

# Poignant status of Transgender in India; An Autobiography of *I am Vidya*

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## Abstract

Transgender, the word denotes the partial of two. They are voiceless people, if they raise their voice, society do not accept their voice. The work, *I am vidya* is the voice of the voiceless people. Such people are always struggling for their survival, some of them are seeking alms in the train, jobs in small shops, some of them are forced to do prostitution due to their situation. They do not have any recognition in the family and society. They are treated as a marginalised people in the society. This paper analyses that the pathetic situation and their survival in the society as portrayed in the novel *Iam Vidya*. The writer exposes that she faced many difficulties when she turns a victim of the partial changes in the body.

## Key words: dislocation, identity, marginalised

A person who writes an autobiography, speaks a lot to the readers and is an art of expression from oneself. At times it becomes universal when it addresses a common issue and any reader may identify himself/herself with the writer. In general, Autobiography is said to be written for a few purposes such as leaving a message to the future generations, passing on heritage and to put closure to a period or episode, to process experiences, to preserve family history and to share many things. A Biography, written by a famous person, gets easy attention from the audience but not the autobiography, written by a person himself who reveals the buried secrets of the the past memories.

*I am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* is an autobiographical text, closing in on transgenders' plights in India. It addresses the basic needs and struggle of transgenders. The voice of the voiceless (third gender) is made explicit through this text. The study of such text in the class room is vital in terms of a different set of pupils. It also demands a pedagogical strategy as the text deals with a sensitive issue. The knowledge about a struggle of the marginalised in the society will pave the way for the ultimate source and resurrection of the suppressed.

It is necessary to analyse the plight of a transgender in ancient India before dealing with their contemporary issues. The transgenders are a dime a dozen in Indian myths and later they also enjoyed a special status in the king's court. They excelled in espionage and are considered as auspicious signs during festive occasions. Their blessings and curses are expected to turn true so people treated them with great

respect. However, the colonisation brought a different attitude towards the transgenders. They were treated indifferently and they were criticized by their physique and habits that led to a psychological trauma. The society passes various abusive remarks and also ill treated them very casually. The current status of transgenders in India is so pathetic. Owing to, the denial of education and basic amenities like food, shelter and water, they are forced to take up either begging or prostitution. Only a few of them are finding their way to success their in life after so much of hardships and struggles. There are some public interest litigations filed in the High Courts and the Supreme Court demanding for their welfare but pragmatically they have achieved less and still they need to strive to attain their basic rights and livelihood.

The text *I am Vidya* is a Transgender Journey through the life of Vidya who was originally named as Saravanan by her parents. Despite being a M.A linguistic graduate, the life of Vidya proves to be a in state of turmoil. The life of Vidya from her birth to the present and her demands for the basic rights of transgender portray the plight of thousands of unknown transgenders in India. In the beginning, she raises crucial complications involved in the act of birthday suit. In fact searching a body that is perfect for her becomes the ultimate search of Vidya and she achieves it through this birthday suit. In this context, birthday suit refers to the act of transformation into womanhood by the removal of male biological organs. Vidya ultimately turns into a beggar to save money for this gender operation. Once again it reiterates the complication involved in sex transformation in India.

The society in India does not favour anything for transgenders. The pathetic condition of transgender is their need of money for their biological and physical change. For that, they need jobs, but people do not consider and prefer them. She also demands the sex reassignment surgery for the medically and psychologically tested and certified transgender. She throws light on the brutal way of excising the penis and testicles during sex reassigning operation. The operation is conducted in an unnamed hospital and the patients are subjected only to the HIV test. Vidya makes a clear remark that even this HIV test is conducted only to collect an extra fee of two thousand rupees if the person is found to be HIV positive.

Surgery is the great achievement and memorable day for transgender like Vidya, but it is a normal working act for the hospital. They finish operation with a great speed. After the operation, in a systematic way they throw the patients over the news paper covered steel cot one after the other. The attendant neither looks like a nurse nor a hospital worker. Even after this painful process Vidya ultimately attains a peace. She derives happiest moment through the transformation. It is an irony to note Vidya's happiness in becoming a woman as some section of the society in India still laments over the birth of a girl child. Vidya becomes an exemplary when she feels proud for becoming a woman. Her expectation to be accepted as a woman is expressed in the following lines,

Amma, Amma, I have become a woman.

