

Chapter III

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Pain and Stigma - A Psychological Overview

The most common and obvious things are sometimes the most difficult to explain; one of which is the concept of 'self'. Since the 1970s, the prime unifying idea within psychology and other social and behavioral sciences has been the self, as hundreds and thousands of books, articles, and chapters explore self-related phenomena. The innumerable topics that have fallen under the umbrella of the self, have been quite diverse: self-affirmation, self-conscious emotions, self-esteem, self-verification, self-control, self-evaluation, self-discrepancy, self-monitoring, and so on. In short, self is not really a single topic, but rather an aggregate of slackly related subtopics. Factually all of these phenomena encompass, in one way or the other, the ability for self-reflection that lies at the core of what it means to have a self. Humans are not the only kind that exhibit their uniqueness and variability between individual members of the species. Individuals within every living species exhibit variances or inconsistencies. But the extent to which human individuals vary from one another, both physically and psychologically are quite astounding and somewhat distinctive among species. Some people crave social attention and contact while some remain discreet and introverted; some are calm and unruffled, whereas others are uptight and persistently anxious.

Literature which entwines fields such as history, philosophy, sociology, psychology and so on is a discipline wherein language is used as a medium of manifestation to interpret man, personality and individual differences, culture and existence that always stands as a correlated matter of discussion among philosophers, writers, artists, psychiatrists, and psychologists. There is a very strong parallel

between literature and psychology for the fact that both of them deal with human beings and their reactions, longings, anxieties, terrors, perceptions of the world, conflicts, and reconciliations, individual and social concerns, owing to varied concepts, methods and approaches. An author's representation of life is mostly according to his/her observations, ideologies, objectives, and discernment which opens unknown and invisible world to the readers not only by arousing feelings and emotions but also by helping them to discover the meaning of life and existence. It is evident that literature enables individuals to discern and question their identities by nurturing consciousness and awareness.

Traditional representations of self-identity or personality development are inadequate when it inclines to apply for LGBTQ people (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer). The development of identity and experiences faced in life of a queer are not alike in respect to being raised and socialized by people who are not a part of that group. When considering the life of transgender people, the conservative heteronormative beliefs about the gender roles, identity, and sexual orientations are profoundly challenged by their experiences. The roles of gender are premeditated based on how society expects each and every individual to behave, centered on the label of the sex assigned at birth. Gender roles are what a particular culture and society thinks one should do with their life including duties, personality traits, cultural expectations, and mannerisms. Gender identity is often mistaken with the biological sexual trait of being male and female. The heteronormative society thrusts its binary gendered ideologies for everyone to follow, and those who break those norms are marginalized. Transgender individuals live with a gender identity different from the so called binary gender roles which leads to the stigmatization of the community.

The term 'transgender' replicates the perception of breaking gender roles and gender identity and transcending the margins of one gender to another gender.

Transgender narratives are a critical tool, a meta tropic genre that can critique assumptions about the formation of sexual consciousness, sexual subjectivity, sexual memory as well as sexual roles. Autobiography, as Laura Marcus points out in her work *Autobiographical Discourses: Criticism, Theory, Practice* has been useful in exposing processes of exclusion and marginalization. Autobiographical study is a rich area, particularly because of its concomitant conflation, shifting, and deviance in the correspondence between writer and the written. Sigmund Freud's inventions of psychoanalysis and the unconscious world seem to provide one beginning cultural marker for such a study. This chapter focuses on the subjugation and dejection faced by the transgender individuals during their childhood. And it also aims to make an extensive analysis on how the insults and fears heaped on them during childhood in the name of gender and sexuality becomes the root cause of their aggressive behavior, inferiority towards the self, and hatred towards the society in the future. The analysis is further validated by using the Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Karen Horney.

In the book *Our Inner Conflicts: A Constructive Theory of Neurosis* Horney states that social and cultural conditions, especially childhood experiences are largely responsible for shaping personality. Individuals who lacked the love and affection that were supposed to be satisfied during their childhood develop a basic hostility towards their parents and as a consequence, suffer from basic anxiety. Horney theorized that people combat basic anxiety by adopting one of these fundamental styles of relating to others: moving towards people, moving against people, and moving away from people. The compulsive behavior of neurotics generates a basic intrapsychic conflict that may take the form of either an idealized self- image or self- hatred. The idealized

self- image is expressed as neurotic search for glory, neurotic claims, and neurotic pride. Self- hatred is expressed as either self- contempt or alienation from self.

Horney believed that human beings, if given an environment of discipline and warmth, will develop feelings of security, self-confidence, and a tendency to move toward self-realization. Unfortunately, early negative influences often impede people's natural tendency toward self-realization, a situation that leaves them with feelings of isolation and inferiority and added to this failure is a growing sense of alienation from themselves.

Horney states that neurotic conflict can start from any developmental stage, but childhood is the age from which the majority of problems arise. A wide range of traumatic events such as sexual abuse, neglect, beatings, and open rejections may leave their impressions on a child's future development. Also, these devastating experiences can almost invariably be traced to the lack of care and affection from those who are around the child. Horney draws a hypothesis that a difficult childhood is mainly responsible for neurotic needs. These needs are powerful because they are the child's sole means of gaining feelings for safety. An individual's personality development is somehow based on the totality of early relationships. Although later experiences can have a desirable effect on individuals, childhood experiences play a vital role in personality development.

To approach the problem genetically we must go back to what I have called basic anxiety, meaning by this the feeling of a child has of being isolated and helpless in a potentially hostile world. A wide range of adverse factors in the environment can produce this insecurity in a child: direct or indirect domination, indifference, erratic behavior, lack of respect, for the child's individual needs, lack of real guidance, disparaging attitudes, too much

admiration or the absence of it, lack of reliable warmth, having to take sides in parental disagreements. Too much or too little responsibility, over protection, isolation from other children, injustice, discrimination, unkept promises, hostile atmosphere, and so on and so on. (Horney 41)

Although Horney did not overlook the importance of genetic factors, she repeatedly emphasized cultural influences as the primary base for both neurotic and normal personality development. Modern culture, she contended is based on competition among individuals. Any individual is a real or potential competitor of everyone else. Competitiveness and basic hostility spawns as a result in feelings of isolation. These feelings of being alone in a potentially hostile world lead to intensified needs for affection, which in turn, cause people to overvalue love. As a result, many people see love and affection as the solution for all their problems. Genuine love is healthy and growth-producing experience but the desperate need for love provides a fertile ground for the development of neurosis. Rather than benefiting from the need for love, neurotics strive in pathological ways to find it. Their self-defeating attempts result in low self-esteem, increased hostility, basic anxiety, more competitiveness, and a continuous excessive need for love and affection.

According to Horney, the society contributes to this vicious circle in several respects. First, people of this society are imbued with the cultural teachings of kinship and humility. These teachings, however, run contrary to another prevailing attitude, namely, aggressiveness, and the drive to win or be superior. Second, society's demands for success and achievement are nearly endless, so that even when people achieve their material ambitions, additional goals are continually being placed before them. Third, society tells people that they are free, that they can accomplish anything through hard work and perseverance. In reality, however, the freedom of most people

is greatly restricted by genetics, social position, and the competitiveness of others. These contradictions all stemming from cultural influences rather than biological ones provide intrapsychic conflicts that threaten the psychological health of normal people and provide nearly insurmountable obstacles for neurotics.

