

Chapter II

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Social Dynamics of Gender

Transgender studies have gained exponential attention in sociology over the last two to three decades than ever before. It gives a comprehensible definition on the terms like transgenders, transsexuals, trans- community, their history, and interactionist framework incorporating queer theory and interdisciplinary influences. The trans- community was subjected to discrimination and subjugation in familial, occupational, medical, and public space. Trans narratives like memoirs, documentaries, and case studies demonstrate the difficulties and resistance they experienced whenever they tried to prove their existence and identity to this heteronormative society. Transgender studies prove how cisnormativity or an ideology that expects everyone in this world to be a cisgender demonizes the possibilities of the third gender or sex options thus making it difficult for them to survive without bigotry. The paradigms of gender differences framed transgenders as a deviant to normative and stabilized practices of domestic life.

The contemporary transgender studies focuses on the demonstration and visibility of the community in educational, legal, religious, and scientific sectors. The terminologies like 'transgender' and 'trans people' refer to individuals whose gender identity and expression does not align with their sex at birth while 'gender non-conformity' is used to connote the break in the societal expectation of fitting into the heteronormative spectrum. Furthermore the term 'gender transitioning' is used to indicate the process of an individual's alterations in appearance, hormonal levels, style or characteristics, and significantly the name or pronoun usage. The process of transition unfolds over time and the completion takes several months to years. It is not just a singular event, rather it is a journey for every trans person to attain their choice of life, especially

when the third gender are stigmatized by the binary gender systems that has rooted deep in the society. The major reason for this skepticism about transgenders is that there is no single, conclusive evidence or explanation for why people are born that way. The expressions and experiences of transgenders are so diverse that it is difficult to identify their origin. There are some hypotheses which state that the biological factors like genetics or prenatal hormone levels as well as socio- cultural factors during childhood and adulthood experiences can cause a gender variance.

Former to the 1860s, research and knowledge about transgender lives was curtailed only within the psychiatric and medical journals. Those studies focused solely on the psychiatric histories and anatomical analysis of transgender individuals who had undergone the sex reassignment surgery. They were treated as mere specimens to learn the incongruity of gender. This pathetic state changed only when trans people joined together and instigated to establish support groups, activist movements, and NGOs. The public started to know about the transition process, surgery, and psychological status through their autobiographical accounts. This became a major breakthrough in gender studies. People who were once considered to be an outcast of nature started to gain a petite portion of positive visibility from the society. The books and articles published about the trans community created a cognizance in deviance studies, gender theories, and ethnomethodological approaches in research.

The *American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders* responded to the allegation over the term 'Gender Identity Disorder' and replaced it with 'Gender dysphoria'. Gender identity disorder is an indicative category that stigmatized the transgender individuals by implying there was something disfigured or disordered about them. On the other hand, Gender dysphoria

does not stigmatize the individual as disordered but at the same time falls under a category that will give access to hormone therapy and gender reassignment surgery. There is also a deeply ingrained transphobia in society since people equate transgenders with homosexuality. They do not distinguish between gender roles, gender identity, and sexual preference. This is due to lack of information and a totally inadequate job of public education about gender spectrum. Bodies are a part of nature, but explanations in terms of biology are inappropriate. It must address the dichotomy between nature and cultures since the relationship between these are social and historical. Biology and physiology are classificatory systems that organize and systemize human experiences, as they are therefore features of culture and not nature. It is the culture that decides the identities in a social context. What counts to be a man or a woman is determined by the culture and cultural norms assigned to it. It not only prescribes, but also restricts individuals in the confines of social norms.

Transgender Studies is a subfield of LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/ Transsexual, Queer) studies. It offers an interdisciplinary approach to women's studies, gender studies, and sexology by concerning the intersections of sex and gender which are intertwined with culture and political movements. Transgender studies further deals with political and social ramifications of the community which incorporates trans culture, history, psychology, ethnography, anthropology, liberation, literature, and mental health. The Western society is a lot more familiar with transgender studies compared to other nations. Academicians like Susan Stryker and Paisley Currah and theorists like Simone De Beauvoir, Magnus Hirschfield, and Judith Butler initiated *Transgender Studies Quarterly* in 2014, the first non- medical academic journal entirely devoted to transgender issues and their experiences.

Transgenders are different from others of the LGBT community. Apart from sexual preferences, transgenders have to encounter the problem of appeasing their gender discomfort. They want to make changes in their bodies and the gender role they play in the society and those changes may endanger their lives but still they are prepared for it. They need utmost courage to face the surgery. They need financial and moral support as they lose the public and family approbation. They have to unlearn what they have learnt from childhood to adjust to the 'other' gender of their choice. Though these people use their cross living experience to finalize the choice of gender, it is not easy to make adjustments to function successfully in other roles. They cannot embrace the gender condition voluntarily. They do not actually know the reason for their condition, which is thrust upon them by nature. Hence they need help from the society, which expects them to play a role that they dislike. Their willingness to suffer excruciating physical, mental, and emotional trauma shows the helplessness they feel being trapped in a wrong body.

In India, the hijra community is quite visible as many beliefs, ideas, and mythologies are surrounded around them as the harbinger of blessings on newborns and newlyweds. But there is a high contrast between their visibility in society and absence in academics and employment. This non-appearance does not mean that they are incapable of education or employment, rather not every transgender individual in India is fortunate to avail the credible environment for personal growth. This chapter focuses on the sociological aspects of transgender community in India and Western countries. An extensive study is done on the physical construct of transgenders, their identity issues, exclusions faced from the society, lack of awareness about the gender spectrum, and the hurdles faced by the trans individuals to reveal their identity in a

social forum. The study is validated through the concepts in *A Scientific Aspect of Transgenders* by Ajay Majumder and Rabin Tarafder.

A Scientific Aspect of Transgender illustrates the livelihood, social positions, language, and customs about the transgender community. The book is an analytical and fundamental study about both transgenders and the parallel sexual communities in picturesque language. The authors Majumder and Tarafder have given a special emphasis on the suicidal tendency among transgenders. The book methodically investigates the concept gender in a socio- cultural perspective. Before the 1900s, gender and sex were regarded as the same. It was widely believed that the gender roles and status of men and women are determined by the biological sex and therefore it cannot be changed. A branch of study in social science deals with gender studies and it determines gender as a social construct. While natural sciences looks only into the biological construct in male and female so there arises an ambiguity about how far the biological differences can influence the formation of gender identity in an individual. Every human born in this world is identified as either male or female by their genital organs. The crisis of gender arises when men and women were given different status and roles to perform based on their sexual trait. Many cultures look at women as subordinate to men. In case of transgenders they substantiate themselves belonging to the opposite sex to their assigned biological sex. As the binary gender beliefs are deep rooted, cisgender people finds it difficult to accept transgenders into the mainstream society. "Sex is natural and biological while gender is socio- cultural and man- made. Sex constantly remains the same but gender changes from time to time, culture to culture and even family to family" (Majumder and Tarafder 18). Discrimination towards the transgender community began centuries back and it still prevails. They suffer subjugation and threats in most parts of the world, in varying

degrees from the hands of the society and at times, from the government. Though the world is developing at an astonishing speed, the attitude towards the third gender people remains stagnant in many instances. They are shunned by their own families, ex-communicated from their religious places, assaulted verbally and physically, discriminated at work place, denied of proper medical facility, and housing facility.

