

Vidya...

(A short story in Marathi by Dr. P. S. Jadhav and translated into English by Dr. A. A. Kamble)

Dr. P. S. Jadhav

Assistant Professor, NVP Mandal's Arts, Commerce and Science College, Lasalgaon, (MS) India

Dr. A. A. Kamble

Assistant Professor in English, NVP Mandal's Arts, Commerce and Science College, Lasalgaon (MS) India

I was just arrived at Rajkot for a course. It was impossible to stay in summer season at forty eight degree Celsius. I stayed there because it was necessary for me to complete the course. All business was in Gujarati language there. Wherever we go in the world and we listen to the speaker of mother tongue suddenly, we cannot put such experience into the words? I had such experience at Rajkot. Where we regularly had breakfast, lunch and dinner at canteen, there, someone was speaking in Marathi language. My ears were keen to listen and eyes were moving from one corner to another. The name of the speaker was Vidya, speaking in Nagpuri tone. She was working as a sweeper and waiter in the canteen owned by a person from Patel community.

I was taken aback. Therefore, I called her and enquired about her name, native place and everything. She told me her name as Vidya Satramwar. I asked her you might be from Nagpur? If you are from Nagpur, then, what you are doing here? Naturally, I had a question. Her answer really stunned me. As she came to know that I'm Maharashtrian, her face bloomed like a flower in the morning and she opened her heart to me. She was talkative. In spite of many professors from the corners of country, she

began to take care of me. Usually, she was busy. Whenever she can, she smiled at me, talked to me and sometimes, waves the hands from a distance.

I came to know much more about her in fifteen days. I decided to write about her when I listened to her.

A blue eyed, smart and very active little child always followed her just like a boy following a butterfly. I asked, "Who is this always following you?" Vidya just twenty years old, slim, brown in complexion, long black haired and in a very cheap clothes answered my question as "He is my child, Sister". I was shocked and surprised. The child is eight years old and mother is in her twenty? I guess that something is wrong. I asked her to sit down and tell the journey of her life. When did you get married? What is your husband? Where is he? She said hurriedly that the owner of the canteen is looking at me. I have to attend everyone here. I'm also willing to talk to you but later. She went out. She was moving just like a black shade from table to table attending everyone. I was looking at her. Her every move was giving birth to a question in my mind.

I came to my room at evening. I always observed Vidya busy in her work moving

here and there as the canteen was adjourned to the residential rooms. She was so slim that a stream of air can take her away. Once evening, Vidya finished her work early and came to see me. I understood that she wants to share her experience with me from her eyes and body language. She was in front of me. I had also many questions to ask her. I asked her, "How do you come here from Nagpur to Rajkot?" She said, "I'm here with my parents-in-laws. There are not enough girls in Patel community. The mediator arranged my marriage for just fifty thousand rupees. My husband serves in the same canteen. Fair, slim and heighted person is the father of my child". I was surprised to get to know that her husband belongs to Patel community in Gujarat. Her husband was much fairer to her but addicted to chewing Gutaka and Mawa. I had never seen him talking because his mouth was always filled with Gutaka and Mawa.

Tears appeared in her eyes when I enquired about her parents. She replied in trembling voice that, "Her mother fell seriously ill when her younger brother was just one months old. She died on her way to hospital because we could not afford her medical expenditure. We four brothers and sisters lost our mother. Our grandmother took us to maternal uncle. Our father was a drunkard. He usually had a quarrel with our grandmother daily. Once a day, he had consumed poison under influence of alcohol. We became lonely. The real struggle of life began later. Maternal uncle was also a drunkard. He was usually irritated because he could not look after us. He usually taunts us saying that your parents left you for me. Why should I work hard for you? He threatened us many times to leave the home.

He had also beaten us brutally. Whenever he was angry with us, we left home and hide us somewhere. We return back home from the back door when he got asleep. We became fearful even if our uncle makes a move in his sleep. Grandmother gives us the leftover food cursing our parents and us. What can anything else they do? They were common workers and helpless. The conditions of my life force me to stop going school from seventh class. I joined as a worker with my grandmother. My grandmother was happy but not my uncle. Although I was young but the responsibility of my brothers made me older one. My brothers and sister continued school education.