Horney identified that there are four general ways people use as resistance strategies to protect themselves in a potentially hostile world. The first one is affection; a strategy that does not always end in authentic love. In a desperate search for affection, some people may try to get it with self-effacing compliance, materialistic things or even through sexual favors. All they need at that time is someone to love them unconditionally. Mostly in all queer writings this tendency of compliance can be witnessed evidently. When children are ridiculed and neglected for their gender non conformity, they tend to long for genuine love. The second protective device is submissiveness. People may submit themselves to other people or to institutions such as organization or a religion. They often do so in order to gain attention and acceptance. The next defense that people show is power. It is a defense against the real or imagined hostility of others and raises a tendency to dominate others. The fourth protective mechanism is withdrawal. Neurotics habitually protect themselves against basic anxiety either by evading freedom from others or by becoming emotionally detached from them. By psychologically withdrawing, they feel that they cannot be hurt by others anymore.

Expressions of these protective tendencies do not ineludibly indicate a neurotic condition; many people in general go through these conditions but neurotics feel compelled to rely on them and are thus unable to employ a variety of interpersonal strategies. After all, compulsion is the striking feature of all neurotic drives. In short, basic hostility arises when parents do not satisfy the child's needs for safety and satisfaction and this repressed hostility leads to feelings of insecurity and

apprehension. The child who has faced harassments from the people around, he/she desperately finds ways to keep going and cope with this intimidating world. Despite his/her weakness and fears the child unconsciously shapes a resistance strategy to meet the disturbing forces in his/her environment. In doing so the child develops not only the necessary strategies but also some lasting character trends which becomes the part of his/her personality. And Horney terms these tendencies as 'neurotic trends'.

To fully understand how conflicts develop, one must not focus sharply only on the current actions and trends but should rather take a panoramic view of the circumstances a child can and does find herself/ himself in which is possibly moving towards people, moving against people, and moving away from people.

When moving toward people he accepts his own helplessness, and in spite of his estrangement and fears tries to win the affection of others and to lean on them. Only in this way he can feel safe with them. If there are dissenting parties in the family, he will attach himself to the most powerful person or group. By complying with them, he gains a feeling of belonging and support which makes him feel less weak and less isolated. (Horney 42)

The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life story is a heart wrenching narrative by A. Revathi, one of the most high spirited transgender personality in India. Her autobiography brings the predicament of the trans people in this society. Revathi, in her book gives a detailed account of hardships she has gone through during her childhood, adolescence, and transition. The incidents bring into perspective that not only Revathi, almost all the gender non confirmed children born in India are subjected to violence and marginalization from the family and society. Revathi daringly reveals every aspect of Hijra culture to make the readers and society aware of the fact that trans people too are human beings and they also deserve a life like everyone else.

In the preface section of her autobiography Revathi questions the society whether the marginalized are getting access to the rights that everyone else is enjoying. “In society we speak the language of rights loud and often. But do the marginalized really have access to these rights? Individuals are denied these rights in the name of sex, sexuality, caste and religion. They have to either compromise or engage in a struggle” (Revathi v).

Revathi was born as a youngest child in an affluent family and was named as Doraisamy by his parents. He grew up shy, effeminate and with an inclination to dress like a girl. He liked to do the household chores usually done by women of his village. He always liked to play games with his sister and other neighborhood girls and never tried to mingle with boys. At first his family members dismissed those actions as a mere naughtiness of age but as days passed they were highly annoyed and reprimanded him. Doraisamy spent his early childhood years with a growing unease as he tried to negotiate his body's incongruity with his inner desires and natural talents. Growing up in family where flaws were severely dealt with physical violence, one of Doraisamy's brother had a penchant for mercilessly beating him up with a cricket bat for behaving like a girl. Being a boy with inclinations to girl's attires, accessories, and attitudes brought him immense troubles.

Doraisamy was not matured enough to understand that the gender stereotypes of society cannot be mended easily. Neither did he understood the discriminations that come along with gender incongruity.

I think I was punished not just for being distracted, but also because I spoke like a girl, holding my body coyly like one. I remember being caned for ‘not being brave like a boy’. And since I did not play boys' games, I got punished by the PT teacher too. He would box my ears and yell, ‘Are you a girl or

what? Pull your trousers down, let me check'. He would make as if he was going to strip me and I would start crying. The other boys laughed at this.

(Revathi 7)

The fear of taunts, thrashings, and the deep longing for acceptance made Doraisamy hide his hostility. Such suppressed emotions resulted in insecurities and withdrawal from the self. Once his family decided to take him to a temple and perform some rituals to make him 'normal', thinking he was possessed by some kind of evil spirit. These kinds of behaviors made Doraisamy wonder whether he was committing some sin. He dared not to express his emotions to anyone around him even to his mother.

Horney places a great emphasis on parents' love and care for children. Their actions at times can undermine the child's feeling of security and thus induce hostility. They cannot easily fool children with false demonstrations and insincere expressions of love. The child may feel the need to repress the hostility stimulated by the parents destabilizing behaviors for reasons of helplessness, fear of the parents, need for genuine love, or guilt feelings. She also points out that children can easily be made fearful of the parents and the people around them through punishment, physical abuse or other such intimidating forms. The more frightened the children are, the more hostile they become. And if they lack the right of expressing their emotions, the repressed hostility undermines the child's need for safety and is exhibited in a condition called basic anxiety. Horney strongly believed that basic hostility and basic anxiety are inextricably interwoven. Hostile instincts are the prime source of basic anxiety, but which can also contribute to feelings of hostility.

In the long quest for affection and approval, neurotics attempt to indiscriminately please others, tend to dread self-assertion, and are quiet

uncomfortable with the hostility of others as well as the hostile feelings within themselves. Doraisamy as a child wanted to please his family, friends, teachers, and neighbours to win their love and approval. He tried to hide his irrepressible femaleness in all ways possible. But he was always avoided by people around him. Even his parents never tried to understand the anxiety within him. All they could see was their son behaving like a girl for no reason. Each time he tried to assert his feelings he was rejected and ridiculed. He could not find a proper way to express his innermost thoughts and anxieties. He began to hate himself and the way he was created.

I wondered why God had chosen to inflict this peculiar torture on me, and why He could not have created me wholly female. Why am I a flawed being, I wondered often. I might as well die, I thought, I could not study, yet pretended to, and all the time I was obsessed, confused and anxious. (Revathi 15)

This way of rigid restrictions on uncontrollable expressions not only impoverished Doraisamy's life but made him dependent on others all the more. When others failed to accept and understand his real self he tried to win their love and trust by pleasing them. He even tried to justify the abuses as their affection for him. Horney calls this tendency as a kind 'masochistic drive'.

Neurotics who exhibit the compliant personality, tend to have a desire for a strong partner. A partner's love appears to them as the only goal striving for and worth living for. Life without a person to love appears flat, fruitless, and blank. At one point of life, love becomes a 'phantom' that is to be chased even to the exclusion of everything else. Due to the lack of self-confidence, neurotics strive to attach themselves to a powerful partner. This need creates an overvaluation of love and a dread of being alone and deserted. Not once, but Revathi travelled twice through this phase. Her unquenched desire for acceptance, love, and longing to lead a

‘normal’ family life like other women in society made her submit herself to that partner without thinking whether he is worthy of her love or not.

Revathi returns to her home town some years after her sex reassignment surgery. Due to some dispute over parental property, she left her parent’s house and rented a small house in the neighborhood. There in a petrol bunk she met a man named Babu, who worked as an operator in a nearby theatre. He was very much interested in Revathi, enquired her name and whereabouts without knowing that she is a hijra. For her it was an elevated feeling, being approached by a man with love not lust, being enquired with care and not ridiculed. After that they met often but Revathi was afraid to reveal her identity as a trans woman to Babu. She feared that he will abandon her once he knew the truth. She felt loved by someone after a long time. She cooked for him and waited till he returned from work. She did everything a typical house wife in her locale would do for her husband. Even women in her neighbourhood mocked her playfully about her love for Babu. But events took an unexpected turn when her brothers found out about Babu visiting Revathi. One morning they arrived at her house and abused her for having an affair with a man. Few minutes later Babu arrived but Revathi instructed him to wait inside the room. Her brothers humiliated her about her sexuality and threatened to kill him if he ever visit her again. After this havoc, Revathi told Babu that she is a trans woman and that he could he leave if he wanted to. Moments later he left Revathi.

