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Sufferings and Challenges of a Transgender in Living Smile Vidya's:

I am Vidya – a Transgender's Journey

Abstract

This paper deals with pain and sufferings experienced by a transgender in her life. Living Smile Vidya was born as a male physically and later she identifies herself as female mentally. She wishes to change herself as female, so she undergone a sex reassignment surgery. As a transwoman she faces lots of struggles and challenges throughout her life.

Keywords: Identity, Transwoman, Struggles, Challenges.

Introduction

Living Smile Vidya or Smiley is an Indian Trans woman actor, assistant director, and writer. Vidya has a master's degree in linguistics and is keenly interested in contemporary theatre and cinema. She currently works for a voluntary engaged in serving destitute people in Chennai. Living Smile Vidya was a male by birth and she was named as Saravanan. And later she changes her name as Vidya after she became a transgender.

Traumatic Experiences of Living Smile Vidya

Living Smile Vidya was a male by birth, named as Saravanan by her parents. Her family consists of father Ramaswami, mother Veeramma and sisters Manju and Radha. Her family lived in Attumanthai Street. As she was the only male child for her parents they gave much priority to her than her sisters. Her father was strict towards her and the only work for her is to study and get good grades in her examinations. In her childhood she used to wear her sister's dress when no one is in the house. She sang and danced wearing with that dress. It gave her much pleasure than anything. In the school, other boys played the usual boys games but she preferred to join the girls at their games. She loved playing girls' games and being one of them.

One day in her class, they had a dance contest during lunch break herself and another girl from her class danced. The students who watched their dance thought her performance was the best. On another occasion, she and her friends from the streets performed a snake dance in imitation of Sripriya in the film *Neeya*. Her speech and her behavior had been changed. She felt herself as a girl. Her friends from her street and school mocked her for unusual behavior. To make the matters worse, she moved to Bishop Heber School for her ninth grade because it was a boy's school. New school and new atmosphere were unfriendly. She had no friends and no one understood her. Somehow, she passed in her twelfth grade.

Then she joins the college for B.Sc Computer Science. She loved to read books. Literature and solitude were her companions. Her friends loved teasing her. At last, she found a woman trapped in a male body. And then she found a new friend Senthil who has the same feelings like her. They shared their desires, needs, humiliations; pains and loneliness were all identical. Meeting with Senthil was a turning point in her life. She learned of a NGO, was she found people like her. She completed her B.Sc Computer Science and she joined MA in Linguistics. She spent more time in library and dramatic department. She was much interested in drama. She took part in many dramas with her college group. She spent most of her time in dramatics than in the Linguistics.

She often visits a NGO in Tiruchi and the bus stands where tirunangais gathered in numbers. Spending time with them became a pleasurable activity for her. In the beginning she tried to hide her sexuality, after a while she began to roam around like them. It was a difficult time for her. She desires to live a life like them but she was unable to express her feelings. The time passed with her involvement in theatre and literature and her friendship with tirunangais. Then she completed her MA degree. She moved to Chennai. Her friend took her to SWAM and NGO. There she was adopted by Arunamma a senior trans gender. She changed her name as Vidya. With the help of other tirunangais she started to know all about the tirunangais. She underwent a sex reassignment surgery called nirvana. Her father finally comes to know that his son was a transgender.

Her family did not accept her. Then she went to Pune and there she found new friends. She has to choose a work either begging at the streets or to involve in prostitution because no one is ready to give job. She chose begging instead of involving in prostitution. At the beginning she felt guilty in begging and later she understood that she had no other choice she had to do it for her survival. She had been begging in the streets and in the railway stations. In the markets the people used to mock at her and some used to harass her and some

injuries her. On an occasion when she asked for an extra five rupees from a man they hit her hard and she was injured. At that time no other people tried to help her.

Even though she is angry she could not do anything against them because they were in large numbers. During the days of heavy rainfall there were no shops opened and no one will were found in the streets as well as in the railway stations. Her life on those days was worst. Later she travelled to Madurai and she found a place to live with the help of her friend .Then she moved to Coimbatore for her first interview. She got a job finally for her educational qualification. The colleagues were friendly with her. She found new friends in literary circles. They encouraged her to write. Her writings had occurred in the little-magazine, *Mozhi*. Then she wrote a book but she was unable to found a publisher for her book. Then she wanted to change her name in her certificates so she applied to the Tamil Nadu Stationary Department.

When they asked her reason for changing her name, she mentioned her sex reassignment operation. Her application was returned as operations which are not recognized by government is not accepted. She went to Madurai to meet advocate and filed a case. It took one and half years for name change in certificate. On the way from her job there was always a group of people waited to tease her. At that time tears would fill her eyes. Not only men but also girls and children mocked and laughed at her. When everytime that happened, she swallowed her pride, hid her irritation and walked on. Then she travelled to Chennai. There she was given opportunity of working in the administrative wing of Suyam Trust. The atmosphere was good and she was satisfied with her job. At the end she did not ask for heaven but she was begging to be spared from that living hell.

Conclusion

Vidya's life showed the struggles and challenges that had faced by all transgenders in this society. This society has not given the freedom for the transgenders to live a normal life like other gender people. Transgenders were insulted and humiliated by the society. Every transgenders has to be given their freedom to live a normal life like other people.

Works Cited

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