I am not Saravanan any more,

I am Vidya-a complete Vidya- a whole woman...

Radha, please Radha, I am no longer your brother Radha.

I am your sister now, your sister...

Look at me, Appa. Look at me as a woman.

Accept me as a girl, Appa. (Vidya, 9)

Vidya was born on 25 March 1982, named as Saravanan by her parents. She was a precious child to her parents. They offered prayers to god for a boy child. After the birth of Saravanan, they believed that their desire was fulfilled. They didn't expect that their son to change his sex. Being born as a boy, he gained more love from her parents, sisters and friends. After the change of gender the love of parents turned fluid .

His parents' behaviour was too different to him, when his femininity was visible to them. The loss of masculine identity reveals the arrogant punishment. His parents' dreams were shatter because of the new changes. She lacks in her studies and also she was strictly denied of opportunities to play with others and chat with others. She expresses that she lost her happiness in her childhood and also she could not fulfil her father's expectation. Vidya exposes that her sisters turned as vigilance officers. She presents that in her childhood, she dresses herself in woman's attire and dances in front of her family. Everybody enjoys her imitating actions of heroines. But when she reveals that she has feminine sensibility in her young age, the family members would not accept the changes. In school and public places, Saravanan was teased by the people. She says, "Even kids from lower class teased me at school. Look at him lady, they shouted after me" (Vidya 24).

Some people helped her after knowing her troubles for survival. A bank employee helps her and introduces her to an NGO, which gives a new way to her. Through the help of the NGO, she shifted herself from Trichy to Chennai. She develops her confidence and ready to face the difficulties. The most rational problem is identity crisis. Many transgender are hiding their feminine sense in front of the society and family because lacked the sense of identity. Because of this suppression, they undergo severe trauma. They cannot live their life as they wish. Vidya says that she pretend as a boy outside and inside she feels the feminineness. Some NGO's helps them, transgenders' feels the NGO is like their home , sit and talk together in the colloquial language. Vidya confines herself and decides to turn herself as a woman. She needs money. She needs to undergo an operation . She had to beg. Thousands of transgenders' are begging for the sake of their survival.

Society did not consider them and also people did not give any opportunities to them. They like to live a decent life, but the cruel society did not accept them. The society is the victimizer. She ensures that she can understand the reality. But her personal space says, “No, I couldn’t live any longer as a man, if I could not become a woman, I’d rather die. If wasn’t confused now. I had come to a clear decision and it burst out in words ( 56). This quotes deals about the inner space of the transgenders. She moves to North India and joins the group there. When she talks about the life of transgenders’, some privileges are there. Many people need the blessings of transgenders’ for their better life. They have certain rules and regulations, customs, tradition and rituals. She states, “the life of transgender is bound by thousands of such rules and regulations, all written ( Vidya, 75). The life of transgenders’ is a sausage. She records her bitter experience too. In the intial stages, she had to beg and feels that the activity is odd. But later she understands that she begs for her survival.

Her acquaintance was, once she caught by four men in the train. She was severely harassed, no one came to rescue her. After the incident, she was thrown out of the train like a waste paper. Vidya recovers herself and stepped into other compartment to continue her travel. For security, almost transgenders move in groups rather than alone. If they were alone, people can attack them easily. Vidya says, transgenders are also a human being. They also have emotions, feelings and pain. The present modern era open doors for transgenders and recognise them as ‘third gender’. Vidya craves for freedom for transgender and for the existence of a person who undergoes physical and mental transformation. In some places people ill-treat transgender as untouchables. Their expectations are people treat them as humans. They need support from the public and as well as the family. In our democractic country, people have their rights to be what they want to be. Likewise transgenders too have rights to live their life in a peaceful manner. The public should accept them.

Every individual is created by god with some special abilities similarly transgenders are also created by god for some purpose. Transgenders are also partners of the society. Vidya says that government would understand the difficulties and problems of transgenders one day. The pathetic condition of transgenders is to be changed by creating awareness. With the quote of Virgina Woolf, “I want to write a novel about silence, he said the things people don’t say”. *I am Vidya*: she is not the voiceless of the voice; she is one of the voiced women to raise her hand against the horrible status of transgenders in India.

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