If society scorns us, then we then we turn to our families, if we have a family. But if family scorns us, who do we turn to? Is this why people like me do not stay in touch with their families? Could not God have created me as a man or a woman? Why did He make me this way? Why is He savouring this spectacle

that He created? In a rage, hitting my head against the wall, I began to cry.

(Revathi 185)

According to Horney's Psychoanalytic Social Theory, it is very important to understand the structure of compliant personality. For people like Revathi, a partner's love seems to be an inevitable factor at one point of life. In fact it seems to be the only way in which all the neurotic needs could be fulfilled. They think that a relationship promises to satisfy the need to be liked and wanted. They willingly accept the subordinate place to win the partner's undivided regard. It permits them to easily justify all the aggressiveness in the relationship towards them as a part of love. Neurotics are unaware of the fact that this emotional surrender to a person handicaps the individual's personal choice and desire; love beckons as the cure for all the problems. As they were denied of parental love, their subconscious mind believes that if they find the right person to love and accept them unconditionally, everything will be alright. Horney gives an example for this kind of behaviour in the neurotic's perspective:

I am weak and helpless; as long as I am alone in this hostile world, my helplessness is a danger and a threat. But if I find someone who loves me above all others, I shall no longer be in danger, for he (she) will protect me. With him I shouldn't need to assert myself, for he would understand and give me what I want without my having to ask or explain. In fact, my weakness would be an asset, because he would love my helplessness and I could lean on his strength. The initiative which I simply can't muster for myself would flourish if it meant doing things for him, or even doing things for myself because he wanted it. (Horney 59- 60)

Horney also pointed out that, neurotics who try to move towards people restrict their life within narrow borders. They habitually attempt to remain inconspicuous, to take up a second place, and be content with the least they have. They downgrade their own abilities and dread making demands on others. Whenever Revathi visited her village, she tried to stay inside the house or if she went her sister's house, she pretended to be someone from another village. "I was petrified of being exposed and teased. What if I got angry and fought back? Then people at home would come to know of it and god knows what they'd say. I lived in the silent shadows, half hidden" (Revathi 119). Revathi's autobiography exposes the feeble and traumatic journey of the trans community who live on margins of the society devoid of rights and respect to live with dignity.

I Am Vidya: A Transgenders Journey exhibits the hardships Saravanan endured to become Vidya which includes a lot of physical and mental trauma. In addition to her life, the autobiography also presents the plight of transgenders like Vidya in India whose existence are not welcomed by many and supported by neither family nor friends. In *I am Vidya: A Transgenders Journey* the readers can see a lot of excruciating psychological and physical struggles Vidya underwent to be true to her identity and find a meaning to her life.

Vidya was named Saravanan by her parents in fulfillment of her father's vow to name his first son after Murugan, a Hindu deity. The child was born after two girls and her father was extremely happy. But gradually Saravanan felt a difference in his body and mind. Coming to terms with his/her gender identity or gender expression is a time consuming and equally perplexing process in a trans person's life. The imposed binary gender ideologies on the basis of biological sex create a barrier from accepting

themselves in the first place. Saravanan too struggled to hide his femininity and pretended to be masculine before others.

I was a girl. Unfortunately, the world saw me as a boy. Inwardly I wanted to be a girl, but I made every effort possible to hide my femininity from the outside world. I took the particular trouble to remain inconspicuous . . . I lead a false life of strenuous attempts to swagger like a man and speak like one.

(IAV 33)

As mentioned in Horney's theory on basic conflict that anxiety stems from childhood. Saravanan used to reveal his true self in isolation. The changes started when he was six or seven years old. He started wearing his elder sister's clothes and sang and danced locking himself inside, once everyone in the house had gone out. One day he was caught dancing but elders thought that he was doing some mischievous imitation of his sisters: "Look at this madness. Girls, come and see what this boy is up to.' Grandma probably thought that I was doing some playful imitation. Hardly did she know the true story, did she?" (Vidya 18).

Movies had a profound influence on Saravanan. He loved watching the heroines dance gracefully to the beautiful songs. He used to imagine himself to be one and imitated them at home. To dress like a movie star, he used to take his sister's skirts and blouses, her eyeshades, bangles, and jewels. Instead of lipstick he used to rub coconut oil for gloss. He wore a towel around his head and twirled the long rear portion as a braid to replace the long plaited hair of the heroines. Getting all ready, he used to dance in secret. The strain Saravanan took to hide his identity was tiring him. Most of the time he searched for isolated space where no one would take notice of him. He was much troubled with his inner self that sometimes all he looked for was an opportunity to sneak out and be his true self. Unfortunately his mother passed

away in an accident when Saravanan was a child and he was very young to fully comprehend the extent of his loss. At the time of his mother's final rituals Saravanan slowly slipped into a room and put on his sister's clothes and danced to the tunes on the radio. But to his shock, someone passing by noticed and his secret was revealed. His father thrashed him for dancing like a girl at such an unhappy moment. Two years later, Saravanan's habits remained the same but the way people looked at him differed. "My old ways- the same habits which had been dismissed lightly as childish pranks- were now viewed with disfavor. Chithi and Radha scolded me for my acts, and Appa thrashed me regularly" (Vidya 22). Horney claimed that a child exposed to an unsupportive, uncaring and hostile environment develops strategies to cope with the basic anxiety that such environments produce.

According to Horney, this basic anxiety is solved in one of three different ways; hostility, isolation, and helplessness. Generally people rely on all the three aspects to negotiate interpersonal relationships. Situation arises when a person has to be assertive and go against the other people whom he/she loves. A period of withdrawal or silence may be more appropriate at other times. Moving towards people seems to be best option on certain occasions. A non- neurotic person can easily integrate all the three trends and act according to the situation while the neurotic type tends to stick on to one trend rigorously due to lack of confidence in both their own self and in others. Saravanan behaved no different from Doraisamy. He too wanted to win the affection of his father and family so he tried to hid his femininity. The more he repressed his identity, the more stressed he became. His parents wished to make him an IAS officer and Saravanan too excelled in studies. But incidents took a twist after his mother's death. His gender incongruity and rejection from his own family

fueled the helplessness. Saravanan's anxiety paved way for another neurotic trend: the need for a powerful partner.

A river ran close to Saravanan's house in Somarasampettai, in which he regularly bathed and washed clothes. There he used to sit alone for a long time and enjoy the solitude. The isolation gave him time and space to indulge in his fantasies. That place usually gave him an awakening of his feminine sensibilities and he imagined dancing in that river and being with a partner. One day he met Ilango, a young man who owned a dairy business in his village. He came to the river to wash his milk cans. Saravanan was generally reserved with men. His innate shyness and fear that Ilango might notice the feminine behaviour and harass him made him to be aloof and non-approachable. Initially Saravanan avoided Ilango when he tried to start a conversation. He also felt irritated about losing his quiet and peaceful bath time, yet Ilango was considerate and never made fun of Saravanan for his effeminate mannerisms.

When Ilango shared his thoughts about the girls he met at the bus stop and the one he loved, Saravanan was thrilled and imagined himself as a girl who attracted other men's attention. "I thought then that what I felt for Ilango was neither love nor lust- Ilango was the man who kindled in me the kind of changes that occur to a woman at different stages of her development. Ilango was the man who made me feel whole as a woman" (Vidya 28). In this case, Vidya before transition longed to be with Ilango only because he never criticized her for the effeminate behavior. The mere gesture of approval and acceptance is what neurotics desire for, from people around them.

