

Story 7: “Becoming Both, Becoming More” – The Journey of Aishwarya Rutuparna Pradhan (Odisha’s First Transgender Civil Servant)

In the quiet village of Katibageri in Odisha, a young boy named Ratikanta sat in front of the mirror with questions — about the world, about himself, about who he truly was.

He was born male. But he never felt like one. While his classmates played cricket and traded action cards, he preferred dancing, writing poetry, and draping his mother’s dupatta around his shoulder.

They laughed at him. Teachers punished him. His family prayed it would pass.

But what Ratikanta felt wasn’t a phase — it was his identity. As he grew older, the world grew crueler. He was bullied, called names, sexually harassed, and mentally broken. But he fought silently. He kept his grades high. He studied relentlessly — not to escape, but to elevate.



After graduation, he appeared for the Odisha Civil Services exam. He cleared it in 2010 and became a Group-B officer. But something still felt incomplete.

In 2015, after the NALSA judgment that recognized transgender rights, he made a bold decision:

▮ To legally transition.

He chose his name: Aishwarya Rutuparna Pradhan — a blend of grace and courage.

When the news spread, headlines exploded: "Odisha Gets Its First Transgender Civil Servant."

But behind the headlines was a woman who had cried alone for years. Who had written suicide notes at 19. Who had endured insults even after becoming an officer.

Colleagues whispered. Some refused to work under her. But she kept doing her job — auditing government schemes, improving transparency, and pushing for gender sensitization in rural blocks.

Today, Aishwarya is more than a civil servant. She's a symbol — for trans children who think they're broken, for young adults trapped in the wrong body, for families afraid of truth.

She visits colleges, speaks at awareness programs, and mentors young LGBTQIA+ aspirants who dream of the civil services but fear society more than the syllabus.

She didn't just change her name.

She changed the system.

From he to she — from pain to power.
