Bhishma to death.

For transgender people, 'Brihannala' is one of the most well-known transgender stories. The Pandavas disguise themselves in order to avoid the wrath of the Kaurava prince, Duryodhana. In the thirteenth year in disguise (Agwatawas), if the true identities of the Pandavas had been revealed, they would have spent another twelve years in the jungle. So, when Yudhishtira inquired about Arjuna's disguise in Virata's court, Arjuna responded:

O lord of the earth, I will declare myself as one of the nature sex. O monarch it is, indeed difficult to hide the marks of the bowstrings on my arms. I will, however cover both my ears

and conch bangles on my wrists and causing a braided hair to hang down from my head, I shall, O king appear as one of the third sex, Brihannala by name.

[Ganguli (Trans) Sec IIP-3]

To get rid of their cousins, the Kauravas entered Virata's land, when the king and his troops were chasing cow thieves. When Virata's little son Uttara boasted that he could defeat the invaders on his own, the terrified women flocked to him for help. "Do as my brother's charioteer, O Brihannala," begged Princess Uttara of Arjuna because they were short on charioteers. P-66 of [Ganguli Sec XXXVII] Laughter ensued as the prince realized he had no other choice. His eyes were drawn to an array of gleaming spears and trumpeting elephants as he and his companions made their way into the opposing lines. Prince Uttara jumped out of the chariot and hurried toward the city in a state of frenzied fright. After chasing him for some time, she finally caught up with him and brought him back to where she belonged.

He was persuaded to fight by Brihannala. Finally, Brihannala brought the prince to the forest to get the enormous bow from the secret place and told Uttara to ride straight into enemy territory. It is in the Mahabharata's Virat Parva section that Vaisampayana eloquently recounts Brihannala's great attack on the combat front with prince Uttara as her Charioteer:

Arjuna then removed his bangles from his arms and put on a pair of gold-embroidered gloves on his hands. With his face turned to the east on the wonderful car, the powerfully armed hero, purifying his body and centering his soul, recalled all of his weapons into his memory. Ganguli (Translated) Sec XLV P-78] The Skanda Purana⁴ contains a story about a man named Samavan who undergoes a sexual transition and is accepted by the community without incident. Samavan married Sumedhas, a friend of his. Two destitute Brahmans, Sumedhas and Samavan lived together. There was no one willing to give either of them a daughter because they were so impoverished. Their research revealed the existence of one queen, Simantini, who served and gave gifts to one Brahmin couple every Monday after worshipping them as Shiva and Shakti, the gods of power (Parvati). As a result, they came up with the idea of obtaining the goods by deception. Sumedhas' bride-to-be, Samavan, disguised herself as a

woman as well. In Simantini's estimation, the couple consisted of two males. The queen, imagining them as Shiva and Shakti, worshipped them nonetheless. A woman named Samavati was born out of Samavan losing his masculinity as a result of the queen's dedication and devotion. Sumedhas was first astonished, but eventually accepted the proposal. The queen's generous gifts allowed the couple to build a home and start a family.

There is a frequent theme in Indian epics in which men who can't conceive have to seek help from a hermit who conducts yagnas to prepare a potion that will help their wife conceive. The fact that Mandhata⁵ was born without any connection to a woman is traditionally seen as a source of tremendous honor. As he is not conceived in the womb, it is considered that he does not have to go through the process of death and rebirth. Not once, but twice, the Mahabharata recounts Mandhata's birth narrative throughout the epic. Then, in the Puranas, it is repeated. Despite having multiple wives, Yuvanashva, king of the Ikshava clan, had no children. Sages felt sorry for him and created a magical pitcher of water that had the power to conceive his wives. During the visit of King Yuvanashva to the sages, he was overcome by thirst and drank the miraculous water, which resulted in his pregnancy. He went into labor nine months later and felt the contractions. Ashwini, the divine healer, was called upon since there was no way for the child to come out of the body. Cut one of his thighs apart and pulled out the kid with his bare hands. She said, "How should I care for him?" It was in response to this that Indra, monarch of the Devas, sliced off his thumb. Since the period of Mandhata, it is thought that youngsters have been sucking on their thumbs. Mandhata, a powerful monarch, was born to a man, a god, and a god's wet-nurse, all of whom were midwives.

The other story which is cemented in the memories of Hijras is Lord Ram's, the seventh avatar of Lord Vishnu in Hindu mythology, allowing them to speak whatever they want and it will happen. Ayodha's King Dasaratha decided to give the

throne to his son, Ram, and retreat to the woods for a life of contemplation, leaving his wife and children behind. Although Dasaratha had promised Kaikeyi two boons years before after she had saved his life on the battlefield, his younger wife sought them on the eve of the coronation. The two favors sought were the crowning of Bharata, Kaikeyi's son and the legal heir to the throne, as king of Ayodhya, and the fourteen-year exile in the forest of Ram, the eldest son and the legal heir apparent. Dasaratha, sworn to secrecy, issued the exile order for Ram. No questions were raised, no remorse was expressed, and Ram simply obeyed his father. Lord Shiva and his family departed the palace with his younger brother Lakshman and his loyal wife Sita.