When Karen Horney classifies the neurotic needs, she states that, people with basic anxiety restrict one's life within the narrow borders. Though they strive hard to acquire a position in the society, the rejections force them to take up second position

and be content with the little they have. When the family and society denies their existence, neurotics were forced to believe that they do not have any ability and dreads making demands on others. Saravanan, amidst all the chaos completed Master's Degree in Linguistic at Thanjavur University. At that period of time, he recognized his interest and talent in theatre arts and performed many stage plays. Whenever he got a female role, he did not feel like a man disguised as a woman rather he completely manifested his suppressed feminine emotions. As days passed, Saravanan felt it was becoming physically and mentally impossible to suppress the growing femininity inside him. So he left for Pune and joined a group of transgenders. There Saravanan transformed to the true self- Vidya. At Pune, Vidya had to take up begging for a living.

In most places, there is no social security given to transgenders. The only thing they experience is marginalization and hatred from the society. In her life as a trans woman, while begging in streets, from shops, and on trains Vidya faced a lot of discrimination and humiliation. There were times when she was physically abused by passengers for seeking alms. When people blindly aim at harassing trans people for what they are and how much disgrace they bring upon the family, the society fails to accept the truth that those poor souls were born with gender fluidity they do not deserve to get hatred instead of love, dejections instead of appreciation, abuses instead of security, and curse instead of consolations right from childhood. If only they had been accepted by their family as a cisgender child would, their perspective on life and world would have been different.

There are only a select number of memoirs written by self-identified trans men and trans women of colour and drag queens. To name a few *A Finer Specimen of Womanhood: A Transsexual Speaks Out* by Sharon Davis, *From Juliet to Julius* by

Julius Kaggwa, *I Rise- The Transformation of Toni Newman* by Toni Newman, *An Unspoken Compromise* by Rizi Xavier Timane and *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love and So Much More* by Janet Mock. All these narratives give a glimpse into the writer's lives and how against all odds, they managed to find personal happiness, career, success, and love. These memoirs engage in acts of story-telling and memory- making that challenge the readers to confront and expand their previous notions on transgenderism. The compelling beauty of Janet Mock's memoir *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love and So Much More* is that it is personal and also reflects the life of those within the LGBTQ community who identify as trans women of colour. The concept of freedom and acceptance is portrayed in a different angle.

Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love and So Much More is the debut book of Mock, an American writer and transgender activist. The memoir recounts Mock's journey as a transgender woman from childhood to adulthood. In the book Mock used the flash back technique to narrate her story to her boyfriend Aaron who was unaware of her trans identity. *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love and So Much More* offers a bold new perspective on being young, multiracial, economically challenged and transgender in America.

Mock was born as a boy named Charles. His parents rejoiced over the birth of their son, but upon growing up Charles was never comfortable as being a boy. When he expressed his femininity during childhood, his grandmother and mother used to scold him. He never understood the reason for their anger because he felt he was behaving in a very normal way. But later he understood that the gender identity of a person was determined by the society and not by how the individual feels. When Charles and his brother Chad were young boys their parents got separated. Upon

separation Charles lived with his mother, grandmother, and elder sister Cori and Chad moved with his father in Oakland. At first young Charles felt happy to be the younger one of the house and enjoyed the pampering from his mother but not long afterward, with the birth another sibling Jeffrey, Charles was sent to live with his father and brother Chad. Being much attached to his mother, Charles felt that his world was breaking into two. This separation from his mother affected him a lot during childhood. By the time Charles moved in with his father Chad and the father had developed a mutual connection and understanding and for Charles it was like barging into their pretty little world.

Life at Oakland was not easy for Charles. His father always made comments for not being masculine enough like Chad and his mother never called or enquired about the life at Oakland. This lack of affection from parents and criticisms on his gender was more than young Charles could handle.

To my father, I was a sissy, and he tried his hardest to squash my femininity the only ways he knew how: intimidation and fear. He seemed to believe that if Chad enjoyed the bike ride, then I should also enjoy it. Chad was held as the standard of acceptable boy behavior; I grew aware of the fact that I negated that standard, and I internalized that on a deep level. I thought that something must be wrong with me because I didn't enjoy the things Chad did, the activities that Chad took on with such ease and little debate. The constant friction between my father and me led me to not like him. (Mock 31)

The lack of love, care, and affection from parents created emptiness in Charles. He was often bullied and called derogatory words like 'sissy' 'freak' 'faggot' 'nigger' and 'tranny' at school for behaving like a girl. Words have the power not only to empower and encourage but also to dehumanize and demean. All the insults heaped

on Charles were meant to shame him for not meriting the societal standard set for boys. These insults and harassments created a basic hostility in Charles. He then decided to remain inconspicuous about his identity and emotions. This aggression created a hostility inside him which acted as a nutritive soil for basic anxiety.

As claimed by Horney, childhood is the most important phase in an individual's life. Those who suffer from basic anxiety during childhood have the tendency to downgrade their own abilities and have a dread making demands even for their own needs. She insisted that children should be loved by their parents despite differences and expectations. The lack of approval and love during childhood made transition harder. He was too confused about the growing femininity inside him. There was nobody he could confide in, not even his mother. He was even molested by Derek, a boy much older than Charles. All these frustrations made him confine himself inside his room trying his best to go unnoticed.

Charles' mother took him and Chad back to Hawaii after five years. Despite the issues on gender identity Charles felt happy to reunite with his mother. He deeply wished for his mother to accept him the way he was but she failed to do that. To win the love of his mother he tried to repress his feminine instincts and acted as if he is a boy who matched the societal standards. "I was a child, dependent, learning, unknowing, trusting and willing to do what was asked of me to gain approval and affection" (Mock 47). Charles' parents welcomed two sons into the world, and one was feminine so they thought he needed 'fixing' and 'thrashing' to make him right. His parents consistently monitored and policed his gender. He even felt that his father's gaze followed him all through his childhood which forced him to isolate himself and quietly grapple his identity. The loneliness and self-consciousness made him vulnerable in a way that he was not able to recognize his gender identity as a

trans woman for decades. Charles also thought he was diseased and needed to be cured or fixed. It was Wendi, a trans woman from Hawaii, who made him realize his actual gender identity. Since then Charles bravely revealed his female persona and requested others to call him Janet Mock and to use female pronouns.

People who exhibit the trend of moving towards people, show a need for a powerful partner. The rejections neurotics face during childhood is the reason they try to get attached to a companion. Adolescence is the passage that links childhood and adulthood, a crucial period in a person's life figuring out who the person really is. When Mock realized her identity and decided to be true to her self she too was forced to face the hardships people with gender incongruity do. Apart from the stares and offensive words she had to indulge in sex work to save money for her gender reassignment surgery. While doing sex work, what Janet really longed for was the affection and approval from a partner. Her words reflect the depth of her longing for love.

Standing on those streets, slightly hidden by the awnings of local businesses and lit by unmoving lamps, I wished for someone to reach out and cradle me, to tell me I was beautiful and worthy and better than the world I had come from. I wanted a man to tell me that there was no money in the world that could buy me. I wanted him to take care of me in the ways that my parents had failed to. When my wishes weren't granted, I chased affection in the cars of cute guys. I believed that these boys looking to get their rocks off would make me worthy, someone better than who I actually was: an incomplete girl-child.

(Mock 172)

Mock met Aaron at a Brazilian restaurant and felt he was a genuine person. He appreciated and adored Mock for her lucid behavior and high spirit. She felt very special and happy when he was with her but the internal fear of being exposed as a

trans woman frightened her. She did not want to lose a person like Aaron because of her gender identity but at the same time felt guilty for not being completely true to Aaron. Janet deeply desired for Aaron to love her and accept her into his life and the fear of losing him made her vulnerable. Mock writes: “My belief system operated on the notion that the good things in my life were a universal hiccup where doom surely loomed. Happiness was fleeting and accidental; goodness wasn’t in the cards for a girl like me” (6).