Accidentally, my grandmother and uncle came to know that a middleman arranged a marriage of a girl in neighborhood with a person from Gujarat because there are no girls for marriage. Addition to this, the parents of the girl received fifty thousand rupees. Both of them found out the middleman and talked about my marriage. The middleman was happy to arrange a marriage and he suggested a suitor immediately. I was twelve years old- just having the experience of menstrual cycle. I was so young to get married. I knew only the quarrels of my parents. I was so worried not for being married with a person from Gujarat but for my brothers and sisters. I hoped that the married life in Gujarat would have been better than the cursed life here. So, I got married when I was twelve years old and came to Rajkot. It was a nuclear family. My husband was unemployed. I had the responsibility of looking after the parents in laws, two cousin sisters and a cousin brother. I belonged to a tribal community and I don't know whether they have really

accepted me as their daughter in law or not. However, I accepted them whole heartedly. I became mother at early age. They loved my child because he looks like his father. I became just a medium to gift them an heir. Husband is moody but loves me. We decided to educate our child for his better future.

My husband and I came here because my father in law called me a thief and had a quarrel with my husband. We get eight thousand rupees as a salary together with free boarding. We sleep in the store room in spite of suffocation. I fell asleep immediately due to the hard labour. I wake up early for sweeping and cleaning the tables and utensils etc. The owner of canteen is very strict. He cut the salary for negligence. We think to leave this job and will join another. I asked her whether she visit to her native place. Vidya said, "Grandmother doesn't allow me. She is angry with me because the middleman didn't pay fifty thousand rupees for arranging my marriage. I also decided not to see her". I asked, "What about your siblings? Have you visited them in the last eight years?" Vidya answered that, "My younger sister failed in matriculation. She was also upset with my maternal uncle's violence. She runs away with a young man. She bears two children. Her husband is also a drunkard. He beats her daily. She also blames to her fate. I can blame to my grandmother and maternal uncle but she cannot. She had taken her own decision to run away. Now, she bears to her husband. We don't any native place to return back. We have nothing in our lives. Somehow we manage our life. How can we help her? My younger brothers left the school and joined

the job of a worker". Vidya's voice was trembling and she was very close to break down. She was crying. Her child was staring at her. Probably, her child understands her better.

I suggested Vidya to educate her child. He is a bright child. Open a bank account and save the money for his education. Life is like this and we have to face it. Try your best to make your life happier. Be courageous. If you accept the conditions of your life, life will be easier for you.

I was talking like this to her and she was listening to me. She was ready to leave. She said rising to me, "How many days you are staying here? I'm the happiest person when I see someone from Maharashtra." In real, I was from Nashik and she was from Nagpur. I could understand her love for native place because she was in Gujarat. I replied her that I'm leaving for Nashik on fifteenth of this month.

I observed her daily sweeping, cleaning the utensils and feeding her child sometimes. Every time, she smiles at me and waves her hand to catch my attention in spite of tiredness. She was waiting for me at the gate on the previous day of my departure. She said to me that she is going to offer me a cup of tea. She was ready to spend ten rupees for me. How can say her, No? I accepted her offer for a cup of tea. I can see the satisfaction and proud feeling on her face.

It was a day of departure to Nashik. When I was packing my luggage, Vidya entered in my room with her child. She was upset because I was going to leave Rajkot. She asked, "When would you come back?" it was not sure that I will visit Rajkot again but

I said, "Sometime I will visit again". I began to move and Vidya helped me to carry my luggage. I put a note of one hundred rupees in her child's hands. She was not ready to accept it. This was a tradition to express love in Maharashtra. I said Vidya to purchase him some sweets. While I was leaving, Vidya asked for my contact number and surprisingly, I received her call on the very next day. I attended the call but could not receive the voice. After some time, Vidya said in a trembling voice, "Is there rainfall in Maharashtra? Are you happy after returning back to your home? It's not possible for me to return back to my home. Come back to Rajkot. I'm waiting to see you. Then, she immediately cut the call. I became instable. How Vidya become so

matured, sensible and conditioned? How a twelve years old girl could went to other state. She is living in an unknown family- the family and the community was completely different from her. Her life was nothing but a gambling.

Innocent Vidya victimized because of drunkard father, illiteracy, and selfishness of grandmother and maternal uncle and especially of female feticide. Someone killed a female feticide and therefore Vidya is in Gujarat permanently. It proved her to be a greatest adjustment of her life. She doesn't care for her life. Even an educated girl could not accept this but an uneducated girl, Vidya, had chosen this way of life. Therefore, her name, Vidya, is proved to be a suitable name.