Residents of Ayodhya were devastated when they learned of the occurrence. Loved him so much that they accompanied him into exile. While crossing the river that divided his realm from the jungle, Ram turned around and said: Those of you in Ayodhya who actually care about me should dry your eyes and head back to the realm of your brother. I'll have to venture into the wilderness on my own. We'll see each other in 14 years. In the words of Pattanaik

The people of Ayodhya returned to the city with considerable reluctance, following Ram's command. A few individuals remained on the banks of the river that separates the forest from the kingdom fourteen years after Ram's return.

Outraged Ram inquired as to why these guys were defying his orders. Hearing Ram talk so severely, the people began to weep. It dawned on Ram that something wasn't right. Asked by Sita how long they had been waiting, the villagers stopped sobbing and answered:

The ruler of the Raghu clan should not accuse us of disobedience and betrayal because of our actions. Men and women should have returned to Ayodhya fourteen years ago, as you instructed. In contrast, we are neither male nor female. We're not provided any guidelines. There was nothing we could do. Consequently, we waited for you here. In the words of Pattanaik (173):

Ram was overcome with emotion after hearing their story. They had not deserted

him, despite his indifference to them. He embraced them and said, "Come, let us return home together. I am overwhelmed by their devotion." "You will never again be unseen." In the words of Pattanaik They reached Ayodhya with Ram to share the boundless pleasures of Ram's dominion with everyone else for all time, even though they are neither men nor women.

Instructions on the 'third gender' can be found not just in Hindu mythology but also in foundational Sanskrit writings like the *Natyasastra* and the *Kamsutra*. With relation to sexual practices with the 'third gender', the 'Kamsutra sex manual' provides recommendations for males. Additionally, in the classical Indian theatrical text, *Natyasastra*, the term "Prakriti" is used to describe the third gender alongside the male and female genders. In some cases, people with ambiguous sexuality or the "third gender" are celebrated. In general, Hinduism believes that all people have both male and female aspects within them. Sexual Variance in Society and History by Bullough, a major work in anthropology, explains the meaning of the term:

Hinduism's Tantric school of thought sees the Supreme Being as having both male and female sexual organs. The ideal is hermaphroditism. Transvestism of the male (never female) gender is a requirement for salvation in several of these religions. According to some traditions, a man must imitate a woman in order to come to terms with his true nature as a woman. True love can only be achieved in this manner. Bullough, 1976, p. 260: In Hinduism, the concept of gender fluidity and the existence of both male and female deities and human beings is explicitly discussed. Aside from the male eunuchs, Bullough mentions the "water-less" male eunuchs, "testicles emptied" male eunuchs, hermaphrodites, and the "not woman," which is normally a term for a woman who doesn't menstruate. The *Kamsutra* mentions a variety of different methods of sexual enjoyment provided by each of these different types of people.

Keeping in line with Hinduism's generally "pro-sex" outlook, Vatsyana, the author of the

sex manual, answered to criticism of oral and anal sex by saying that "in all things related with love, everyone should act in accordance with the custom of his country, and his own inclination." (Burton, 1964, p. 127) Sukumarika ("nice little girl"), an ancient Sanskrit play prostitute, is another example of a "third sex" reference from antiquity. Sukumarika has been accused of having an insatiable need for sexual pleasure. The fact that she is of the third sex gives her an edge in her job: She has no breasts to get in the way of tight embrace, no monthly period to interrupt the enjoyment of passion and no pregnancy to mar her beauty. (O'Flaherty) The year is 1980, and the number is 299.

Similarly, Hindus disprove the Western notion that a person's genitals determine their sexual orientation. "Women Androgynous and Other Mythical Beasts" by Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty supports the hypothesis of hydraulic building in Hindu religion. These findings are consistent with recent studies on medical texts from the Greek and Roman worlds. Male and female characteristics are strongly linked to their physiology in this perspective, but this linkage itself is unstable. According to the Greco-Roman concept, the amounts of cold and heat in a person's body determine their gender. Even after death, their levels can alter..

With the arrival of colonial power in India, the "tritiyaprakriti" (third nature) that was widely accepted in pre-colonial India began to oppose the "order of nature." In the Hindu epics and legendary books, there is a chasm between the existence of transgender people and their present-day life in society. Before the establishment of colonial control, Hijras in India led comfortable lives and worked in well-to-do families with plenty of resources at their disposal. People are expected to fit into one of two gender boxes defined by colonial rule: male and female. "In western culture, gender identification is ideally dichotomous: one is expected to feel one's self as either a man or a woman," writes Serena Nanda in *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India*. As stated by Nanda, (115) It was in Europe's bourgeoisie middle class throughout the

