

Empowerment of the Third Gender Amidst the Challenges in the society Expressed in the Autobiography *I am Vidhya* by Living Smile Vidhya

M. Suganya

M.Phil. Scholar,

Department of English,

Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies (VISTAS),

Chennai -600 117.

&

J.Kiruba Sharmila

Assistant Professor,

Department of English,

Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies (VISTAS)

Chennai -600 117.

kiru.sharmi@gmail.com

Abstract

Literature provides space for all sections of society, changes their longing and regrets. It creates awareness about specific issues that require rethinking and reconsideration. What sex thinks about in writing manages the issues of sexuality, power, and minimisation in literature and culture. This paper discusses the historical evolution and the traumatic effect caused by the society in the life of transgender through the autobiography I AM VIDHYA by LIVING SMILE VIDHYA, where she seeks her identity; describes her sufferings, challenges and survival in her words gives an excellent message to the world.

Keywords: Hijras, transgender, transsexual, evolution and the traumatic effect, identity, challenges and survival etc.

Introduction:

Merriam Webster states that a person who does not confirm their gender due to the physical and mental differentiation between their thoughts and identity is said to be Transgender. People who converted their identity from male to female are called as 'Thirunangai'; people converted themselves from female to male are called as 'Thirunambi'. 'Transgender' is the word replaced for the old term 'transsexual' which means biological stature of a person. German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld began the word 'transvestite' in 1910 he later built up the Berlin foundation where the specific first sex change activity occurred. As per the Oxford Dictionary, the primary utilisation of 'androgyny' was recorded in 1552. However, it has just found over the most recent ten years that individuals have guaranteed it for themselves to portray a condition of being in the middle of or having the two sexual orientations.

Transgender people had been a piece of Indian culture was a chronicled sign of affirmation of 'third sex'. The Jain content specifies the idea of 'mental sex', which accentuates the mental cosmetics of an individual particular from their sexual attributes. In the epic Ramayana, Lord Rama, due to their devotion, approved hijras the ability to give gifts on individuals on propitious events like labour, marriage and furthermore at debut works in which, it guessed set the phase for the custom of badhai, in which they sing, move and give favours. Master Rama while being uprooted from the kingdom to timberland for a long time, he pivots to his supporters and asks every one of the 'people' to come back to the city among his devotees, the hijras alone felt guaranteed by his course and receive to remain with him, Rama was awed with their steadfastness.

The British provincial organisation prevents the universal ideal from claiming hijras. They were thought to be a separate station or clan. The transgender winds up conceivable. The most understood and well known are third kind of sex in the cutting edge world. The third sex in India has risen as a solid division. In the contemporary time, the government of India introduces so many welfare policies and schemes such as census documentation issuing of the citizenship cards issuing passports social, economic development and constitutional safeguards for the transgender people.

Other people all around the world ill-treated transgender people. Sometimes they behave ugly before everyone because of their alienation in the society. They were not appropriately judged, they were suffering for the food and shelter. This is because of the misunderstanding and the misperception they have created for those communities. I have personally seen transgender misbehaving to the passengers in the train as well as in shops. I have seen the way of their dressing all those things have created a disrespectful perception towards their community. They begin main roads, shops, temples, train etc. Their life was hard to overcome which will put them down whenever they rise. Their talents were not respected by the society they have no magnificent job to place them and prove themselves.

Most transgender live at the borders of society with law status, and the word "Transgender" used insultingly. Violence against them specifically sex workers, often cruel. They face public harassments and also face extreme discrimination in health, education, employment, settlement, law and unable to place them into male or female gender categories. These people are exposed and abused vocally and bodily. They are not given proper education. When these people started to show opposite signs their parents were not sympathetic to accept them as what they are. There are many delusions about transgender is not a disability or disease instead it is a condition which only changes the physical stature of a person.

Vidya is profoundly talented transgender, however; she had encountered mind-blowing instability and feeling of rootlessness which made mental exhaustion her multiple occasions. Vidya was disheartened by everybody she knew including parallel transgender who did not have the fearlessness to reveal their very own sexualities. Not at all like them, Vidya was firm and immovable to experience the sex-change activity lastly progressed toward becoming

what she generally longed to be – "a Woman." Today, Vidya has no second thoughts. Progressively associated with theatre and utilised in a voluntary association in Chennai, she believes society will be all the more forgoing towards transgender and offer them measure up to circumstances.

Anyway conceived as a kid named Saravanan, ideal from her youth she always wanted to spruce up like her sisters and move to film melodies. In school and school, she attempted to conceal her female qualities. She felt it was good for nothing to have a double existence and was overcome enough to experience the problematic and unverifiable sex-change activity, uninformed of the dreadful moments that lay in store for her. Vidya was disheartened by nearly everybody she knew including individual transgenders who came up short on the courage to reveal their sexualities.