According to Majumder and Tarafder knowledge, power, and agency play an important role in promoting hegemonic discourses of patriarchy and heterosexuality, among others. The knowledge systems over the years have inscribed or promoted the gender discourse of two sexes corresponding to two genders; male for masculine and female for feminine. These knowledge systems, relying on its sources, have a great role in maintaining the hegemonic gender discourse. The sources of knowledge include individual experience, media visibility, science, subcultural knowledge, popular wisdom, and language among others. In order to deconstruct this gender discourse one has to understand how self, body, and identity are constructed. Self is constructed as a result of discursive practices and is capable of taking in new information and knowledge systems. Traditional gender perspectives have conceptualized sexes as inherently biological and opposite.

Identification of gender starts from the family. Gender difference grow in the mind of a child from the behaviour of the parents and other members belonging to the family. Most of the parents get their children dressed on the basis of gender and buy gender oriented toys and other playthings. A survey done in 1997, reveals that dress and colour of the bedrooms are selected as per gender as for example the room of a girl child is coloured in a different shade with some items not befitting a boy. (Majumder and Tarafder 27)

The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story by A. Revathi is an unflagging autobiography that revolves around a transgender person who finds it difficult to adhere to the conventional gender norms and sexual codes. She was very clear about her purpose of writing an autobiography. Her aim was to introduce to the society the hijras, their distinctive culture, their daily perils by the heteronormative and about their shattered goals and ambitions. She wanted the readers to know that the entire life of a hijra was not supposed to be spent begging and doing sex work. Revathi, in her work pursues an ephemeral shadowy path to live a life of her own. She is not hesitant or modest, in narrating the gory details of her sufferings in the hands of both the police and the goons. She narrates her escapades from a shy boy from a village to a jet setting activist in Bangalore, all the while speaking up for the community amongst elite and erudite audience.

My story is not meant to offend, accuse or hurt anyone's sentiments. My aim is to introduce to the readers the lives of hijras, their distinct culture and their dreams and desires.

I hope now that by publishing my life story, larger changes can be achieved.

I hope this book of mine will make people see that hijras are capable of more than just begging and sex work. (Revathi v)

The story unfolds in a small village in Namakkal taluk in the state of Tamil Nadu, where Doraisamy was born as the youngest of five children in an upper middle class family. As the youngest child of the family, Doraisamy was pampered by his parents and siblings. They did not notice anything odd in his wish for wearing his sister's skirt and blouse; twist a long towel around his head and trail down like a braid and walk like a shy bride. Everyone laughed and reasoned it as a child's prank. But as he grew older, the inner desires and fascinations towards girls increased. At one point,

Doraisamy could not hide his body's incongruity which resulted in being a laughing stock among his neighbours and classmates. They called him obscene names as 'number 9', 'female thing', 'pottai' and 'female boy'. No one tried to understand the fact that femininity come to him naturally and he was helpless in repressing it. The abuses and insults were more than he could bear at that tender age. Awfully bewildered about his gender identity, Doraisamy tried to suppress and hide his effeminate behaviors fearing the punishments from his family and teachers but everything was in vain. All he needed at that age was his family and friends to accept and love the way he was.

I did know that I behaved like a girl, it felt natural for me to do so. I did not know how to be like a boy. It was like eating for me- just as I would not stop eating because someone asked me not to eat, I felt I could not stop being a girl, because others told me, I ought not to be so. (Revathi 7)

The book shows that agricultural labor in his village was clearly differentiated by the genders. The men dug and raised the bunds and watered the fields, whereas the women planted. Despite being a boy, Doraisamy always stood along with the women and helped with the planting, though he was shooed away by them several times.

Majumder and Tarafder in their book *A Scientific Aspect of Transgenders* opinioned that, transgenders who belonged to the marginal sexual communities in the society suffers a great deal of mental agony. Their confusions and doubts regarding their sexual identity kept them on the edge for a very long time. Even if they understood their sexual construct, the life that awaited them outside was full of social humiliation, alienation, and discrimination. Though modern society has undergone a drastic change in respect of culture, education, and various other concepts, the notion about the trans community remains widely unchanged. It is evident that the society

holds a negative approach towards transgenders. As a result they lack a chance to manifest their entire personality traits and they are suppressed under the pressure of circumstances.

From the very beginning of the adolescence, the people belonging to the transgender and the other marginal sexual communities face an acute crisis because they do not have any particular identity. Indeed, they begin to think why they belong to a different sexual orientation. He asks a question to himself but finds no answer. As a result, a conflict arises in his mind and he believes that he has become a victim of a kind of incurable abnormality.

(Majumder and Tarafder 213)

Doraisamy was ostracized from his home, school, and friends. At first he thought that there was no one like him and he was a flawed creation of God. Later he understood that there are people like him who suffered the same teething troubles he faced. The deepest desire to be with his tribe led him to run away from Namakkal to Delhi. There he found a hijra house and begins a new life as Revathi.

In Delhi, Revathi was sent to beg in the markets for living. Hijras in India have a specific culture and tradition. They live in groups as families or parivars. There they have kin relationships like guru or mother, sister, aunt, cousin etc. Revathi lived with her 'nani' who was her guru's guru. As she was the youngest member in the house she was taught all the hijra customs and protocols. There she learned that a hijra's prime source of income is earned through begging and sex work. She questioned the system but shortly understood that not only in her native place but in all the other places transgenders were ostracized for their incongruent gender identity. The dependence of transgenders on their community duplicates the mainstream societal set up. They subject themselves willingly to the hierarchy, pool their resources, and share expenditures

which replicate the economic adaption of the mainstream society. They are provided with the much needed security and solace during times of trouble in return. Revathi talks about the protection given by her people when she had to earn her living as a sex worker she confides in her autobiography that whenever there was any trouble her gurubhais managed everything and they never involved the young hijras who lived under their protection. Transgender houses serve as both physical and social units of identity and lineage affiliation.

While begging in the market, she happened to befriend a shopkeeper and wrote a letter to her parents using the shop's address. She longed eagerly to visit her family and spent time with them. Out of fear she dared not to disclose her real identity in the letter but apologized for the running away from home and assured them that she is fine and will return home as soon as she made some money. After some days she met a lorry driver from Namakkal. Feeling terrified that this driver may inform about her current state of life to her parents, she fled the spot. A few days later she met the driver again and learned that her mother was seriously ill. Revathi was heartbroken and ran to her nani and explained the situation and begged to send her home. Her nani did not object and allowed her visit her ailing mother. Arriving at Namakkal, she changed into a man's garb and entered her house. She was shocked to see her mother sitting in front of the house and she looked healthier than ever. Suddenly sensing Revathi's presence her brother grabbed a cricket bat and started beating her continuously till her skull cracked open. Her mother instructed to thrash harder so that she would not run away anymore, only then she realized that all that news about her mother was a lie and trap. Unable to bear the pain she hid inside a room and locked the door. Revathi could not hold the betrayal any more. She wailed shouts at her family.