nineteenth century that a discourse on sexuality and how it might shape social order first emerged. When it came to the bourgeois family, a different sexuality challenged the foundation since it would be ineffective. The social and political system that was taking shape in Britain's colonies spread throughout the British Empire. In his dissertation, Shane Patrick Ganon explores the precolonial Indian image of Hijras. There is an account in his book by a French traveler named Jean de Thevenot about his experience with the "hermaphrodites" in the city of Surat, which he includes. "Turban on their heads like man, though they go in the habit of a woman" is how he characterizes the hermaphrodites (Ganon 133). Ganon points out that in pre-colonial India, transgenders wore non-gendered clothing to show how this was done. Words like "disgusting" were used to describe Hijras in postcolonial literature. Moral aesthetics can be incorporated into the design. These creatures were referred to by Ganon as "vile and polluted beings" (Ganon, 141). As a result of the Hijras' incapacity to procreate, the subject of whether or not they were a "perfect" species was also asked. Post-colonial portrayals "categorize them as medically aberrant" based on Francois Balthazar Solvyns' "The Costume of Hindustan" (1807). In Ganon 138 (Ganon), Coercive power was gained by enforcing these ideals with institutions like as law and government. Denial and segregation were commonplace in Western culture as a means of seeking to reconcile sexual ambiguity and inconsistency. Although this may be the case, Hinduism appears content to let opposites clash without resolving their differences, "celebrating the idea of the universe being boundlessly varied and... that all possibilities may exist without rejecting each other" (O' Flaherty 1973:318). Indian tolerance for social, cultural, and personal paradoxes is what allows transgender people to not only be accepted, but even given a measure of authority in the framework of Indian society.

Endnotes:

'TritiyaPrakriti' (third gender) is originally mentioned in the Mahabharata and elaborated on in the Kamasutra several

centuries later. In Danielou's translation of the Kamasutra, the tritiyaprakriti, or 'third gender', is mentioned (1.5.27).

This type of religious book was prevalent in South India from the 5th to the 15th century CE. Lord Siva is depicted in the Shaiva Agamas, which are temple writings that detail previously unknown mythical stories. Puranas (Chronicles), Tantras (Occult Texts), and Nigamas (Vedic literature that concentrates on the yagna) are all included in the same category as these stories (fire worship). Pre-Buddhists are the Nigamas, whereas Post-Buddhists are the Agamas.

There's a folk tale known as the "White Cowherd" in which Lord Krishna and Radha switch places, with Krishna dressing like Radha and Radha dressing like Krishna. Radha disguised up as Krishna is the subject of the expression. The moral of the story is that we are not defined by our clothes.

It is believed that the SkandaPuranawas lived between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE. It wasn't until the 16th century that the account recorded in the SkandaPurana of the sexual change of Samvan was repeated by Tamil poet Varatanuka Rama Pantiyar. Further information on SkandaPurana may be found in Vettam Mani's PuranicEncyclopaedia.

In the Mahabharata, the account of Mandhata's birth is repeated twice. During the exile of the Pandavas, Lomasha first related the tale, and then Vyasa told it during the conflict with the Kauravas. Mandhata's golden age is referred to in a variety of Indian languages, including Hindi, Malayalam, and Bengali. The Surya Vamsa, or sun dynasty, includes Mandhata, an ancestor of Ram. "A-yoni-ja" means "one who is not born from the womb," and Mandhata is that. Because of this, Mandhata gains the ability to transcend reincarnation and death.

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The Mahabharata first mentions the concept of 'TritiyaPrakriti,' or the "third gender," which is further developed in the Kamasutra several centuries later. Tritiyaprakriti, sometimes known as the "third gender," is mentioned in Danielou's translation of the Kamasutra (1.5.27).

From the 5th century CE to the 15th century CE, this sort of devotional literature was common in South India. The Shaiva Agamas, temple literature that reveal previously unknown mythical tales, depict Lord Siva as a deity. This category includes Puranas (Chronicles), Tantras (Occult Books), and Nigamas (Vedic Literature that Focuses on the Yagna) (fire worship). Agamas belong to the post-Buddhists, whilst Nigamas belong to pre-Buddhism.

Folklore has it that Lord Krishna and Radha trade places in the "White Cowherd," in which Radha and Krishna both dress as the other. The phrase refers to Radha in disguise as Krishna. A key takeaway from the story is that our appearance does not define who we are.

The SkandaPuranawas are thought to have lived between the seventh to the twelfth centuries CE. It wasn't until the 16th century that Tamil poet Varatanuka Rama Pantiyar retold the SkandaPurana narrative of Samvan's sexual transformation. An encyclopedia devoted to the Puranic scriptures contains additional information on SkandaPurana.

It is recorded twice in the Mahabharata that Mandhata was born. Lomasha originally narrated the story during the exile of the Pandavas, and later Vyasa told it during the battle with the Kauravas. Many Indian languages, including Hindi, Malayalam, and Bengali, refer to Mandhata's golden phase as "the golden age." Mandhata, an ancestor of Ram, is part of the Surya Vamsa, or solar dynasty. As the term "a-yoni-ja" indicates, Mandhata is one who was not conceived in the womb. It is because of this that Mandhata is granted the ability to transcend rebirth and death. The Alberta Press, 2009.

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