As Horney mentioned in her Psychoanalytic Social Theory, people with basic anxiety long to be accepted and loved by a powerful partner but the very thought of a dejection or failure in a relationship makes them plunge into deep depression. Here Mock was too anxious to commit to a relationship with Aaron though she longs for it. The lack of self- confidence and dread to express the emotions due to her basic anxiety stops her from voicing out her needs. All these neurotic needs were a result of the basic hostility and anxiety. If only Mock’s parents had loved her and accepted her as the person she was, her personality would have evolved with much self-determination and courage.

Both Sides Now: One Man’s Journey Through Womanhood by Dhillon Khosla is a vivid and compelling account of how one man’s search for wholeness led him through multiple, complex, and life-threatening surgeries that transformed him not only physically, but emotionally and spiritually as well. Though born in a female body Khosla always felt masculinity within him. He spent nearly two decades repressing his emotions and tried to embrace the female form. Shortly after turning twenty-eight, he came across an article about men born with female bodies who had undergone surgeries to reclaim their male identity. When he read their stories, Khosla felt flashes of recognition stirring within and for the first time he felt a ray of hope.

In this riveting memoir, Khosla discusses openly and honestly about what it was like to live a woman, and how that life shaped the man he is today. Through anecdotes, he shares unique and profound insights about the differentiation between biological sex and gender roles.

What makes *Both Sides Now: One Man's Journey Through Womanhood* unique from other trans memoirs is that Khosla avoids the usual arc of writing which start with childhood gender discomfort and build up to the decision to transition and instead he employs an appealing structure: he begins his decision to become a man and weaves his childhood memories and surreal dream sequences. *Both Sides Now: One Man's Journey Through Womanhood* is a narrative about what it means to truly love oneself and the willingness to turn away from the dissenting voices of the society that instructs who every individual ought to be.

The Psychoanalytic Social Theory was built on the credence that social and cultural conditions, especially childhood experiences are largely responsible for shaping the personality of an individual. A difficult childhood is primarily responsible for neurotic needs. Despite gender indifferences children need to experience both love and healthy discipline. Only such conditions can provide them with feelings of safety and satisfaction and permit them to grow in accordance with their real self. Unlike Revathi, Vidya and Mock, Khosla was accepted by his father during his childhood and transition phase. His father, Manu Khosla never once criticized or harassed him for his gender incongruence. Though Khosla faced basic anxiety and hostility during his adolescence and transition period, the acceptance and security he got from his family helped him to manage with the situations in a much better way.

Khosla was born in Brussels to an East Indian father and German mother. By birth he was named Asha Khosla. After spending his childhood in Europe, he and

his family immigrated to the United States, and settled in Westport, Connecticut, where he completed his high school education. Asha sensed that she could not express the femininity which the society expects from a girl, rather she felt an over growing sense of masculinity. In the beginning she thought she might be a lesbian and because she was attracted to girls and not boys. This confusion was faced by almost all the transgenders before their transition period. But later on she realized that she felt uncomfortable in being addressed and identified as a girl. But at times when people mistake her for a boy because of her short hair and shirt and address her using male pronouns, she felt happy and contented. She tried to accept her body and femininity as an attempt to belong in gender norms created by the society. But shortly Asha realized it was impossible. Later on when she found her identity as a transgender, she was happy and relieved. The transformation from Asha to Dhillon started there.

I started laughing as I thought about how I had spent the last few years in a meditation school, believing that if I just meditated enough and got more in touch with my spirit, my body would become irrelevant I wouldn't need to change anything. Now, standing on this side of the decision, the notion seemed utterly absurd. I realized I had been fighting for the wrong side; I had been using all my strength to go against my true being rather than to serve it. And I saw all of this because the freedom I felt now held wisdom, and certainty I had never known before. (Khosla 16)

When Khosla decided to undergo the sex reassignment surgery he informed his family, friends, and colleagues about it. And he was blessed enough to have a small circle of friends to back him at this crucial decision. He was working as an Attorney and he informed his boss about his decision and requested everyone in the office to call him Dhillon instead of Asha. To his surprise everyone obliged immediately and

started sending their regards and wishes for his strength to achieve what he needed in life. The more they spoke to him freely about the hormone therapy, surgery and transition the more he felt at ease. Working in that office for two whole years was the time he felt that everyone really cared for him. His parents also took it in the right spirit and supported him. His father wrote him a letter that he was proud of his decision. The words of the father show the deep parental affection regardless the gender changes of his child. "You should never worry about me rejecting you or cutting you off. You are my blood and I will always take care of you- no matter what" (Khosla 79).

Being a transgender personality, Khosla too had faced the difficulties of basic anxiety and hostility. There were some people in his life who intentionally called him 'Asha' and addressed using female pronouns to assert the notion that having hormone therapies or undergoing a gender reassignment surgery would not make him a complete male like the cisgenders. Those moments were really heart wrenching for him. Khosla tried to console himself saying that it was just a pronoun and it could not affect his identity but each time he faced such situation his spirits plunged deeper to sadness. This hostility made him restrict his life within some borders. He felt like the right to be independent and true was taken away at birth in the name of gender. Khosla sadly quotes: "But much as I tried, I could feel losing the battle as the evening wore on. My mood became darker and there was an underlying frustration seeing it. I felt as if something had been taken from me. And I wanted it back" (135).

One of the major trends in moving towards people is the need for a powerful partner. Neurotics and non- neurotic individuals exhibit this need in certain phase of life, but the difference is neurotics tend to rely much on the partners. Transgender people tend to over value love and the need for a powerful partner. For them it is an

acceptance and recognition for their true self. While Revathi, Vidya and Janet were denied of parental affection during childhood they longed for a partner who could make them feel complete accepting their true self. And when they faced rejections, they were traumatized over those incidents. Khosla was fortunate enough to be accepted by his family and this sense of security made him control his emotions when he was turned down by his partner.

Khosla met a girl named Virginia and fell in love with her. At first she reciprocated her love but at one point she rejected him for his gender identity as a trans man. He felt that he was rejected for no mistake of his. Back during his adolescence when he expressed his feelings to women they rejected him for being a female and after transition he got rejected for being a trans man and his dream for a partner who would stand with him in all his happiness and worries were shattered. “It was the irony of all ironies. Eight years ago I was rejected for being a woman. And now I was rejected for being a man. It suddenly struck me as hilarious, and I started to laugh. I laughed all the way home. I laughed so hard there were tears in my eyes” (Khosla 314). It took some time for Khosla to recover from this rejection. But what kept him going was the support of his family.

Once a Girl, Always a Boy: A Family Memoir of a Transgender Journey by Jo Ivester is the journey of her son Jeremy from childhood through coming out as transgender and eventually emerging as an advocate for the transgender community. This is not only Jeremy’s story but also that of his family, told from multiple perspectives—those of the siblings who struggled to understand the brother they once saw as a sister, and of the parents who ultimately joined him in the battle against discrimination. Jeremy Ivester was born as a girl and named Emily by her parents. As a child, Emily preferred the toys and games that society viewed as masculine.

She kept her hair short and preferred boys' clothing. Everyone called her a tomboy and that was what she called herself too. By high school Emily showed no interest in boys so her parents thought she might be a lesbian. But she denied that saying she was not interested in girls either that made everyone doubt her sexual orientation as asexual. When Emily was twenty three years, she surgically removed her breasts. A year later she started taking testosterone hormone tablets and emerged as a trans man, Jeremy. This is a story of pure love and acceptance in a world where trans people are disowned and thrown out of the house.