‘Why don’t you try and understand my feelings? Why do you hit me even before you ask me anything? I am here only because of the love I bear for all of you! What have I done wrong that you should beat me so?’ I cried out loud, my voice ragged and tear- filled. My brother told me then that I had been spotted in women’s clothes, begging in the apple market. (Revathi 56)

Revathi managed to escape from her house after some days and returned back to her guru’s house. Later she underwent the sex reassignment surgery and felt like her destiny was accomplished. As there were no other livelihoods for Revathi, she engaged in sex work. Days were tough for her as she had to deal with the goons while going for sex work. She never wanted to be a sex worker, yet circumstances forced her to accept that condition. Those who do sex work were closely monitored by elder hijras and the money earned was handed over to the guru. Revathi and her fellow sex workers were often left with meager tip of ten or twenty rupees. With that money she bought cosmetics and clothes. During those days Revathi realized that she was wrong to conclude that running away from house, undergoing sex reassignment surgery, and going back to home in female attire was the real freedom. When children with gender incongruity were thrown out of their homes, their chance for a proper education was suspended. Powerless to fight back, hunger stricken, and broke they were left with no choice but to beg in the trains and markets and involve in sex work. There they are forced to suffer physical and mental agony which the outer world could not even imagine. She remarked:

This was a world I had not known until then. I was witness to other people’s sorrows, I came to know them as my own. Women doing sex work; hijras who had been deceived by men who praised their beauty and enslaved them, who stole their hard-earned money and spent it all, leaving the hijras with scarred

faces, bruised by knives, who were little better than servants, going to the shops, washing vessels; those who had earned in thousands for their mistresses and were yet cheated by them and had to go to other places for work; those who suffered from sexually transmitted diseases and did not receive proper medical care and therefore died; those who had to put up with the capricious demands of clients who paid them a mere fifteen or fifty rupees and who used them as they wished, brutally, and left them with bite marks on their bodies, as if they had been bitten and abandoned by mad dogs; those young ones with great sorrow in their hearts who yet stood on the streets, with powdered faces and painted lips, smiling at prospective customers; those who were carried away by the police for no fault of their own, who were beaten with whips and lathis and stamped upon by police boots, had electric current run through their bodies, who could only leave after paying the police a hefty bribe. I saw all this and more, all that I had not seen until then. (Revathi 133)

The loss of traditional occupations due to westernization, urbanization, and social changes have hastened to push the transgenders into their practice of prostitution, an occupation that is totally dependent on the mainstream society especially on men, rowdies, and police. They were forced to go with all sorts of men; drunkards, local rowdies, and sadists. Majumder and Tarafder, points out the social humiliation and vulnerabilities faced by transgender community around the world. Trans women who engage in sex work face high stigma: being a transgender and for being a transgender sex worker. The death rate of trans sex workers due to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) and STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease) escalated each year. The economic hardships and social alienation explains why a high proportion of trans women engage in sex work.

The inability of the hijras to defend themselves against local thugs brings out the inhuman condition in which they live and the insecurity they face in society without any help from other quarters. They are not spared even to sleep peacefully inside their houses. Most of the nights they were jolted awake by the heat of the lighted match sticks on their bodies thrown by goons. They knew that the police would give them no support. This fear and feeling of vulnerability results in loss of sleep and ultimately forces them to consume alcohol. They are compelled to fulfill the unnatural carnal desires of the people. It should be the political concern of the state to protect its citizens. But trans people and their problems are insensitively looked over both by the state and society and this makes them wonder, "I asked myself why we pottais were treated with no respect. Would a time come when we would be freed from being humiliated thus?" (Revathi 109).

Majumder and Tarafder emphasized the suicidal tendency among transgenders in *A Scientific Aspect of Transgenders*. They identified various risk factors for the high rate of the suicidal behavior. The seclusion of the third gender from the mainstream society creates a barrier for them from obtaining a proper education, employment, and housing because of which most of them had to dwell in slums or streets for shelter. Violence against the transgender people happens across multiple institutional and social contexts. They are verbally harassed, physically, and sexually abused by the police and rowdies. Moreover rejections from public, hatred, verbal and physical abuse from family members, refusal of legal rights, lack of health care support, derogatory labeling in public, and the risk of getting HIV to increase their psychological distress. All these pitiful conditions lead them to break down even further and many transgenders ended up committing suicide.

Revathi went to Bangalore after spending some years in Delhi. There she took Mayuri, Famila, and Rithu as her daughters. Through Famila, Revathi got a job in an NGO named 'Sangama' that supports the LGBTQ community. While working there she learned about the transgender rights and tried to educate her people with that knowledge. Revathi came to know more about the plight of trans community and she strived hard to create a change in the society. It was Famila who taught her how to legally approach the predicaments they face in daily life. Many transgenders are still unaware of the rights and facilities provided by the government. Whenever Revathi talked about giving up Family advised her and encouraged her to work hard. Unfortunately, one day Revathi received the news of Famila's suicide. She was completely devastated on her chela's death. Revathi sadly recounts those moments in her autobiography:

That she died before I could know what was in her heart made me blame myself for her death. She considered me her mother, and would often say that she had earned good karma to have a guru like me. I considered it my good luck that she was my chela. I loved her as my daughter. She was educated, but she would say that she only knew a handful of things. As I've always said, I learnt a great deal from her. (293)

The suicidal tendencies among transgenders are closely associated with the poor mental health, psychological pain, emotional fatigue, and low self-esteem. Majumder and Tarafder stress the importance of suicidal prevention awareness campaigns among the trans community to prevent further loss of lives of trans people.

The magnitude of struggles faced by the trans community is generally high. The major issue concerns the denial of a personal identity in the society. Over the recent decades, the issue of transgender identity has been a matter of discussion in

both cultural and social context where gender equality remains as challenging factor towards the development of the society because gender stratification exists in every sphere of social structure. The social stigma and the feeling of incompleteness encountered by the trans community in their strenuous journey for redefining the 'self' is miserable. Transgenders are pushed to the periphery, despite the progressive laws and regulations to prevent such intolerance. The autobiography *I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* by Living Smile Vidya delineates the horrors trans people encounter in their daily life. It is a heart wrenching story of how she confronted the traumatic journey of atrocities and injustice she faced from the society. The protagonist Vidya was educated, strong, and firm in her convictions but that does not make her transformation easier. This book too can be subjected to analysis as a queer text that expresses the thoughts and feelings that are considered as 'strange' by binary ideologists.

Vidya, was born as a boy and was named Saravanan who received all the privileges of being an only male child. Saravanan was shy and effeminate during his childhood which provoked anger and disgust in his father. He felt like he was placed inside a wrong body and suffered tremendously due to that. He struggled hard to claim an identity and escape the brutality of the society. Saravanan was doing exceptionally well in academics but the taunts and ridicules of the other students made him lose all his interest in studies.

My effeminate ways- hitherto an object of ridicule on my street- now became the target of my schoolmates' taunts. Even kids from lower classes teased me at school: 'Look at this lady,' they shouted after me. I was still a bright student, but I was lonely through high school. My studies began to suffer.

(Vidya 24)

Saravanan's habits did not change over the course of time as others expected. His voice was naturally soft and effeminate but his neighbours thought he was behaving that way to seek the attention from people. Even those who sympathized for being a motherless child started to call him obscene names and looked at him with disdain. At school he never played with boys rather he was fond of girls, their braided hair, skirts, and accessories. He envied a fellow student, a girl named Amirtavalli for her impeccable features. Her long thick braided hair and beautiful smile made him feel that she was his rival. Once Saravanan and Amirtavalli had a dance contest during lunch hours and the students who watched appreciated his performance over her's. Saravanan was elated on their words, he was satisfied that his femininity won before a cisgender girl. Later the marriage of his elder sister Radha was a shattering blow, as she was the only comfort he had at home. Within days the whole school gossiped about his effeminate ways and he was ridiculed beyond imagination which made Saravanan shun company and became a loner. Majumder and Tarafder state that, institutional discrimination hurts the transgender individuals and leaves an overlying effect in their lives. The denial of opportunities and rights to individuals and groups is woven into the fabric of culture so subtly that it goes unnoticed. Normative structures, customs, and attitudes are so internalized that the society does not recognize them as partial.