I have not seen any transgender sitting in a high position or in a place where we adore them but this book *I AM VIDHYA* have changed my view about the transgender. *LIVING SMILE VIDHYA* is the first person I have read about whom I respected and admired only through this research, I have learned more hidden things about transgender. I get to know their sufferings and capability. I crossed reading about many transgender sitting in a perfect place.

Transgender was ill-treated by other people mentally and physically. Harassments, physical tortures and tournaments were more. They were not allowed to be free and happy. They should undergo all pains, to get food for their daily life; their life is not an easy go. Even in Vidhya's breath, in one chapter she was mentioned that:

"Once you settle down in a group of tirunangais, the harassment started. The arrival of a new tirunangai helps to some extent, as attention is diverted to her. Somewhat in the manner of college ragging, victims turn tormentors overnight. Unlike college students, these are people who have been marginalised by society insulted and humiliated, even cursed". (Vidhya11)

She earned for the love and support of her family. She searched for the support and care. Education plays an important role in her life. The environment becomes the strongest burden and obstacles for her which is common for all transgender. The misperception made the society not to seclude them and started to tease them violently. Through this, they were affected both physically and mentally. In the life of Vidya we read the sufferings that she encounters, she stated that:

"When walked down the streets, youngsters started teasing me: look at the nattamai's son. He walks like a female I was known as a nerd, apparent and was a coward" (23)

This is not only the case of vidya; this situation comes to every transgender. Because of this, they hide from the world. They live secretly with other transgender. Every Trans people lives separately and follows unique god and have their ceremonies for themselves. Vidya being Trans women she does not want to see herself begging or going for prostitution which was the only choice of every transgender when the society ignores them. Vidya becomes the role model for other transgender through her different approach towards the view of the society.

She makes the laugh of others as a welcome smile and makes herself positive. She states in a chapter that:

"The teasing did not hurt me on the contrary, and it pleased me. It made me happy to know that at least some onlookers understood what I was feeling". (23)

Vidhya's situation was not different from that of thousands of other transgender. She could not live in her own house; her family members did not accept her. She desires to be a woman and wants the others to accept her gender as she feels. Even her father shows her an attitude. He was unhappy with Vidhya's transfer and the showers a volcanic eruption whenever he sees Vidhya, he shed tears and curse. Though Vidhya doesn't lose her confidence, she was brave enough to encounter those words:

"Don't worry about me. I am educated and can survive; I am worldly wise and know how to live; I can learn how to live. Yes; I am not Saravanan, but I am a human being, not some monster. Not some demon. My brain will protect me. Bye." (Vidhya80)

These words create a dignity Vidhya. Her heart was full of worries and sufferings though she was brave and confident; this was because of her education. Education always makes us visible brave and bold in front of the world. This clarifies that every transgender should get the proper education to have a bright and glad life. In a world of men and women, no one has the maturity to accept tirunangais naturally; the place of tirunangais was always turning to be a problem. They are but representatives of a world of men and women.

Most of thirunangai's from south India moves to the north, to cities like Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata and Delhi because in these parts people see them as avatars of Krishna. Either people think it is good to get their blessings or fear that their curses could become most south Indians are God-fearing religious people but neither myth nor epic seems to have a positive impact on them where thirunangais are concerned. They don't seem to realise that thirunangai's eaten, sleep, work hard and live just like anyone else. People look down on them in a powerful spirit with disrespect, with disgust, as if very nearness with them could affect. We can understand the pain of all thirunangais through the words of Vidhya throughout this book especially through those words she pointed in the chapter 'my world, my people':

"What sin has thirunangais committed? If to be born male and feel a female is a sin, it is nature's creations, what can we do about it?" (Vidhya 82)

She was the voice of the voiceless community, these words are not only Vidhya's emotional encounters, and these are the words lamented by every transgender. Even Vidhya have undergone the unbearable truth of begging. She pointed out that:

"I knew life would be no bed of roses in Pune, I knew clearly what I was going to do there –beg, plain and simple as long as I did not want to be a sex worker, begging was my only option all thirunangais had to face this cold truth". (Vidhya 82)

Begging is translated as 'shop asking' or shopping. The other varieties are 'train begging' and 'traffic signal begging'. Vidhya was sent for shop begging in Mumbai. As we read this book,

we come to know that thirunangais have lots of rules and regulations. Walking with the bowed head is one of those rules; they have to walk with bowed head until they reach the main road. The reason for this was that in Mumbai the street was meant for thirunangai sex workers - only they were allowed to stay there. Also, those who hadn't had their nirvana were not permitted to lodge on the road.