Horney in her book *The Basic Conflict* emphasizes about the importance of parental love and security to children during childhood. She states that parental behavior that undermines a feeling of safety and security will lead to neurotic development. The ideal family atmosphere provides warmth, goodwill, and healthy friction with the wishes and wills of others. Such an environment allows the child to develop a sense of security and belongingness instead of basic anxiety. Healthy parenting requires loving the children irrespective of gender, sexuality, and disabilities. In the narratives of Revathi, Vidya, and Mock one can evidently see the lack of parental affection and the anxiety faced by the children during their transition. For Khosla, his family accepted his decision to be a man, so he resisted the basic conflicts to an extent. In the case of Jeremy, his whole family stood by his side in all the decisions he make. *Once a Girl, Always a Boy: A Family Memoir of a Transgender Journey* can be called as a roller coaster among trans memoirs.

Jeremy's need for affection and approval was fulfilled by his family all through his transition journey. His mother and father accepted his gender identity as a trans man without any second thought. In the part '*The Haircut*', Jo recollects an incident when Emily was a child; she wanted her hair to be short like her elder brother

Ben. The hair dresser could not satisfy her wish so Jo promised to make her hair right once they get home and she did, trimming Emily's hair like she do for Ben. And that made Emily really happy. "It didn't matter to me that her pleasure in looking like a boy was unusual. I even kind of got it, remembering how I'd felt much the same way back when I was a child. All I cared about as a mother was that somehow, in some way, I'd made my child happy" (Ivester 10).

Right from the beginning Jo and Jon made sure that despite the situations, they always supported their child. The unconditional affection and approval of parents and other family members was something that strengthened Jeremy's personality before and after transition. When Jo's brother Charles came out as gay, her father rejected him and that created a great impact on Charles, so Jo was keen to make sure Emily knew that they will completely support her and her gender orientation was not at all an issue. When Emily was young, she was more comfortable playing with boys and being in their company. But as they grew up her friends avoided her on many occasions as she was the only female member of the group. This made her feel sad and question her gender identity. It took twenty four years for Emily to figure out her real gender identity. So all through the years she had to face hurdles and rejection from school, friends and the society but the love from her family was strong enough to hold her throughout the transition.

The second aspect of basic conflict 'Moving against people' examines the type in whom the aggressive trends predominate. Just as compliant people assume that everyone is good and dependable, aggressive people take for granted that everyone is hostile. As a result, they adopt a defense mechanism of moving against people. Neurotically aggressive people are just as compulsive as people who are compliant and their behavioural pattern is just as much promoted by basic anxiety. Rather than

moving toward people in a posture of submissiveness and dependence, these people move against others appearing tough or ruthless. They believe that their life is full of struggles. Horney explains this compulsive attitude of people with Darwin's theory:

His needs stem fundamentally from his feeling that the world is an arena where, in Darwinian sense, only the fittest survive and the strong annihilate the weak. What contributes most to survival depends largely on the civilization in which the person lives; but in any case, a callous pursuit of self-interest is the paramount law. Hence his primary need becomes one of control over others. (64)

The need for power is usually combined with the needs for prestige and possession and manifests itself as the need to control others and to avoid feelings of weakness or stupidity.

In *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*, Revathi narrates how much she struggled to get a driving license and her paternal property registered in the name of Revathi and not Doraisamy. Due to some disputes in the family, Revathi's brothers demanded their father to divide the property and register it in their name. When it came to her share of the property, the advocate advised her to present before the court in a man's garb for all the identity proofs were issued as Doraisamy and not Revathi. She bluntly refused and pleaded with her parents telling them the hardships she underwent, to lose that male identity and she was not willing to take it up, not under any circumstance. Revathi felt vulnerable while living as Doraisamy. One sound of the name aloud sent chills down her spine, for it made her to think of the dark past, where she was taunted and abused by everyone. So taking up that name again is like letting her guard down to be defeated.

In India, during the time of Revathi's transition trans people do not have a proper and legal access to sex reassignment surgery. The operations were done in some clinics with no proper documents or health care. Medical certificates stating the sex change was not provided in most cases which created a hindrance to change their names in identity proofs and other documents. When Revathi got a bike, she tried to register it in her name. But all her documents displayed the name before transition so the officials did not give her Registration Certificate. Like everyone else Revathi too wanted to be law abiding so she decided to get a driver's license. She completed all the formalities; but the driving instructor rejected her application. They even asked for more money from her as they had never encountered such a case. Fed up with all the discriminations faced, Revathi shouted and demanded justice. She assured them that she would be very careful while driving and would not make any mistake. Only after this entire ruckus, the instructor agreed to issue a license and that too only after she produced a certificate from the police station, stating that she is indeed a female. "To get a license under the name of Revathi, I had to go through all of this. It was exhausting, and worse, what ought to have cost me a hundred fifty rupees set me back by two thousand rupees. However, I had my license, and I was happy to have it" (Revathi 226).

Neurotics who exhibit the trend of moving against people love to be admired by others. They put their trust easily in people who approach them with a little affection. Their wounded self-esteem longed to be fed by the admiration and approval of others. This is the reason for them for being easily cheated by others. They can be easily manipulated and deceived. Also Horney states that neurotics often express a strong drive to be the best in what they are. They have a strong tendency to defeat those who subjugates and discriminate them.

In the autobiography *I am Vidya: A Transgenders Journey*, Vidya described how transgenders are treated in India. Despite their long history, subjugation of trans community is so common in India. The long journey of struggles and rejections made them aggressive, the kind, Karen Horney categorizes as ‘moving against people’. In their world, everyone is hostile to them and only the most fittest and cunning can survive. So they pretend to be the ferocious ones unmoved by the external forces but in reality they are elevated by basic anxiety.

When Vidya arrived at Pune and joined the transgender community, she eagerly waited for her ‘Nirvana’ or sex reassignment surgery. From childhood Vidya felt that she was indeed a girl and not a boy. When others taunted her for ‘behaving like a girl’ she could not understand what was wrong in it because she was behaving as she was supposed to. At Pune, she yearned to be a complete woman. For Vidya, removing all the traces of masculinity and embracing femininity was a kind of attaining power. For a whole life time people criticized her for being born as a man and behaving like a woman, but after the surgery she could have the pride of being a complete woman.

Ah! Nirvana! The ultimate peace!

My operation took all of twenty minutes...

Inside I was at peace. It was a huge relief. I was now a woman: mine was a woman’s body. It’s shape would be what my heart wanted, had yearned for.

This pain would obliterate all earlier pains. (Vidya 8)

Horney asserts that the neurotics tend to reveal their need for social recognition or prestige, personal admiration, ambition, and personal achievement. Vidya wanted her real self to be socially recognized, personally admired and accepted for her

achievements. Shortly after the sex reassignment surgery, Vidya was determined to look for a job other than begging in the trains.

Vidya, who lacked parental care and affection, support from friends and acceptance from the society, was clearly a victim of basic anxiety. She desired, asked, even begged for her neurotic needs to be met, for a better psychological state of mind, but it was denied each time she tried. Every human craves to be admired for their talent and work, but only some people get it. While non-neurotic people take it in a more lenient way, neurotics strive over it again and again. One breakthrough or appreciation is all they want, something they were denied during childhood. This autobiography is not just about Vidya, rather it mirrors the life and fate of entire transgender community in India especially south India. Transgenders are neither bad people nor criminals. All they need and deserve is a normal life. Their expectations are simple as that of Vidya.