The freedom in his sister's home allowed him to visualize himself as a woman. Sarvanan identified himself as a girl; unfortunately the world saw him as a boy. He made efforts to hide his femininity but the deviation from the so-called normal was quite obvious for everyone who saw him. Saravanan's queerness was best expressed, when he was overcome by fear and apprehension, when he had to stay with his classmates in the hostel. The thought that he was not male made him nervous. He felt tremendous trauma every night as he was afraid to stay in men's room. That

experience and the 'ready to defend' urge whenever a boy came near him made Saravanan felt empathetic for his step mother who was often beaten up by his father. He passed his brave thoughts and made her to understand the necessity to stand against her husband's physical violence. The awakening inside Saravanan, helped his step mother to voice her feelings and face her husband boldly and in those moments he felt more affirmed about his femininity.

Majumder and Tarafder point out that the urge of transgender individuals to be identified and accepted in the mainstream society will always remain in their minds. They are mainly bound by two things; their own self and their surroundings. They desperately strive to be financially independent but the opportunities are scarce compared to that of cisgenders and the earnings are marginal which barely suffice their daily needs. So they either end up in getting alms or engage in sex work. Some transgenders of North India earn money by taking part in auspicious ceremonies like weddings and child birth. It is believed that the blessings of a trans person brings good luck. Majumder and Tarafder highlights the fact that most transgenders are highly talented in cooking, art, acting etc. but they are not getting the right window to prove their expertise. Further most transgenders spend a major portion of their money in sex reassignment surgery. In *A Scientific Aspect of Transgenders* Majumder and Tarafder proves this with evidence from their case study.

Sudeb, a member of the 'Transgenders Association' frankly expressed that the principal motto of his life was to change his sex- identity. He saved a portion of his income only to serve this purpose. Another one, inspite of being a chartered Accountant by profession, went to the USA to undergo the same process and settled there. The process of sex change, being a very expensive

matter, the poor ones accept the risk of being operated upon by the quacks.

(Majumder and Tarafder 164)

The very first chapter of Vidya's narrative titled *Nirvana* suggests the difference from ordinary line of thought. The word 'Nirvana' is a Hindu religious jargon that suggests a state of bliss, free from all emotions, whereas in the hijra parlance it stands for the excision of penis and testicles which gives Vidya, "The Ultimate Peace!" (8). Though her friend Sathya groaned in pain, for Vidya it was a huge relief, because from then on she was a woman, the very identity she longed for since childhood. She describes the complications of the surgery trans people undergo. No proper medical attention or post- surgery health care was given to her. It was only after the surgery Vidya felt perfect and a complete woman. She took up begging ultimately to save money for the operation. Her Master's Degree or the numerous awards she got during her school and college days were not enough for her family and the society to accept her as an individual let alone a woman. Every one of them was focused on her non- heteronormative gender identity which they thought as 'imperfect and sinful'. Vidya was fully aware of the condition that transgenders like her got no other possibilities than begging and sex work and she chose the former though it exhausted her, mentally, and physically. When she stood before a shop to ask for alms for the first time, her mouth went dry and she was unable to utter a word. All her achievements since childhood came before her mind. With a heavy heart and tearful eyes she begged from others. Gradually she accepted the fact that she was not going to be loved or accepted by the society.

For the first fifteen days of my begging career, my extreme diffidence made it difficult for me to put up my hand out in supplication- especially for alms.

Shame, fear, ego, my education, memories of awards and rewards and God knows what else made me pull back every time I tried.

The realization hit me hard that any revolution in trends of gender discrimination- including discrimination against transgenders- was merely lip service, and that begging was my only source of income. I made up my mind immediately- I could not blame anyone for the state of affairs. (Vidya 92- 93)

Transgender community have effectively adapted to the society around them despite the marginalization. The revolution in the arena of gender discrimination, especially when it comes to the discrimination against transgenders was mere words and nothing came to practice. They suffer series of economic constraints due to lack of education, training, professional orientation, entrepreneurship development, leadership development, financial assistance, and allied economic advantages. Most transgender people live below the poverty line. They are deprived of several economic benefits like identity documents, infrastructural facilities, civic amenities, professional training, and developmental opportunities.

What makes some individuals unique is the way they convert their adversities into opportunities. None of the stigmatization and discrimination they faced can be erased from their life till they die, but they try to overcome the wound and lead their life though it would not happen overnight but progressively. Once they learn to fight back their fears and anxieties, then nothing in the world can stop them. In case of Vidya, her psyche was in complete distress. In this 21st century, she was denied of freedom of speech, freedom of liberty, freedom to have a life of her own, and so on. There was nothing she could do to convince the people around that individuals like her too deserved to be a part of this society. What she desired for was a peaceful life and what she got back were taunts and insults. She was caught in a hurricane of emotions like insecurity, betrayal, denial, anguish, and hatred. But what followed after was something worthy to note. Vidya started to accept herself. When the thieves, murderers, and criminals live in this society without

any guilt she felt then why she should hurt herself being a pure creation of nature. Perfection is not a human quality, for no human born in this world is perfect. She realized that it is the society which needs to change its view on people like her. Vidya left Pune and returned to her home town to visit her parents and relatives as a female. From there she went to Madurai to find a job. With the help of some good friends she got a job in a bank. It was a micro- credit institution that also lent help to groups promoted by NGOs. Vidya was appointed as an EDP (Electronic Data Processing) assistant in Madurai branch. The staff working in the bank treated her as an equal. Her life in Madurai was a great consolation for her earlier struggles.

The concluding chapter *I Want to Live- With Pride* is an outburst of Vidya's feelings. Her decision to leave Madurai, which gave her economic security, was to fight against ridicule and oppression and get legal sanctions for transgenders. She details the struggles she underwent to change her name legally from Saravanan to Vidya. Her request for a name change was denied because there was no document to prove the sex alteration. She filed a case in the court along with a fellow trans woman activist Priya Babu demanding franchise for transgenders. The judgment was favorable for them, that transgenders could choose male or female as their gender. It was a great victory for the trans community. Some of them even got voter ID cards as a result. Vidya moved into activism under an administrative NGO called Suyam Trust: another decisive and brave survival strategy. She is still fighting for the rights of the trans community. Some of her demands are freedom to live freely in this society and a legal recognition for SRS. She has even asked the film censor board to remove the scenes which depict transgenders in a vulgar way.

Vidya ends her memoir with a note to the government and a plea to the mainstream society:

The government can do it. If it will- if the government takes one step- society will follow suit. Once we gain social approval, our families will also accept us. Politicians take out flag marches for a million causes. They can surely take some interest in this issue?

