Beyond gender binaries

What needs to be done to implement the Tamil Nadu government order banning sex normalisation surgeries on intersex children and infants?

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The story so far: A short while before the first anniversary of the verdict that invalidated Section 377, the case of the intersex community is unlikely to have made the rounds of the news. However, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court, while banning normalisation surgeries on intersex infants and children, directed the government to file a compliance report. The Tamil Nadu government passed an order on August 13 banning sex normalisation surgeries on intersex children and infants, except in life threatening circumstances.

What does intersex mean? Intersex refers to people born with physical and biological characteristics that are more diverse than socially accepted norms for being male or female. Intersex people can also be assigned sex before birth based on sex being male or female by health professionals. However, the consent of the parents is rarely taken.

What is sex reassignment surgery? Sex reassignment surgery is performed on the child which could lead to physical trauma, emotional turmoil and problems arising out of sex assignment. Surgery to correct the genitalia is then performed in case there is a life-threatening situation. The order specifies that such surgeries can only be performed in case of life-threatening circumstances, also excluding the consent of the child. The consent of the parent cannot be considered the consent of the child. The government order specifi­cally states that such surgeries can only be performed on the child which could lead to physical trauma, emotional turmoil and problems arising out of sex assignment.

What else is happening? In April 2015, the Madras Bench of the Madras High Court, while banning sex reassignment surgeries on intersex infants and children, directed the government to file a compliance report. The Tamil Nadu government passed an order on August 13 banning sex normalisation surgeries on intersex children and infants, except in life threatening circumstances. The Tamil Nadu government passed an order on August 13 banning sex normalisation surgeries on intersex children and infants, except in life threatening circumstances.

Why are sex selective surgeries performed on intersex infants and children? Sex selective surgeries are performed on intersex infants and children to correct the genitalia. The process is known as intersex normalisation surgery. The surgery is performed on the child which could lead to physical trauma, emotional turmoil and problems arising out of sex assignment.

Who is the government order banning sex normalisation surgeries on intersex children and infants? The Tamil Nadu government passed an order on August 13 banning sex normalisation surgeries on intersex children and infants, except in life threatening circumstances. The Tamil Nadu government passed an order on August 13 banning sex normalisation surgeries on intersex children and infants, except in life threatening circumstances.

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