

= Vidya Balan =

Vidya Balan (pronounced [??d ? ja? ba?l?n] ; born 1 January 1978) is an Indian actress . She has established a career in Bollywood and is the recipient of several awards , including a National Film Award , five Filmfare Awards , and five Screen Awards , and was awarded the Padma Shri by the Government of India in 2014 . She is known for portraying strong female protagonists and has been acknowledged in the media for pioneering a change in the concept of a Hindi film heroine .

Vidya aspired to a career in film from a young age , and had her first acting role in the 1995 sitcom Hum Paanch . She pursued a master 's degree in sociology from the University of Mumbai and simultaneously made several unsuccessful attempts to start a career in film . She subsequently featured in various television commercials and music videos , and in 2003 made her feature film debut as the protagonist of the independent Bengali drama Bhalo Theko . In 2005 Vidya garnered praise for her first Hindi film , the drama Parineeta , and followed it with a leading role in the highly successful 2006 comedy film Lage Raho Munna Bhai .

This initial success was followed by roles in the romantic comedies Heyy Babyy (2007) and Kismat Konnection (2008) which met with negative reviews . The year 2009 marked the beginning of the most successful period in Vidya 's career as she portrayed five consecutive roles to wide critical acclaim in the 2009 drama Paa , the 2010 black comedy Ishqiya , the 2011 semi @-@ biographical thriller No One Killed Jessica , the 2011 biopic The Dirty Picture , and the 2012 thriller Kahaani . These roles established her as a leading actress of Hindi cinema .

In addition to acting in films , Vidya promotes humanitarian causes and supports the empowerment of women . She initially drew criticism for her fluctuating weight and " questionable " dress sense , but was later credited in the media for " not morphing herself to fit into any conventional slot " . She is married to the film producer Siddharth Roy Kapur .

= = Early life and background = =

Vidya Balan was born on 1 January 1978 in Poothamkurussy , Puthur , a town in the Palakkad District of Kerala , to parents of TAMILIAN descent . Her father , P. R. Balan , is the Executive Vice @-@ President of Digicable , and her mother , Saraswathy Balan , is a homemaker . According to Vidya , they speak a mix of Malayalam and Tamil at home . Her elder sister , Priya Balan , works in the field of advertising . The actress Priyamani is her second cousin .

Vidya grew up in the suburban neighbourhood of Chembur , Mumbai and was schooled at St. Anthony Girls ' High School . From a young age she aspired to a career in film and was inspired by the work of actors Shabana Azmi and Madhuri Dixit . At the age of sixteen , she starred in the first season of Ekta Kapoor 's sitcom Hum Paanch as Radhika , a bespectacled teenager . Following the success of the show , Vidya refused director Anurag Basu 's offer to star in a television soap opera , as she wanted to concentrate on a film career . Her parents were supportive of the decision but encouraged her to complete her education first , so she attended St. Xavier 's College to pursue a bachelor 's degree in sociology and later earned a master 's degree from the University of Mumbai .

= = Career = =

= = = Struggle and film debut (2000 ? 04) = = =

While pursuing her master 's degree , Vidya was cast as the female lead in the Malayalam film Chakram , opposite Mohanlal and was subsequently signed on for twelve other Malayalam language films . However , due to production difficulties , Chakram was shelved . The postponement of a film starring Mohanlal was an unheard of occurrence in Malayalam cinema and film producers blamed Vidya for bringing " bad luck " to the project ; labelled her as a " jinx " and replaced her in all the films that she had been contracted for . She then shifted focus to Tamil cinema . In 2001 , she was cast as the female lead in N. Linguswamy 's Run (2002) . However , after completing the first

shooting schedule of the film , she was unceremoniously dropped and replaced by Meera Jasmine . She was signed up under false pretences for a sex comedy , a genre she was then uncomfortable with , and thus decided to leave the project . Thereafter , she signed on for a third Tamil film , Manasellam (2003) , but was replaced by Trisha as the director was dissatisfied with her work . Kalari Vikraman , another Malayalam film that she completed work for in 2003 , failed to get a theatrical release .

After failing to start a film career , Vidya appeared in approximately sixty television commercials and in music videos for Euphoria and Shubha Mudgal ; a majority of these were directed by Pradeep Sarkar . In 2003 , she was signed on by Goutam Halder for his independent Bengali drama Bhalo Theko ; her first film release . Her portrayal of Anandi , a young woman reminiscing about her past , won her an Anandalok Purashkar for Best Actress .