An M.A. degree holder begs in the shop and streets because of her gender. World fails to understand the heart and sense of human instead they encounter their appearance and identity. I was ashamed myself for being one among them. I was shocked to unfold things which were unknown to the world. I was immature to learn those things when it was around me. But this book of Vidhya opened my sight to experience the sufferings of transgender people and surprise to see those creatures of God with enormous talents and submissive nature. Their willpower was higher than the ordinary people. Vidhya encounters that:

"There is no social security for transgender in this country. Who will step forward to help us, when the government itself is unprepared to extend any basic recognition-it does not issue us a voter ID or even a ration card". (Vidhya 92)

The above words express the status of every transgender and their isolation. The start of westernisation and globalisation has changed the lifestyle of the people all over the world. Culture and tradition brought into new look:

"Theatre is always my first love. When I was 19 years old, I decided to be an actress, and while doing my post-graduation at university, I spent most of the time in the Theatre Department rather than my Linguistics Department. So I was able to do a couple of plays. But at that time I was known to my colleagues and classmates as a boy" (interview)

She states her desire in an interview. This becomes the most inspiring interview for every human. There she breaks all the obstacles of transgender. They are not different from others they are the third gender in the world. Transgender generally get motivated to beg rather than getting an education.

On the other hand, we are not ready to accept the third gender they undergo intense traumatic practices in the various stages of their lives especially during 'coming out' and 'passing'. Detachment from the family and the relatives is another significant torment looked by the transgender. The alerts which they look in life will be abbreviated to half if they are documented and reinforced by their friends and family. The family is the place which pushes them in the city. The relatives are not prepared to confront the general public in which they live because of dread and disgrace. They feel low in their societal position. The interruption which the family created has an incredible effect in the brains of the transgender. When the general public corners them, the family turns into the main report. At the point when that excessively turns into a question mark they are left as penniless:

"Where are you amma? Can't you come to me by some miracle? At least for a moment? Please hold my hand, amma. My heart seems to be breaking into

smithereens. Radha please, Radha, I am no longer your brother, Radha I am your sister now, your sister".(Vidhya9)

The aching to be a piece of a family is apparent through her stream which leaves the psyche of her torment and nervousness. Scarcely any occurrences which are awful for the peruser are simply the main place where a sort of self-examination and self-acknowledgement happen for Vidhya. The last part 'I need to live proudly' makes the torment of her central goal to change her name in the administrative records, which changes her character which she longed for:

"Hunger but for that, no thirunangai would beg on the street, train or marketplaces. They submerge pride and dignity and put their hands out in supplication, seeking alms, only because all the windows of opportunities closed to them. It is our tragedy that the world doesn't understand this simple truth". (Vidhya137)

It is a society initiate to open the doors for transgender. Though there are many NGO's to take of them, through the Tamil Nadu government has given them ration cards, voter IDs, given them seats in elections, accommodated them with proper shelter the bigger question arises, to what extent are these fruitful and effective? Every individual in this society should welcome the third gender:

"After my post-graduation, I went to Pune for my castration, and I had to stay there. Once I came back, I was challenged to find a mainstream job, and after a long struggle, I found a job in a rural bank. And only then I realised that I was the first Transwoman in India who worked in a mainstream job rather than working for NGOs."(Interview)

When a reader reads, this book change comes in their life through the words of Vidya which is inspirational and bold. Anyone who reads her words will feel proud to be a reader of this autobiography:

"Everywhere I went, I had to suffer barbs, ignore insults, and brush aside hurts. On my way home from work, there was always the jibe, or two flung at me, I tried to hide my tears. Not just men, but sometimes women, too, laughed at me. Every time that happened, I swallowed my pride, hid my irritation and walked on".(135)

Conclusion:

The government should take necessary inventiveness to identify them as a human being. This type of autobiographies not only reveals the experience of the people of such community also creates an impact on every reader's perception. Transgender face many issues around the world. They face educational stress, economic, social, financial and family stress. There is no one to support or hold her hand, share tender words or to show them a right path. They have visible features with invisible feeling. Law and order provide space for all communities, National Commission for SC/ST Authorities act 1989. The government should bring orders and provide space for the third gender. It should bring some useful schemes to those communities. This should create an impact and reflect on all other transgender. "All I want is legal approval and recognition that will enable us to walk freely in public". (137) She is the

voice for her community. This statement that she encounters is the speech of all voiceless transgender.

Works Cited:

1. "An autobiography of transgender Vidya". vishaltayade.blogspot.Web.May 5.2017
<<http://vishaltayade.blogspot.in/2010/04/i-am-vidya-autobiography-of-transgender.html>>
2. "Living Smile Vidya". Blogspot.Web.21 June
<theheroines.blogspot.in/2014/03/interview-with-living-smile-vidya.html>
3. "Living Smile Vidya". Yokibu.Web.21 June
<<http://www.yokibu.com/communityspeak/2012/i-am-vidya/>>
4. "Transgender journal". its journals.Web.May5.2017
<<http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol19-issue10/Version-9/E0191093237.pdf>>
5. Brooker, Peter. A Glossary of Literary and Culture Theory. New York Routledge Taylors&Francis group.2017.Print.
6. Garbacik, Jaimee. Gender and Sexuality For Beginners. Danbury, USA.Beginners LLC.2013.Print.
7. Stryker, Susan. The transgender Studies Readers.New York Routledge Taylors&Francis group.2006.Print.
8. Vidya, Living Smile. I am Vidya: A Transgender'sJourné. New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt Ltd,2013.Print.