I do not ask for heaven- I am begging to be spared from living hell. I plead for myself and fellow tirunangais. Thank you for your understanding. (Vidya 138)

According to Majumder and Tarafder the behavior of transgenders, who undergo a treacherous path causing pain and suffering, reveals the complex issues affecting their emotional and psychological state. First of all, gender dysphoria, which is a fundamental uneasiness they experience with their biological sex that leads to anxiety, depression, and restlessness culminates into a desire to transition. Even during childhood, they are not allowed to do what they like but are expected to follow the norms of their biological gender. When they get into adolescence their plight becomes all the more worse because, added to their teen worries, they learn that they are different. The taunt and tortures they faced during these hard times, deny them the support they badly need. They move away from family and friends, which leaves ineffaceable scars on their psyche. They run away from the family, thereby, spoiling their chances of getting education and learning skills, which are needed for their future. Their early adulthood is yet another problematic age, when depression from stigma, shame, and isolation resulting from their inability to earn for tiding over the financial crisis of undergoing surgery, takes a toll on their mental and physical health. At the stage when, they should achieve laurels in life, is wasted harboring secrets and suicidal thoughts, due to lack of support. Only to alleviate the fears of isolation and secrecy the transgenders seek friends like them. What they have lost in their natal family, they try to gain from their adopted families. If most of the transgenders had

not found their mentors they would have been wiped out of their existence by their own sorrow and sufferings. They show implicit obedience to the ways of their community because they have already experienced what would happen if they 'deviate' from norms. The gregarious nature of human beings which is ingrained in their psyche makes them adhere to the group.

Majumder and Tarafder further points out that society respects the ways of the majority. This preference most of the time leads to ignorance and misconception about those who resist its edicts. The society which has its own conceptions about the binary existence has its reservations about recognizing people who do not fit into this binary division. It develops a primordial fear of monstrosity or loss of humanness. This fear manifests itself as resentment, revulsion, and hatred. These change into physical, mental, and emotional violence directed at those whom they do not feel confirmed to their standards. The society cannot understand or sympathize with what it cannot feel. The burly physique and deep, baritone voices should not hamper the efforts to understand them.

It is known that transgenders are subjected to discrimination but there is a miserable fact that trans women of colour are contended to multiple marginalization. They live within various intersections of discrimination; being a woman, being a woman of colour, and in particular being a trans woman of colour. Although fundamental efforts from advocacy and LGBTQ support groups exist to address the discernment against trans women of colour, they are still exploited and treated as outcasts in society. For them gender oppression is intertwined with racial oppression thereby magnifying their risk for polyvictimization. Angelica Ross, a successful business woman, entertainer, and transgender rights advocate, stated in a *Huffington Post* essay that being trans comes at a high cost, but being woman of colour and trans can cost their

life. She poignantly reminds how the intersection between anti- Black and anti-transgender violence endangers life of every trans woman of colour by a pervasive victimization from multiple sectors of the society. *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love and So Much More* by Janet Mock is an unflinching work in the history of trans narratives. Through this memoir Mock expresses herself as a resounding and encouraging voice for the transgender community especially for the trans women of colour. The memoir is an achingly honest story of a trans woman's struggle to be understood, accepted, and achieve in the world.

Majumder and Tarafder in the book *A Scientific Aspect of Transgenders* highlight that, people who belong to marginal sexual communities especially transgenders suffer a serious kind of mental agony. They remain doubtful and confused about their sexual identity. In a life full of social humiliation and discrimination it is hard to be stable and confident. In the recent days the trans people get to share their experiences through memoirs and social media, yet the mainstream society continues to ostracize and disenfranchise them. Mock was not an exception to all these cruelties. She wanted to be a media person but sadly recounted that the media used transgenders as a subject to pain and punch lines. She was afraid to disclose her identity to the world fearing those taunts and abuses. She spent her younger years internalizing and fighting those stereotypes.

Growing up, I learned that being trans was something you did not take pride in; therefore, I yearned to separate myself from the dehumanizing depictions of trans women that I saw in popular cultures from Venus Xtravaganza's unsolved and unexplored murder in *Paris Is Burning*, to the characters of Lois Einhorn (played by Sean Young) in *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, and Dil (played by Jaye Davidson) in *The Crying Game*, to numerous women

exploited as modern day freak shows on *Jerry Springer* and *Maury*, Let's not forget the "tranny hooker" credits seen everywhere from *Sex and the City* to every *Law & Order* and *CSI* franchise. (Mock xv)

Judith Lorber, an American professor and gender theorist, in her work *Paradoxes of Gender* suggests that no social space exists in the Western society for people who deviate from the binary gender systems. She points out that transgenders are highly oppressed and they experience high rates of discrimination and violence in the United States. And they are affected by transphobia in a wide range of forms. This includes bullying and discriminatory treatment in schools, physical and sexual assault from family members, friends, or colleagues. Though Janet Mock was born a boy and named Charles, she always knew she was a girl but was afraid to disclose the identity to the world. There was an incident in Charles' life when he was a kid. While playing, his friend Marilyn dared him to put his grandmother's dress and run around the house. He did it happily but when his sisters and grandmother found it out they scolded him for that. He first thought they reprimanded him for ruining the dress but later on his mother told him that boys were not supposed to wear women's clothes. Charles went numb and bewildered on hearing those words. Unable to explain his affinity to female garments and accessories he stood helplessly before his mother helpless. He was confused about his identity by then. When the schools, parents, and society are indulged in teaching the binary gender norms they forget the fact that some children are experiencing their trans- selves long before they discover the language to express the changes happening in their body and mind.

Majumder and Tarafder say that when a child is born doctors and parents categorize them into male or female and further believes that they begin raising a boy or a girl child so they cannot accept if the child behaves out of the gender binary

attitude fixed by the society. Those who were raising boys would not allow their sons to wear lipsticks and skirts or buy Barbie dolls to play with and vice versa. They always wished their boy to be a brave well-built man in the future. Parents who raise a girl child would insist her to accept her gender roles and make a family. This system proclaims that gender and gender roles come along with the sex assigned at birth. So the family and society fails to understand how to treat a child with gender confusion. They try to 'correct' that child by punishing, scolding, and beating which creates a great negative impact in his/her mental health. Certain communities believe that children born with gender incongruity were cursed and possessed; they even perform exorcism to cast out demons. Charles' family too rigidly believed in the gender binary system. His mother was not much of a disciplinarian that role was reserved for his father. He tried extremely to 'fix' his son in all possible ways. He was ashamed of Charles' behavior and always compared him with Chad, his younger brother.

They were unaware of the reality that gender, like sexuality, exists on a spectrum. By punishing me, they were performing the socially sanctioned practice of hammering the girl out of me, replacing her with tenets of gender appropriate behavior... Our genders are as unique as we are. No one's definition is the same, and compartmentalizing a person as either a boy or a girl based on the appearance of genitalia at birth undercuts our complex life experiences. (Mock 22)

The biggest issue with the idea of 'male bodied' and 'female bodied' then is the question of what makes a biological man or a biological woman in the first place. This sex binary formula erases intersex people the same way the gender binary erases many trans people so it is already invalid as a dichotomy. If the binary aspect is taken out of the equation and the male-bodied and female-bodied as merely two possible

types of bodies out of many, there is still a definitional issue. No two bodies are exactly alike so even with humans being sexually dimorphic, all male bodies are not alike and neither are all female bodies. This understanding challenges a simple model of human sexual dimorphism. Individuals with gender incongruence undergo physical and mental turmoil because they are misplaced mentally and feel that they need to change their identity from one sex to the other. The traditional dichotomy that a man should be man and a woman should be a woman is challenged and they change their physique to belong to the category of their desire and either converts into a man or a woman.

