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Breaking the Architecture of Silence: Gendered Violence, Resistance, and Transformative Activism in Sunitha Krishnan's *I Am What I Am*

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Abstract: Sunitha Krishnan's *I Am What I Am* is a personal narrative that reveals the intertwined systems of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, victim-blaming, societal silence, trafficking, and institutional apathy. This study analyses the book via the notion of "architecture of silence"—a web of familial, social, cultural, and institutional behaviours that inhibit women from discussing sexual abuse while shifting shame from offenders to victims. Krishnan's ordeal of gang rape illustrates how sexual violence can serve as a mechanism for controlling women who defy traditional gender norms. Her rejection of shame transforms personal violation into defiance and ultimately into enduring action against sex trafficking. The document additionally examines the abuse of women and girls in prostitution, the commercialisation of female bodies, the inadequacies of rescue efforts lacking rehabilitation, and the importance of economic autonomy and social reintegration. Special emphasis is placed on Prajwala as a formal representation of transformative activism aimed at transitioning survivors from vulnerability and social marginalisation to dignity, economic independence, and empowerment. The memoir further complicates traditional portrayals of survivors by rejecting the notion that trauma equates to enduring powerlessness. Utilising feminist, intersectional, and marginality-focused research, the paper contends that Krishnan converts autobiographical discourse into a collective action. *I Am What I Am* eventually illustrates that confronting gender violence

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necessitates dismantling silence across personal, societal, economic, legal, and institutional dimensions.
Keywords: Sunitha Krishnan; gendered violence; sexual trafficking; silence; resistance; transformative activism

Introduction

Gender-based violence is not sustained solely by physical coercion. It is upheld by silence, trepidation, stigma, societal scrutiny, financial reliance, institutional apathy, and cultural beliefs around female sexuality. A woman subjected to sexual violence may be muted by offenders, relatives, community authorities, societal stigma, and even by those who claim to be supportive, asserting that revealing her experience will irreparably harm her future. Consequently, silence transcends mere speechlessness. It evolves into a societal framework safeguarding imbalanced authority.

Sunitha Krishnan's *I Am What I Am* presents a persuasive autobiographical critique of this framework. The biography chronicles her individual encounter with gang rape, the societal reaction to that brutality, her repudiation of victimhood, and her ensuing decades of advocacy against sexual exploitation and trafficking. However, the poem should not be interpreted solely as an uplifting account of an extraordinary woman triumphing over challenges. It consistently transcends personal fortitude to enquire why women and girls are rendered susceptible, why survivors face blame, why rehabilitation proves challenging, and why society persists in stigmatising individuals who have suffered exploitation.

Renu Sud Sinha recognises patriarchy as a significant barrier depicted in the memoir, emphasising the detrimental effects of societal perceptions on victims of sexual offences and trafficking. This finding highlights the difference between primary and secondary violence. Sexual assault represents the foremost infringement, although victim-blaming, societal ostracism, prying enquiries, job discrimination, and enduring stigmatisation might perpetuate that violence within society.

The issue of gender should also be contextualised within broader frameworks of disparity. Nidhi Sadana Sabharwal and Wandana Sonalkar warn that the term "'Woman' in India

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does not represent a uniform category" (45). Their contention is crucial for comprehending the women and girls shown in Krishnan's tale. Susceptibility to trafficking may correlate with poverty, social caste, age, insufficient education, familial disintegration, economic reliance, and restricted access to institutional safeguards. Gender discrimination does not function uniformly throughout different social groups.

Visweswara Rao Chenamallu similarly situates the experiences of marginalised women within the intertwined frameworks of "caste, class, and gender" (608). His idea is valuable as trafficking cannot be seen solely as an issue of individual criminal conduct. Traffickers take advantage of prevailing socioeconomic weaknesses. Economic instability, social exclusion, inequitable job prospects, and gender bias can foster an environment where misleading assurances of matrimony or employment serve as instruments of exploitation.

The matter of voice assumes equal importance. Gopal Guru's claim that "Dalit women communicate in a distinct manner" (2548) originated from a particular Dalit feminist framework, but its foundational epistemological tenet is pertinent to survivor-focused advocacy: personal experience is significant. Women who have firsthand seen marginalisation hold insights that cannot only be substituted by outside authorities. Krishnan's narrative of survivor involvement in Prajwala indicates that individuals who have faced exploitation can transform into significant contributors to rehabilitation and intervention, rather than being perpetual subjects of philanthropic attention.