Horney pointed out that in the neurotic trend of moving against people, neurotics exhibit a need for power, prestige, personal admiration, and achievement. Power and affection are perhaps the two greatest neurotic needs. The need for power is usually combined with the needs of prestige and possession and that manifest itself as the need to control others and to avoid feelings of weakness or stupidity. After transition, Mock grew confident in her choice to be true to herself despite the thought of being judged by others. She believed that if she chose to make herself happy, to live in the pursuit of herself and her dreams, she would be happy. Her femininity was heavily policed by others because it was seen as inferior to masculinity. Mock was very determined to acquire the power of self-recognition and prestige. The changing of her name officially was a strong step towards attaining that power.

To legally change my name at fifteen would have required me to appeal to my mother to petition for my name change, pay the three-hundred-dollar-plus

filing fees, and plead with my father in Dallas to cosign on something he had absolutely no knowledge of. So I postponed the legal process until I was eighteen and wielded the power of self-determination, announcing to my peers and my family that I would only answer to Janet and she and her pronouns.

(Mock 144)

Maya Angelou's *Why Caged Birds Sings* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* created a profound impact in Mock. She had never before read works about people like her, about girls who had been abused and told to be quiet about it. She was struck by Maya Angelou's self-inflicted muteness brought on by guilt and abuse. Though Mock was not carrying a child, like Celie in *The Color Purple*, she was pregnant with trauma and fear. Celie's audacity to write to God demanding a meaning to her life continued to influence her. At one point she realized that there was no use in merely asking the society for acceptance or permission to be herself, she had to take what she felt she deserved. That self-assuredness prepared her for the monumental struggles that were yet to come in her life.

Self-definition has been a responsibility I've wholeheartedly taken on as mine. It's never a duty one should outsource. Of this responsibility, writer and poet Audre Lorde said, "If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive." Self-definition and self-determination is about the many varied decisions that we make to compose and journey toward ourselves, about the audacity and strength to proclaim, create, and evolve into who we know ourselves to be. It's okay if your personal definition is in a constant state of flux as you navigate the world.

(Mock 172)

In *Both Sides Now: One Man's Journey Through Womanhood*, Khosla tends to move against people by expressing his need for power, social recognition, admiration, and ambition during different stages of his transition. When he decided to undergo hysterectomy, he contacted Dr. Ann Singleton, a gifted therapist who worked among trans people and a trans woman herself. During the first call Khosla made to Dr. Singleton, he realized that her voice sounded very masculine. Khosla was on hormones for eight months and was impatient about his voice not deepening fast enough. While there was Ann, living as a trans woman for almost twenty years without a complete feminine voice or attractive physique of women yet she never complained about that. Khosla wondered how she confronted people who mistakes her voice for that of a male. Her answer for that was quiet simple: "I think my life is quiet like that of any other women" (Khosla 158). At that moment Khosla realized that recognition, prestige, and dignity starts from within. As a way to assert this notion of self- acceptance, Khosla encountered similar situation like this.

Khosla underwent a genital re-construction surgery and was sent to the recovery center after that. There he met three trans women who had been there for their sex reassignment surgery. Despite their middle age, he could sense a youthful glow in their faces. What struck him most was the way they loved their body in spite of the scars and wrinkles. Like Dr. Singleton who never complained about her voice being masculine, these women too did not complain about their bodies. They accepted themselves fully with love and admiration. This made Khosla to think about his outbursts and break downs during transition. There he realized the real power of self-assertion and moved against all the odds.

And because of this, if something doesn't work out as I planned, I am much more likely to have faith that there is something greater, something even more

right, just waiting around the corner. I may still kick and scream at first- old habits die hard- but there is a part of me slowly starting to recognize that what I experience today may very well be a form of preparation for that which will happen tomorrow. (Khosla 358)

As Horney wrote in her book *Our Inner Conflicts* between moving towards people and moving against people the difference is not simply about weakness and strength. Everyone has the potentialities for both compliance and aggression. With proper affection and acceptance the neurotics can arrive at some integration on those needs.

In *Once a Girl, Always a Boy: A Family Memoir of a Transgender Journey*, Emily longed for social recognition and also personal admiration. Most of the trans people realize their gender identity at a very young age itself, but Emily could not analyze her identity correctly. For a long time she thought she was asexual. Only at the age of twenty four she realized and accepted her identity as a trans man. When she did, the need for social recognition and personal admiration made her undergo the gender reassignment surgery and she came out as Jeremy. As stated earlier *Once a Girl, Always a Boy: A Family Memoir of a Transgender Journey* is a family memoir. Jo was there for Jeremy's surgery and throughout the recovery. But when Jo realized other trans people who came up for the surgery were not accompanied by their family members, she could not control sympathizing for them.

I got a little choked up looking around. The patients all looked so young, barely out of their teens. Yet only one had a parent with him. How could anyone know their child was going through such a traumatic procedure and not want to be right there? The one other mom who was there looked as if she wished she weren't. Instead of chatting quietly with her son, she stared off into the distance, only looking his way when he reached out and took her hand. (Ivester 117)

Jo was determined to give Jeremy the recognition and admiration he needed.

After the surgery and recovery, Jeremy came home and was taken care of by his family. At one point, he felt that he should announce his identity as trans man to the world. He did not want anyone to call him Emily or using female pronouns anymore. Though his family accepted him completely, Jeremy felt tensed about how the world would perceive his identity. He knew that trans people were discriminated and looked down by the society. Finally he made a post in his Facebook page announcing about his transition and requested everyone that from then on he wanted to be called as Jeremy Ivester and not Emily Ivester. After this announcement was made, responses flooded to his inbox congratulating him and wishing him good luck. All his friends, relatives, and colleagues switched to Jeremy without an effort. It may be just a name but accepting the name Jeremy was like accepting his identity. The most heartwarming response was from his family who commented publicly in Facebook for his announcement.

Dad wrote, "Your bravery is inspiring. I am very proud of you."

Mom was the most sentimental of all. "I'm pleased to tell the world that I now have *three* sons. Jeremy, you are continuing on the amazing journey that was started when you were little more than a toddler. You are such a strong young man that you are willing to see this adventure through to wherever it leads.

Know that your family is with you every step of the way. We are bursting with pride for your courage. And we couldn't love you more." (Ivester 159)

The comment was viewed and welcomed by many trans people around the world. Many came up with gratitude for accepting Jeremy as a trans man and shared their sad experiences with them, how they were disowned by their family and suffered insults

and taunts from the society. At that moment Jeremy realized that there are many trans people striving for social recognition and achievement. So he decided to be the voice for them. Jo and Jon too wanted to fight as parents for the betterment of trans children all around the world.

The third phase of the basic conflict is the neurotic's need for detachment, and that phase comes under 'moving away from people'. Neurotic detachment is not the mere fact of a desire for occasional solitude. Sometimes people like to be left alone to have a personal space. This is a basic expression of one's need for privacy, independence, and self-sufficiency. Non-neurotic individuals take these needs in a positive behaviour and healthy fashion however neurotics compulsively distance themselves from other people. They find associating with others as an intolerable strain. The consequence is that they are compulsively moved away from people, to attain independence and control. They deliberately build a world of their own and do not allow anyone get close them. Most of the time, they value freedom and self-sufficiency and often appear to be aloof and unapproachable. They pretend to shun all the social commitments but inside they are frightened of losing people they love.

Every person, to the extent that he is neurotic, is like an airplane directed by remote control and so bound to lose touch with himself. Detached persons can be quite like the zombies of Haitian lore- dead, but revived by witchcraft: they can work and function like live persons, but there is no life in them. (Horney 74)

Horney says that all neurotics tend to be superior, but those who were detached have an intensified need to be strong and powerful. Their unending feeling of isolation can be tolerated only by a belief that they are perfect in their own way and beyond criticism. In short the neurotic trends flow from basic anxiety, which stemmed from a child's relationship with other people, so if a child was accepted and respected by

others during childhood, he/she will definitely feel confident of his/her self and move easily with others.