= = = Breakthrough (2005 ? 08) = = =

In 2005 Vidya made her Hindi film debut with Pradeep Sarkar 's musical drama Parineeta . Before being cast for the film , she had to undergo extensive auditions for a period of six months . The film , an adaptation of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay 's novel of the same name , narrated the love story of an idealist Lalita (Vidya) and a musician Shekhar (Saif Ali Khan) , the son of a capitalist businessman . Her performance in the film was praised by critics ; Derek Elley from Variety wrote , " An acting revelation is Tamil newcomer [Vidya] Balan , whose devoted but dignified Lalita is the picture 's heart and soul . " Parineeta fetched her a Best Female Debut award and a nomination for Best Actress at the annual Filmfare Awards ceremony . The following year , Vidya appeared opposite Sanjay Dutt in Rajkumar Hirani 's comedy film Lage Raho Munna Bhai . She portrayed the role of Jhanvi , a radio jockey and the love interest of the protagonist Munna Bhai . To prepare for her role , she met with a couple of radio jockeys and watched them at work . Her performance was critically well received , and the film emerged as a blockbuster with earnings of ₹ 19 billion (US \$ 18 million) .

In 2007 Vidya featured in a supporting role in Mani Ratnam 's semi biographical drama Guru as a woman suffering from multiple sclerosis . The film , which starred Mithun Chakraborty , Abhishek Bachchan , Aishwarya Rai Bachchan , and R. Madhavan in leading roles , performed well at the box office . However , film critics Khalid Mohamed and Raja Sen noted that her " talent was wasted " in a " minuscule role " . Her next release was Nikhil Advani 's Salaam Ishq : A Tribute To Love , a romantic comedy featuring an ensemble cast , in which she was paired opposite John Abraham . The film , which narrated six individual love stories , saw Vidya play the role of a television reporter , Tehzeeb Hussain , suffering from a memory loss condition . The film , which was a critical and commercial failure , generated positive reviews for Vidya . Sukanya Verma of Rediff.com wrote , " Vidya 's transformation from a self assured working woman to a helpless , vulnerable person is superb . "

Vidya then took a supporting role in Vidhu Vinod Chopra 's drama Eklavya : The Royal Guard , alongside Amitabh Bachchan , Boman Irani , Sharmila Tagore , Saif Ali Khan , and Sanjay Dutt . The film , which failed commercially , met with positive critical reviews and was selected as India 's official entry to the Oscars for the 80th Academy Awards . She was later cast as Isha Sahni , a single mother , in Sajid Khan 's Heyy Babyy , alongside co stars Akshay Kumar , Ritesh Deshmukh , and Fardeen Khan . The comedy film was a box office success , but garnered negative reviews from critics , as did Vidya 's performance ; CNN 's Rajeev Masand criticised her wardrobe and make up , and considered her the " sore thumb " of the film .

Vidya 's fifth and final film of 2007 was Priyadarshan 's Bhool Bhulaiyaa , a remake of the Malayalam film Manichitrathazhu (1993) . Vidya featured as Avani Chaturvedi (a character played by Shobana in the Malayalam original) , a woman suffering from dissociative identity disorder . Co starring Shiney Ahuja , Akshay Kumar , and Ameesha Patel , Bhool Bhulaiyaa was a commercial success with a worldwide revenue of over ₹ 830 million (US \$ 12 million) . Reviewers , while being generally negative of the film , were appreciative of Vidya 's performance . Writing for Hindustan Times , Khalid Mohamed described her as " bankably likeable " and Bollywood Hungama

's Taran Adarsh labelled her as " splendid " . The role earned Vidya a second Filmfare nomination in the Best Actress category .

In 2008 's *Halla Bol* , Vidya played a supporting role alongside Ajay Devgn and Pankaj Kapur . The film was based on the life of activist Safdar Hashmi , who was killed by political rivals while performing on a street play (by the name of *Halla Bol*) in 1989 . The film was a critical failure . Later that year , she co -@-@ starred with Shahid Kapoor in Aziz Mirza 's romantic comedy *Kismat Konnection* . Faring poorly at the box office , the film and her performance generated a negative response ; critic Sonia Chopra commented , " [Balan] is made to look downright drab . The haircut is unflattering , the make @-@ up too plain , the clothes usually in off @-@ white or brown . Plus the character is repetitive and reminds us of the one she played in *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* . "

= = = Widespread success (2009 ? 12) = = =

In 2009 Vidya played the role of an unwed gynaecologist struggling with her 12 @-@ year @-@ old son 's progeria syndrome , in the R. Balki @-@ directed dramedy *Paa* . Amitabh Bachchan played the role of Vidya 's son and Abhishek Bachchan played the title character . A critical and commercial success , the film has been described as a major turning point in her career . Sukanya Verma compared her acting style to that of Dimple Kapadia and noted , " Balan is poignant yet restrained and projects an impressive figure of grace and integrity " ; Nikhat Kazmi from *The Times of India* further argued that Vidya was successful in lending a " rare dignity to the image of the Bollywood mom . " Her portrayal garnered her several awards , including a Filmfare Award for Best Actress and a Screen Award for Best Actress .