Mock was unapologetically happy and pleased about the way she looked, especially after her sex reassignment surgery. No one could easily spot her as a trans woman. When she was young and she used to feel elated when people commented her that she can 'pass' like a cis- woman without people recognizing her for being a trans. Many praised her for having gorgeous physique like that of a female with no masculine traces. As days passed she felt those compliments as backhanded, acknowledging her beauty while invalidating her identity as a woman. One 'looking like a woman' subtly means that she is not 'real' therefore she is faking it. All transgender individuals especially trans women strongly oppose this presumption of passing from one gender to another. For trans people gender identity and expressions are not only about getting a confirmation from others based on their appearances. How a transgender person is perceived in the eyes of a cisgender is not always consistent. For example, it is common in a trans person's everyday life to be addressed as 'madam' by certain people and 'sir' by others. Majumder and Tarafder points out that female- to- male trans people pass as male in the eyes of cisgenders than a male- to- female pass as female when they are clothed. Undressed, female – to – male trans individuals are vulnerable to abuse and discrimination because not many

of them would have undergone genital surgeries compared to trans women. Since transphobia still clearly exists in the world, passing as cis can be used to escape verbal and physical violence. Those who cannot pass as cisgender may face violence, ranging anywhere from mis-gendering to murder. Mock stubbornly comments about this unjust persuasiveness in her memoir:

These thoughts surrounding identity, gender, bodies, and how we view, judge, and objectify all women brings me to the subject of “passing,” a term based on an assumption that trans people are passing as something we are not. It’s rooted in the idea that we are not really who we say we are, that we are holding a secret, that we are living false lives. Examples of “passing” in media, whether through race (*Imitation of Life* and Nella Larsen’s novel *Passing*), class (*Catch Me if You Can* and the reality show *Joe Millionaire*), or gender (*Boys Don’t Cry* and *The Crying Game*), are often portrayed as leading a life of tragic duplicity and as deceivers who will be punished harshly by society when their true identity is uncovered. This is no different for trans people who “pass” as their gender or, more accurately, are assumed to be cis or blend in as cis, as if that is the standard or norm. This pervasive thinking frames trans people as illegitimate and unnatural. If a trans woman who knows herself and operates in the world as a woman is seen, perceived, treated, and viewed as a woman, isn’t she just being herself? She isn’t *passing*; she is merely being. (155)

Every being in this world has an internal identity. The interior is not just a case filled with organs and bones rather it is also filled with something called a ‘self’ or a soul. When the society tends to categorize people as male and female with an outlook of external sex organs, transgender people are put in a dilemma. They are forced to

challenge the dominant gender ideologies because they were exempted from the mainstream society. The rejection of the designated sex and gender happens when the gendered expectations do not coincide with the physical bodies of trans people. Transgender lives are considered inconsistent with the heteronormative notions. They are often referred as people who live 'outside' the boundaries of societal normalcy.

Majumder and Tarafder in their book *A Scientific Aspect of Transgenders* points out that trans people have the right to choose their own way of living with or without the sex reassignment surgery. How a trans person goes about transitioning every nuance of the physique solely depends on their financial capacities and personal interest. Some can afford the surgical and hormonal treatment while others cannot. Certain transgender individuals will only alter their genitals while some others undergo hormonal therapy, vocal cord surgeries, breast implantations, laser treatment, lip fillers etc. for a so called 'perfect look'. Those who lack the financial capacity often use less expensive methods to alter their appearance in ways that cause them to appear differently gendered. There are two major reasons transgender people want to look perfectly feminine or aggressively masculine; one for their own satisfaction and the second is to get a recognition and acceptance from the mainstream society. Trans women with a beard or moustache and trans men with a soft voice will be subjected to extreme ridicule and discrimination. So trans people tend to spend a major portion of their income on surgeries, implants, and cosmetics.

The visibility of male- to- female transgenders is more than female- to- male transgenders in any society. This relates to the traditional makeup of the society, because women in culture have been raised to repress any sexual feelings they have, while men by comparison have had pretty much liberty over their sexuality. Women can easily escape attention wearing androgynous clothing but men come under

scrutiny concerning their dress, since the society places much more priority on manhood than womanhood. The experiences of trans men are extremely different from that of a trans women. Once trans men realize that their innermost self is authentically a male, they start to modify their bodies to express their authentic identity. The modification is not just like any other process, it is a version of radical freedom or an individual nihilism that completely denies all the cultural norms of gender to create an embodiment of another identity. The perceptions and opinions of the society are highly influential in the transition of female- to- male transgenders. For them it is also a matter of increase in status and prestige when it comes to be recognized as a male in the society. Hazel Edwards and Ryan Kennedy in their novel *F2M: The Boy Within* have lucidly stated reasons behind trans men invisibility through the words of Finn, the protagonist who is also a female- to- male transgender:

One of the reasons why FTM are invisible in society is because society in general isn't that interested in what women do. Yes, MTFs are generally more visible because they don't pass as well, but they are also much more interesting to people like you, because a man is doing something out of the ordinary. They are not actually men, but that's how people like you see it "Women dresses butch" isn't in the radar but it's news if it is the other way around. (254)

Both Sides Now: One Man's Journey Through Womanhood by Dhillon Khosla is a vivid and compelling account of a trans man's journey through complex and multiple life threatening surgeries to attain the wholeness of manhood. While working at California Federal Court as a judicial staff attorney, Khosla decided to undergo a complete medical transition from female to male resulting in multiple cutting- edge surgeries which continued for several years that ultimately transformed his outer self

just like his inner one. Khosla decided to document his entire transition and published the book in the year 2006 which has been greatly welcomed and admired among both the transgender and cisgender community.

The narrative begins in July 1997, at San Francisco right after Khosla graduated the law school and cleared the bar exam. Khosla was born as girl and was named Asha Khosla by her German mother and East Indian Father. Asha recalled reading an article about a female- to- male transgender person who gave a lecture in a psychology class. She kept reading that article and was awestruck by the fierceness of that person's resistance when treated as a girl. Asha remembered her own past when she insisted everyone that she was not a girl but a boy and adamantly refusing to play with dolls and avoiding dresses and she liked to hang out only with other boys during recess. The article went on describing how people confused that man for a lesbian. This made Asha look back at her own teens where she was attracted to girls but not in a girlish way. The final words of that trans man hit Asha hard, that finally he was living the life he always 'dreamed' of.

The word "dream" hit me hardest of all. I had spent so much of my childhood dreaming of developing a firm, male chest. I remember running around shirtless at my birthday parties and fantasizing that I was a pop/ rock star like Billy Joel and Rod Stewart- always men. And in the past few years, when those fantasies and dreams had resurfaced, I couldn't think of anything to do except pray that God would make me a man in my next life. (Khosla 5)

Asha was confused about her identity for the past years but reading that article made her realize who she really was and where she belonged to. The truth made her take a decision about the life she wanted to lead. And there started the journey of Asha Khosla becoming Dhillon Khosla.

The journey Khosla chose to attain manhood was not an easy one. It exhilarated him physically and mentally. The numerous appointments to the doctor, the endless medical tests and multiple surgeries made him exhausted still he managed to keep up the pace. Khosla was very careful about his attire. He carefully handpicked male attires that could project him as an impeccable male. He tried to keep his voice low so that others do not have the chance to notice the femininity in his voice. All these efforts shattered each time when someone addressed him using the wrong pronouns. For others it was just a mistake out of ambiguity but for Khosla it was a never ending trauma. He felt sad when his friends and colleagues made that mistake and did not even paused to correct or apologize for it. He tried to communicate in betwixt with genders while going through the transition. On one hand, he went through surgeries to gender-transition, on the other; he was still undergoing through his female analogical processes such as menstruation and breast enlargement. Through his autobiography, it appears that he longed to be accepted as a social male not because he had undergone surgeries to become one, but through his masculine mannerisms. It shows that acknowledgment from the society is equally important in creating an identity.