In *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*, Revathi tried hard to earn money and live a dignified life. She believed that society will accept her if she had a job, earned money and supported her family. She wanted to be accepted as a normal human and not as some flawed being. For her incongruity of gender and transition was an achievement, her female identity was not something that she was born with but a trophy she won fighting her inner self, family, society, and her own body. So, she could not bear criticized for being a trans woman. Though her sub-conscious mind believed that she was as perfect as any other woman, the negligence and abuses she faced from the society posed a threat to that belief. She could not contain her outburst of rage whenever someone commented about her gender identity.

One incident at Namakkal hurt Revathi deeply. After getting the driving license, she went to Namakkal town for some work and she noticed some auto-rickshaw drivers pointing at her and talking among themselves. One group said that Revathi was a man while the other group insisted that she was definitely a woman. One of the man in the first group argued that she was 'big-built' and no woman was that large and that no woman from their village would wear the kind of dress she wore and cut the hair like her's. Revathi was angry and frustrated, so she parked the vehicle and shouted at them. They denied that they had discussed about her. This infuriated her even more.

What do you fellows get out of talking like this? Listen! I am a pottai! I was a man who changed into a woman. If you had one like me in your family, would you place bets on a person like me?

There is this power in me, this urge to fight wrong. I don't know if it's because I was born a man and became a woman. I am not sure I'd have thus stood on a road and shouted had I been born a woman. (Revathi 229)

Trans community in India has been considered degenerate for centuries. They were not allowed to indulge in the society's day to day affairs as cisgenders do. So they create a world for their own and confine themselves in it. These kinds of experiences make them more withdrawn and move away from others. Not only Revathi, Vidya too had experienced violence in the hands of people which elevated her anxiety further.

Once when she was begging in train, Vidya encountered a terrifying experience. She entered a compartment and saw four men sitting there; three of them were very tall and well-built while the fourth one looked kind, so she approached him for alms. He gave him two rupees and Vidya requested him if he could give her some more as she had not earned anything that day. Suddenly a hard slap landed on her cheek, by the one sitting next to him. When she reacted, all the four men converged and attacked her fiercely. Her hands were trembling and tears rolled down her cheek. She was filled with self-pity and at that moment the two rupees in her hand felt like a burden. So she threw it at them and cursed them. It was a firm belief that if a trans person cursed someone, it would affect their life. Seeing this, the four men surrounded her again and thrashed her. None of the onlookers helped or rescued her from the aggressors. Vidya was even thrown out of the train. The pain, helplessness, and disgrace hurt her severely. Incidents like this made the trans community completely mistrust the society and move away from it. Vidya express her emotions as: "You can bear most of the troubles of life, but to feel orphaned is to feel a huge loss- self-pity is a strong drug, a venom: what I was undergoing was such through misery" (9).

The Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Horney affirms that people who suffer from basic anxiety show a neurotic need for self- sufficiency and independence to prove that they can get along without others. They also strive relentlessly for perfection and unassailability and prove their self- esteem and personal superiority. Mock in her memoir *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love and So Much More* says that the greatest proof of her unassailability is expressing and accepting her identity. In her opinion femininity in general is seen as frivolous. The public often mistake trans women as individuals who apply makeup, wear high heels, use hair extensions as a distraction, and to pass as what the society terms as a 'real woman'. But for trans women there is no 'passing like a real women phase', they express their self. Mock emphasized that even as a teenager her femininity was more than just adornments, in fact they were the extensions of herself, enabling her to express the identity. Her body, clothes and makeup were just a medium for those expressions. At that very moment of realization she felt that she has attained the perfection she meant to be.

There was a resounding peace that day, one that mirrored my first night back home after Bangkok. Lying on my twin mattress where, just weeks earlier, I had wept myself to sleep, I heard something unfamiliar, something so foreign that it felt right: tranquillity. I relieved myself of the tears and the sobs and the prayers for miracles, and realized myself. And that realization lulled me to slumber, serving as a backdrop to more far-reaching dreams. (Mock 242)

Mock's memoir is an eye opener for those who believe in a rigid system of individuality and identity. There were unaware of the fact that gender identity exists on a spectrum. Punishing or performing some rituals would not take away the femininity from trans women nor the masculinity from trans men. The gender identity

of trans people are as unique as cisgenders. So compartmentalizing a person as either a boy or a girl based entirely on the appearance of genitalia at birth undercuts their life experiences.

According to Horney, neurotics who move away from people are directed towards the major need of not getting involved. She also states that a more precarious way to maintain self-sufficiency is by consciously or unconsciously restricting others from involving their life. The neurotics feel that their needs can be fulfilled only through their effort and striving. Khosla felt this need of unassailability every time someone addressed him using wrong pronouns or taunted him for his gender identity. Every time he was the one to correct and stand up for himself and no one else did, so gradually he restricted himself from interacting with people who makes him feel uncomfortable.

The need for perfection and independence is another need queer people exhibit in their life. Khosla recalled an incident when his car broke down; he sat in the parking lot and worked with the flat tire himself. A neighbour passed by and just nodded and enquired about the vehicle and went on his way. For a moment Khosla imagined what would have happened if this it had been before his transition. The man probably would have sympathized and offered help, seeing him as a woman struggling with a flat tyre. And soon as he made this offer Khosla would have tensed up for being seen as a woman. Now he felt calm and contented for attaining the masculine status he once desired. There he also realized why people who change their gender identity chose change of place for living. It was because they yearned for a new start.

I realized for the first time why people in my situation move to a new town.

Until then, I had always thought that people who disappeared from their old life were cowards. Why, I thought, would they leave behind people who love

them? Why would they reject their past? Isn't our past part of who we are?

Isn't this whole journey about integration, not rejection? (Khosla 131)

Khosla mentions about the work of cognitive psychologist Abraham Maslow's the hierarchy of needs and applied it to his own life. To attain self-actualization, he should be fully accepted as a man- the primary physical aspect of his identity.

People tend to attain the neurotic need for perfection by striving relentlessly. They dread making flaws because if they did, society would not accept them. To achieve that unassailability they desperately attempt to hide their weakness and flaws. In all the above discussed trans narratives, the characters try hard to make the society accept their identity as trans men or women. In that effort, they undergo basic anxiety to an enormous extent. In *Once a Girl, Always a Boy: A Family Memoir of a Transgender Journey*, Jo tried to make the readers especially parents to understand the fact that acceptance and sufficiency should start from home. Once the trans children were accepted and loved unconditionally they will get the strength to face the world. Making flaws and failing in life is common, but those who were disowned by the families dread living a normal life. They constantly live in fear of losing the people they love. So when Jo accepted Jeremy with all his gender incongruity, he felt independent enough to lead a normal life without any tension or fear of being lonely in life. Jeremy's family arranged a party after his surgery and Jo thanked everyone who stood with his son during the transition.

"Here's to Jeremy. Congratulations on your new legal status. May your new name bring you great joy and happiness. To all your friends," she said, looking around the table, "you are here tonight because you have *always* been here for Jeremy. I know that means a lot to him. And as his mother, it means the world to me." (Ivester 181)

The more the society realizes what infinite harm neurotic condition inflicts on the personality, the more stringent appears the need to resolve them. But that cannot be done only by rational decisions or exertion of will power. The conflicts can be resolved only by changing those conditions within the personality that brought them into being. As Maslow proposes in his theory of hierarchy of needs, an individual's most basic needs must be met before they become motivated to achieve higher level needs. Every child born deserves to be loved and protected by its parents despite the gender and sexual orientations. If an individual feels secure in his/her family circle then the personality development will be strong enough to face the deprivation that comes in his/her life.