

Third sex: third generation essay



In all probability the pre-historical human societies had close to 5 or 6 gender identities, keeping with the nature of humans. Indeed some of the surviving ancient tribes (e. g. the Native Americans or the Bugis of Sulawesi, etc.). When there were not enough gender identities, unlike present day west, these cultures accommodated all the possible shades of gender within the ones available.

The feminine male, the masculine female and the hermaphrodite — all were considered important members of the society and had their distinctive roles in the society. E. g. hey often became priests and healers. At some point of time Masculinity in men started to be valued much more — perhaps because the society needed more warriors. This may have resulted in femininity in males being devalued. This was the stage when boys had to now go through a ‘ manhood’ test, testing their physical and mental stamina for a warrior/ hunter life, before they were taken in as men. Men and women used to live in separate groups and boys lived in women groups till they reached adolescence after which they either joined the men’s group or the third gender group.

The feminine male gender which was originally a valued and respected gender now may also have become a kind of banishment for all those masculine gendered boys who could not pass the stringent, often cruel physical tests. The various genders for the female sex were gradually abolished, but women were always allowed a lot of fluidity in all societies (except the Islamic and Christian ones later). Women could opt for both feminine and masculine roles within the same gender space. This was probably because femininity was not over valued in women.

They could be warriors as well as housewives. At some point of time the society manipulated masculine male gender and arbitrarily fixed 'procreation' as the new test of manhood — clearly, to help augment the population. This automatically gave sex with women an immense social value for men — as source of their 'social masculinity'. Obviously, masculine men who rebelled or were seen to fail the new masculinity test were, at least symbolically, labeled with the now much discredited and marginalized third sex.

This acted as a sort of banishment, but was inappropriate, because the third sex was basically a space for feminine gendered male — not for men who do not want to or cannot reproduce (as some ambitious homosexual activists claim). This created an intense pressure on masculine gendered men that made almost all of them opt for marriage. Marriage and procreation has always been enough to prove one's manhood and emotional attachment with females was seen as unmanly — even a quality of the third sex — in the ancient world.

Although sexual interest was never an issue it did bring extra 'masculinity' points to men and made the whole game easier. In due time masculine gendered men also responded by creating their own spheres where they invented pretexts behind which they could stay away from women without losing their manhood status. These spaces were either warrior cults or spiritual cults. Women were strictly not allowed within these spaces and its adherents were restrained from contacts with women — except for procreation purposes within marriage.

As part of this gender and sexual politics to control the sexual behavior of masculine male, the third sex's sexual need for women was 'unacknowledged' in order to make male-male sex sound masculine. Third sex males who liked women too went underground. With time, the third gender — a people which once were both men and women (two spirited) became neither men nor women (napumsak). Sex between men was extremely common amongst masculine gendered men even when marriage was seen as a social duty necessary for procreation. It wasn't unmanly or a third gender quality to desire another man.

In fact, traditionally it had a masculine value and all warrior male traditions attached great value to such bonds. By the time Christ was born however, masculine male sexual bonds started to be targeted by the societies, who now had less and less tolerance for them, as they were a big hurdle in the institution of marriage. Christianity and Islam began a never ending violent 'crusade' against masculine male bonds till such bonds were completely obliterated from the surface of the society. The second blow came in the form of 'social masculinity'.

In the medieval ages sex between men started to be actively propagated as a feminine quality that is only indulged in by members of the third sex — not only by Christians and Islamic societies, but also by others like Hindus as well. They took cue from each other, no doubt. All this had the effect that sex between masculine gendered men went underground and men started to observe strict silence over such needs or bonds in the formal space. But masculine gendered men who liked men exclusively, in the entire history never actually became a part of the third sex.

However, with this the third sex males who liked men got a social space all for themselves and became powerful within that space. The exceptions were the Christian societies however, which had no such space and acknowledged only male and female genders. It expected all men to be masculine and all women to be feminine. However, the criteria for masculine and feminine was not based on nature but arbitrarily decided by the society. The feminine gendered male was seen both as a sinner and as a diseased person.