

## Burial and Cremation of Hijras

Most eunuchs are slim and trim. The reason is simple. They walk very long to earn their livelihood. This makes them healthy. They are not overfed. They are physically active. They have accepted the harsh life of a third gender as their fate so they do not have many ambitions, neither do they have big dreams. Hence, their lives are much less stressful. They might be born in Hindu families but they follow the religion of their gurus who are mostly Muslims. The gurus justify natural circumcision as their source of Muslim religion.

They have less complicated body organs, which in turn implies lesser medical complications. For example, they have greatly reduced genealogical problems. They may suffer from sexually transmitted diseases if they indulge in commercial sex (See page.....) and an appreciable number also suffer from AIDS. Though they fall ill like other humans, they recover fast because they respond to treatments more quickly. This is because of their physical strength acquired due to the labour of their wanderings for livelihood. Eventually, death overcomes them, just like the rest of us. Upon death, they are cremated in the normal way. None of my friends or relatives has witnessed the death of a eunuch. The reason for this is simple. The number of eunuchs, as compared to that of the general population, is very low. Also, death is a sombre affair for everyone and hence, cremation takes place without any fanfare. Their social circle is extremely limited. They do not observe common social rituals, e.g. 16 sanskar, birthday, mundan, upnayan, education, puberty, marriage etc. Hence, they do not develop the deep filial and social bonds that cause bereavement.