Kranti Lodhi and Nisha Indraguru characterise the disadvantaged New Woman as "a symbol of metamorphosis and rebellion" (67). Their concept provides a significant counterpoint to narratives that depict oppressed women solely via their anguish. Krishnan's memoir recognises significant pain however rejects the notion of trauma as the culmination of female identity. Individuals who have survived can transform into labourers, specialists, coordinators, advisors, proponents, and contributors to the rehabilitation of others.

This transition from enforced identification to autonomy is also evident in academic work that specifically engages with Krishnan's memoir. Chenamallu's examination of caste, stigma, and social exclusion highlights how externally imposed classifications can influence individual

recognition. Gayathri and Jeripotula likewise underscore the need of self-identification and emancipation from externally assigned identities. Such methodologies are especially effective for gender analysis as women who have experienced sexual violence are frequently categorised with identities—victim, prostitute, fallen woman, trafficked woman—that risk overshadowing the intricacies of their individuality.

Smita M. Patil characterises marginalised feminist agency as an "epistemic departure" from prevailing paradigms (37), indicating that substantive feminist critique should reevaluate the sources of knowledge regarding oppression. Krishnan's memoir consistently questions established beliefs regarding rescue, rehabilitation, prostitution, survivor conduct, and societal acceptance.

I Am What I Am might thus be interpreted as a story about voicing truths on multiple fronts. Krishnan articulates his personal experiences regarding rape; confronts the societal silence that perpetuates victim-blaming; unveils concealed trafficking networks; scrutinises institutional shortcomings; and establishes frameworks for survivors to reconstruct their lives. This article contends that the memoir converts autobiographical discourse into impactful advocacy. Gender justice, as articulated in Krishnan's story, necessitates actions beyond merely denouncing violence. It necessitates deconstructing the societal framework that conceals violence, shifts shame onto victims, limits their economic prospects, and denies them the opportunity to transcend their experiences.

Review of Literature

Prof. Visweswara Rao Chenamallu's "Caste, Stigma, and Social Marginality in Sunitha Krishnan's *I Am What I Am*: A Study" (2026) offers a direct academic analysis of the memoir. His examination centers on the mechanisms by which socially marginalised identities are formed, maintained, and opposed. His focus on stigma is especially pertinent to the current research. Sexual violence characterised by gender persists through societal categorisation, as the victim may remain associated with the assault long after the physical act has concluded. Chenamallu's approach thus aids in understanding Krishnan's opposition to a lasting victim identity as a contestation against socially constructed marginalisation.

P. Gayathri and Dr. Malavi Jeripotula's "Freeing the Labels of Caste: Marginality, Self-Definition, and Liberation in Sunitha Krishnan's *I Am What I Am*" (2026) emphasises the connection between categorisation and emancipation. Their research holds importance since Krishnan consistently challenges externally imposed identities. The designation of rape survivor may initially recognise an experience, although when permanently affixed to a woman, it might eclipse her later accomplishments. Their focus on self-definition bolsters the current paper's assertion that breaking silence should ultimately return narrative control to the individual instead of just substituting one externally imposed label for another.

In "Dalit Women and Their Journey toward Self-Emancipation," Prof. Visweswara Rao Chenamallu explores the various pathways via which marginalised women confront oppression based on caste, class, and gender. Education, financial autonomy, collaborative efforts, civic engagement, and self-articulation arise as crucial components of liberation. While primarily focused on the experiences of Dalit women, the article offers a valuable comparative foundation for Krishnan's philosophy of rehabilitation. Prajwala similarly transcends mere rescue by highlighting livelihood, psychological rehabilitation, skill development, institutional assistance, and social reintegration. Emancipation then becomes into a proactive endeavour instead of a benevolent offering.

Renu Sud Sinha's "'*I Am What I Am*' by Sunitha Krishnan: Of Hope and Resilience" (2024) underscores Krishnan's determination to not let sexual trauma dictate her destiny. Sinha recognises patriarchy, human trafficking, societal perceptions of survivors, and the challenges of rehabilitation as major themes of the memoir. Her focus on Prajwala's integration of survivors into the workforce is especially significant. Experiential knowledge transforms into an organisational asset, allowing survivors to aid in the rehabilitation of others. Sinha's critique thus endorses a conception of resilience that transcends personal psychological fortitude and emphasises communal and institutional action.

Priya M. Menon's review of *I Am What I Am* (2024) emphasises the memoir's probing enquiries into sexual exploitation, trafficking, and recovery. She notes that Krishnan did not create the narrative chiefly to evoke compassion. Conversely, her focus persists on taking action.