Vidya followed the success of *Paa* with the Vishal Bhardwaj @-@ produced *Ishqiya* (2010) , a black comedy directed by debutant Abhishek Chaubey ; co @-@ starring Naseeruddin Shah , Arshad Warsi , and Salman Shahid . Vidya 's role was that of Krishna Verma , a sexually manipulative woman . Vidya described her character as " an epitome of grey " and a departure from the conventional portrayal of women in cinema . In preparation for her part , she undertook professional training to speak in the local Uttar Pradesh @-@ dialect . The feature as well as her performance received critical acclaim ; Anupama Chopra of NDTV stated , " Vidya Balan 's smoldering looks scorch the screen even as her eyes hint at tragedy . She proves that she is miles ahead of the cookie cutter Barbie dolls that clutter Bollywood and that sensuality has very little to do with showing skin . " Her work in the film earned Vidya a Filmfare Critics Award for Best Actress , a second consecutive Best Actress award at Screen and a nomination for Best Actress at Filmfare .

Raj Kumar Gupta 's semi @-@ biographical thriller *No One Killed Jessica* with Rani Mukerji was Vidya 's first release of 2011 . The film , based on the Jessica Lal murder case , saw her portray the real @-@ life character of Sabrina Lal , Jessica 's reticent sister . While preparing for the role , Vidya did not meet Lal on the insistence of Gupta as " the Sabrina [...] today is different from the Sabrina a decade ago , [when] the story begins " . *No One Killed Jessica* met with contrasting reviews from critics , but Vidya 's performance was particularly praised . The Hindu remarked on Vidya 's ability to be " in sublime control over her emotions " and Savera Someshwar of Rediff.com added that " her hesitant body language , her faith , her helplessness , her rage , her sorrow and her gratitude all come across beautifully " . The film had earnings of ₹ 490 million (US \$ 7 @.@ 3 million) and was noted for being a commercial success despite the absence of a male lead . Vidya earned another Filmfare nomination in the Best Actress category for the film . In March 2011 , a retrospective of Vidya 's films was held in Australia , as part of the film festival *Bollywood & Beyond* . That same year , Vidya featured in a guest appearance in Santosh Sivan 's Malayalam language fantasy film *Urumi* .

Vidya 's next appearance was in Ekta Kapoor 's production *The Dirty Picture* , a biopic based on the life and death of the controversial Indian actress Silk Smitha . Vidya was cast as Silk , who was ? in Vidya 's words ? " known for her brazenness and in @-@ your @-@ face sexuality . " She described the role as the " boldest " she had ever played , one that " required a lot of mental preparation , " and to look the part , she gained 12 kilograms (26 lb) . The film opened to major critical acclaim , and Vidya received unanimous praise for her portrayal which several reviewers regarded as her best

performance to date . Khalid Mohamed observed , " She 's extraordinary : gutsy , consistently in character and unafraid of exposing her darker side . Here 's the kind of complex performance which you haven 't evidenced in years and years . " Her director Milan Luthria described her as the contemporary claimant of the " sex @-@ symbol " title , and compared her " voluptuousness " to the likes of yesteryear actresses Sridevi and Vyjayanthimala . The film was eventually declared a blockbuster , earning ? 1 @.@ 14 billion (US \$ 17 million) worldwide . Vidya won a second Filmfare Award , a third consecutive Screen Award , and a National Film Award for Best Actress .

For her next feature film , Vidya starred as Vidya Bagchi , a pregnant woman in search of her missing husband in Sujoy Ghosh 's Kahaani (2012) . The thriller , set in the city of Kolkata during the Durga Puja festivities , met with wide critical acclaim . To lend authenticity to her part , Vidya met several pregnant women and learnt about their lifestyle . She generated public and media attention by wearing a fake baby bump during the film 's promotional activities . Vidya received further appreciation for her performance in Kahaani . Subhash K. Jha praised Vidya 's portrayal of " grace under pressure " as " measured and skilled " ; Pratim D. Gupta of The Telegraph added that she " gets into the physicality of a pregnant woman with unfailing mastery " . Kahaani emerged as a major commercial success both at the domestic and international box office , with revenues of over ? 1 @.@ 04 billion (US \$ 15 million) . Vidya won a fourth consecutive Best Actress Award at Screen and a third Best Actress Award at Filmfare .

