

Unraveling the life story of a Transgender through A. Revathi's

The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story

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ABSTRACT

Humans are also called social animals. Humans tend to break others emotionally and physically like an animal does. Sometimes it is by mistake and sometimes it is intentional. In this society, there are few groups of people who have been marginalized based on caste, religion etc. One more intentionally segregated people group is the Transgenders. Common people look at them as God as well as an object. This work of art focuses on how transgenders are treated in society. Transgender people are recognized as the third gender in India. They have got legal status to affirm their gender identity. But how many of them are treated with the due respect which is given to the other genders is a question. Transgender people undergo incalculable sufferings in their personal life. They are deprived of their basic rights, and their voice is still silenced in most places. Transgender people do not ask for a comfortable life, rather they ask for a respectable life. The first stage to have a peaceful life is they need to respect themselves.

An autobiography is an account of a person's life through their own words. Autobiographies serve numerous purposes, which include self-reflection, sharing personal experiences, or documenting historical or cultural contexts. *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*, reflects the life of every transgender. As a transgender herself, Ms. A. Revathi is a writer and an activist who works with Sangama, an organization for

sexual minorities. She has given a pounding work which spotlights her sufferings, starting from being disowned by her family, abused by the society, facing heart breaks, yet entering Sangama and arising as a strong woman. Her work has been translated by Ms. V. Geetha, an activist. This auto-biographical book has disclosed the voice of the marginalized community in society and has also shown that life changes which you respect yourself. Life gives new ways to shine amidst darkness.

Keywords: Transgender, Self-respect, Discrimination, Awareness, Self-care.

This paper intends to find all the troubles that transgenders face in their lives and how they have been misused. The troubles and pain smack them from all sides of society and the paper intends to categorize them based on the given examples from the source text. This paper delves into the feelings of the transgenders and their original needs.

As said by Jim Butcher, “When everything goes to hell, the people who stand by you without flinching—they are your family,” the first set of people who will protect, encourage, and stand for us in every situation would be our family (19). These transgenders will also feel the same way, but the reaction of the family is always the opposite. Here the protagonist Doraisamy feels himself as a woman, which obviously is hidden by him at first. He tries to enjoy his new feeling when the other members of the family are not present. His plight is found by school students who mock him. He starts facing humiliation. The tinge of braveness in him makes him disguise himself as a goddess in the Mariamman festival which gives him happiness. When the family gets to know that he has the feeling of a girl, they make him obey their wishes by blackmailing him with parental emotions.

The protagonist goes to a distant place to study. One day, he sees for the first time a group of transgenders. He wonders whether they are men or women and how he must address them by their appearance. From these people he finds out that they are also people like him in this world, and those

people also have a life to live. He hears from them that he could be operated in Bombay, and he can change himself into a complete woman. He also finds that the person who is operated on will have a guru, and they will be chelas who will serve the guru like a child. The guru plays a vital role in guiding and protecting their chelas, imparting the traditions and customs of the community.

The protagonist moves to Bombay, gets himself operated and turns into a woman. Doraisamy becomes Revathi. Revathi gets a guru, and she serves that guru. She lives in a colony in which only Hijra's life. This place feels at home where she finds a sense of belonging and identity among the hijras. She tries to earn for her guru by begging or being a sex worker. Even though she is good at most of her subjects, she cannot get a proper job or continue her studies. Society looks at these people only as entertainment or as an object of mockery.

According to Bertrand Russel in his book, *The Impact of Science on Society*, "War does not determine who is right - only who is left" (66). The second is the differences in treatment within the community. It is seen that the hijra community itself has some hierarchy within themselves. This hierarchical structure has established roles and power dynamics. The hijras are not only exploited by the society but sometimes by their clan itself. This can include financial exploitation or other forms of abuse. The younger hijras are more vulnerable than the elderly ones. They would be asked to give money to the elder hijra. But the hijras manage to get over them.

The kind of work a hijra does is also decided by the Elderly Hijra. The guru teaches everything about the community to the chela. The guru also cautions the chela not to go away from the community, the line take from the text enhances the point, "*Don't you dare run away!*" the Hijras will not leave the others hijra that very easily. The hijras are mostly made to become sex workers, and that money is given to the guru. No one cares about the pains and emotions of the hijra. This is seen through the words of the protagonist, "The women sex workers did not share their woes with me. They were scared that I would

report them to my guru. The women were treated more or less like prisoners. They had to do sex work for three years, earn money and only then they would be sent home. They were also not paid much” (Revathi 55).