This differentiation is essential to the current research as silence is not only disrupted by the recounting of pain. Articulation becomes revolutionary when it aids in prevention, salvation, restoration, legislative reform, financial autonomy, and societal transformation. Menon consequently assists in positioning Krishnan's autobiography within the realms of personal narrative and activist engagement.

Kavya T.'s article "Between Care and Control: Biopolitical Practice in Sunitha Krishnan's *I Am What I Am*" (2026) provides a significant viewpoint on the institutional aspects of rehabilitation. Rescue organisations wield considerable power over at-risk survivors; thus, vigilance is essential to avoid transforming into another mechanism of domination. This viewpoint complicates oversimplified narratives of altruistic salvation. The current research utilises this issue to investigate how survivor-focused rehabilitation ought to enhance rather than limit women's decision-making abilities. Protection assumes a feminist significance solely when it fosters autonomy.

Kranti Lodhi, and Nisha Indraguru's "Resistance and Resilience: The New Woman in Dalit Feminist Narratives" (2026) explores the journey of marginalised women from subjugation to self-empowerment. Their concept of the New Woman as simultaneously revolutionary and defiant is beneficial for comprehending Krishnan's confrontation with the cultural narrative of the fractured survivor. It is equally relevant to women who reconstruct their lives after experiencing trafficking and sexual exploitation. Resilience within this context is not merely a form of passive endurance. It encompasses the restoration of identity, contesting repressive systems, and cultivating the ability to engage in societal life under revised conditions.

Nidhi Sadana Sabharwal, and Wandana Sonalkar's work, "Dalit Women in India: At the Crossroads of Gender, Class, and Caste" (2015), illustrates that the marginalisation of women cannot be sufficiently elucidated by gender considerations alone. Their intersectional viewpoint is especially pertinent to trafficking, as economic hardship, caste marginalisation, gender bias, and limited chances can mutually exacerbate each other. The women depicted in Krishnan's story hold diverse socioeconomic standings, and their weaknesses cannot be attributed to a

singular factor. Their research consequently offers a structural foundation for transcending personalised interpretations of sexual exploitation.

Objectives

To investigate silence as a societal tool perpetuating gender-based violence in Sunitha Krishnan's *I Am What I Am.*

To examine rape, victim-blaming, shame, and stigma as interrelated mechanisms of patriarchal dominance.

To examine the gendered frameworks that underpin trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of females and minors.

To examine Krishnan's conversion of emotional anguish and rage into opposition and structured social engagement.

To investigate Prajwala's survivor-focused methodologies for rescue, rehabilitation, economic empowerment, and social reintegration.

To assess the memoir as a feminist narrative that converts personal discourse into a communal and institutional response to gender inequity.

Methodology

This qualitative research utilises meticulous textual examination guided by feminist, intersectional, and marginality-focused methodologies. It analyses *I Am What I Am* by exploring the interrelated topics of silence, sexual assault, victim-blaming, human trafficking, stigma, survivor identity, resilience, rehabilitation, livelihood, and social reintegration. Principal textual evidence is analysed in conjunction with chosen secondary research on Krishnan's memoir, Dalit feminism, gender marginalisation, and resilience. Special emphasis is placed on the transition from personal defiance to survivor-focused institutional and collective advocacy.

Discussion

The Silence Surrounding Sexual Violence

Silence embodies multiple interpretations in Sunitha Krishnan's *I Am What I Am*. Victims could choose to remain quiet due to apprehensions of being blamed, doubted, or publicly revealed. Families and communities might promote silence to save their reputations.

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Organisations could evade addressing shortcomings that permit violence to persist. Krishnan's autobiography explores various manifestations of silence, drawing from her personal experiences and her subsequent involvement with women and girls affected by trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Following Krishnan's gang-rape during adolescence, the local community fails to channel their outrage exclusively against the offenders. Females counsel her to be silent, whilst the male-centric panchayat scrutinises her behaviour. Prior to the attack, she had motivated the rural girls to pursue education and had conversed about menstruation health. The guys inform her that she had been "providing them with poor suggestions" and "received what was warranted" (Krishnan 18). Their reply interprets her endeavours to enhance girls' understanding as grounds to hold her accountable for the abuse inflicted upon her.

Krishnan subsequently recognises the conviction that informs this reaction: "women who challenge the established order merit retribution" (19). Consequently, silence performs a political function. It safeguards those who perpetrate violence, cautions other women against defying established roles, and transforms a societal injustice into a liability for the victim. Discussing the assault serves as a kind of defiance since it challenges the community's narrative regarding the events and the allocation of accountability.