= = = Commercial struggles (2013 ? present) = = =

After completing the duties of a jury member at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival , Vidya starred opposite Emraan Hashmi as a boisterous Punjabi woman in Ghanchakkar , a comic @-@ thriller from director Raj Kumar Gupta . Critics were unenthusiastic about the film and it earned little at the box office . Vidya then provided the voice of Draupadi for Mahabharat , a 3D animation film based on the Indian epic of the same name .

The romantic comedy Shaadi Ke Side Effects was Vidya 's first film release of 2014 . Directed by Saket Chaudhary and co @-@ starring Farhan Akhtar , the film tells the story of a married couple who face a series of comic events after the birth of their first child . Critics found the film to be a " bit overstretched " , but praised both Akhtar and Vidya 's performances . Also that year , Vidya featured as the host of No More Kamzor , a television special on women empowerment . She then starred in the comedy @-@ drama Bobby Jasoos , which saw her play the eponymous role of a Hyderabad woman aspiring to be a detective . Vidya was drawn to the idea of playing a female detective , and identified with the character 's struggle to " do something unusual " in life . The role required her to sport twelve elaborate disguises , and she trained with a language coach to adopt a Hyderabad accent . Saumil Gandhi of Mumbai Mirror wrote that Vidya 's " effervescence rubs off on the proceedings and gives it an energy that drives the film " . However , both Shaadi Ke Side Effects and Bobby Jasoos failed to find a wide audience .

In 2015 , Vidya reteamed with Hashmi in the Mohit Suri @-@ directed romantic drama Hamari Adhuri Kahani . Penned by Mahesh Bhatt , the film tells the story of Vasudha , a single mother trapped in an abusive marriage , who has an extra @-@ marital affair . Shubha Shetty @-@ Saha of Mid Day reviewed , " Vidya Balan , a fine actress with thousand emotions fleeting across her lovely face , has shown us what she 's capable of in her earlier movies . But here , saddled with a boring , outdated , weepy character , there was nothing much even she could do " . Vidya next took on the part of a police officer in Te3n (2016) , a thriller inspired by the 2013 South Korean film Montage , co @-@ starring Amitabh Bachchan and Nawazuddin Siddiqui . She was attracted to the idea of playing a " no @-@ nonsense police inspector who commands much respect " and was particularly drawn to her character 's " silent aggression " . NDTV 's Saibal Chatterjee criticised the decision to bill Vidya 's pivotal role as a special appearance and noted how much her presence benefited the film . Rajeev Masand was critical of the film 's predictable denouement , but wrote that Vidya " is reliably solid each time she ? s on screen , raising her brow , curling her lip to effectively communicate more than words can " . She then portrayed the actress Geeta Bali in multiple songs for Ekk Albela , a Marathi language biopic of the actor @-@ director Bhagwan Dada .

As of June 2016 , Vidya has three upcoming projects . She has completed work on a sequel to Kahaani , and is filming for the role of a procurer in Srijit Mukherji 's Begum Jaan , a Hindi language remake of the Bengali film Rajkahini (2015) , which is a drama set in a brothel during the partition of India in 1947 . In addition , Vidya will star in Aami , a biopic on the controversial author Kamala Surayya , which will be filmed in Malayalam .

= = Personal life and off @-@ screen work = =

The mass media has often speculated about a romantic relationship between Vidya and her co @-@ actors , but she has strongly denied these reports . In 2009 , Vidya was involved in a controversy when she mentioned a previous relationship in which " caustic remarks " were made at her due to her weight . She said , " If someone who matters to you takes you down , it can break you . That someone whose approval mattered to me started to constantly find faults with me . At that point of time , it was important to walk away from that relationship . " Though she refused to name the person , tabloid reports suggested that she was referring to Shahid Kapoor (her co @-@ star in Kismat Konnection) . Kapoor , however , denied the allegations . During an interview in May 2012 , Vidya announced that she was dating Siddharth Roy Kapur , the CEO of UTV Motion Pictures . On 14 December 2012 , the couple were married in a private ceremony in Bandra , Mumbai .

Vidya is trained in carnatic music and briefly studied the dance forms of Bharatnatyam and Kathak . Regarding her religious affiliations , Vidya said , " I am a person with a lot of faith and I have conversations [with God] all the time but I am not so religious in the conventional , organised sense " . She practices vegetarianism and was listed as " India 's hottest vegetarian " in polls conducted by PETA in 2011 and 2012 . Her weight fluctuations over the years have been the subject of substantial media coverage in India .