Majumder and Tarafder also point out the financial implications that occur for trans men. The surgical transformation of female- to- male trans people are complex and draining. They mention that there is no way to do the surgery as a single and discreet procedure. There is a 'top surgery' which means a bilateral mastectomy or breast tissue removal for contouring of the chest, then comes the 'bottom surgery' which involves the removal of internal female reproductive organs and genital reconstruction. Trans men try to achieve masculinity by enhancing their bodily features while the attainment of social identity happens to be at stake most of the time.

Many transgenders grow up feeling alienated from their peers. Since they do not confirm to the gender roles, they are teased and bullied by schoolmates and kids

within the neighborhood. Some tend to eliminate social interaction from their lives. Many transgenders are the targets of hate crimes. They are also the victims of subtle discrimination, which includes everything from glance or glares of disapproval to invasive question about their body parts. They live a lonely life as children; they feel they are the only ones who experience the feelings they have and they are afraid to reveal it to anybody out of fear of rejection or humiliation. They dress in secret and develop deep seated feelings of guilt about their behavior. Their efforts to purge these feelings and to live a life without cross dressing and giving up their desire to be the opposite gender have always been 'spectacularly unsuccessful'. When these people change their gender roles, they are attracted to opposite gender. The feelings they experience can create fear, panic, anger, confusion, self-loathing, and guilt which are very harmful to mental and psychological wellbeing. The rejection they face from family when they reveal their gender identity is the most harrowing experience one can undergo. All too often people are under the beliefs that people with gender incongruity want their surgery done for sexual reasons. The heteronormative society fail to realize that this is a long standing problem and transgenders cannot get a solution through mere psychotherapy or medications. There are practically no physical or psychological tests to diagnose transgenderism before a child's birth or early times of infancy.

Once, Khosla attended a weekend workshop at his spiritual school. The group consisted of people from various sexual and gender minorities. They gathered at a temple to relax and share their experience of happiness, discriminations they underwent, the grief in their heart, and the therapies they took. That particular day's topic was 'the beast', the part of one's self that was so disappointed in infancy at not being loved the way it wanted as a result it rejects all the love and goodness in an

attempt to avoid being betrayed again. Khosla found himself drawn into the lecture that reminded him of his early experiences. Gradually the group moved to the present day life and started to talk about things that hurt them the most. Khosla talked about a dinner he had at Santa Cruz and how incredibly relaxed and happy he was until someone he knew addressed him using a ‘female pronoun’ that left him stunned and bruised. And then he explained the importance of using the right pronouns to the people gathered there. He tried to make them see the naive child inside every transgender individual who was longing for the acceptance and warmth of others. People can make excuses saying that the wrong usage was unintentional but Khosla remarked that stumbling over a person unintentionally can also make wounds. The only logical explanation that can be given was some people inside the circle takes the transition of a trans person seriously and give them their support and love while others tend to ignore the physical and mental agonies that trans individual undergoes and hurt them intentionally or unintentionally with their words and actions. He further points out that these kinds of negation from others made him question his self-worth and identity.

When I was in undergraduate school, I studied the work of a cognitive psychologist named Abraham Maslow. Maslow had developed what he called the “Hierarchy of Needs.” It was a pyramid- style model where the bottom of the pyramid represented basic human needs such as food and shelter, while the peak stood for highly developed concepts such as autonomy and self-actualization. Under Maslow’s theory, if one of those basic needs remained unmet, one could not climb the higher levels toward the pinnacle of self-actualization.

Tonight, as I sat in this temple, I applied Maslow’s theory to myself. And what I found out was this. Until this most primary- physical- aspect of my

identity was on solid ground, I could not fully and freely embrace what lay beyond. In other words, until I was accepted as a man, I couldn't be "more than just" a man. It was like trying to climb a ladder and reaching the third rung, only to have someone constantly come along and kick it out from under me. (Khosla 284)

The words of Khosla demands to alter the norms and create a breakthrough in the binary centered society. Each and every individual has the miracle of unique consciousness. Letting them live the life in their own way itself would be a great act of acceptance to the minority communities.

Majumder and Tarafder in their book *A Scientific Aspect of Transgenders* speak about the society's tendency to invisibilize anything that deviated from its norms and ideologies. The only way to make the world avoid thinking or talking about those things is by making it a taboo. This strategy was used in the gender politics; by glorifying binary gender ideologies and thus by invisibilizing the third gender or the transgender. It is highly tragic that a community is fighting for their basic needs like food, shelter, education, employment, and identity for centuries. Only a handful of trans people have come forward to share their experiences to the outer world. Many are still frightened of the horrors they sustained. The lack of love and support from others had made them to live inside the four walls of their community. The book *Once a Girl, Always a Boy: A Family Memoir of a Transgender Journey* by Jo Ivester is entirely different compared to other transgender narratives.

As the name suggests the memoir is a compiled record of a loving family about Jeremy Ivester's transition to manhood. *Once a Girl, Always a Boy: A Family Memoir of a Transgender Journey* makes the readers understand that love is the greatest support that can be given to a trans person during transition. A mere gesture of

acceptance can give them a great confidence and courage throughout their life. Each transgender individual's journey is different among which Jeremy Ivester was blessed with a loving family and supportive friends that made him to look at the world without a hint of shame and declare his identity as a trans man. Jo and Jon Ivester were not at all surprised when their third daughter Emily showed interest in sports because both her elder brother and sister were actively involved in sports. But they were confused about Emily's denial towards anything that felt girlish and her gravitation towards boys stuff just like his older brother, Ben. Emily loved to spend time with Ben and play with him. Even at school she liked the company of boys and used to play with them after school. But things changed when her turned nine years. The boys made teams within themselves which caused Emily a great deal of confusion and pain. She believed that her place belonged with the boys and not with the girls. But Emily could not express her emotions through words.

Emily wrote about the struggles she faced during her puberty. The lack of awareness about the gender variations created a deep confusion inside her. She always saw herself as a boy but during puberty her hormonal levels changed which caused a lot of changes. She hated every single thing happened in her body. Everyone around her was excited about it but Emily dreaded each moment of those changes. She did not want to disappoint her family by expressing the discontent about her physical changes so she endured everything silently. "I wish I could stop the process. But puberty is happening, and there's nothing I can do about it" (Ivester 26). For a while she even asked her family to call her 'Em' instead of Emily which made her feel like a tomboy. She already felt bad for being a girl and she did not want to become a woman.

Coming out as a transgender after realizing the gender identity is a crucial stage in every trans person's life. It is a process by which a person first acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates his/ her sexual orientation and gender identity then decides to share it with others. But revealing the gender identity that does not come under binary norms was always stigmatized in the heteronormative society. When Emily was nineteen years old she happened to watch an MTV reality show called True Life. It featured a transgender man named Ted who described his life of being born as a girl and then transitioned to a man. He further explained his life as a trans man and was an eye-opening moment for Emily. She could relate to everything Ted spoke on that show. She even became jealous about how he had the courage to undergo a sex reassignment surgery and live the life he always dreamt of. There Emily got an idea about her own gender identity but she did not know what she had to do next and she did not want to be a transgender back then. The discrimination they face in the society made Emily flinch but she decided to go with the name Em, use a chest binder and wear only male attires. It took some years for Emily to come in terms with transgender identity.