Rape, Victim-Blaming, and the Transfer of Shame

Krishnan's book depicts rape as a manifestation of authority employed to control women who transgress established limits. Her "transgression," according to the panchayat's narrative, is her autonomy and her efforts with young women. She articulates the notion that "rape serves as an effective means of disciplining" women who contest traditional structures (19). The attack and ensuing accusations convey a caution that extends beyond her own situation: women asserting educational or public power may be compelled to dread the repercussions.

Victim-blaming shifts the burden of shame from offenders to victims. A woman who has experienced assault may encounter enquiries on her whereabouts, attire, level of resistance, and potential impact on her family's reputation. Krishnan dismisses this inversion of ethical accountability. Why ought I to feel guilt?" she enquires, asserting that those who transgressed

against her should bear the disgrace of confronting others (18). Her inquiry contests the notion that a woman's honour is contingent upon sexual "purity. An action perpetrated against her without her agreement cannot render her ethically accountable for it."

The distribution of shame influences a survivor's willingness to communicate. If the community perceives disclosure as an additional harm to her reputation, remaining silent may appear more secure. By identifying the offenders as those deserving of disgrace, Krishnan transforms discourse into a tool of indictment rather than one of admission. Her reply re-establishes a differentiation that patriarchal assessment blurs: the contrast between enduring a crime and perpetrating one.

Trauma and the "Ideal Victim"

Even when a victim articulates her experience, societal norms may dictate her expected conduct. Krishnan refers to this anticipation as the "model of a perfect victim" (19). A woman is more likely to be trusted if she exhibits fear, reticence, vulnerability, and seeming embarrassment. Irritation or self-assurance may serve as indicators that she has reacted inappropriately. Such evaluations maintain external control over the survivor's actions following the incident of violence.

Krishnan rejects this script, while recognising the persistent impact of trauma. She depicts nightmares, anxiety, dread, and distressing recollections, referring to trauma as "my silent companion, an ever-present shadow" (20). The illustration illustrates tenacity without implying that trauma dictates all her choices. She articulates the experience of "experiencing shame while maintaining an upright and dignified posture" (21). Her narrative permits the simultaneous existence of socially induced guilt and self-esteem, akin to the coexistence of anguish and civic engagement.

Disclosing one's experiences does not eliminate psychological trauma. Subsequent activism does not demonstrate that the assault lost its significance. Testimony provides Krishnan an avenue to engage in articulating the experience that others have attempted to elucidate for her. She is capable of articulating the damage accurately while dismissing the expectation that she

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stays always powerless. The memoir's narrative of resilience hinges on the differentiation between acknowledging suffering and being limited to a certain anticipated reaction to it.

Anger and the Movement toward Public Resistance

Krishnan's reply evolves gradually. Her attack does not immediately yield a comprehensive agenda for anti-trafficking advocacy. Prior obligations to social service, indignation toward inequity, contemplation, and ensuing interactions all shape its trajectory. She ultimately arrives at "the conviction that I would dedicate every breath of my life to combat sexual offences against women and girls" (19). The declaration signifies her choice to transform a private experience into a public engagement.

The memoir does not ascribe worth to the crime due to the subsequent advocacy. The brutality persists as an inequity. Krishnan's agency is in the decisions she subsequently makes, utilising fury to discern the frameworks that stigmatise survivors and shield offenders. Her fury is neither a breakdown of self-control nor a replacement for initiative. It attains political significance when associated with rescue efforts, public advocacy, institutional development, and rehabilitation.

This advancement also alters the magnitude of her defiance. Denying responsibility following her own assault constitutes a singular action. Efforts to avert exploitation and assist others necessitate coordination, resources, and sustained accountability. The narrative chronicles the transition from personal dissent to communal action while indicating that public success does not eliminate private fragility.

Trafficking and Repeated Sexual Exploitation

"Krishnan's interactions with women in prostitution broaden the memoir's narrative on sexual violence. By engaging in dialogue with them, she discovers themes of deceit, manipulation, financial necessity, and human trafficking. Many of them were lured with assurances of employment or matrimony," she states (12). Both commitments are influenced by existing circumstances that are already affecting women's lives. An employment proposition may take advantage of pressing monetary need; a marriage proposal may manipulate confidence and anticipations for a woman's future.