Besides acting in film , Vidya promotes humanitarian causes and supports charitable institutions . In March 2011 , she endorsed World Wildlife Fund 's Earth Hour campaign in India . She campaigned for the cause of nutrition in India for Child In Need Institute (CINI) , a non @-@ profit organisation based in Kolkata . In September 2012 , Vidya visited a village in Mirzapur , Uttar Pradesh , where she participated in a campaign to promote children 's education and the empowerment of women . For her attempts to empower women , Vidya was awarded The Prabha Khaitan Puraskar 2012 by the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce ; she was the youngest recipient of the award . Vidya has also been appointed by the Government of India as their brand ambassador in the drive to improve the country 's sanitary condition . In August 2013 , she served as the grand marshal of the India Day parade held in New York City . In September that year , she launched a technology @-@ based learning platform for underprivileged children in the Thanapur village of Uttar Pradesh . On the occasion of International Women 's Day in 2015 , Vidya wrote an opinion column in Hindustan Times on the issues faced by women in India .

= = Media image and artistry = =

Following the success of Parineeta and Lage Raho Munna Bhai , Vidya 's film roles were subject to wide critical analysis . Vir Sanghvi noted that the films Heyy Babyy and Kismat Konnection were " strange films [...] in which she tried to pretend to be what she is not ? a Bollywood bimbette . " Vidya described that particular phase in her career as a " struggle to be someone else " . Due to the criticism that her film choices evoked , Vidya decided to choose roles that she " believed in " rather than choose by convention . Members of the media have subsequently labelled her as " bold " and " daring " in her choices .

Her starring roles in Heyy Babyy and Kismat Konnection also led to considerable attention in the media for her " questionable wardrobe " . Several publications listed her as the " worst dressed actress " and her costume designers attributed her failure to carry off western clothes due to her weight and body structure . She was later praised in the media for wearing saris at public events ; designer Niharika Khan explained , " Vidya 's beauty lies in her curves . She 's comfortable in her voluptuousness , and therefore in a sari . " Vidya has since been identified as defying " an anglicised

idea of sexuality " and embody the idea of " raw Indian sexuality " .

After portraying strong female protagonists in Paa , Ishqiya , No One Killed Jessica , The Dirty Picture and Kahaani , Vidya was credited in the media for pioneering a movement that breaks the stereotypical portrayal of heroines in Bollywood . The major commercial success of the latter two earned her the title of a " female hero " and Kalpana Nair of First Post noted that with these two films Vidya spearheaded a change in the roles that were offered to actresses over thirty . Film critic Mayank Shekhar predicted , " Just a few smart male actors can completely change the face of a commercial , star @-@ driven film industry . Looking at [...] Vidya Balan [...] it appears , that change could well originate from the leading lady instead . " India Today featured her in their listing of the " 25 Power Women " and noted that " she has toppled the all dominating hero , reducing him to a supporting role in a male dominated film industry " .

Vidya occupied the top slot in Rediff.com 's annual listing of " Bollywood 's Best Actress " for two consecutive years (2010 ? 11) . She also featured in the list for the years 2005 , 2006 , 2009 , and 2012 . In 2010 , she featured in Filmfare 's listing of the " Women we love " . In 2012 , the magazine Verve listed her as one of India 's " Young Power Women " and wrote , " In a reel world peopled by size zero @-@ toned bodies and pretty @-@ as @-@ a @-@ picture heroines , Vidya comes across as completely real and natural ? a woman who has followed her own instincts and dared to live her destiny by being her own person and not morphing herself to fit into any conventional slot . " In 2014 , Vidya was awarded the Padma Shri , the fourth highest civilian award in India , for her contributions to the entertainment industry . The following year , she received an honorary Doctor of Arts degree from Rai University ; the university also named a scholarship program for underprivileged girls after her . The chancellor of the university , Harbeen Arora said , " Among the league of iconic actors , Vidya is a pioneer in every way . Her films epitomise a distinct Indianness and a powerful womanhood " .

= = Filmography and awards = =

= = = Selected filmography = = =

= = = Awards and nominations = = =

Among Vidya 's film awards are a National Film Award for Best Actress for The Dirty Picture (2011) , and five Filmfare Awards : Best Female Debut for Parineeta (2005) , Best Actress for Paa (2009) , The Dirty Picture (2011) , and Kahaani (2012) , and Critics Award for Best Actress for Ishqiya (2010) .