Once her brothers were commenting about a boy named Mark, that he was a girl before and how unrealistic that was. They said that no individual should do such a thing for it is 'bad' and 'unacceptable'. Emily could not bear those words and ran towards her mother and told that she felt sorry for Mark and also revealed she too is like him. Jo was taken aback by her words but kept calm and embraced Emily. Jo and Jon decided to learn about the gender spectrum and trans community so that they could support their child. They threw themselves into learning the difficulties faced by transgender individuals and what they discovered dismayed them. Over forty percentage of homeless youth in major cities were disowned by their parents and

thrown out of homes because they were somewhere on the LGBTQ spectrum and over forty percentage of transgender individuals had tried to take their lives; not just contemplated but tried to commit suicide. Jo was heartbroken on learning all those statistics and wanted to become advocates for the trans community. Emily appreciated their efforts and helped them to define their roles as allies.

The transition process can have a significant impact on a transgender individual's physical and mental health. Several complications were identified among transgenders before, during, and after the transition process. It includes multiple complicated surgeries and that is why it is important to support a trans individual during the transition phase. Jo and her family accepted Emily's being a transgender and loved her without a hint of hesitation. She decided to undergo a breast removal surgery and Jo never left her side. She stood there as a pillar of support for Emily. At the hospital Jo met several other transgender people who came for surgeries and post- operational checkups. But she noticed that they were all alone and no parent or guardian was there to help them. Jo felt sad when she saw them anxiously seated before the doctor's room waiting for the medical reports with no one to hold their hand to reassure that they have crossed all the misfortunes and they are going to be fine. She made sure that Emily was never felt left out in any situation. She accompanied Emily to the sex reassignment surgery and was thrilled to select a new name for her child. Emily transitioned to Jeremy Ivester.

Inequality and marginalization created by society act as the prompters of deviance. Biological variations are natural but sociological are created, but these biological inequalities are the foundation upon which the society raises the edifice of social inequality. This structure of social inequality is assimilated by the members of the society as a culture and is handed over to posterity, until some enlightened

members understand the predicament of the subalterns and take up their cause. They strive to bring about a change in what is perceived normal and which is culturally defined. *Once a Girl, Always a Boy: A Family Memoir of a Transgender Journey* is a beautifully written account of transgender boy's early life and his family who stood beside him all the way. Ivester seamlessly weaved the contributions of her husband, Jeremy's siblings, his sister-in-law, and Jeremy's video accounts in this honest and moving work. This memoir helps the reader realize that puberty and transition is even more soul altering for a transgender child compared to a cisgender.

Jo points out one of the major struggles faced by trans individuals at schools and colleges. The authorities hesitate to admit gender incongruent children in schools fearing the issues that arise about bathrooms, locker rooms, and sports team. Colleges were faced with added complexity of dormitories. She further adds that even within trans community there were disagreements about the solution; some people suggested that trans students should be able to sign up for a room and roommates should be based on their gender identity while some others opinioned that schools and colleges should provide single rooms for trans students to avoid the potential problem of making the student, roommate, or the student's parents uncomfortable. Lack of awareness about gender spectrum among students is the major cause of these kinds of dilemmas.

Transgenders encounter different predicaments in every aspect of their life. They are forced to confront the anti- hostile society for not conforming to its gender norms and the inner conflict of being different. Apart from the racial and ethnic discrimination the trans community faces considerable amount of verbal harassments and physical violence. If a person is identified as a transgender then he/she faces a complete exclusion from both the family and society. Many transgenders have reported that they were dismissed from jobs, evicted from rented houses, and

furthermore denied of the basic rights enjoyed by a common citizen. Even the police officers and medical emergency professionals were reluctant to help them. Restrooms, the most essential and common of public and workplace amenities, often become sites of harassment and confrontation, for access was often denied to them. Confined to live in the outskirts of the regulated society, the plights of the transgenders remain largely invisible. Inferior schooling, poor health care, inadequate counseling, lack of government help, and other rules have been deterring transgender people from airing their views. Most of them have internalized these problems but not all. Some of them have, through defiance of social oppression, come out of their self-imposed cocoons to claim their rightful place in the society despite continual verbal attacks eroding their sense of self-worth, self-esteem, constant name calling, and snide remarks affecting their mental health. It is the practice of society, when faced with changing attitudes about non normative behavior, to shun and silence those who do not conform to its deeply held norms and it try to limit or eliminate the growth of individuals or groups who do not observe traditional behaviours.

People who are denied of these rights often join together to oppose or alter these unlawful practices and prejudicial attitudes and try to advance natural support to vent their grievances in public. Some of them draw the attention of the society by their writings to bring about the way the society looks at them and the innumerable hardships they undergo. They touch the raw nerve of the reader by elucidating the inhuman tortures they are subjected to but at the same time they try to build confidence among people of their own kind. They strive for acceptance by the society through their intellectual outputs. Hate crimes are perpetrated upon people due to their appearance or affiliation to a particular group. These restrict the access to human rights. Hate crimes that are inflicted upon individuals due to their sexual orientation

and gender discomfort amount to abrogation of human rights. These violations are explicitly exposed by their writing.

Recent literature about transgender community returns to the issues of gender ambiguity and questions binary polarity. The works advocate cross cultural understanding of gender fluidity. The different categories of other genders from various parts of the world, who represent an alternative to the duality of the binary gender system, the reasons for their existence, their struggle for survival, their multiplicity of social differences, and their attempt to express themselves in order to bring about a change in the general public thereby gaining acceptance and respect in the society have become central motifs of discussions.

Indisputably Revathi, Vidya, Mock, Khosla, and Jeremy have constantly strived to challenge the existing power structure by narrativizing the prevailing conflicts in society through their lived experiences. Through their narratives, they try to express the spatial tensions and hierarchies based on boundary systems of gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, caste, and sexuality imposed upon transgender people. Through the power of their words, taking their experiences as lessons, they are succinctly trying to build a counter narrative and generate representation for a community that has been pushed to the periphery for long.

Analyzing the five narratives at an intricate level, several parallels can be drawn between them. These range from their first transgender experience, to cross-dressing experience and them being discovered doing it, their femininity/ masculinity ways being questioned, their acquisition of feminine/ masculine clothing and makeup, their encounters and participation in transgender support groups and communities, their identification of emotions, feelings, and behaviors, finding help with the medical community, therapist, and surgeons, and finally the act of 'coming out' and telling others. Another common tendency

noticed particularly in trans women narratives is 'role playing' and how those sessions turned out to be the only happy childhood memories regarding their presentation of selves. They dressed up in their mother's sarees and sister's dress, imitated female members in their families, played only with girls from neighbourhood, and loved to engross in feminine routines. Revathi, Vidya and Mock recalled how much they could express their internalized self while engaging in such activities.

The society expected performance of gender, collided with their sense of gender and identity, was however disrupted when they came into collision with the formidable systems of knowledge, thereby experiencing a deep psychological conflict. Hegemonic discourse naturalizes the binary system of sex, which in turn determines gender based on the external genitalia, and gender then dictates sexuality and sexual orientation. Seeing sex and gender independent of sexuality and sexual orientation was a distant possibility, but the narratives of Revathi, Vidya, Mock, Khosla, and Ivester reflects sure signs of positive transformation among the community and the society.