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Her narrative encompasses juveniles who have been coerced into sexual exploitation. Their situation renders age, coercion, and control important to any evaluation of autonomy. Krishnan's advocacy is mostly directed for women and children whose bodily autonomy has been compromised or significantly limited. Her stance as an abolitionist evolves through these interactions, although it is crucial to differentiate the particular coercive scenarios outlined in the memoir from all instances categorised as prostitution.

Contemplating her own attack, Krishnan ponders the incessant abuses that trafficked women and girls would experience "on a daily—hourly?!—basis" (19). The analogy illustrates the magnitude of exploitation she seeks to understand. It further elucidates why her reaction transcends singular criminal occurrences. Profit reliant on the sustained dominance over individuals' bodies necessitates that prevention, legal action, financial assistance, and rehabilitation tackle the circumstances enabling exploitation to endure.

Children and the Limits of Assumed Protection

The memoir commences with a four-year-old child who, according to Krishnan's narrative, has suffered sexual abuse and neglect. The father's reported participation renders the incident very unsettling. It contests the presumption that familial ties inherently ensure a girl's protection. Protection should be evaluated based on a child's real experiences, rather than the presumed reliability typically attributed to a parent or family.

The situation also compels Krishnan to reevaluate her reactions to children who have experienced violence. She states, "As long as I concentrated on the suffering and trauma of the victims, I jeopardised neglecting their strength and fortitude" (3–4). Her apprehension is not that injuries ought to garner diminished focus. A damaged youngster must still be acknowledged as an individual with abilities and potential. Prompt assistance is crucial, although a moral approach should also facilitate rehabilitation, learning, and existence beyond the offence.

This tenet shapes the memoir's broader perspective on survivors. Familial, communal, and institutional assertions of safeguarding women and girls cannot supplant the necessity for genuine safety and dignity. Krishnan's approach initiates with the individual requiring assistance and enquires about the practical objectives of protection.

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From Rescue to Rehabilitation

Rescue constitutes an immediate reaction to exploitation; yet, Krishnan characterises it as the commencement of an extended journey. An individual extricated from trafficking could lack a secure residence, financial stability, continuous education, mental health support, or societal acceptance. Trauma can endure, and an employer or neighbour can react with scepticism upon discovering her history. Without ongoing assistance, mere physical removal cannot ensure lasting liberation.

Prajwala signifies Krishnan's endeavour to structure that extended reaction. The memoir's scope includes safeguarding as well as guidance, instruction, medical treatment, job readiness, legal assistance, economic sustenance, and reintegration. These endeavours necessitate resources, skilled personnel, and ongoing evaluation. Krishnan's narrative on institution-building encompasses challenges and discord alongside resolve; transformative activism relies on more than just one audacious deed.

The objective of rehabilitation is to enhance a survivor's capacity to make choices regarding her life. Oversight may transform into domination if an organization perpetually dictates her choices. Care must consequently encompass chances to acquire knowledge, engage in employment, cultivate relationships, and exercise discernment. The degree to which a victim acquires practical options is a crucial indicator of whether institutional assistance is aiding her in reclaiming autonomy.

Economic Independence and the Social Barriers to Reintegration

The concept of livelihood is important to this interpretation of freedom. A woman lacking a stable income may find herself reliant on precarious relationships or have limited options for exploitative employment. Education and job can provide her with choices about her residence, means of self-sustenance or assistance for her children, and the path she wishes to follow. Psychological support is crucial, however it cannot solely eliminate economic insecurity.

Employment, meanwhile, does not eradicate stigma. Krishnan narrates facilitating employment at a hotel for a young woman from Prajwala, only to discover that the manager perceives her amicable exchanges with male coworkers as dubious due to her past. Actions that

may appear commonplace are redefined via an understanding of her history. The employment offers a chance while simultaneously subjecting her to a unique level of oversight.

Krishnan enquires, "How can social reintegration occur when your history casts a significant shadow over your current circumstances?" (16). The inquiry assigns accountability to both society and rehabilitative entities. Employers, neighbours, organisations, and families should allow survivors to assume normal responsibilities instead of repeatedly reverting them to their previous situations. Reintegration is not fully achieved if a woman gains skills and income yet is deprived of the opportunity to be recognised for additional attributes.

Survivor Participation and Rights

The memoir challenges the strict dichotomy between saviours and the saved. Prostituted women assist Krishnan in recognising a susceptible youngster on an initial interaction. Subsequently, individuals who have experienced exploitation can assist in efforts with recently rescued women. These instances acknowledge that an individual who has suffered may also have insight, discernment, and the ability to assist another.