Next is the treatment of society. Transgender people often face discrimination in various aspects of life, including employment, housing, education, and healthcare. This can lead to economic hardship, limited access to essential services, and social exclusion which leads their life in a different way. They are not allowed to address even the common problems because they would get into trouble. These people are not given basic provisions like they are usually given to people of other genders. They are teased by shopkeepers through words and gestures.

The hijra face a lot by the officials and authorities, even though it is not their fault. The protagonist is walking on the side of a road one day and is caught up by the police. The protagonist is blamed and ends up being assaulted by the police. This is seen through the lines of the protagonist, “We’re Police! Why are you here? We’ve received reports about you. You cause us so much headache... you’ve been caught today. We’re going to file a case against you. You’ll learn your lesson if we lock you up for six months” (Revathi 216). This makes Revathi question herself about her life. These above-mentioned factors make transgenders doubt themselves and make them think they are useless.

In many places, transgenders struggle to obtain legal recognition of their gender identity, which can create significant barriers to accessing basic rights and services. The protagonist’s money is stolen by a person who was intimate with her, but she is unable to file a complaint against that person. Her life is like a question mark, and she gives the following statement after the policeman incident. The protagonist says, “god has given me these feelings and I have to live in the world that does not respect my feelings. The world considers it wrong of me to beg, wrong of me to get married... it is not as if I have killed or cheated or committed theft”, (Revathi 87). Love means seeing transgenders as individuals, with their own unique

experiences, feelings, and aspirations. It involves treating them with the same kindness, compassion, and empathy as anyone else. It involves letting go of preconceived notions and embracing their authentic selves. The protagonist also gets into a chance of loving a person and ends up hurting her.

The protagonist loves a person deeply and that person reciprocates the feelings. They rent a home for themselves. Everybody in the apartment thinks they are a couple. They live a happy life for a few days, which gives Revathi hope to have a happy family with a husband and children. She builds castles in her dreams. But that is all shattered by the person who feigned to love her with his unconditional love. He is an epitome of hypocrisy, who uses her for his pleasure.

After all these heartbreaks she understands that self-esteem is important. It is the overall opinion one has of oneself. It's a person's sense of self-worth, and how much a person appreciates and likes oneself. Revathi, after going through this pain in her life, realizes for the first time that she wants herself to live a life of dignity. This is seen through the words, "I long for respect. I want to live a life of dignity. I want to go to work as many women do" (Revathi 88). She has self-esteem. People with healthy self-esteem tend to have a positive outlook, form healthy relationships, and handle challenges effectively. They are more likely to be assertive, confident, and resilient. The protagonist develops these qualities after a trouble-stricken life.

Revathi starts to work in an NGO named Sangama which works for the welfare of transgenders. NGOs like this organize lots of events like beauty contests, singing, dance, and oratorical contests to make them more confident and to normalize their presence along with people of other genders. The protagonist gives a detailed description of the Koovagam festival which is for transgenders. The protagonist starts to respect herself and thus there is a great change. It also makes her write two books about the lives of such people. As said by Thomas Crum in *Three Deep Breaths: Finding Power and Purpose in a Stressed-Out World*, "The quality of our lives depends not on whether or not we have conflicts, but on how we respond to

them” (Revathi 77). She also sends her hard-earned money to her parents, taking care of them amidst all the things that they have done to her.

Once the fear for others vanishes in the minds of transgenders, they will respect themselves and try to improve their life. This is where lots of awareness should take place, giving them motivation. They should pursue education and training to enhance job prospects and should develop strong communication and interpersonal skills. They should also cope with the world by becoming proficient with computers and online communication, as many resources and communities exist online.

Self-care is extremely important in this high-tech world. They need to practice self-care activities, such as exercise, meditation, or hobbies, to manage stress and promote well-being. They can also consider learning self-defense techniques to protect themselves from potential violence or harassment. They should also inculcate skills of budgeting, saving, and managing finances to ensure economic stability. Due to discrimination in employment, it is very important to have good financial skills.

Growing awareness and understanding of transgender issues have led to increased visibility and advocacy. A lot of things must be taken to erase the mindset of society that sees transgenders like invisible creatures. Media representation and public figures coming out as transgenders have helped to raise awareness and promote acceptance. Some countries and regions have made progress in enacting laws and policies that protect the rights of transgenders, such as anti-discrimination laws and legal gender recognition. India has made an effort to look at these people from stigma to stardom.

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