Such involvement should not be idealised or expected from every survivor. Personal experience does not compel a woman to engage in activism or reveal her past. When she opts to engage, her involvement contests the perception of survivors as only passive beneficiaries of institutional support. It enables individuals impacted by exploitation to contribute to the formulation of responses.

This transition fosters the recognition of survivors as individuals possessing rights. Assistance, safeguarding, fairness, restoration, and equitable treatment need not to be contingent upon a girl's perceived vulnerability to elicit sympathy. Entitlements impose responsibilities on organisations. They also create shortcomings in law enforcement, funding, care, and reintegration issues for public accountability rather than regrettable deficiencies in charity. Krishnan's advocacy transitions from aiding individuals to enquiring how systems should react.

Voice, Media, and the Right to Self-Definition

"Articulating experiences of sexual abuse in public might shatter the enforced silence, while it may also create a new form of constraint. Krishnan observes that her disclosure results in

others consistently labelling her as a rape survivor, even when she is addressing topics such as trafficking, rehabilitation, or institutional practices. Individuals refused to release their perception of me as a rape survivor," she articulates (13). The focus on the attack may eclipse the proficiency acquired over years of labour.

She thus asserts that "being a victim of sexual assault does not define me." It constitutes an experiential reality" (15). Disclosure provides the public with awareness of an occurrence; it does not confer ownership of her narrative to the public. A survivor must maintain the capacity to determine if, when, and how to communicate, along with the significance that experience will have in her existence. Media exposure is only beneficial when it does not diminish a woman's credibility to her traumas.

Krishnan's prior assertion that she saw herself as "a survivor, not a victim" signifies a crucial repudiation of powerlessness (14). Her subsequent opposition to being indefinitely categorised as a survivor further elaborates on the same principle. No solitary word can encapsulate her complete identity. *I Am What I Am* affirms her entitlement to recognise violence, trauma, fury, professional expertise, and accomplishments without permitting others to define her identity through a singular aspect.

From Silence to Transformative Action

Krishnan's narrative traverses themes of personal violation, communal culpability, trauma, testimony, activism, rescue, rehabilitation, and advocacy. These experiences do not provide a straightforward trajectory where a single utterance eliminates guilt or the establishment of an institution eradicates exploitation. Trauma reemerges, stigma endures, and institutions might falter. The persistent character of these challenges elucidates the necessity for resistance to encompass both individual self-identification and structured societal transformation.

The memoir's primary acts of rejection are interrelated. Krishnan disavows accountability for the offence perpetrated against her, the stigma imposed upon her, the anticipation that she exhibit vulnerability, and the enduring designation linked to her revelation. Prajwala's efforts also reject the notion that trafficking is unavoidable or that just rescue is

adequate. Her defiance evolves into frameworks designed to assist other women and girls in regaining security, economic stability, and autonomy.

I Am What I Am therefore identifies feminist agency in the ability to challenge the perception of violence and in the efforts to alter the circumstances that perpetuate it. Disclosing one's experience enables a survivor to articulate her narrative on her own conditions. Transformative measures necessitate that institutions and communities engage in active listening, advocate for rights, and create space for existence beyond violence.

Conclusion

Sunitha Krishnan's *I Am What I Am* illustrates that gender-based violence is perpetuated by factors beyond only the offenders. It is perpetuated by silence, victim-blaming, shame, stigma, economic insecurity, institutional shortcomings, and societal norms regarding the conduct of sexually assaulted women. Krishnan's experiences illustrate rape as a possible means of gendered control, while her interactions with trafficked women and children uncover the larger systems that render female bodies susceptible to commercial exploitation.

The importance of the memoir, therefore, resides equally in its transformative politics. Krishnan declines to embrace shame, dismisses the enduring victim persona, and transforms individual defiance into ongoing activism. Prajwala institutionalises this opposition via prevention, rescue, rehabilitation, livelihood assistance, advocacy, and social reintegration. Survivors are thus envisioned not only as beneficiaries of safeguarding but as individuals endowed with knowledge, labour, decision-making abilities, and the capacity to aid in the rehabilitation of others.

The narrative ultimately implies that shattering silence involves more than simply urging women to recount their tragedy. Society should engage in listening without assigning blame, facilitate rehabilitation without exerting control, offer employment without perpetuating stigma, and acknowledge survivors without diminishing them to their traumas. *I Am What I Am* thereby converts autobiography into a discourse advocating for gender justice based on voice, dignity, rights, economic independence, institutional responsibility, and transformative communal engagement.

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